TOWARDS A RICHER UNDERSTANDING OF PRESENCE IN TEACHING
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

During the act of teaching, teachers are faced with numerous decisions on how to best meet the varied needs of their students based on their awareness of those students’ needs. This process is encapsulated in the theory of Presence in Teaching, which includes the constructs of teacher awareness, reflection-in-action, teacher decision-making, and connections to student/teacher relationships, professional identity, and pedagogical content knowledge. This qualitative study sought to deepen current understandings of this theory through exploring how experienced teachers become aware of student needs, how they use those awarenesses to inform their decisions made during instruction, the role of reflection in making decisions, and what this process looks like to an observer. Data came from interviews, observations, journal entries, and a focus group with three experienced elementary school teachers. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore and describe the participants’ experiences of becoming aware and connections between their awareness and their decisions made during instruction. Findings show the participants experienced awareness of their students in four different layers, used knowledge from all of these layers to inform their decisions, and engaged in reflection-in-action when they were presented with new situations during instruction. Findings also show the participants experienced an emotional/physical and cognitive reaction to new awarenesses, and their awareness, reactions, and decisions were strongly influenced by their personal teaching philosophies. This information can help
teacher educators cultivate Presence in Teaching among teacher candidates to increase responsive teaching and student learning.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teaching is now defined as the process of making and implementing decisions, before, during, and after instruction, to increase the probability of learning. If what a teacher does is consonant with what is now known about cause-effect relationships in learning, and if that teacher’s decisions and actions reflect awareness of the current state of the learner and the present environment, then learning will predictably increase. (Hunter, 1979, p. 62)

The act of teaching is incredibly complex within today’s society and culture (Clark, 1988; Danielson, 2007). Having a thorough understanding of content, pedagogy, student development, and well-planned lessons is not enough. Teachers also need to be aware of the cognitive, affective, social, and physical needs of their students, as effective teachers are constantly making decisions in the moment of instruction based on their awareness of these student needs and how students are responding to the instruction (Gay, 2000; Heck & Williams, 1984; Hunter, 1979; Palmer, 1983). When students are in an environment of responsive teaching, they are more engaged with the subject matter, more willing to take risks in learning, and they tend to perform better academically both on informal and formal assessments (Gay, 2000; Heck & Williams, 1984; Talbert-Johnson, 2006).

This requires hundreds of decisions each day (Danielson, 2007; Jackson, 1990). These decisions made during instruction are integral to the act of teaching, and have been compared to surgery in that:

You think fast on your feet and do the best you can with the information you have. You must be very skilled, very knowledgeable, and exquisitely well trained,
because neither the teacher nor the surgeon can say, ‘Everybody sit still until I figure out what in the heck we're gonna do next.’ (Goldberg, 1990, p. 43)

Unfortunately, these decisions are difficult to identify as they often operate out of intuition and take place without conscious thought or for-planning (Berliner, 1994; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Schon, 1983, 1987). Yet they have a strong influence on the effectiveness of the instruction, and need to be considered when discussing effective teaching (Danielson, 2007). Thus, one aspect of effective teaching is teacher’s being aware of students’ needs and responding to those needs in the moment of instruction through making decisions about how to adapt their teaching. Furthermore, my own experiences as a classroom teacher have led me to believe teachers are most effective in increasing student learning when they are aware of where their students are academically and emotionally, and are responsive to their needs during instruction.

Unfortunately, we know little about how teachers make decisions in response to both diverse students and the diverse needs of one student. How are these decisions made? How can teacher educators and professional developers better prepare teachers to be responsive to students’ needs during instruction? The purpose of this inquiry is to investigate these issues using assumptions found in the theory of Presence in Teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

**Theoretical Framework and Background**

Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) defined the theory of “Presence in Teaching” as: “A state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning
environments and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step” (p. 266). A model of this theory is presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Model of Presence in Teaching theory](image)

In deconstructing this definition, the construct includes three different features:

- Awareness of individual and group mental, emotional, and physical dynamics, in the context of teaching,
- Reflection on this awareness through considering possible actions or choices, and
- Responding to that awareness through making a decision and taking action, described as a “compassionate best next step.”

This represents an iterative cycle of observation, reflection, and decision/action, where the teacher observes how students are reacting to their instruction, reflects on whether or not any adjustments to their instruction need to be made to increase student engagement with learning opportunities, then decides which adjustments to make and implements them. The elements of caring in teaching are represented by the use of the term “compassionate” in describing the teacher decisions and actions taken. This implies a relational stance in teaching where the teacher considers the student’s mental,
emotional, and physical needs, as well as academic responses to current instruction, in making decisions that show caring for the student’s wellbeing as a whole individual while increasing student learning. The cycle then repeats with continued awareness of how students are responding to instruction, and continued reflection and adjustment to increase the effectiveness of their instruction and show caring for their students.

According to Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), this theory is built upon a foundational understanding that trusting relationships between the teachers, students, content, and context of the school site are a necessary prerequisite for teachers to be truly present in their teaching. The teacher’s sense of professional identity is a key precursor to these trusting relationships as it allows him to trust his decisions and gives him a sense of purpose in teaching. Teachers also need to know their subject matter and pedagogical possibilities well enough that their mind is not preoccupied with following a predetermined path through the content, but is free to choose alternate points of entry or adjust the instruction if needed. From the student’s point of view, a present teacher recognizes what is needed emotionally, cognitively, and physically in any given moment, and is able to respond to that need with seeming ease. From the teacher’s point of view, being present is bringing all your senses to full attention with focus on what is happening in each moment.

To put it another way, teaching with presence is an act of relationship between teacher and student, where the teacher presents opportunities to learn and the student is open to engaging in those opportunities. This creates a moment of instruction where being present in teaching means being “fully in the moment” through teaching students, observing their responses, and adjusting teaching to address continued needs (Rodgers &
Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 268). In essence, teaching with presence becomes the difference between acting upon students, and acting with students as it reflects a power-with model, instead of a power-over model of teaching.

Since the publication of the theory in 2006 (Rodgers & Raider-Roth), presence in teaching has been referenced and studied in a wide variety of research studies. These studies include research on issues of identity in teaching (Pellegrino, 2011; ulvik & Langorgen, 2012; Wang, 2012), the role of reflection in teaching (Davies, 2008; Mortari, 2012; Rodgers, 2006), and relationships in teaching and professional development (Gidseg, 2007; Raider-Roth, 2011b; Stieha, 2010). Researchers have also referenced the importance of having pedagogical content knowledge (Lenhart, 2010; Toom, 2006) and caring for students (Frelin, 2013; Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin, & Vanderlee, 2013; Nilsson, Ejlertsson, Andersson, & Blomqvist, 2015) that is inherent in this theory. This theory has also been used to support the idea that teaching is more complex than just following a checklist of ideas and behaviors (Calvo de Mora & Wood, 2014; Crabb, 2014; Ulvika & Riese, 2015). Other researchers have referenced the focus on the immediacy of teacher decisions and judgment included in this theory (Frelin, 2014; Korthagen, Attema-Noordewier, & Zwart, 2014). In a study of how a beginning teacher developed her sense of self during her first year of teaching, Meijer, Korthagen, and Vasalos (2009) referenced the focus on bringing your teaching identity into your teaching that is included in the theory or presence in teaching, and Rodgers (2006, 2010) discussed how teachers can use descriptive processes to increase their presence in teaching. Mutch (2013) studied the theory of presence in teaching directly with a focus on how teachers can quiet their mind for deeper reflection to increase their presence in teaching.
Given this plethora of research studies on various aspects of presence in teaching, no research to date has been conducted exploring how teachers experience the phenomenon of becoming aware, specifically how teachers’ awareness informs their decisions in the moment of teaching, or what this process looks like in action. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) recognize this lack of empirical research into what teaching with presence looks like, and acknowledge the difficulty it creates in studying presence in teaching. Therefore, further research exploring the construct of awareness in teaching and its connection to teacher decisions during instruction will give a richer understanding into how teachers teach with presence as a form of responsive teaching.

**Justification**

According to Miller (2007), presence is more imperative in teaching than the strategies the teacher uses or philosophy a teacher espouses as it builds relationships of caring and trust based on connecting with students as holistic human beings. From a more global view of teaching, Hansen (1995) in *The Call to Teach* posits that the act of teaching is an act of service for the good of the community, which elevates it and gives a sense of grander purpose to being a teacher. Taken together, this sets the stage for teaching with presence to become the precursor to responsive teaching that meets the needs of students, parents, the community, and the nation.

The literature on effective teaching also includes multiple aspects of teaching with presence. While there is no clear consensus on what specific teacher qualities are necessary to be an effective teacher (Giovannelli, 2003; McEwan, 2002), research has shown that there are some specific teacher behaviors that support effective teaching. Brophy and Good (1985) in their meta-analysis of empirical studies into teacher qualities
that increased student achievement found that the quality of ‘withitness’—monitoring the entire classroom during instruction and individual students during seat work—increased effective teaching as it helped teachers gauge students’ response to instruction and implied a quick response to the students. Empirical studies into effective teaching have also identified an interactive teaching style as one teacher instructional behavior that increases student scores on measures of achievement (Borich, 2000; Brophy & Good, 1985; Doyle, 1986; Evertson, 1986; Reynolds, 1992). According to Darling-Hammond (2013), having an understanding of the students and making judgments about what is “likely to work in a given context in response to students’ needs” is another aspect of effective teaching (p. 11). Additionally, research into what makes a teacher ‘highly qualified’ has found that the requirements go beyond the usual definition as having strong subject knowledge, and includes specific teacher dispositions, including the ability of teachers to “affirm and embrace all students,” which speaks to presence (McEwan, 2002).

Hamachek (1999) summed up effective teaching:

> Effective teachers are, in a sense, ‘total’ teachers. They seem able to adjust to the shifting tides of classroom life and students’ needs, and to do what has to be done to reach, and thereby teach, different students in a variety of circumstances. (p. 206)

Aspects of teaching with presence are also incorporated into the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards for the profession of teaching, meaning teacher educators have a responsibility to foster and develop these skills in their teacher candidates. For example, standard 2 calls for teachers to make “appropriate and timely provisions” to meet students’ needs (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 11). This calls for adjustments to instruction during the
instruction itself, not just in reflection after teaching and in planning for the next time that lesson is taught. In addition, standard 3 calls for teachers to be “thoughtful and responsive” listeners and observers, and standard 8 calls for teachers to be aware of student needs during instruction and be flexible in adapting instruction to meet those needs (pp. 12, 17).

In order to explore the complexities of teaching, and develop the identified teacher behaviors of effective teachers and the dispositions and skills embedded within the InTASC standards, it’s necessary to understand how teachers become aware of student needs through observation and listening, how they make judgments based on those awarenesses, and how those judgments lead to decisions made during instruction. This qualitative study is designed to develop this understanding more fully to identify ways teacher educators can increase teachers’ presence in teaching to make their teaching more effective and ultimately increase opportunities for student learning.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to deepen our understanding of the construct of presence in teaching by addressing the following research questions:

1. How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?
2. How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?
   a. How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment?
b. How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something?

c. Do they always take action? Why or why not?

3. What does teaching with presence look like in practice?

Analysis of the participants’ experiences with presence in teaching focused around these research questions will add depth and understanding to the theory of Presence in Teaching as it is currently defined (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

**Definition of Terms**

Presence in Teaching - The theory defines this as “A state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266).

In-the-moment decisions - These are decisions that are made in the moment of instruction or when students are working in independent work time.

Academic need - This relates to a student’s understanding of the content currently being taught.

Cognitive need - This relates to a student’s general cognitive abilities and relation to grade-level expectations overall.

Physical need - This relates to a student’s medical condition and the physical necessities of food and warmth.

Emotional need - This relates to a student’s emotional state and affective needs. It includes the need for attention and safety.
Social need - This relates to a student’s need for appropriate and supportive social engagement in the school environment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the theory of Presence in Teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006) and situated it within research on effective teaching and the need for teacher educators to develop the dispositions of awareness and thoughtful teacher decisions in teacher candidates based on the InTASC standards for teaching. My position in relation to this research was made transparent. The problem and purpose of this study was delineated, research questions were stated, and an overview of the methodological framework was given. I turn next to a review of the research literature relevant to the theory of Presence in Teaching and the goals of this study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a synthesis of the current research literature for each aspect included in the theory of Presence in Teaching, and the foundational elements necessary to teach with presence (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). I begin with a review of the literature on the phenomenon of becoming aware in educational settings, reflection-in-action, and teacher decision-making during instruction, as these are the major elements in the theory of presence in teaching. Next, the research literature on relationships in teaching, teacher identity and philosophy, and pedagogical content knowledge are presented, as these are foundational concepts necessary for teachers to teach with presence. This literature review establishes the foundation for the current study on how teachers experience and express presence during instruction, and grounds the participants’ experiences in the current research base of each aspect included in the theory of presence in teaching.

Presence as Awareness in Teaching

Presence has been defined in different ways by many different fields of study, including philosophy, history, religion, psychology, education, and art. The field of philosophy and history discuss presence in terms of the past asserting its presence on the current moment through “things we cannot touch that nonetheless touch us” (Ghosh & Kleinberg, 2013, p. 7). Philosophy defines presence as a sense of ‘wide-awakeness’ through giving full attention to the act of living and reflecting on how we relate to our
surroundings (Green, 1973). In literature on spiritual development, presence has been
defined as a “state of being” with an emphasis on paying full attention to the moment you
are in (Brown, 2010; Tolle, 1999).

Within the field of psychology and Zen Buddhism, presence is often termed as
“mindfulness” as it calls for being mindful in the current moment through paying full
attention to yourself and everything that surrounds you (Tremmel, 1993). Hanh (1999), a
Buddhist Monk, described being mindful as a novice monk washing hundreds of dishes
on a cold winter morning. As he spent hours on the task, he declared it a wondrous
reality: “I’m being completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence,
and conscious of my thoughts and actions” (p. 4). Psychology seeks to blend eastern and
western approaches to personal growth through presence as an all-inclusive state of
consciousness, which includes all aspects of being alive and human (Wilber, 2001). In
clinical psychology, this is applied through “being in the present on purpose” (Childs,

In the field of education, the basic definition of presence is expanded from a focus
on being aware of yourself to being aware of yourself and others. Dewey (1933) defined
presence as being “alive” in the classroom through observing students’ bodily
expressions and words, and interpreting their reactions to classroom teaching (p. 275).
Presence has also been addressed in writings about the ethics of care in education. Under
this framework, it is defined as being “totally and non-selectively present to the student”
through giving attention to the student, while acknowledging that each encounter itself
and poet, discussed being present in education through the actions of inquiring, sensing,
seeing, sorting, finding patterns, and making meaning of what is happening in the moment (p. 226). Writings on reflective practices among teachers have advocated for incorporating the concept of mindfulness in education through situating teacher reflection in the current teaching moment as “reflection-in-action” (Schon, 1983).

Focusing specifically within the context of teaching, the definition of presence and its application within the classroom is a developing field. Presence has been defined in terms of the teacher experiencing “original enlightenment” that taps into the “cosmic consciousness” of humanity where teachers are true to their “authentic spiritual self” (Mutch, 2013, p. 10). Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) described presence as a "slow motion awareness" that focuses on the interactions between learner, environment, and content in their theory of Presence in Teaching (p. 271). This includes a teacher's feelings and expression of passion for the subject matter and for the act of teaching itself.

At its foundation, teaching is also an act of relationship between teacher and student, where the teacher presents opportunities to learn and the student is open to engaging in those opportunities (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). This creates a moment of instruction where being present in teaching means being “fully in the moment” through teaching students, observing their responses, and adjusting teaching to address continued needs (Hruska, 2008, p. 32). Thus, teaching with presence becomes the difference between acting upon students, and acting with students. From the student’s point of view, a present teacher recognizes what is needed emotionally, cognitively, and physically in any given moment, and is able to respond to that need with seeming ease. From the teacher’s point of view, being present is bringing all your senses to full attention with focus on what is happening in each moment (Rodgers & Raider-Roth,
All these definitions include a common thread of being aware of what’s happening in the classroom.

**Observing and Listening to Develop Awareness**

In the research literature, references to teacher awareness are often discussed in terms of monitoring the classroom through observation of students as they work independently or in groups (Doyle, 1986; Heck & Williams, 1984; Raider-Roth, 2011a; Rodgers, 2010; Schultz, 2003, 2009; Skowron, 2006). This monitoring includes watching for individual students’ body language, behavior, communication and work patterns, and their interactions with other students, as well as observing the cumulative mood and energy of the whole classroom (such as active, lethargic, angry, etc.) so the teacher can decide to either support the current mood or do something to change it (Hruska, 2008; Schultz, 2003). It also includes watching for students who are self-segregating through their positioning in relation to other students and the ratio of teacher talk to student talk (Hruska, 2008). Heck and Williams (1984) summed up the focus of these observations while monitoring students:

> The teacher must be acutely aware of the myriad of factors that affect each student – the obvious and the not so obvious. This information, gathered through observations or interactions, must be considered in making professional decisions that are designed to meet the individual needs of students. (p. 52)

These observations are often discussed in regards to classroom management and are a beginning step in becoming aware of student needs (Borich, 2000; McEwan, 2002).

Schultz (2003), a teacher educator who worked with students from elementary school through adult learners, theorized that observation of students isn’t enough; teachers also need to listen closely to their students. This listening goes beyond just
hearing the words they say, it includes paying attention to their body language, actions, facial expressions. Schultz (2003) described this process of listening to students:

Really good teachers can hear in a student’s voice interest or understanding or fear, can see in a student’s writing, drawing, and math notebook pages evidentiary traces of that student’s thinking, like rabbit tracks in the snow. They know how to read the faces, the arms, the shoulders, and the feet of those they teach, how to tell when their students are voting with their faces, arms, shoulders, or feet, and whether the votes of the moment are yea’s or nay’s. Really good teachers know what is going on. (p. ix)

This type of listening is an “active, relational, and interpretive process that is focused on making meaning,” as it seeks to understand students’ perspectives in the classroom (Schultz, 2003, p. 8-9). It implies teachers become deeply engaged in hearing and understanding what the student’s words, gestures, and actions are saying and includes listening to the purpose and emotion behind their words, as well as listening for students who are silenced in the classroom.

Schultz (2003) added it is important for teachers to listen “across lines of difference” to the social and cultural voices of students’ families and the community (p. 12). According to Schultz, this type of listening is key to bridging cultural divides between students and teachers, as teachers listen “to be caught off guard and surprised, or listen beyond what a person expects to hear” (p. 12). This deep listening includes both the act of listening and teacher actions that take place as a result of the listening act. In Schultz’s words, “The teacher’s task is to understand, as much as it is possible, students’ understandings as a starting place for teaching. By listening to others, the listener is called on to respond” (p. 9).
Turnbull (2013) posited people often think they are listening when they actually are not. Real listening is an active process where all attention is focused on the person doing the talking and our minds are not wandering elsewhere. These actions of observing and listening to students help teachers focus on each individual student and become aware of teachable moments when students are especially open to a specific idea, activity, or conversation. Rodgers (2006) also discussed the importance of listening to students as they discuss their learning and thoughts in her writing on using “descriptive feedback” to hear and understand students’ voices. According to Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), truly listening with intent to hear what students are “telling” teachers is especially important in today’s society where teachers’ and students’ voices and needs are being “squeezed out” under the current educational climate of standards, testing, and accountability (p. 265).

Teacher Decisions in Response to Awareness

The theory of presence in teaching connects these awarenesses to action through teachers making decisions in response to the identified student needs (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Madeline Hunter (1979), whose research on teaching and learning is seminal to the field of teacher education, also described this connection between awareness and response:

During teaching, a teacher must determine whether this student should be immediately accountable, or be given additional time before having to demonstrate achievement. Should a student proceed to the next learning after one demonstration of competence, or are several validations required for that student’s retention of what has been learned? Should the teacher, at this moment, be supportive or demanding? Questions such as these can be answered only with information emerging from the immediate situation. Answers remain based on validated principles which affect learning, but are implemented with
Other researchers in the early 1970s to the mid-1980s confirmed this view of teaching as they examined teachers’ instructional decision making using simulations and video (Borko & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Jackson, 1990). A meta-analysis of studies during this time found the estimated number of teacher decisions was fairly consistent across the studies at .5 to .7 decisions each minute of interactive teaching (Borko & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986). More recent research has concluded that teachers make hundreds of decisions each day, with numbers ranging from 1,200 to 3,000 daily decisions (Danielson, 2007; Jackson, 1990). While there is wide variety in these numbers, they confirm that teachers make hundreds of decisions each day as part of the complex act of instruction.

Further exploring teacher decisions, Jackson (1990) closely documented the lived experiences of four elementary school teachers in Chicago in the 1960s and found while the number of teacher decisions remained “fairly stable from hour to hour, the content and sequence of those interchanges cannot be predicted or preplanned with any exactitude” (p. 149), requiring “spontaneity and immediacy” of teachers in their responses (p. 152). In an analysis of then-current research into teacher thinking, Clark (1988) found teachers depended on their quick routine habits and behavior, and on their values and ways of seeing the world in making these teaching decisions. More recently, Danielson (2007) reiterated this complexity:

More recent research has confirmed that teaching is also cognitively demanding; a teacher makes hundreds of nontrivial decisions daily, from designing lessons, to responding to students’ questions, to meeting with parents. In other words,
teaching is a thinking person’s job; it is not simply a matter of following a script or carrying out other people’s instructional designs. (p. 2)

Anderson (1981), in a review of research on students’ responses to instruction, identified four categories of student responses that inform teachers of how the students are responding to the instruction. These are: the amount of attention a student gives to a task (often termed ‘on-task behavior’), a students’ initiative in seeking help when it’s needed, the amount of success a student has on his or her daily assignments, and a students’ understanding of what cognitive processes are expected for an assignment. Anderson posited it is important to recognize these different types of student responses as they are “signals for the teacher to consider when making decisions to continue ongoing instruction or to modify it” (p. 100).

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989) recognizes the importance of teacher flexibility and responsiveness during instruction embodied in these teacher decisions, and has included a focus on these decisions in their third assessment principle: “Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning” (p. 3). This connection between teacher awareness and teacher decisions found in the research literature, and included in current teaching standards, supports the focus on connecting teacher awareness to teacher decisions that is encapsulated in the theory of Presence in Teaching, and suggests a need for reflection in making these decisions (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

**Reflection as Link between Awareness and Action**

The process of reflection during instruction on awarenesses gained through observation and listening is the third key element in the theory of Presence in Teaching as
teachers consider how to best address the student needs and issues they recognize (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Schon’s (1983) concept of “reflection-in-action” applies here as it focuses on reflection in the moment of instruction to inform immediate teacher decisions. According to Schon (1987):

What distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action. In reflection-in-action, the rethinking of some part of our knowing-in-action leads to on-the-spot experiment and further thinking that affects what we do – in the situation at hand and perhaps also in others we shall see as similar to it. (p. 29)

Schon (1987) posited this reflection-in-action takes place in the following circumstances:

- The teacher recognizes a situation during instruction that stimulates a routine response.
- The routine response does not produce the routine results in the student; instead the student responds in a novel or unexpected way.
- This novel response draws the teacher’s attention and leads the teacher to reflect on possible new responses.
- This leads to a decision on how to respond to the student at that moment.

The first step in the process above includes an initial ‘routine’ teacher response to a situation at an unconscious level, and conscious reflection in the moment when presented with a novel or unexpected student response. This process is further situated in the moment through description as “a spontaneous and deliberate reaction to a unique set of circumstances,” which incorporates the elements of becoming aware of how students are responding during instruction, reflecting in the moment on possible responses the teacher
can give, and deciding on which response is the best for that moment (Giovannelli, 2003).

Beck and Kosnik (2001) supported Schon’s (1983) idea, and claimed that “teachers can reflect while teaching; that we commonly do; and that we must reflect while teaching if we are to be attentive and responsive” (p. 220). They described the advantages of reflection during instruction over reflecting after the act of teaching is completed:

- Teachers know what’s happening because it’s happening now and they have a more realistic viewpoint,
- Teachers can make adjustments during the actual lesson instead of putting off changes until a future lesson,
- Continued observation and reflection on student feedback to adjustments allows teachers to continue to adjust the lesson,
- It models for students how to reflect on what’s happening and make quick adjustments for their future lives. (p. 222)

Teachers who engage in reflection during instruction have also been referred to as “thoughtful practitioners” with the teaching becoming more patient, responsive to student needs, and useful to students (Schon, 1983, p. 240).

Schon (1987) took the idea of reflection-in-action to an even deeper level as he further posited that teachers generate and adjust educational theory during their reflection-in-action. Schon described this process - “Reflection on the unexpected results of experiment leads to theory” (p. 181) - and claimed that this theory building created
“springboards for making sense of new situations” as teachers applied it in additional situations and continued to observe their students’ responses (1983, p. 317). In essence, Schon argued that teachers use their reflection-in-action to generate and adjust educational theory as they experiment with different responses to student needs during instruction, and observe their students’ responses to those decisions.

While Schon’s concept of reflection-in-action has been accepted generally, the inclusion of theory generation during reflection-in-action has been met with some controversy in past years. Roth, Lawless, and Masciotra (2001) argued that teachers do not have time during instruction to consider theoretical constructs and principles because reflection-in-action concerns itself with responding to the specifics of each moment as teachers present a specific subject matter to specific children in a specific classroom during a specific moment. This leaves no room for theorizing during reflection-in-action. Furthermore, Roth et al. (2001) claim that if teachers do take the time to theorize while engaging in reflection-in-action, their teaching quality will diminish as the needs of the classroom move too quickly to allow for this deep level of thinking. Given this debate and the inclusion of reflection-in-action in the theory of presence in teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006), exploring the role theory generation plays in teachers’ reflection-in-action will yield a richer understanding of how teachers reflect-in-action as they teach with presence.

With an understanding of the key elements in this theory, research on the foundational principles of this theory are presented next. This includes the need for trusting relationships between students, teachers, colleagues, and administrators; a sense of professional identity as a teacher; and an understanding of the content and pedagogical
possibilities in the teacher’s subject area. These will each be discussed in the sections that follow.

**Relationships as a Foundation for Teaching with Presence**

Researchers on teaching with presence have found that presence exists within relationships of trust between teachers and students (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012) and these relationships are essential in creating a classroom environment where students are willing to learn (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004; Raider-Roth, 2005; Raider-Roth, Albert, Bircann-Barkey, Gidseg, & Murray, 2008; Schultz, 2003; Stieha, 2010). Glasgow and Hicks (2003), in a well-accepted textbook for beginning and mentor teachers, state this directly: “Curricular coverage only works if students care about what the teacher has to say. There has to be buy-in and engagement. It is true that to teach students, you must first reach them” (p. 24). Studies have found that students who felt their teachers cared about them personally were more engaged in school, performed better on academic assessments, and had more positive academic attitudes and values than students who felt their teachers did not care (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004).

Furthermore, Schultz (2003) found that teachers need to have established relationships with students in order to truly listen to the students because the act of listening presupposes close physical proximity to the students and intimacy in the sharing of personal thoughts and feelings. Schultz also theorized this connection between relationships and listening is reciprocal: a relationship is necessary to listen sincerely, listening builds deeper relationships, and these deeper relationships make listening easier.
and more meaningful. As part of a class for future teachers, a high school student in Maryland reflected on the effect of having a positive teacher relationship on her learning:

I relaxed and felt comfortable as I sat down to learn. I knew she cared about what I had to say. Ms. Little was genuinely interested in me as a person and continued to show that interest every day of my freshman year. Her welcome set the tone for the rest of my day and the rest of my year. Ms. Little’s faith in me made it possible to take the risk of being wrong and trying new things. I knew she would help me get back up again if I stumbled. (Lapoma & Kantor, 2014)

Taken together, this research places trusting relationships as a necessary foundation for teaching with presence so students can learn.

Research has identified specific teacher behaviors that support and build relationships with students. Lasky (2005) studied how a group of high school teachers in Ontario, Canada developed relationships with their students. She found that being respectful of students, open, and transparent, all worked to establish a rapport between the teachers and students. In addition, the teacher’s willingness to take risks and be real, genuine, and vulnerable in the classroom showed the students it was safe for them to be human and vulnerable in the classroom as well (Lasky, 2005). Further studies confirmed this sharing of humanity strengthens and deepens the relationship between teachers and students and makes students more willing to take risks in learning (Heck & Williams, 1984; Schultz, 2003). Additionally, a study by Raider-Roth (2005) on how 6th grade students show their learning in school found that students share knowledge in their classrooms based on their understanding of the relationships within that classroom. In other words, the students shared more knowledge when there were established relationships of trust than when those relationships were not there. The same study also found that showing genuine interest in students’ ideas validates their experiences and
strengthens the relationships within the class. In addition, Hruska (2008) found that even simple teacher behaviors, such as maintaining eye contact with students, visually scanning the classroom frequently, and maintaining your body posture toward students when writing on the board, served to build relationships as these behaviors keep teachers engaged in the dynamics of the classroom and created opportunities to listen to students and become aware of what is truly going on.

Focusing on what relational teaching looks like, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) conducted research into how women learn through in-depth interviews with 135 women from nine different colleges and human service agencies in the United States. Their research described effective teaching for women as teaching that allowed them to enter into relationship with the content through discussion and dialogue, and not simply receive the content from the instructor. A college student described what this process looked like:

She was intensely, genuinely interested in everybody’s feelings about things. She asked a question and wanted to know what your response was. She wanted to know because she wanted to see what sort of effect this writing was having. She wasn’t using us as a sounding board for her own feelings about things. She really wanted to know. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 255)

Belenky et al. (1986) termed this “connected teaching” and defined it as teaching that allows the teacher to see each student’s perspective through entering into relationship with the students. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) reaffirm the position of trust at the center of this connected teaching as it allows teachers to “support, scaffold, and help students build their own ideas” instead of focusing only on the teacher’s ideas (p. 275).
Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) put forward the idea of mutuality in education, a form of “mutual meaning making” where the students and teachers are each aware of and responsive to each other’s actions, as another essential element to the relationships between teacher and students. This is accomplished as teachers and students read and interpret each other’s expressions and actions to make meaning of intention and expression. In their own research with students, student teachers, and experienced teachers, Raider-Roth et al. (2008) found students watch teachers closely in these relationships to observe teacher’s responses to their comments and work in class, and teachers watch students closely to see how students are responding to the teacher’s actions. This continual observation and feedback loop of teachers taking action, observing students response, and using that observation data to inform future teacher actions, created and maintained the relationship between students and teacher. This plethora of research and theory on relationships in teaching has demonstrated these relationships are an essential feature to learning, and are complex and contextual.

Additionally, these relationships create opportunities for teachers to show compassion to their students, which in turn strengthens their relationships. Noddings (2001) described this relational process as teachers engage in acts of caring for their students: teachers attend to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of their students to the point of “motivational displacement”; this then creates a desire for the teacher to respond to the student in a compassionate way; and the student acknowledges this caring act (p. 100). These acts of compassion vary from individual to individual and situation to situation in an effort to “address individual needs and maximize a child’s capacities” (Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996, p. 85). A study in one urban elementary school on this
relational caring process between teachers and students supports the connection between showing compassion to students and building stronger relationships. The researchers found the students felt a stronger connection to teachers they recognized cared about them. The theory of Presence in Teaching acknowledges the need for teachers to show students they care through the description of teacher decisions as a “considered and compassionate best next step” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266).

Relationships with Colleagues and Administrators

In addition to having relationships with the students, research into the effect of relationships between teachers, their colleagues, and administrators on classroom teaching has found that relational trust between teachers, administration, parents, and colleagues is necessary for developing and maintaining a community of professionals where teachers feel safe enough to take risks in teaching (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Lasky, 2005; Stieha, 2010; Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012). This trust allows teachers to discuss issues and concerns with each other (Raider-Roth et al., 2008) and lowers the fear of judgment in asking administration or support personal for help when it is needed (Lasky, 2005). Administrators can encourage the development of caring relationships between the teachers and students at the school site by modeling caring relations and respecting their teachers’ efforts to care for their students (Beck, 1994; Deiro, 1996; Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996).

According to Lasky (2005), when that trust is absent, feelings of vulnerability can shut down a teacher’s ability and willingness to adapt their teaching to the needs of the immediate environment. Furthermore, administrators who use their authority to press their teachers into one specific method of engagement with students may dismantle the
ability for teachers to establish caring relations with their students (Noddings, 2003). Within the school environment, the conditions of trustworthiness, empathy, caring, psychological freedom, and emotional safety are necessary for teachers to respond creatively to students in the classroom (Lasky, 2005). Establishing these aspects within the school culture supports the development of teaching with presence, as it gives teachers the freedom and trust necessary to respond to student needs in caring ways. With this understanding of the relational aspects of teaching with presence, research on teacher identity is presented next, as identity represents the teacher’s relationship to him or herself and is another foundational element in teaching with presence.

Identity is Integral to Teaching with Presence

Teachers’ identity influences how they understand and interact with the world around them, both in and out of the classroom. It also affects their ability to understand others’ realities and enter into authentic relationships with others (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Heck and Williams (1984) stated this relationship clearly:

Human beings who lack an awareness of their own personal reality cannot experience the mutual tuning-in relationship, the experience of the ‘we’ that is at the foundation of all possible communication…. Without the ability to enter a mutual tuning-in relationship, the teacher is in some manner incapacitated since teaching is, in so many of its dimensions, a mode of encounter and of communication. (p. 4)

Since teaching is ultimately an act of relation between teacher and students, having a strong sense of personal and professional identity becomes integral to the process (Raider-Roth, 2005; Wilber, 2001). Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) discuss identity in terms of being “present to oneself” and suggest teaching with presence increases our
sense of identity as “students’ responses to us are so often the windows to our own self-knowledge” (p. 271).

According to the constructivist theory of learning, each individual makes meaning and builds their personal identity out of the experiences of their personal lived biographies and interactions with people, things, and ideas (Von Glasersfeld, 1995). Because all of our experiences are different, we have all constructed different perspectives and perceptions of reality. Holland, Lachicotte Jr, Skinner, and Cain (2001) situated personal identity as existing within “figured worlds,” which are representations of real or imaginary sociocultural positionings (p. 49). Given this situatedness, Holland et al. defined identity thusly:

We take identity to be a central means by which selves, and the sets of actions they organize, form and re-form over personal lifetimes and in the histories of social collectivities. Identity is one way of naming the dense interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice. (p. 270)

Holland et al. further posited people have “practiced identities” based on their personal identities that informs how they carry out social interactions and expectations within their self-identified identity framework. These include the actions of thinking, speaking, and gesturing, which place people “in degrees of relation to – affiliation with, opposition to, and distance from – identifiable others’ (p. 271). As an example, a person who identifies within the figured world of academia may spend her days reading and writing books. These behaviors are part of the expectations within that figured world and place the person in affiliation with other academics who also perform those tasks.

Battey and Franke (2008) situated this conceptualization of identity specifically within the world of teaching:
How one thinks of herself is conceived of in relation to a particular context, with a particular history, with others who have ideas about themselves. These histories (and the structures in which they are embedded) contribute to how a teacher comes to make sense of what it means for her or him to be a teacher, what it means to be a “White” or “African-American” teacher, what it means to be a “traditional” or “reform” mathematics teacher, as well as what it means to be a “good” teacher. (p. 128)

In more succinct definitions, Stillwagon (2008) defined teacher identity in relation to curriculum and students: “To be identified as a teacher is to be taken by the latter as a bearer of the former” (p. 67), and Lasky (2005) defined teacher identity as “how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others” (p. 901). While each of these definitions differs, they all include a sense of self-identification as “teacher” in relation to others and imply an understanding of what that role means to the individual. Additionally, in a meta-analysis of research on the development of teachers’ identity, Rodgers and Scott (2008) found teachers’ philosophy is an expression of their identity:

The self is its own system with a clearly defined set of values, a clear philosophy. One is no longer pushed and pulled by the needs, wants, or expectations of others. Rather, the self is able to take a perspective on information, evaluate it, and then decide how to act upon it. Teacher identity at this stage is defined internally; it is no longer subject to the demands/expectations of the cultural surround. (p. 742)

Teacher identity also plays a role in teachers' decision-making processes, especially when there is a conflict between teachers’ identity of self-as-teacher, and an external expectation of what a teacher ‘should’ be (Wilber, 2001). This conflict is often based on differing philosophical frameworks between the teacher and administration, school site, district, or the nation (Nixon, Comber, & Cormack, 2007). For example, a teacher with a social-constructivist philosophy of teaching may find his concept of professional identity challenged when teaching in the classroom of a school with a behavioral philosophy. This creates a conflict between the teacher's professional identity
and the demands of that particular school site, and may lower the teacher's ability to
make decisions he feels are in the best interests of his students. Beijaard, Meijer, and
Verloop (2004) addressed this conflict directly:

What is found relevant to the profession, especially in light of the many education
changes currently taking place, may conflict with what teachers personally desire
and experience as good. Such a conflict can lead to friction in teachers’
professional identity in cases in which the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ are
too far removed from each other. (p. 109)

Teachers in this position are left in limbo wondering how to reconcile the two
ideologies: their own identity and philosophy about teaching, and the current values in
the broader educational system. When this conflict makes teachers feel professionally
unsafe, it lowers their willingness to adapt their curriculum and instructional practices to
meet the needs of their students (Lasky, 2005). This tension can also undermine
teachers’ trust in themselves, which affects the trust between them and their students
(Raider-Roth, 2005; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). This ideological disconnect can lead
to a divided self and compromise a teacher’s ability to be present as the teacher becomes
distanced from her personal sense of identity (Dewey, 1938; Palmer, 1983). Rodgers and
Raider-Roth (2006) discussed this struggle directly:

When there is a lack of continuity between a teacher’s professional life and
personal self such that a teacher refers to herself in opposing terms – ‘me as a
teacher and me as a person’ – The apparent lack of continuity between her worlds
can become worrisome and her ability to be present is compromised. (p. 272)

Uncertainty over their rights, obligations, and responsibilities as teachers, coupled with
ambiguity over the consequences of decisions made in their classroom, compounds this
issue (van den Berg, 2002).
The Influence of Teacher Beliefs

Researchers have also found the beliefs and perceptions teachers hold informs their professional identity and the choices they make in their classrooms (Mansour, 2010; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012; van den Berg, 2002). van den Berg (2002), in a review of research on the existential and phenomenological aspects of teachers’ decision-making processes, found that teachers’ pedagogical decisions were strongly influenced by their beliefs, opinions, and perceptions of teaching regardless of whether or not their they were supported by research. van den Berg (2002) explained this connection:

Every teacher has a set of opinions that may clearly differ from those of his or her colleagues. This set of opinions is part of the teacher's personal subjective educational theory, which is not a collection of scientifically well-founded insights into the pedagogical-didactic process but a collection of general knowledge, insights, and experiences gained from actual practice. (p. 589)

This connection was illustrated through van den Berg’s (2002) research in two examples of how different high-school teachers responded to a school-wide reform initiative focused on teachers guiding students’ learning of the subject knowledge instead of just imparting the subject knowledge to the students:

Maurice, an English teacher, believed teachers should teach subject knowledge directly, and loved delivering formal lessons to students. When the school reform was implemented, he tried to adapt his teaching but found it very unsettling as it did not match his personal expectations of teaching. After a period of time his sense of self-efficacy in teaching diminished, and he considered leaving the teaching profession altogether. (p. 578)

Martin, a physics teacher, believed teachers should help students develop their learning capacity so they can engage in society in individually meaningful ways. He designed every lesson so students spent half the time working collaboratively as he guided their individual learning processes. He did not view the new reform initiative as problematic, but instead embraced it in his teaching as it matched his
These anecdotes illustrate researcher’s findings that a teacher’s personal beliefs, opinions, and sense of individual capacity can affect their willingness to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the environment (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Lasky, 2005; Lipman, 1997), which is at the heart of teaching with presence.

Additionally, these beliefs are informed by teachers’ own past educational experiences through what Lortie (1975) termed the “Apprenticeship of Observation.” Lortie explained this process: “Teaching is unusual in that those who decide to enter it have had exceptional opportunity to observe members of the occupation at work; unlike most occupations today, the activities of teachers are not shielded from youngsters” (p. 65). In effect, these years of schooling have served as a type of apprenticeship for future teachers. Taken together, this research connects teachers’ past experiences as students to their current beliefs and teaching identity and to their decisions made in the classroom.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge as a Precursor for Teaching with Presence**

In order to teach with presence, teachers need to understand their content and pedagogical possibilities thoroughly enough to focus on their students while teaching. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) stated this connection clearly:

Complete mastery of subject matter is, of course, never fully achieved, but a knowledge that is deep enough to free the mind of the teacher from preoccupation with it and that is able to connect students to an appropriate point of entry is a prerequisite for presence. In addition to knowledge of subject matter, presence is predicated on the teacher’s ability to translate the aforementioned points of entry into curriculum, activities and learning environments. (p. 280)
Shulman (1986) combined both of these elements – knowledge of the content of instruction and knowledge of pedagogical practices – into a new theory, which he termed “pedagogical content knowledge” (p. 9). This theoretical framework calls for teachers to master deep knowledge of the content itself and knowledge of the most effective pedagogies to develop and teach the content. In Shulman’s words:

> The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students. (p. 15)

Cochran, King, and DeRuiter (1991) restated the focus of Shulman’s theory succinctly: “It is the integration or the synthesis of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge” (p. 5).

Danielson’s (2007) framework for teacher evaluation incorporated Shulman’s (1987) theoretical framework into her first component of a successful teacher. According to Danielson:

> Teachers must be aware of the connections among different divisions of the discipline (for example, between scientific concepts and inquiry) and among the different disciplines themselves (for example, between the history and the literature of a particular period). The term content includes, of course, far more than factual information. It encompasses all aspects of a subject: concepts, principles, relationships, methods of inquiry, and outstanding issues. (p. 44)

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989) also acknowledged the need for pedagogical content knowledge in their second core proposition: “Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students” (p. 3). In defining what this proposition means, they described Shulman’s (1987) pedagogical content knowledge theory:
Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and of the strategies and instructional materials that can be of assistance. They understand where difficulties are likely to arise and modify their practice accordingly. Their instructional repertoire allows them to create multiple paths to the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989, p. 3)

The inclusion of Shulman’s theory in current teaching standards and teacher evaluation protocols validates the relevance and significance of his work even given the many changes in education since 1989.

A study by Hashweh (1987) found that teachers developed this level of content knowledge only in the specific subjects they taught, as opposed to developing this level of knowledge in all subject matters. Hashweh had three physics teachers and three biology teachers each evaluate a textbook chapter and develop teaching plans from both a biology and a physics textbook. While the teachers showed a deep understanding of their own content area and developed pedagogy to teach students that was appropriate and meaningful to their specific content area, they did not show the same depth of understanding in working with the textbook from the other content area. In other words, the biology teachers had deep knowledge of content and pedagogy in biology, but not in physics and the physics teachers had deep knowledge of content and pedagogy in physics, but not in biology. This shows that teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge specifically in the areas they teach, and this knowledge does not necessarily transfer to other content areas.

This deep pedagogical content knowledge allows the teacher to enter the content from a variety of angles based on the learner’s needs. If teachers do not have this deep
understanding of the content, and pedagogy appropriate to that content, their instructional choices are limited and their ability to respond effectively is curtailed (Harnischfeger & Wiley, 1976). The professional education program teachers attend prior to entering into the field, as well as continuing education and professional development while they are teaching, gives teachers this deep understanding of their content area and pedagogical possibilities.

**Chapter Summary**

This review of research on teacher awareness, reflection-in-action, and teacher decision making gives a situated understanding of each of these aspects of presence in teaching. Teachers become aware of their students’ needs and reactions to instruction through the actions of monitoring and listening to their students, and they are then faced with a decision of how to best respond to those awarenesses. Teachers often make these decisions subconsciously, with reflection-in-action only taking place when the students present novel or unexpected behaviors in class. Furthermore, teachers are faced with hundreds of these decisions every day as they seek to help their students master the concepts being taught, and these decisions have a large impact on teacher’s effectiveness in teaching.

Additionally, a review of the research on relationships, teacher identity, and the importance of pedagogical content knowledge gives a situated understanding of these foundational elements of presence in teaching. Developing trusting relationships with students fosters student engagement with the concepts and more willingness to take risks in their learning. This allows for the students and teacher to make meaning together as they are aware of and responsive to each other’s actions. It also creates opportunities for
teachers to show compassion towards their students and strengthen the relationship. Furthermore, it is essential to have trusting relationships between teachers and colleagues, administrators, and parents so teachers are willing to take risks in teaching to meet their students’ needs. Teachers’ identity, philosophy, and beliefs inform the decisions teachers make in their classrooms as they become a lens through which the teacher develops relationships with students, observes them, and interprets their actions. Teachers also need deep pedagogical content knowledge in order to make informed instructional decisions. With this understanding of how each aspect of presence in teaching is situated within the research community, the methods for this study are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a more complete understanding of how teachers experience awareness in their teaching, and the connection between becoming aware of a classroom dynamic or student need, reflecting on that awareness, and deciding what action, if any, to take to address the issue. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?
2. How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?
   a. How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment?
   b. How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something?
   c. Do they always take action? Why or why not?
3. What does teaching with presence look like in practice?

Research Design

This qualitative study is grounded in the constructivist understanding that people construct their own reality based on their lived experiences, both past and present (Von
Glasersfeld, 1995). A phenomenological lens was used to explore those lived experiences. This lens was chosen because phenomenology is a “ministering of thoughtfulness” about some aspect of the lived experiences of human beings in an attempt to uncover and describe the patterns, structures, and meanings of those lived experiences “to a certain degree of depth and richness” (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 11-12).

According to Van Manen (1990):

> Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, “What is this or that kind of experience like?” It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it. (p. 9)

As a phenomenological study, the data was entered into with no expectation for specific content analysis, or a priori codes. Instead, the codes for analysis came from the data itself. This kept the analysis “discovery oriented” in order to find out how the phenomena being studied was experienced (Van Manen, 1990, p. 29). This lens allowed me to explore how the participants experienced the phenomenon of becoming aware in their teaching, to discover patterns in their perceptions of awareness, and to identify the connections between awareness and decisions they made in the moment of instruction.

The specific research design, described in the sections below, was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Boise State University before participants were recruited and data collection began. Additionally, all names used are pseudonyms.

**Participants**

I conducted this study with three elementary school teachers who all had at least 7 years teaching experience. This time frame of 7 years past experience was chosen based
on research into the professional life phases teachers go through, which found that years 0-7 are spent building commitment, identity, and efficacy in teaching, and the remaining years teaching are built on that foundation of understanding (Day, 2012). Since this study sought to understand how teachers experience awareness, richer data was gathered by working with teachers who were already established in the profession and had developed an understanding of teaching. This represented purposive sampling with no sampling selection based on gender, age, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or health status, and no attempt to randomize the results. The sample size of three allowed me to explore how each individual participant experienced presence in their teaching, and to explore similarities and dissimilarities across multiple cases. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) acknowledged that three case studies is an appropriate number for phenomenological research studies as it “provides sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants, but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated” (p. 51).

The participants were all from one elementary school in a rural area of a Northwestern state. This meant they were all working within the same set of adopted initiatives, school philosophy, and administrative and support personnel. Keeping all the participants in the same school site allowed me to focus on their experiences with awareness and decision making during instruction without the influence of different school philosophies, adopted initiatives, and personnel issues on their in-the-moment decisions. An email invitation was sent to all the teachers at the elementary school site with at least 7 years teaching experience, and Pam, Julie, and Tamara chose to participate in this study. Their backgrounds and classroom contexts are described below.
Pam

Pam has been a teacher for 18 years. She originally entered teaching because she wanted a schedule that matched her husband's, who was also a teacher. Her first four years she taught 2nd and 4th grade. Then, when her son was born with hearing difficulties, she switched to kindergarten because it was a half-day program, which gave her more time with her son. After teaching two years in kindergarten, she switched to teaching all K-5 grades together in an online public school environment for 11 years. This gave her a more flexible schedule that allowed her to meet the needs of her son. After this time, she switched back to a traditional brick-and-mortar school this year where she was teaching kindergarten again. Of all the different grades she had taught, Pam said she loved kindergarten the most because of the hands-on nature of instruction and her joy in working with students at that grade level. Pam described her early years teaching kindergarten and how she felt this year:

I loved it mostly because I could see learning happening every single moment. And in the older grades it was kind of like, you know, we're teaching new material, but they already knew how to read... it wasn't like I was teaching them brand new skills that they needed to have for the rest of their life. So in kindergarten, I loved it. I still love that. (first interview)

While Pam loved teaching kindergarten, she found the teaching schedule and work load more demanding than she expected, and experienced frustration over the amount of physical preparation and meetings required in teaching. Other than this frustration though, Pam expressed great joy in teaching and working with the students daily.

Pam felt her role as a teacher was to deliver new information to her students and facilitate them in mastering the information. Classroom management was also key to Pam’s teaching as she felt it established routines and created an environment with few
distractions so the students could learn. She felt this focus on classroom management was specifically important to the kindergarten grade, as it laid the foundation for her students’ future years in schooling.

Pam’s classroom was very full, with each wall filled with posters like the ABCs, a word wall, students’ collage work, daily activities for carpet time, a number line, phonics cards, and rules for the classroom and using the iPads (first observation). She used bookshelves to section parts of the room into a storage area for her students’ belongings and a work area for her desk and teacher supplies. The students sat at small trapezoid shaped desks with two students to a desk. These were arranged around the room with a central area left free for carpet time. A kidney-shaped table was also in the room for small group work. Around the edges of the classroom were a variety of rolling carts and hanging pocket charts with a variety of activities on them. She regularly used all the parts of her classroom to teach her students: she conducted whole-class discussions and teaching on the carpet, had students do individual work at their desks, and worked with small groups of students at the small table.

As a student herself, Pam found elementary school difficult but enjoyed the social aspects. She was held back in first grade because she struggled with reading, but this didn’t upset her. She felt that she would have had a more emotional struggle had she been held back in a higher grade. In high school she focused more on athletics with less effort put into her studies. She had to work hard to maintain her academic standing so she could do sports, and felt she needed to move straight into college after high school or life might distract her from returning to her studies.
Julie

Julie had been a teacher for 12 years. Her first 5 years were spent teaching in another state, and the last 7 have been in her current state. Her first year teaching was very frustrating. She had a student who was undiagnosed bipolar and she had no training to deal with his needs. Her principal called her the wrong name for the whole first year and she felt completely out of place. When she asked for help from her team or the principal, neither would help her. Her struggles that year took up all her time and mental energy so it was difficult to focus on teaching content to the class. Later in her first year a colleague finally offered to help her in an informal mentor role, which finally allowed her to breathe. She decided to give teaching another year because of the mentor’s help and the time and energy she had put into her education. Her second year was better as she was able to connect with the students. In her words,

My second year was a little bit better. I didn't feel like I was drowning under water anymore, I was just right at water. And then I was thinking - why am I doing this? And then you have that kid... that just... makes the difference. You know? There’s the one kid that smiles at you or gives you a hug or tells you a nice comment. It’s like… [snapped her fingers] there it is! That's why I'm here. (first interview)

After her fourth year, she felt secure as a teacher and decided to go back for her master’s degree in special education. At this point, she moved to her current state and began teaching 5th grade. She struggled with a contentious teaching team that required arbitration to resolve disputes between them. After a year of that struggle, she was asked to stay and switch to 3rd grade. She considered this for a while and decided to accept the offer as she had so much time and money invested in teaching at that point. Plus she recognized she loved the act of teaching and the relationships with the students. Since
then she has taught third grade and enjoyed the students, content, and working relationships with her team. She also completed her master’s degree in education. While her master’s degree helped her understand how to work with students with special needs, from that point forward each principal gave her many of the special needs students in the grade level she was teaching each year.

Julie felt that her first role as a teacher was to make sure her students’ basic needs of food and safety were met. Beyond those needs, she felt it is essential to build relationships with her students in the beginning of the year before trying to teach any content to them. She felt teaching “is not just ‘I’m here to teach you!’” but also to build a genuine rapport with the students (first interview).

In Julie’s classroom, individual student desks were pushed into groups of 6, and each group had a basket close by with reading books and art supplies in them. A large classroom library filled one wall with a basket of stuffed animals next to it for students to read with. Her walls were filled with the alphabet and phonics cards, notes the class had written titled “Friendship,” vocabulary words, objectives for the day, and personal pictures. Julie’s desk was in the back corner of the classroom, and there was room at the front and side of the classroom for the students to sit on the carpet for instruction. There was also a small table in the back of the room for working with small groups. Julie used the different parts of her classroom often, including having students spread out throughout the room on the floor for partner work. She also changed the arrangement of the desks and the seating chart every few weeks to give students opportunities to work with different people in class.
In her own experiences as a student, Julie struggled socially and with reading comprehension in elementary school. With her teachers’ help, she not only mastered the skills necessary to comprehend, but learned study skills that made her high school years much easier, much to the frustration of her friends who had to work harder at that point. In second grade, she had one teacher who noticed she was having personal problems at home that were affecting her schoolwork, and took extra time and energy to get her the help she needed. Julie stated, “She kind of was the mother that wasn’t there” during that period of time (first interview). This made an impression on Julie and led to her eventual decision to become a teacher herself. In reflecting on this, Julie stated, “It was that one teacher that stood out for me. And I was like, ‘Oh! I wanna do that for these other kids when I grow up’” (focus group).

Tamara

Tamara had been a teacher for 16 years, all at the same school site. She began by teaching 1st grade for 5 years, and then worked as a Title 1 coach with all the grade levels for a year. After that she spent a year teaching 2nd grade, and has been teaching 4th grade ever since. She enjoyed her time in 1st grade and fell in love with the students, but found teaching at that grade level physically exhausting. While she switched positions due to changes in the school’s needs, she appreciated moving from 1st grade as she had more children of her own and found it difficult to keep up the required energy level for 1st grade. Her first few years were spent teaching before the standards movement in education and she appreciated having the freedom to design her own curriculum and instruction. This year she experienced frustration as she felt her curricular and
instructional choices were dampened by the adaption of new curriculum and standards by the school district.

She felt her role as a teacher was to teach the content and help her students develop life skills that would help them in future grades and opportunities. These included specifically how to deal with stress and anger in positive ways. She valued communication between her and her students, and saw each student as an individual person with individual strengths and challenges that needed to be met. She viewed herself as an ‘emotional’ teacher who liked to have fun with her students and acknowledged the role emotions play in her classroom. In her words, “I just - I love kids. I'm in it for teaching kids” (first interview).

In Tamara’s classroom, the student’s individual desks were arranged in groups of four to six. She had a large class of 28 and the amount of desks left little open space in the classroom. She did maintain a section of carpet near the front of the classroom where the students would come for whole-group instruction. She would often use this space to introduce a new concept, then release the students who felt they understood back to their desks, and allow other student to choose to stay on the carpet for more help. There was a small table in the back of the room also which was used for small-group work and assessment. Her walls had a variety of items on them, including: the alphabet, phonics elements, objectives and schedules, a student made poster that said, “You rock because__” where a student could write in an answer, and a poster by the back door that read, “What stuck with you today?” At the back of the classroom was a large map the students had drawn, and a sign that read, “Mistakes are OK.” She regularly referred to the sign when teaching to encourage her students to try their best.
Tamara struggled as a student herself in the upper-elementary grades and was afraid to speak up. In her words, “I was very scared… very worried that people were going to think I was dumb, very afraid to answer questions, afraid to speak up and tell what I thought” (second interview). She decided to go into teaching because her mother was a teacher and she had been involved in helping her mother for years. She also wanted to help other students not feel as she did during those tough years in elementary school.

Setting

The study took place in a rural elementary school in a Northwestern state. The school served 686 students and had 30 full time teachers, making the student to teacher ratio 23:1. The student body was 56.7% Caucasian, 39.1% Hispanic, 0.6% Asian, 1.2% Native American, and 2% mixed race. Additionally, 79% of the student body was eligible for free or reduced lunches. All of the teachers were credentialed in the field they were teaching, and 10 of the teachers held a master’s degree or higher.

The administration at this site had been in place for two years and they supported the teachers in adjusting the adopted curriculums to meet the needs of their classes. The teachers had worked together over the previous summer to develop their own math curriculum to the state standards, and the school used the Open Court curriculum for their English Language Arts instruction. The participants expressed their appreciation for the support from the current administration in planning instruction to meet the unique needs of each class, especially as the previous administration was more focused on fidelity to the specific adopted curriculums at that time.
The administration and teachers had adopted a school-wide philosophy called Tribes Learning Communities. Within this program, each classroom was its own tribe and the school collectively sought to model safe, positive communities through a focus on attentive listening, mutual respect and appreciation, and the right to pass in class discussions. This philosophy also fostered collaboration through having students work together on tasks to meet specific goals, monitoring and assessing each other’s progress, and celebrating the achievements of all students. This school-wide philosophy informed the interaction styles and classroom rules in each participants’ classroom, as they sought to reflect these values.

**Procedure and Data Collection**

The data for this study came from four different data sources: three interviews with each participant, four observations of each participant’s teaching, two personal journal entries from each participant, and one focus group conducted with all the participants. The observations were conducted in each teacher’s classroom. The teachers and I worked together to choose days that were free from distractions due to testing, field trips, or other non-routine teaching activities. I also held the interviews and focus group in the teachers’ classrooms after regular school hours. The participants wrote the personal journal entries in a setting of their choice. These will each be discussed in detail below. Data collection took place along the following time line:

- The initial interview was in September.
- The observations were conducted over the next 7 weeks, running from late September through November. They were spread out throughout that time with approximately one and a half weeks between each observation.
• Also during these 7 weeks, the participants each wrote two journal entries, which were collected during the observations.

• The second interview was conducted in November after the observations were concluded and the personal journals had been turned in.

• The focus group took place in December.

• The final member-check interviews were held in February, after the initial data analysis was completed.

Interviews

I conducted a series of three semi-structured interviews with each participant, with a specific focus for each interview. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date for reference. During the first interview, I focused on building a relationship with the participants and getting to know each participants’ personal background, teaching philosophy, and experiences with teaching. I also introduced the topic of this research project and explained the data gathering process and personal journals I asked them to write. This interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes with each participant. See Appendix A for the first interview protocol.

The second interview took place after the observations were conducted, and after the personal journals had been written. Information from those data sources informed the questions in this interview, creating a unique interview for each participant. These interviews were focused on discussing the participants’ experiences with becoming aware in their teaching and how it affects their instructional decisions, reflecting on their personal journal entries, and discussing the observations I had conducted. Each interview
lasted approximately 60 minutes. See Appendices B, C, and D for the second interview protocols.

The third interview took place three months later, after the initial analysis had been completed. In this final interview, I shared the preliminary conclusions and invited the participants’ comments and feedback as a form of member checking (Guba, 1981). I also asked additional questions to fill in gaps in the data and clarify the participants’ statements in the focus group. This created a unique interview for each participant again, as I asked different clarifying questions based on each participants comments thus far. These interviews lasted for approximately 40 minutes each. See Appendices E, F, and G for the final interview protocols.

Observations

I conducted a series of four classroom observations with each participant where I observed the class for approximately 80 minutes each time to document interactions between the teacher and students in field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). These observations were completed around the participants’ schedules, with no specific order or pattern to the observations. However, they were scheduled at different times of the day. I broke the school day up into three time sections – from the beginning of school until morning recess, from morning recess until lunch, and from lunch until school was out – and observations were spread throughout these time sections to make sure data was gathered from different times of the day.

During these observations, I sat in the back of the classroom and typed my notes to capture the momentary happenings during the class, while maintaining my gaze and attention on the classroom and participant. At the end of each observation, I reviewed
my notes and added details to provide a thorough description of what was observed. The first observation was focused on describing the classroom setting and documenting general patterns of teacher-student interaction. Further observations were focused on identifying and documenting specific instances where the teacher made in-the-moment decisions during instruction or individual student work time.

In order to identify such decisions, I focused on teacher actions that could not have been decided before teaching the lesson, and teacher comments during instruction that referenced a change in their plans. This included teacher actions such as calling on students during whole-group instruction, adjusting an assignment or activity as students were working on it, and talking with students individually during both whole-group instruction and individual work time. All of the decisions were observable teacher actions, and they all had an observable precursor, such as a specific student behavior or the participant looking at a group of students. When a decision was noted, I recorded the initial student behavior that led to the teacher’s actions and related student responses. When I was unclear as to whether a decision was preplanned or in-the-moment, I asked the participant about the decision after the observation. If I could not clarify whether or not a decision was made in-the-moment with the participant, I noted the confusion in my field notes and did not include that decision in the later analysis. I also documented the participant’s instruction to the students, movements around the classroom, and student groupings, behaviors and responses to instruction during these observations to gather a “thick description” of the classroom environment and interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).
Additionally, I documented the participants’ observations of their students’ work and behaviors. I identified these moments by noting times the participants were physically looking at a student or group of students. To determine the focus of the participants’ gaze, I watched the teacher behaviors as they were observing the students and immediately after observing the students. For example, I recorded Julie looking over a student’s shoulders at the work on his desks, which illustrated her focus on that student’s schoolwork. During another observation, I recorded Pam looking at a group of students then calling out a comment on their behavior, which illustrated her focus on that group of students’ behavior. In this manner, I could tell what their observational focus was. When there was no clear focus on either student work or behavior, I either asked the participant about that moment after the observation was completed, or I did not include it in the analysis of participants’ observations of students.

As I moved through the series of observations with each participant, my understanding of their teaching patterns and interaction style with students led me to recognize more in-the-moment decisions with each successive observation. Thus, my observation notes became richer and thicker as the observations progressed. The number of participant in-the-moment decisions recorded in each observation is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1st Observation</th>
<th>2nd Observation</th>
<th>3rd Observation</th>
<th>4th Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, I held a short 5-10 minute debriefing session with the participants after each observation. These debriefings allowed me to ask any questions I had to clarify my field notes on the observations. These observations and descriptions informed the questions in the second interview discussed above.

**Journals**

Each participant wrote two journal entries where they reflected on how they experienced awareness during instruction, and how their awareness informed their in-the-moment decisions. The journals allowed the participants to reflect on their experiences without my influence or the time constraints of an interview, which gave them more time and opportunity for reflection. I emailed a unique prompt for each journal entry to the participants, and they emailed their responses back to me. The first prompt was very open and allowed the participants to reflect on becoming aware during instruction, how they felt their awareness had changed over time, or any other thought related to this research project. In response, all of the participants shared a recent experience where they became aware of a student need during instruction and recounted their response to the student. To reach a deeper level of reflection, the second prompt was directly focused on the thought processes the participants’ used in deciding how to respond to an identified student need. The journal entries informed the questions in the second interview discussed above. See Appendix H for the journal prompts.

**Focus Group**

I held a focus group after the second interviews and observations were complete where the participants responded to a common set of ideas raised during the observations
and interviews, and explored how their experiences related to specific aspects of the theory of presence in teaching. This allowed the participants to share their experiences with each other and discuss what was similar and dissimilar to each of them and their grade level as we explored the phenomenon of being aware during instruction. See Appendix I for the focus group protocol.

Data Analysis

The framework of phenomenology guided the analysis, as the goal of this study was to explore how elementary school teachers experienced the phenomenon of becoming aware of student needs during instruction, and how that awareness informed their in-the-moment decisions. With this goal in mind, I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the data (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is not a fixed method, but a process that can be adjusted to meet the needs of a specific research question and context. It is concerned with the human predicament and is used in studies focusing on how humans engage with the world in a specific context. This method of analysis consisted of a series of steps to explore the participants’ lived experiences in depth and facilitate identification of patterns and connections within each participant’s data set and across all the participants’ data sets.

Data analysis began after the first interview and continued throughout the interview and observation process, with the analysis informing further interview questions in the second and third interviews. In this manner, each data point with the participants built off the previous data and moved the analysis and understanding of the phenomena of presence forward, representing an iterative cycle of analysis. The following steps constitute the data analysis that I conducted in this study.
Initial Reading and Coding

The first step in the analysis was to read the data multiple times. I completed this step as I transcribed the audio recordings and then re-read the transcriptions to check for accuracy. Once I was familiar with the data through these multiple readings, I began a layered process of coding. I initially coded the data line-by-line to identify provisional feelings, actions, responses, and themes in the data (Smith et al., 2009). Coding in this manner allowed me to look at the data critically and analytically without getting caught up in the entire narrative or imposing my own biases into the data. This was an appropriate first step for this research project as line-by-line coding works well with detailed narratives and observations of people, actions, and settings (Smith et al., 2009). These initial codes were guided by the data itself, instead of being guided by the research questions. The intent was to discover possible leads and connections to pursue in the next step of the coding process. Constant comparative methods were used as I continually compared statements and incidents within a single participant’s data set and between all the participants’ data sets (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During this comparing process, I looked for patterns, similarities, and dissimilarities both within and across cases. Coding in this manner met the criteria of “objectivity” in phenomenological analysis as the codes were constructed out of the lived experiences of the participants, keeping the codes “true to the object (Van Manen, 1990, p. 20). I used the NVivo software program for this coding, with a new non-hierarchal code created for each new piece of data that represented the idea or action presented in the data. This resulted in a total of 294 codes in the first step of analysis. This first step of analysis
began in September after the first interviews and continued through December, when data collection was completed.

Secondary Coding

Once the first layer of coding was completed, I began the second layer of coding. I reviewed the 294 detailed codes already created and sorted and categorized them into broader themed groups that each subsumed the specific detailed codes with material that related to the broader theme (Saldana, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). I used concepts from the theoretical framework—awareness, reflection, in-the-moment decisions, teacher identity, relationships, and pedagogical content knowledge—and emergent themes from the data itself to identify the broad themes. Each of these broader themes became a new superordinate code that incorporated the related subordinate detailed codes. This process continued until the original 294 detailed codes were all subsumed into a new final set of 16 superordinate codes. See Appendix J for the list of final superordinate codes. These superordinate codes were then related back to the research questions themselves to identify emergent ideas within each code and how the ideas connected to each other and the research questions. See Appendix K for the list of superordinate codes in relation to the research questions. I also completed this second layer of coding using the NVivo software for data analysis to support analysis of the data by specific code, and to explore relationships between codes. This focused analysis took place from December through February.

There were two points in this analysis process where I used a subset of the data to explore a specific question. The first moment was to explore the types of student needs each participant became aware of. The data for this analysis was taken from the
interviews, journal entries, and focus group only. Observational data was not included here, as I could not determine what type of awareness a participant experienced in my role as an observer. I could only note an observation through a participant’s action. Therefore, this data reflects the participants’ reflections on becoming aware of student needs and their descriptions of experiences where they became aware of students’ needs during instruction. The second moment was to address the question of what teaching with presence looked like to an observer. I only used data from the observations to explore this research question, as this data documented observable teacher actions during instruction. This allowed me to explore the different types of teacher in-the-moment decisions recorded to identify patterns and connections that related to observing teaching with presence.

This analysis was not a linear process and recognitions throughout the coding process prompted me to return to previous data sets to re-analyze them given the new recognitions. As stated above, using a constantly comparative method allowed me to identify and continually refine and develop the focused codes as I compared my initial coding both within and across data sets. As I analyzed the data in each superordinate code both on a within and across case basis, and related it to the research questions, I formed preliminary findings on how each participant experienced becoming aware of student needs, how those awarenesses informed their in-the-moment decisions, and issues in observing this process. These preliminary findings were then presented to the participants during the final interview for their comment and feedback as a form of member-checking (Guba, 1981).
Throughout this layered coding process, I created research memos to capture my thoughts, define codes and categories, explore connections and relationships, and identify gaps in the data sets. These consisted of descriptive memos to summarize each interview and observation, and analytic memos to document the development of codes and their application to the data sets in analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2013). Each memo was given a specific name that represented the code, connection, or category it related to.

**Forming Final Conclusions**

The analysis was completed to this level before I scheduled the third interview with participants. During the third interview, I shared the preliminary conclusions with each participant and invited their comments and feedback. This gave the participants the opportunity to reflect and comment on the conclusions as a form of member checking (Guba, 1981). Additional questions were also asked to fill in gaps in the data and clarify statements made in the focus group.

After the third interview, I coded the new data line-by-line and compared it to the existing categories of superordinate codes already established in the analysis. Any adjustments or alterations to the codes and preliminary conclusions were made, with analytic memos written to document the logical analysis and application of codes. At the completion of this process, a coherent picture emerged of how the participants’ experienced the phenomenon of becoming aware of student needs during instruction, connections between that awareness and their in-the-moment decisions, and how this process could be perceived by an observer.
Rationale for Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was appropriate for this study as IPA is idiographic through its focus on specific experiences of specific individuals in an attempt to “reveal something of the experience of each of those individuals” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). The steps outlined above allowed the analysis to come from the data directly, as opposed to imposing predefined or abstract categories on the data. Thus, I was able to document in detail the multitude of ways the participants’ experienced awareness during instruction through the initial line-by-line coding, and then collapse those details into larger themes that emerged from the data itself and were related to the research questions. With these themes, I explored the connection between the participants’ awareness during instruction and their decisions made in the moment of teaching, which allowed me to describe the phenomenon of teaching with presence and address my research questions directly.

Role of the Researcher

As the primary investigator in this study, I was the main research instrument, as most of the data was collected through interviews and observations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I worked to maintain my orientation on the object of my inquiry through using analysis methods that kept me focused on the particular details in the data to remain true to the data and not become distracted by outside forces or personal biases. This meets the research standard of objectivity within phenomenological studies (Van Manen, 1990). Additionally, I sought to represent the data in a “perceptive, insightful, and discerning” way, which acknowledges the subjectivity of phenomenological studies (Van Manen, 1990, p. 20). Together, this means I sought to represent the detailed experiences of the
participants in an insightful and discerning way, while acknowledging the unique, personal lens my own experiences brought and endeavoring to keep my presuppositions and biases separate from the data.

**Reflexivity**

To maintain my focus on how the participants experienced awareness during instruction, I maintained a reflexivity journal where I bracketed my personal views and biases as I read and analyzed the data (Kleinsasser, 2000). This helped me acknowledge my own feelings and reactions as I conducted this study, while keeping them separate from the data and analysis to lessen the subjectivity inherent in phenomenological research (Husserl, 2010).

**Trustworthiness and Warrantability**

To establish trustworthiness, I verified my conclusions by checking for confirming and disconfirming evidence throughout the entire data set, and through inviting the participants’ comments and feedback on the preliminary conclusions during the third interview as a member check, which builds trustworthiness specifically within phenomenological studies (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Guba, 1981; Van Manen, 1990). I also established trustworthiness through having another educator with a doctorate degree and experience in phenomenological research code three data points using the parent codes identified in the analysis mentioned above. The three data points included a representation from three types of data: an interview transcript, a journal entry, and an observation transcript. An inter-rater reliability of 93% illustrated objectivity as a measure of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
I established warrantability through following the thorough method of analysis outlined above and documenting my analysis at each step with descriptive and analytic research memos (Denzin, 2009). I also maintained a reflexivity journal where I bracketed my personal thoughts, preconceptions, and biases to establish transparency (Kleinsasser, 2000). Additionally, I used multiple forms of data, multiple participants, and multiple interviews with each participant to establish warrantability (Mathison, 1988).

**Conclusion**

The phenomenological research study described here was designed to explore how the participants experienced becoming aware of student issues during instruction, and how that awareness informed their in-the-moment decisions. The multiple interviews, observations, journal entries, and focus group allowed me to capture the participants’ experiences with awareness during instruction and their reflections on how these experiences informed their decisions. The process of layered coding, analyzing, and memoing allowed me to then explore the data sources to identify themes and connections both within and across cases in relation to my research questions. Through this process I was able to develop a coherent picture of how the participants experienced awareness during instruction and how that awareness informed their decisions made during that same instruction.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

After the thorough process of analysis described in Chapter 3, a coherent picture of the phenomenon of becoming aware of student needs during instruction, and connections between that awareness and teacher in-the-moment decisions, emerged. These findings were then related back to the research questions and organized into the following categories: deciding how to respond and prioritizing responses; seeking to increase awareness; and experiencing awareness. Each category, and its related findings, are discussed in the sections that follow.

Deciding How to Respond and Prioritizing Responses

Analysis of the data presented findings that illuminated the connection between the participants’ awareness of student needs and their in-the-moment decisions of how to respond to those needs. The participants experienced awareness of student needs in four different layers, and used information from each of these layers to inform their in-the-moment decisions as they responded to students during instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge specific to the lesson being taught was also used to make these decisions, and the school culture supported their decision making. While the participants’ most common decision was to talk to the students, there was wide variety in the types of responses documented during the observations overall. The participants also considered information from the different layers of awareness to inform their decisions of which student needs to address first during instruction. Sometimes their choice was not to
respond at that moment, but this decision did not present an observable teacher action.

Each of these findings is discussed in the sections below.

Layers of Awareness

While the theory of Presence in Teaching includes teachers’ awareness of students’ mental, emotional, and physical needs (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006), early analysis illustrated the participants were aware of their students’ needs in multiple layers. Being aware of how a particular student was doing in a particular teaching moment was the first, innermost layer of awareness. The participants were also aware of their students’ general behaviors, mannerisms, communication styles, and ability level in each specific content area in class. This represented the second layer of awareness outside of what was happening in the moment of instruction. Beyond this was a third layer of awareness that included any physical, medical, or family issues the student was dealing with. The fourth layer of awareness included knowing any cultural or community-wide issues that could affect how the students responded to instruction in the classroom. A model of these different layers of awareness is illustrated in Figure 2.
When this model was presented to the participants in the focus group, they all acknowledged they had an awareness of their student issues in each layer, and these different understandings of the students helped them decide how to interact with the students. These connections between the layers of awareness and the participants’ in-the-moment decisions are explained in the sections that follow.

**Awarenesses Informed Decisions of How to Respond**

All of the layers of awareness influenced the decisions the participants made during instruction. The participant’s used the first layer of awareness as they recognized a specific need with either an individual student or a group of students during instruction. As they made those in-the-moment decisions of how to respond, the participants also often considered their understanding of their students in the second layer of awareness: the students’ general mannerisms, communication styles, educational background, and cognitive abilities in class. As an example, I observed Julie calling on a student who was sitting very quietly and observantly to answer a vocabulary question during a math lesson.
(second observation). When asked about this decision after the observation, Julie stated that student was not a native English speaker and she knew he struggled to understand the vocabulary in math. Therefore, her decision to call on him was directly related to her knowledge of his general cognitive strengths and struggles, which are represented in the second layer of awareness.

Also within this second layer of awareness, all the participants used their knowledge of students’ general cognitive ability level to adjust the decisions made during instruction and individual work. Julie stated this connection directly: “These are truly ever-changing decisions of what is best for the student based off of their basic needs, ability level, and type of instruction” (second journal entry). Pam used information in this second layer of awareness to adjust her instruction in one observation when she recognized her students knew more geometric shapes than she expected, so she included more shapes in the lesson (fourth observation). This was also confirmed through multiple observations when Julie and Pam spontaneously grouped students together by ability level during a lesson so the students could help each other with the classwork (Julie, second, third and fourth observation; Tamara, second and third observation). The participants also used information within this second layer of awareness to inform their in-the-moment decisions in response to whole group dynamics during instruction. Tamara illustrated how her understanding of the collective styles and issues in her class informs her decisions when she stated:

Every class is different, so with this class I notice they get very wiggly and start talking to each other while I am talking or someone else is talking. If a lesson is going poorly and the students are not engaged whatsoever and are getting bored or I am seeing an increase in behaviors I will usually try to figure out a way to turn the lesson into something active. (first journal entry)
The third layer of awareness—students’ physical, medical and family issues—was also considered in making in-the-moment decisions. Julie used her knowledge of a student’s medication needs and normed patterns of behavior in her decision to ask a student who was upsetting other students around him if he had taken his medication that morning (second interview). She confirmed after the observation that she knew he does not always receive his medication in the mornings, and she used that information to decide not to respond to the behavior, but instead to ask about the medication. Julie’s knowledge of her student’s medical issue resides within the third layer of awareness.

Tamara also used knowledge in this layer to respond to a student who created a disruption in her class. She had a student who suffered from absence seizures that caused her to occasionally fall asleep and awaken with a startle during class. This created a very large commotion one day when that student awoke screaming because her leg had fallen asleep. Instead of responding to the behavior, Tamara responded based on her knowledge of this students’ medical condition and spoke softly to her while giving her a hug to help her calm down (focus group). Tamara described this moment: “If I just kind of stand there, put my arm around her and hold onto her, I can get the rest of the kids settled down and get back to what they need to do, then focus on her” (focus group).

Tamara’s knowledge in the third layer of awareness gave her the information she needed to respond with compassion in the moment. Julie also tapped into this layer of understanding in her work with students in special education who spent part of their days in her classroom. In Julie’s words, “If they’re [students from the special education program] in here just for social reasons, I’m not going to try and make them read a third grade passage if they’re here to learn social skills” (second interview). Pam
acknowledged tempering her application of her behavior management system based on her understanding of her students’ social development overall: “Some kids… they socially are just not quite mature enough to hold them accountable for every piece of expected behavior. And so you give them a few extra chances” (final interview). This also represents using information from the third layer of awareness to inform her in-the-moment decisions.

Having knowledge of the students in the fourth layer of awareness, community needs and issues, didn’t play as direct a role in the participants’ in-the-moment decisions as the other layers of awareness did. However, all the participants acknowledged that their students came from a low socio-economic community where families often struggled to provide the basics of good food and warm clothes to their children. This understanding had a large influence on Julie specifically as her philosophy of teaching included a focus directly on meeting the students’ “basic needs” before trying to teach them because she recognized many students in the community struggled to have their basic needs of food and warm clothing met (first interview). This focus affected her decisions regularly as she often chose to give a student food or send them to the cafeteria during class time for a late breakfast if a student came to school hungry. Both Pam and Tamara also acknowledged this understanding of the community they worked in, but it did not affect their in-the-moment decisions as directly as the other layers of awareness. Pam summed up the connection between these outer layers of awareness and in-the-moment decisions clearly:

I think knowing those details are helpful because you – it’s not that you treat them [the students] differently but… you do. You pick and choose where you’re going to call certain kids on the carpet, where you’re going to let a little bit go. You have to understand what they’ve been going through. (focus group)
Balancing Responses to Students

As the participants decided how to respond using their different layers of awareness, they each struggled to balance their responses in regards to different aspects of teaching. In kindergarten, Pam was very conscious to not establish precedents that would break down her classroom management. In her words:

There’s a fine line because you don’t want to just give in to that one all the time just because there’s an issue at home. Cause then the other kids will just take advantage of that and they’ll wonder how come he got away with that and they didn’t? (focus group)

Pam also focused on balancing her response to students generally to maintain order in the classroom while still showing compassion to her students:

If you see a kid that’s crying in the morning, you need to pay attention to that, but you also don’t want it to be where you overly talk about it and then they cry every day. So there’s a fine line of – you need to be nice and make them feel welcome and safe, but then also be sure that you set the standards that you can’t cry every day when you come to school. (focus group)

Tamara, in fourth grade, was very aware that her students would soon be leaving the supportive environment of elementary school. This made her more focused on balancing helping her students with giving them the skills they would need to help themselves in future grades. She explained this tension in the focus group:

You want to be loving and kind and considerate, but you also have to get them prepared for 5th and 6th grade where they aren’t going to get that nurturing that they get in elementary school as much. So yeah, I would agree that it’s a fine line in how you treat each individual.

The participants also found it difficult to balance the needs of individual students with the needs of the class as a whole. Julie, in third grade, struggled to not give too much time and attention to one student at the expense of the others. This was a specific
struggle for her because of the inclusion of children with special needs into her classroom. She spoke directly about this during the focus group and referenced Pam’s story of not responding to a student who was repeatedly calling Pam’s name:

If you have a child with a severe need that’s a social or emotional kind of thing, they’re not going to learn anything while the rest of the kids do. So is it effective? For some. Not for everybody. But then, when you [Pam] were trying to shape the child’s behavior by not responding to him calling your name over and over again, is that effective? Well for him, but not for everybody else. So you really pick and choose your battles.

In addition, awareness of how individual students were doing during individual work time occasionally informed the participants’ decisions of how to respond. For example, Pam and Julie were observed calling out a re-direction to the whole class during quiet work time after observing multiple students having a similar issue with the assignment. Julie shared an example of this during our final interview:

That actually kind of happened today. I was walking around, it was a math quiz, and it’s a concept quiz and one of the questions had a section about fractions and we’re just starting to learn fractions. The question says, “What part is not shaded?” and none of - I looked at maybe 5 kids papers - all of them did the part that was shaded so I called out to the class, "I can't help you but I can tell you go back and read it again!" So I'm addressing everybody even though I haven't checked everybody.

These examples highlight the complexities in choosing how to respond and emphasize the need for awareness of students’ needs in the multiple layers to negotiate these issues in the classroom.

**Role of Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Making Decisions**

Analysis of the data revealed that the participants based their in-the-moment decisions on knowledge they had gained in their past teaching experiences, past
conversations they had during collaboration with other teachers, professional development classes they had taken, and past learning from continuing education beyond their initial teacher preparation program. Pam referred to knowledge gained from being a “seasoned teacher” (second interview) and Julie stated: “It’s just experience. Over time – you’ve tried this and this doesn’t work. After doing this for so many years that’s just the method that I’ve found works best, that I’ve seen the most success out of” (second interview). Tamara referred directly to her past learning in professional development as her “toolkit” of possibilities and spoke of this many times in her conversations with me (second interview, second journal entry, final interview). Additionally, Pam used knowledge gained from past conversations with her grade level team on how children learn (second journal entry), and Julie used information on child development when she made an in-the-moment decision to pair students together:

I know kids listen to other kids better sometimes. And so if you pair them up with another kid that kind of could explain – maybe they would be listening to them versus not listening to me anymore for the day. Cause they tune us out after a while. (second interview)

It is interesting that none of the participants spontaneously reported using knowledge from their teacher preparation program in making in-the-moment decisions. When asked directly if their teacher preparation program was an influence on their current decision-making processes, they stated it was not an influence as it was so long ago they couldn’t actively remember what they had learned. Julie addressed this explicitly:

The undergrad – no. I don’t think it prepares you at all for what you’re getting into. And it’s not necessarily how to teach but it’s all the other things. Like the decision making on the spot. Like the non-stop - you have to be on top of the kids all the time. Like there’s no down time. And I don’t know that school could
really prepare you for that. You just don’t get it until you start doing it. (final interview)

Pam added,

“I wouldn’t say there’s anything from a class that prepared me for that [in-the-moment decision making]. It was all just being in the moment and watching other people and observing either colleagues or a master teacher. It was all from just my experience in the field. (final interview)

When this conclusion was shared with the participants during the member check interviews, they all confirmed this was their experience, with one exception. Tamara remembered one specific direction from her teacher preparation program: “Never call on the same student twice,” which she still consciously considered on a daily basis (final interview). This awareness was confirmed through multiple observations with Tamara, showing that information from her teacher preparation program still had an influence on her teaching decisions. Collectively, this information on the participants’ knowledge sources used to make in-the-moment decisions suggests past experience and professional development have a stronger influence on the in-the-moment decisions of experienced teachers than the teacher preparation program they attended.

Influence of School Culture in Making Decisions

Having flexibility within the school structure to adjust their instruction on an as-needed basis also influenced their decisions, as it gave them the freedom to choose not to focus on an academic issue in the moment but to instead plan to revisit the topic in a later lesson. Julie discussed this directly: “We gotta be where the kids are. If the kids aren’t ready to move forward with whatever strategy we’re teaching, or skill, then we can’t just shove through. There’s a lot more freedom now than there ever has been, which makes it
better” (first interview). All the participants acknowledged that they felt free in certain areas to adjust their instruction, but not in every area. In relating the current situation to a previous time when the focus was fidelity to a specific program, Tamara stated:

This year our frustration is with the ELA frameworks. We don’t feel like we have the freedom we want with the Common core. Now it kind of feels like we are back in that “You have to teach this. You have to do this.” Rather than having the freedom to kind of find things that we want to teach that standard or ways we want to teach that standard. We’re getting mixed messages – it’s definitely a learning curve where we’re at. (first interview)

Pam expressed a stronger sense of freedom in kindergarten:

The nice thing is we have a lot of flexibility. Even though we have a curriculum that we have to teach. And we know the Common core standards that we have to teach. We have a lot of flexibility that if they’re NOT – like if we’re doing a writing piece and they’re just not getting that yet, we can back up and do the writing piece the next day. It’s not like it’s a rigid schedule like it used to be. (second interview)

This focus on having flexibility was often connected to issues of time, when the students were struggling to understand the content and a recess or special (such as PE or music) was approaching. The observations indicated that in these moments the participants often chose to move on with the day and re-teach the lesson again at a later time.

The general school-wide culture also influenced the participants’ in-the-moment decisions. Both Tamara and Pam stated that the general school culture, called “Tribes,” informed the culture of their classrooms and their interactions with the students through its focus on community building and teamwork (Pam, first interview; Tamara, first interview). Julie expanded on this as she referenced the role of administration in establishing a school culture and talked at length about the differences between the previous school culture and the current one:
We’ve had different administrators come through the building over the years. And some of those administrators... they didn’t really... put their faith in us as being professional, as a career. So making some decisions on our own – they wouldn’t let us. Like they had to be... in control of everything. And it felt quite undermining. You can tell the ones that... trust you’ve been through a college degree, you’re able to do things, you know? A “you don’t have to ask me for every little piece of permission” kind of situation. We’ve moved now from... complete total control of someone else to... they’re giving us a little bit more freedom. They’re trusting us to make the best decision for the kids. (focus group)

Tamara agreed with Julie’s statement, confirming the administration had a large influence on the school culture and ultimately on the types of in-the-moment decisions these participants felt they could make.

**Challenges to Observing Teachers’ In-the-Moment Decisions**

Analysis of teacher actions documented in the observations confirmed findings by other researchers that teachers make a large amount of decisions during instruction (Borko & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Danielson, 2007; Hunter, 1979; Jackson, 1990). In approximately 16 hours of observation, a total of 417 specific in-the-moment decisions were recorded, which equates to 26 teacher decisions during each hour of instruction, or approximately 1 decision every two minutes on average. In addition, the individual participants each made a similar number of in-the-moment decisions, ranging from a low of 129 for Tamara to a high of 152 for Julie, showing a fair amount of consistency in the amount of decisions made in each grade level. This data is shown in Table 2.

Furthermore, 28 different types of teacher actions were recorded, illustrating the diversity in the participants’ decision making. Of these multiple actions, the participants’ large number of decisions to talk to their students, compared to the lower numbers for
other actions, served to build relationships with their students. Tamara stated she focused on talking with students purposefully because “communication is very important” (first journal entry). In addition, many of the actions were so subtle that an observer might not recognize them unless he or she was specifically looking for them.

### Table 2  Types of Participants’ In-The-Moment Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Decisions</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to talk to student</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to help students with work</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to call on specific student</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to group students a certain way</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to adjust assignment - activity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to show exemplary model</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to have students talk with a partner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to smile or laugh with students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to pause instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to dim or flicker the lights</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to do a physical activity with students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to reteach whole class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to have student share idea with class</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to tease student</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to give more practice to students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to look intently at student</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to physically move around the classroom</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to move on in teaching content</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to separate students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to give physical comfort - touch</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to take something away from student</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to focus on other students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to give more resources</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to include student in group activity</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to lessen distractions</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to use student strengths to engage</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to disengage</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose to wait</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data from observations.

For example, an observer might not recognize a teacher’s decision to move their body physically to a different part of the classroom as a purposeful decision, yet when I discussed this observed action with Tamara she confirmed it was purposeful (fourth observation). Julie’s decision to disengage may also be difficult to identify by an outsider. In this instance, she told a student to work with a partner and when the student did not respond she waited for approximately 5 seconds while looking at him directly, then walked away (third observation). This subtlety makes identifying teacher in-the-moment decisions difficult, and illustrates the necessity of focusing clearly on the teacher’s actions in observing teachers.

Additionally, an observer could misinterpret some teacher decisions without an understanding of the cultural context of the classroom and the relationships between the teacher and students. Tamara’s decisions to tease a student could be seen as cruel, but within the playful, safe environment the lighthearted teasing served to deepen the relationships between both Tamara and her students, and between the students themselves. This was observed during one class when a boy turned in his math quiz to Tamara and she said to him with a smile, “Oh, but they’re all wrong” (second observation). The boy then looked at her and she laughed and winked at him. He smiled widely back and then sat down at his desk. Later in that same observation, during a class
discussion Tamara turned to one student who kept attempting to problematize the lesson and said to him, “Sam, you crack me up!” She then turned to the rest of the class and said, “Wow, Sam is really playing devil’s advocate in a big way. This is a great discussion. The people who are involved are discussing great things. The people who aren’t involved should really join the discussion.” After this exchange, three additional students joined the discussion and multiple other students smiled at Sam. This adds complexity to observing teachers’ in-the-moment decisions, as it elucidates the need to thoroughly understand the context of the classroom in observing teachers.

**Awareness Informed Prioritization of Responses**

The participants also used knowledge of their students in the first layer (specific needs in the specific teaching moment) and second layer (general classroom mannerisms and abilities) of awareness in deciding who to respond to first when multiple student needs presented themselves at the same time. All of the participants declared their first priority was to address the most disruptive behavior first to minimize distractions for the other students. This represented information from the first layer of awareness—awareness of a specific student need in a specific moment during instruction—and situated that awareness within the context of a whole classroom of students trying to learn.

Beyond this initial desire to stop major distractions, all the participants used knowledge from the second layer of awareness to inform their in-the-moment decisions of who to help first when they were faced with several student needs in the same moment. This included helping students who generally struggle in the specific content
area being taught, are learning the English language, get emotionally frustrated when they get stuck on a problem, or have special needs. In Pam’s words:

Typically I just make sure that I try to go around and OK everyone’s work and then if I just see that kids are struggling I try to tune in on that. In the back of my mind I know which kids probably totally get it - are fine - then I don’t really focus in on them. But if there’s kids that I know struggle with things, I’ll kind of just be sure when I’m walking around that I’m looking at each question - that they’re understanding the flow of where we’re going. (final interview)

Tamara added that she tried to balance the mindset of her students with the time demands of the assignment when deciding who to help first (final interview). Sometimes she would help students who don’t struggle in that content area first, as their questions could usually be answered quickly. Other times she would help students who struggle the most first because she knew they would take more time to complete the assignment. She would also sometimes tell a student to skip the problem and continue on so she could help another student first who had a mindset that you can’t skip problems. Julie discussed a hierarchy of student needs, where she first helped students who struggle in the content area, then focused on students learning the English language, then checked on students who often exhibited behaviors that stopped them from learning (final interview). Prioritizing student needs based on these issues infers the participants each had knowledge of their students’ cognitive needs and general behavior issues, which represents knowledge from the second layer of awareness.

Choosing Not to Respond

Interestingly, discussion among the participants in the focus group raised the question of whether or not they always respond to student needs during instruction. In response to this, Julie quickly stated:
I think if you have the awareness the action happens whether you realize it or not. Like I know a child has a certain need, let's say an attention need, I'm either going to feed into that or not feed into that knowing what they have. And either course of those actions is an action. So as soon as you become aware of something the action happens whether you're realizing it or not. (focus group)

As Julie made that statement, Pam and Tamara both chimed in with, “Yes! Uh-huh!” showing they agreed with her. This expands the construct of teacher decisions to include purposeful teacher decisions not to intervene in the moment. Pam further expanded this concept to include times when she decides to not intervene at that moment, but continue observation and allow the student time to catch his/her own mistakes:

Definitely there’s times where you see that they’re doing something wrong but you want to watch them finish it out so they can maybe catch what they're doing wrong by the time they finish it. But of course that’s close monitoring in kindergarten because you don’t want them to start doing things and thinking they’re doing it the right way and just not fix it. So I think watching them kind of move through the system on their own and then if they still don’t get it at the end, then – ok. Let’s go through this and tell me what you did. And then reteaching it if they don’t understand. (final interview)

Further discussion showed these times when the participants chose to do nothing were informed by awareness of the students’ general mannerisms and behaviors in the classroom, medical issues, home life, or community socio-economic issues. These awarenesses are represented in the multiple layers. Julie addressed this directly:

I want to ensure full comprehension when introducing a new concept, however, there are times that I choose to let the inattention go without intervention. At times, I have become aware of difficulties that the child is having outside of school, allowing me to choose if I should press the student for more attention or allow them to simply just be comfortable and safe in the school environment. (second journal entry)

These decisions not to intervene, or to wait and continue observing, were difficult to capture in observations, as there was no observable teacher action. However, one
decision not to intervene was documented during the third observation with Tamara. During that observation, I observed a girl stare off into space for approximately five minutes, then fall asleep at her desk and begin snoring softly. I also observed Tamara look at the girl four different times during this period and not intervene. In debriefing with Tamara after the observation, she confirmed that she had purposefully decided not to intervene because the girl experienced absence seizures and intervening in those moments often created a larger disturbance.

The participants acknowledged that choosing not to respond is difficult, as an observer would not recognize a decision to do nothing as an actual decision, and they may or may not be aware of the student dynamic that led to that decision to do nothing. From the observer’s perspective, it might look like the teacher was unaware. Pam shared an example that highlights this problem well. In this particular moment, she had a student who was repeatedly calling out her name for help, and she chose not to address his behavior because he often called out and she wanted him to learn to raise his hand and wait patiently until she came to help him. There was a parent volunteer in her class that day that witnessed the student calling out repeatedly and offered to help the student. In reflecting on this moment, Pam said:

It was hard for me... professionally because I was thinking in my mind when she was like "Well do you want me to help?" Then I started thinking, "Does she not think I'm teaching right? Does she not…” I mean - all those things are happening in my brain while I’m trying to also teach and hear "Mrs. Pam, Mrs. Pam, Mrs. Pam." So it's like, you start to question - if a principal's in there or a parent's in there, they may think you're doing a fabulous job one way, or you think you are doing a great job doing something and they didn't really see that you were teaching THIS specific thing. They saw that you weren't doing THIS. (focus group)
Julie and Tamara agreed this was extremely frustrating and a special cause for concern when being observed by an administrator for a formal evaluation. According to the participants, this problem is lessened when there is a relationship established between the administrator and the teacher, and when there is a chance for both pre- and post-observation conferences. In Tamara’s words,

I would say communication is HUGE! And usually in those cases, like if it’s an administrator, they usually have an idea if it’s a severe problem – usually we’ve talked to them about that. But not always. You have to go in and say, “Ok. Here’s my reasoning behind this. That’s the reason I did it.” (focus group)

**Seeking to Increase Awareness**

The participants all took specific actions to increase their awareness of their students in the different layers. These actions included monitoring their students during instruction and individual work time through observing and listening to them, and establishing a classroom environment where students are encouraged to take risks and mistakes are accepted as part of learning. In addition, analysis showed the participants who placed a value in time and energy on developing relationships with their students attained deeper awareness in multiple layers, as they knew more about the students’ medical issues, family lives, and educational backgrounds. These findings are discussed below.

**Observing and Listening to the Students**

All of the participants stated in the interviews that they observed students’ work and behaviors to become aware of students’ needs in the moment. In these actions of monitoring the classroom through observation, the participants weren’t focused on identifying specific types of student needs, such as emotional, cognitive, social, or
physical needs. They focused on becoming aware of student academic needs and behaviors. In other words, it was the students’ behaviors and struggles with the content in that specific lesson that caught their attention as they observed the classroom. This represented seeking understanding in the first layer of awareness—the specific needs of specific students in a specific moment.

Julie and I discussed the importance of observing the students’ work explicitly in our final interview:

Julie: I really kind of… don’t let them just be on their own. Where some people are like, “No! They’re all working hard and quiet, don’t disturb them!” I’m like, hmmm… how do you know they’re working hard?

Interviewer: So do you walk around? Sometimes I saw you looking over their shoulder to see how they’re doing.

Julie: Constantly. To see - are they doing it the right way? If they’re not, I’m going to start asking them questions and probing them to see if we can get their thinking to change a little bit.

Pam explained how her observations of student work helped her meet their needs:

So that’s when I walked around, had time to work with the kids that didn’t get it, cause those kids… I’d just look at their paper and they would have it already – numbers written down, names written down. So it gave me kind of a smaller group to work with just be walking around and observing their work. (second interview)

Tamara explained how she used her knowledge of students’ ability level in each content area to guide her focus as she monitored the classroom:

You have kind of a good sense after a while of which kids have an easy time of getting these lessons and which ones don’t. So I tend to focus on the kids that are struggling. And make sure I walk around to them; make sure I’m interacting with them. (second interview)
The participants also used observations of their students’ behavior to become aware of student needs. Tamara described a moment when her students’ behavior let her know they were struggling academically: “I could see a majority of the students getting wiggly and then there were a handful that still seemed glued to me with confused looks on their faces” (second journal entry). Pam also described becoming aware a student was struggling with the assignment as she observed him “put his head on his desk and start crying” (first journal entry).

While the examples above illustrate the connection between student behavior and academic needs, analysis also showed that student behaviors were often indicative of students’ emotional and/or physical needs. Julie recognized student behavior was often an expression of their emotional state:

The emotional needs in my room I think present themselves more as behavioral problems. Not just crying, but blurting out, being disrespectful to others and being unkind and trying to get that attention whether it’s good attention or bad attention. That’s a skill that they learn: “Even though I’m not being good, I’m still getting attention.” (focus group)

A relationship between students’ physical needs and behaviors was documented in Tamara’s class as she worked with a student who had frequent emotional outbursts during instruction. Tamara had talked with the parents and was aware the student had medical issues, which created emotional stress in class. She recognized the medical issues as the underlying cause of the emotional outbursts, and used this understanding in deciding how to respond to her in those moments. This knowledge led her to respond by showing compassion with a gentle hug and soft voice, instead of responding to the behavior directly through a behavior management system. When I shared the connection between student behaviors and specific needs driving the behavior with Pam, she
acknowledged she had been more focused on addressing the behaviors themselves, and stated she should focus more on the issues driving the behavior: “I think I do need to probably pay more attention to their needs instead of just focusing on... on the behavior” (final interview). Thus, student behaviors were seen as indicative of a wide variety of student needs in multiple layers of awareness.

Listening to their students was another way the participants sought to build awareness of how their students were responding to instruction, and of any student needs that needed to be addressed. This action was connected to the actions of observing the students mentioned above, as all the participants listened to their students as they walked around the room observing their students’ work and behavior. Julie listened to her students’ small group discussions and to students read quietly (second observation), and Pam responded first to students who made noises as she monitored her students during individual work time (third observation). Not only did Tamara listen to her students, she taught them to actively “listen with your heart” through listening to other people and thinking about how they feel in response to what they hear (fourth observation). This encouraged the students to identify and express their voices in class discussions, which in turn informed Tamara of how they were feeling and responding to the topic in that moment. All these instances of listening to students served to deepen the participants’ awareness of how students were responding to the instruction, and any issues or needs they may have.

Routine versus Purposeful Monitoring

All the participants expressed that while it took purposeful effort to monitor their students when they were beginning teachers, at this point in their career the process was
so routine that it usually did not take purposeful thought to observe the classroom during instruction. However, under certain circumstances their observations of students became more purposeful and focused as they sought for a deeper awareness of student needs in specific moments.

Analysis showed the participants’ monitoring behaviors became more purposeful when a student showed a pattern of the same problematic behavior over time, exhibited a new behavior pattern, or stopped responding in the usual way to teacher behaviors during instruction. In those moments, the participants each looked for a cause behind the specific behavior so they could address the cause directly in hopes of derailing the behavior. They did this through talking with the student, charting their behavior over time, looking for antecedents to the behavior, and occasionally calling parents to ask directly if anything had happened at home that could be affecting the student in school. This represented a purposeful tapping into deeper layers of awareness to identify issues the student might be having that could be affecting their behavior.

Trying to maintain awareness of both individual students’ needs and the needs of the group also sometimes led the participants to seek a greater understanding of how the whole class was responding to instruction. They attempted to build this awareness by switching their attention back and forth between the whole group and individual students. For example, when working with a small group of students at a table, Tamara raised her eyes to scan the room every few minutes to observe how the whole class was doing (third observation), and when Julie was teaching the whole class, she would occasionally move and stand next to a student to observe his or her work while still addressing the whole
class (third observation). Tamara stated how she sought this additional awareness directly:

I’ll take a quick scan of the classroom and see where everybody else is. You know, if I see a couple that are talking then I might scan the entire group to try to get a temperature of where they’re at – if they’re all unengaged, or if it’s just a couple. (second interview)

The participants also gave conscious effort to become aware of how the quiet students were doing in a lesson, as these quiet students did not automatically draw their attention through talk or behavior. Julie stated this directly, “I don’t necessarily see the withdrawn kids nearly as much. They don’t stick out nearly as much. I have to make a conscious effort to watch for that” (2nd interview), and Pam talked about this awareness in terms of making sure they progress academically:

We want to be sure that we’re looking at each of our students because the kids that aren’t problem kids and they’re quiet and they may not be really high academically, but they may not be really low academically – they’re that ‘bubble’ kid. Sometimes they get passed over because you’re not worried about their academics because they’re kind of where they should be. They’re not a problem in your classroom so you’re not giving them that attention. I think that’s – that’s a rough one. (focus group)

Tamara also mentioned this difficulty, and described how she maintained awareness of these students: “I still have the real quiet ones that I will a lot of times pull back or meet with to make sure they are getting the information” (second journal entry).

Furthermore, the participants also purposefully sought more awareness of their students’ academic understanding of the content being taught when observation and listening didn’t clearly identify the level of student understanding. Julie spoke about this need in terms of identifying if students’ were listening:
Some kids, they don’t have to look up at you to listen. They could be busy with other stuff but they’re still hearing what you’re saying and getting it. It’s hard to distinguish between who’s zoning off and who’s just not watching, but still understanding. (second interview)

Julie and Tamara often chose to call upon students in those moments to clarify their awareness of the students’ understanding and attention level through seeing if the student could answer a question or if they understood the directions. Tamara wrote about this need to understand if students were understanding in more general terms:

As a teacher, I cannot assume I know what is going on when a student is not engaged. After I get to know them, I sometimes think I can assume, but they usually prove me wrong. I have learned to just pull them aside when there is time and talk to them; they have surprised me many times. (first journal entry)

In reflecting on these topics, Julie acknowledged it was not always possible to constantly maintain this deep level of awareness given the intensity of the school day and constant need to be “on your game” (Julie, final interview). Tamara reiterated the intensity of maintaining awareness in the focus group:

It’s just constant even when I’m teaching lessons. You know, keeping track of those kids that struggle with paying attention. You’re watching them to make sure they’re paying attention or trying to pull them in. The kids that are quiet you’re also trying to pull in because you know that they aren’t going to respond on their own so, I think that it’s just a constant awareness of trying to make sure every single one of your kids is getting what they need and getting involved.

Julie summed this up saying maintaining constant awareness of your students was “mentally taxing over time” (second interview).

Patterns in Observing Students

Analysis of the participants’ observational actions during instruction and individual student work time added depth of understanding to their expressed focus on
observing students’ work and behavior to increase their awareness. Table 3 presents a summary of these results.

Table 3  Summary of Participants’ Observations of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Pam</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Tamara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing student behaviors</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing student work</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data from observations.*

The participants overall appeared more focused on observing student behaviors than observing student work. Each expressed that one of their main goals in their classrooms was to lessen student distractions so students could work without interruption. This was important so the other students in the class had as many opportunities to learn without interruption as possible, with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning. This focus on lessening student distractions may have led to the participants’ focus on identifying problematic student behaviors.

This data also shows there was wide variation between how each participant observed her class. In kindergarten, Pam was evenly focused on observing both student behaviors and student work as she sought to help her students master the content and decrease distractions for other students. Julie was more focused on observing her students’ behaviors. Her master’s degree in special education gave her additional training in working with this population of students and she had a higher number of special needs students to her class than the other participants. In addition, three special needs students spent part of their day in her class: one second grade student with autism
came in daily for math instruction, and two third grade students from the resource room joined her class daily for social interactions. The increased number of students with special needs, combined with her training in identifying and addressing specific behaviors common to students with special needs, may have led her to focus on observing student behaviors during class.

It is also interesting that Tamara had lower recorded instances of observing her students overall, and only half the number of observations of student work. In observing Tamara’s class, a strong focus on discussion of the content and group work in applying the content in creative and novel ways was documented (all observations). The students in her class spent less time doing individual work at their desks because of this, which may account for the lower number of her observations of students’ work. Additionally, after teaching a lesson, she would often release the students to their desks if they felt they were ready to do the assignment on their own, and she held a small study group on the floor for those students that wanted more support; every student was free to choose where they went in those moments. This also lessened the need for her to observe how her students were doing on their work, as they were already practicing it with her in a small group format. Thus, her established classroom routines lessened the need or opportunity for her to observe her students working individually. This could account for the different pattern of observation recorded for Tamara.

**Classroom Culture to Increase Awareness**

In addition to simply monitoring the classroom to develop awareness of student needs, some of the participants also worked to create a classroom culture where the students could inform the teacher directly of any needs they had. Tamara purposefully
created a classroom culture where mistakes were not only allowed, but encouraged, and where the students could tell her directly: “I don’t understand.” This alleviated the need for her to intuit how her students were responding and gave her direct awareness of their needs during instruction. This culture was confirmed many times during each of her observations when students would tell her directly, “I’m confused,” or “I need some help.” Julie also worked to establish this culture in her room through purposefully making occasional mistakes in front of her students and allowing them to correct her. She used these opportunities to model appropriate ways to respond when someone makes a mistake, and that mistakes are a natural part of learning. These classroom cultures created an increased awareness of the students’ needs for Julie and Tamara, as they made it safe for students to state their needs explicitly to the teacher.

Pam presented a different scenario in relation to establishing a classroom culture focused on increasing awareness of student needs. There was no evidence of a classroom culture that encouraged students to take chances in their learning during the observations, and she did not mention such a culture during our early interviews. In the focus group, when Julie and Tamara discussed how they had established that culture in their classrooms, Pam talked about observing her students’ understanding during instruction: “During the lesson if they’re not misbehaving or not asking questions then I just – I’m just looking for questions and behavior issues. Instead of maybe looking for kids that are not understanding.” However, in her final interview, Pam stated that she wanted to focus more on “teaching them to be able to raise their hand and ask ‘I need help’ or ‘I don’t understand’” to build that culture in her classroom. As Pam had not been teaching in a
traditional brick-and-mortar classroom for 11 years previous to her current year teaching, her focus may more closely represent the focus of a teacher new to the classroom.

Building Relationships to Increase Awareness

The participants also purposefully focused on developing relationships with their students in the beginning of the school year to gain awareness of their ability levels and general patterns of interaction in class, which represents the second layer of awareness. Julie felt this was so essential to laying the foundation for the school year that she chose to focus on relationships and community building over instruction in the first few weeks:

Our district has these… timelines of when we’re supposed to teach what, and what needs to be covered by a certain point, and there’s really no room to build that rapport and relationship with the kids at the beginning. But you have to make it. And I, I do. I don’t necessarily follow the plans that we build together as a team, and some stuff gets put on the side and some – you know. You have to build the community in your class first cause if you don’t, if you don’t have the respect of the kids and the kids don’t have the respect of you, you’re not going to get very far. (first interview)

Tamara and Julie both discussed continuing this focus on building relationships past the beginning of the school year through sharing appropriate personal stories with their students and maintaining a focus on every student. Tamara explained this connection clearly:

I think that personal relationship is important as well so they know that you are human and that you went through some of those things that they’re going through. And that kind of makes them trust you a little bit more. And makes them go, “Oh – ok, yeah. I’ve felt that way.” (focus group)

While Pam agreed that developing relationships was important, she struggled with this issue on a personal level:
I want to bring in my personal life to share and make them personable with me, but I also feel like I’m a teacher here. I feel like I’m pretty strict so this is the way it is. This is what we have to do. So I have to work on bringing the personable huggy-type teacher in cause I’m not like that personally. I feel like I have to kind of force that in, cause I know it’s a piece that I need to have in there. But I also have that… nature of… this is how we do things here. And if you’re breaking the rule you’re breaking the rule. And so in kindergarten I have to kind of soften that a little bit and try not to be so rigid. (first interview)

Analysis of the data showed the participants who believed having relationships with students was important, and worked to build those relationships, were more aware of needs in different areas of their students’ lives. This is best illustrated through Pam, who did not have a strong focus on building relationships with her students, and who struggled to be personable with her students. In the final interview, Pam reflected on the depth of her awareness of her students:

I feel like the longer I’ve been here the more I’ve learned just because of interacting with them. I don’t know as much personal home… things unless a parent shares it with me. So I don’t really dig in too much into that unless there’s an issue and then I have to call home and say, “Well today was really a hard day. Is there something…?” and then if they share with me.

This was a reciprocal process between relationship and awareness: having a relationship with the students gave the participants’ a better understanding of issues their students might be struggling with outside of school, and this understanding then strengthened the relationship as the participants had more information about their students to inform their decisions. With my participants this translated into an increase of compassion and empathy with their students. One example of how this reciprocal process worked came from Julie:

I have a student like that this year, that she does - she kind of separates from everything. She has a speech impediment and she doesn't want to talk to her friends or anything because she's aware that she sounds different. So it's like, you
just have to really get to know the child so you can help them overcome whatever it is that they're separating themselves from. After I started talking with her a little bit more one on one, not in front of the other kids, she started to trust that I'm not going to make fun of her speech and now she raises her hand all the time, she asks me for help all the time. Whereas before she wasn't ever going to ask me for any kind of help. (focus group)

Building a relationship with her student gave her more information about that student’s physical needs, which informed Julie’s decisions of how to interact with that student. Julie’s actions then built trust between her and the student and strengthened the relationship.

**Experiencing Awareness**

With the focus on awareness included in the theory of Presence in Teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006), exploration into how the participants experienced the phenomenon of becoming aware is essential to gaining a richer understanding of this theory. Analysis of the participants’ actions in teaching, and their reflections on their thought processes in making decisions showed they experienced an unconscious awareness of routine, expected student needs, and a conscious awareness of unexpected student needs. When they did become consciously aware of a student need, they experienced an initial emotional reaction followed by a cognitive reaction. These reactions, as well as the types of student needs they became aware of, were strongly influenced by their personal teaching philosophies. Each of these findings is discussed in the sections below.

**Awareness and Response to Expected Student Needs**

All of the participants acknowledged that they were usually unaware of the routine student needs they would normally expect when teaching a lesson. For example,
they expected that students would have questions about the content and that as teachers they would have students raise their hands and call out to get their attention and participate. In these instances, they did not develop a conscious awareness of the student need being presented to them.

They also weren’t consciously aware of the little decisions they made during instruction, like walking around the room, calling on students, or answering a student question. They just responded automatically based on established routines of instruction and past teaching experiences. Julie stated, “I’ve been doing this for so many years it just kind of happens” (second interview), and Tamara said, “It sometimes feels like I am on automatic because I have to make decisions quickly” (second interview). According to Pam, “It’s unconscious. So if I’m teaching a lesson and I start to see… you know that blank stare. That’s when I’ll just back up” (second interview). These automatic responses represented no active reflection-in-action, as actively reflecting on how to respond takes conscious effort through thinking about the possible decisions (Schon, 1983). Julie termed these unconscious decisions “good teaching practices,” which illustrates her internalization of her decision-making processes to the point of automaticity (final interview).

**Awareness and Response to Unexpected Student Needs**

However, the participants became consciously aware of a student need when there was an unexpected occurrence during their teaching. These occurrences happened when the students did not respond to instruction or a teacher action in the expected way, or when there was an unexpected behavior during instruction or individual student work time. These took different forms and included student behaviors that differed from their
normed methods of interactions and work in the classroom, such as becoming emotional during class, having difficulty focusing on school work, and an unwillingness to participate in group work or discussions.

All the participants also stated their decisions were more conscious when there was a struggle with a whole-group dynamic. Reflection-in-action was reflected in these decisions as the participants had to consciously consider their possible choices in deciding what action to take. Julie discussed her reflection process in these unexpected moments:

When something out of the ordinary happens I really have to think – is it hurting anyone else? Is it stopping the learning for others? And then you make that decision. Those are the kind of the thought process that I run through as I make those decisions. (final interview)

During one lesson where the whole class was not responding, Tamara consciously reflected, “Do I need to switch up what I’m talking about or doing? Do we need to get active?” (second interview). Pam also acknowledged conscious reflection during teaching the whole group: “I thought through this decision quickly by bringing up knowledge of teaching kids in smaller chunks” (second journal). While Pam and Tamara agreed that there was more conscious reflection in decisions relating to the whole group, Julie felt that while this may have been the case early in her career, it wasn’t necessarily true now:

It's not something that you sit there and, "Hmm... these guys are sleepy and these guys are energetic. What am I going to do?" [said in a quiet, mocking voice]. It was like - Oh! These guys are not focusing on me; they're everywhere else. Let's do something to get the focus back. But it's not something that I - I guess at one point I had to really think about it but at this stage in my career I don't. It just kind of happens. (final interview)
Julie added that she felt she experienced more conscious reflection on days when she wasn’t at her best, but she attributed this to changes in her students’ behavior and a possible lack of focus in her teaching:

Sometimes you run out of you know - the days I don't get sleep or I'm not on top of it and I'm like: "Wait a minute. What's happening here? Why are these kids…? What am I going to do to reign them back in?” And so I notice that if I'm overly stressed or if my emotional state is not where it should be, the kids pick up on it a lot more. Like they - they feel it or something. It's not like I'm addressing, "I didn't sleep good last night guys so behave yourself!" [said in a loud mocking voice]. You know, we don't make those kinds of comments, but - they know! And it seems like those days they're a little bit louder, and sometimes you just have to stop and think, "Ok wait a minute. What's happening?” Oh... I get it. I didn't get a good night's sleep so maybe I'm not being as clear as I should be.

Tamara felt she had more conscious reflection-in-action when her students exhibited an unexpected behavior or unexpected response to something in the classroom, and when something that had been working with a student suddenly stopped working. These moments created more in-the-moment reflection as she couldn’t default to a past response because either there was no past response for that situation, or the past response pattern had stopped eliciting the desired behavior in the student. Additionally, she felt noticing a new pattern of student behaviors created conscious reflection:

If I have a kid that exhibits the same behavior that I’ve dealt with before and I find something that works - you know obviously I’ve had kids where it’ll work one day and then it won’t work the next day. Then I’m reflecting; I’m trying to think, “Ok, what can I do to get this kid on track?” But if it works then I’m, “Ok [snapped her fingers] let’s do that!” It’s just kind of an automatic. Then if it doesn’t work then I’m, “Ok. What do I need to pull from? Where’s my next tool?” (final interview)
Thus, the participants’ experienced more conscious awareness and reflection-in-action during these moments as they considered what was happening to make an in-the-moment decision.

**Noise Creates Awareness**

The data also showed that the student behavior that created the fastest conscious awareness, and drew the strongest response, was making loud, unexpected noises. This was witnessed many times in the observations. During one observation with Pam, she immediately stopped her teaching and called to the class, “Who’s whistling? Don’t whistle in class!” in response to a student who started whistling loudly during individual student work time (second observation). When this finding was shared with the participants in the final interviews, they all laughed and agreed that yes, unexpected student noises drew their attention quickly and strongly as they interrupted the learning for the other students. Julie clarified that these loud noises were a problem because “Everyone has to stop and look at them. It’s not just MY attention. It’s everybody!” (second interview).

Julie mentioned another way she develops awareness of student needs is by noticing how she responded to students, instead of noticing the students’ behavior directly. In reflecting on one specific moment, Julie stated, “I noticed I kept telling the students to pay attention and look at the board” (second interview). She didn’t consciously process the students’ silent behaviors of not looking at her or watching the lesson directly, but instead hearing her own voice in response to those behaviors entered her consciousness and made her aware of what was happening. This adds to the finding
that unexpected noise catches the teacher’s attention during instruction, only this time it was *her* noise instead of the *students’* noise.

**Difficulty of Observing Reflection-in-Action**

It was difficult to identify conscious reflection-in-action through observation, as it’s an internal thought process, but there was one moment when it seemed conscious. In response to class confusion over a math problem, Tamara erased the problem and started over. Then “she was quiet for about 15 seconds with her hand to her mouth, looking up at the ceiling” (second observation). This led to her writing a new problem on the board and discussing it with the students, after which some of the students called out, “Oh, I get it!” (second observation). When I asked her about this action after the observation, Tamara confirmed she was consciously thinking about how she could help the class understand the math process in that moment. This supports the difficulty in observing teachers reflection-in-action and reiterates the importance of discussing observations with teachers afterwards to gain a richer understanding of their decisions and reflection processes during instruction.

**Reactions to Conscious Awareness and Connection to Personal Teaching Philosophy**

Analysis of the participants’ reflections on their reactions to these unexpected occurrences showed they each experienced an initial physical or emotional reaction to these unexpected occurrences, which was quickly followed by a cognitive awareness and moment of reflection. For example, Pam used an art activity to reinforce comprehension of a text with her kindergarten students one afternoon. She expected the students to find the activity enjoyable and engaging, but one student “put his head on his desk and started
crying because many students were finishing up and he only had one leaf glued on his paper” (first journal entry). This was an unexpected student reaction, and Pam talked him through the directions of the activity and helped him complete it. As she reflected on this moment in her personal journal entry, she wrote: “It bothered me that some of the students were struggling and getting pretty emotional. I chose to help him because I didn’t want him to be upset with himself” (first journal entry). In the second interview, Pam elaborated that when faced with moments like these, she wondered if she had explained the directions clearly, or if the student was struggling with the content of the lesson.

While all the participants experienced these reactions, their specific experiences were distinctly different, and related to their personal teaching philosophy and educational backgrounds. These connections are outlined in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Initial Affective Reaction a</th>
<th>Cognitive Reaction b</th>
<th>Philosophy a</th>
<th>Educational Background a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>“It bothered me that some of the students were struggling and getting emotional.”</td>
<td>What part of the content or directions are the students not understanding?</td>
<td>Deliver new information to students</td>
<td>Struggled in elementary school; focused on learning content to catch up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>“The awareness of effective teaching felt like chaos.”</td>
<td>How can I help the students learn this?</td>
<td>Build relationship with students and make sure their basic needs are met</td>
<td>Second grade teacher took a personal interest in helping her with issues at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>“It’s like a full body thing like [grunting noise]. What are you doing? I’m”</td>
<td>What’s happening with this student to create this issue?</td>
<td>Show compassion and guide students in learning standards and how to deal</td>
<td>Struggled in elementary school; internalized feeling of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pam felt her role as a teacher was to deliver new information to her students. Her initial reaction to an unexpected student response was emotional in that it “bothered her” that the students were not being successful in learning the content (first journal entry). She expanded on this reaction during the final interview, saying “It made me feel bad that he was getting upset about something.” This was followed by her wondering “if he had not understood how to do the activity, or if he didn’t know what to make” (first journal entry), which represents the cognitive thought: “What part of the content or directions are the students not understanding?” She confirmed this cognitive reflection in the final interview. These reactions maintained her teaching orientation on delivering content to her students, as she was bothered that “some students were struggling” with the content, and her cognitive consideration was focused on the students’ understanding of the content and directions (first journal entry). These reactions also reflected her teaching philosophy that her role as a teacher is to deliver new content to students and connect to Pam’s personal experiences as a student in elementary school. During Pam’s elementary school years, she struggled as a student with learning the content being taught. However, this wasn’t emotionally upsetting for her, and she focused on learning the content and working hard until she eventually mastered the concepts. Thus, Pam’s experiences in school established a focus on learning content without emotional involvement, and her teaching philosophy and cognitive reaction to unexpected student needs reiterated that focus on content. In addition, her initial emotional reaction of being “bothered” by a
student who became emotional confirms her focus on teaching without emotion in the classroom.

Julie felt her role as a teacher was to build relationships with students and make sure their basic needs were met before focusing on the content standards. When she had students struggle unexpectedly in what she expected to be a simple math lesson, her initial awareness was that it “felt like chaos,” followed by the cognitive thought, “How can I help the students learn this?” (first journal entry). During the final interview, she confirmed this was a common cognitive focus in deciding how to respond to unexpected problems when teaching. While her cognitive reaction focused on the students learning content, it mirrored her emphasis on building relationships as it put her in direct relation to the students through questioning how she can work with them to help them learn. This focus on building relationships connects back to her years in elementary school when her second grade teacher took extra care to build a relationship with Julie during a time when she did not have strong family support. This teacher’s actions impressed Julie and influenced her decision to become a teacher herself specifically so she could give this same relational support to her students.

Tamara felt her role as a teacher was to show compassion to her students as she guided them in learning both the standards and how to deal with life issues, such as stress and anger management. She described her initial awareness as: “It’s like a full body thing like [grunting noise]. What are you doing? I’m putting my heart and soul into this!” (second interview). This was followed by a cognitive reaction asking, “Why are they doing this? What’s happening with this student to create this issue?” (second interview). This cognitive reaction showed her focus on the students as individuals, as
she questioned what was happening with that specific student to create this specific issue so she could address the need and guide them in learning ways they can deal with issues on their own. She confirmed her focus on the students as individuals in the final interview. Her focus on showing compassion for each individual student as they learned to deal with life issues connects back to her experiences in elementary school. Tamara struggled to understand the concepts in late elementary school and was afraid to make a mistake in class and look foolish, which led her to become disengaged in the classroom. This influenced the development of her personal teaching philosophy, as she did not want her own students to ever feel foolish and stupid in her class. So she purposefully worked to create an environment where it was safe to make mistakes and her students could come to her for help with any issue, school related or personal.

**Awareness of Types of Student Needs**

Analysis of the types of student needs the participants became aware of illustrates wide variability in each participant’s experiences of becoming aware of student needs. With equal opportunity to discuss the multiple types of needs in the interviews, journal entries, and focus group, their variety in the types of needs they noticed reflects their personal focus on certain issues over others. Further analysis revealed they were aware of student needs that were directly related to their teaching philosophy. This is consistent with the connection mentioned above between their teaching philosophy and their reactions in becoming aware, and reiterates the need for teachers’ to develop self-awareness of their identity and beliefs that is included in the theory of presence in teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Table 5 displays these patterns of teacher awareness and they are discussed below.
Table 5  
**Participants’ Awareness of Types of Student Needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Student Need</th>
<th>Pam</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Tamara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aware of academic needs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of students’ behavior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of emotional needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of family background</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of social needs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of physical needs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of whole class issue</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of cognitive issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of community issue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data from interviews, journal entries, and focus group.

Pam was aware of her students’ academic needs and their classroom behaviors, with less attention paid to other types of student needs. This reflected her teaching focus on delivering new content, as these awarenesses illustrated her students’ understandings of the content being taught, and any behaviors that could stop them or others from learning. She commented on this conclusion in the final interview:

> I think… having this brought to my attention that... I do need to be more aware of... what their issues are going on at home, or physically or mentally, or socially. Are they fitting in? And so I think I do need to probably pay more attention to that instead of just focusing on... the behavior.

Julie focused on three main areas: academic needs, student’s behavior, and family backgrounds. Her specific focus on becoming aware of her students’ backgrounds reflected her philosophical focus on building relationships with her students and making sure their basic needs were met, as knowing their backgrounds helped establish a familiar relationship between Julie and her students. This made it easier for her students to let Julie know if they had a physical need, like being hungry or cold, which they often did. Her other foci relate to making sure her students understood the content and reflected her
focus on students with special needs, as she tried to maintain awareness of their responses
to the content being taught during instruction.

Tamara focused strongly on becoming aware of her students’ emotional needs and responses during instruction. Her second highest areas of awareness were student behaviors and their family backgrounds. These foci reflected her focus on showing compassion and understanding to her students as individuals. Tamara discussed her feelings about the role students’ emotions play during instruction with the other participants in the focus group:

There’s never any “just teaching.” [all laugh] Never. No. It’s constant emotional and physical need. It’s just constant. And if we don’t have that… probably at least 50% of the class is going to have a very difficult time learning if you don’t tack on that outside piece.

Julie agreed with Tamara that she had to deal constantly with student emotions before her students could learn. Pam felt this was not a big issue in kindergarten because the students didn’t have as many personal issues with friends to get in the way and they weren’t as aware of issues at home. She felt her students were simply excited to be in school and the only emotional issue she had to deal with was separation anxiety in the beginning of the school year.

Philosophy as Expression of Identity

While each participant was consciously aware of their philosophy of teaching, and openly shared it during the interviews, they were not consciously aware of having a professional identity as a teacher. When asked directly if they recognized having a professional identity in the focus group, they responded with “yes and no.” Tamara clarified this response:
Um... I think for my own professional identity, I think that... I don’t know. I just don’t even, I don’t even think about it anymore. I feel like it’s just a part of who I am. I don’t see a... I don’t know. It’s kinda weird. I’ve never even – when you said that I was kind of like... hmm... I’ve never really thought of that. (focus group)

The other participants match her sentiment, with Julie stating:

I don’t think any teacher ever thinks – I am just a teacher and that’s it. I don’t think we have that mentality by any means. We all know that it means that we’re a nurse, a counselor, we’re parents, we are all kinds of stuff. It’s not JUST a teacher. (focus group)

The participants then related their identity to their philosophy as they shared what they felt their job as a teacher was during this discussion of professional identity. In response to the necessity of having an established professional identity to teach with presence, Julie added:

Our identities are always changing. We’re always growing and learning more and growing through different experiences just like the kids are. So I don’t know that... I don’t know that that’s necessarily accurate for me. Because I use those things as teachable moments. (focus group)

Their reactions may be partially because they had so many years of teaching experience that they’d internalized their professional identity as teachers to where it was no longer in their consciousness, and was instead expressed through their understanding of their role as a teacher.

Summary

The findings presented in this chapter explore how the participants in this study experienced becoming aware of student needs during instruction, how they used that awareness to inform their in-the-moment decisions, and what this process looked like to
an observer. They developed awareness of their students at four different layers and used information from each of these layers to inform their in-the-moment decisions of how to respond to student needs during instruction. They also considered past learning and experiences in content and pedagogy in deciding how to respond to students, and were able to make these decisions because of the supportive school culture and flexibility in teaching decisions. Multiple and varied decisions were observed with the most common decision being to talk with students. Some of these decisions were subtle and easy to misinterpret without an understanding of the culture of the classroom.

In deciding how to respond, the participants first considered the distractibility of the issue, then used awareness of their students from the second and third layers of awareness as they considered students’ general ability levels, language status, and medical conditions. Additionally, sometimes their choice was to not respond to the student, but this choice was not observable to an outsider.

The participants worked purposefully to develop awareness of their students’ needs through observing their students work and behaviors, and listening to them. These observations were often routine procedures, but became purposeful when the participants wanted a deeper awareness of student needs when faced with problematic behaviors in class, negotiating the needs of the individual with the needs of the group, identifying the needs of quiet students, and when routine observation didn’t present a clear picture of student understanding. They also worked to purposefully establish specific classroom cultures and relationships with the students to increase their awareness of student needs during instruction.
The participants did not experience conscious awareness of routine student issues during instruction or of routine responses to those needs. However, they developed a conscious awareness when there was a whole-group dynamic, or when there was an unexpected issue or students presented a novel behavior. In those moments, they also became consciously aware of their decision-making processes and engaged in reflection-in-action. Loud, unexpected student noises created awareness the fastest and drew the quickest responses from the participants.

Finally, the participants were aware of their personal philosophies of teaching, and there was a strong connection between their philosophies and the types of student needs they became aware of and how they chose to respond to those needs during instruction. They were not consciously aware of having a professional identity as teachers, but instead related their identity to their philosophy of teaching. These findings are related back to the related research literature in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I summarize the study and relate the findings back to the relevant research literature and the theory of presence in teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). I then delineate the strengths and limitations of this study and explain the significance of the findings for teachers and teacher educators. Finally, recommendations for future research are given and I give my concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

This was a phenomenological study of how three experienced elementary school teachers experienced the phenomenon of becoming aware of student needs, how their awarenesses informed their in-the-moment decisions, and what this process looked like to an observer. I also explored the types of student needs the participants became aware of, and connections between the participants’ past experiences in education, their philosophy of teaching, and the types of in-the-moment decisions they made. This data was gathered using in-depth interviews, observations, personal journals, and a focus group, and was analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method.

Discussion

The findings in Chapter Four clustered around the following themes: developing layers of awareness; making in-the-moment decisions; experiencing awareness; the influence of the participants’ personal teaching philosophy on what they noticed about their students and their in-the-moment decisions; and observing teaching with presence.
Findings within each of these themes are related back to the research literature in the sections that follow. Finally, the findings are related to the theory of presence in teaching and a model of the participants’ experiences is presented.

Developing Layers of Awareness

The research literature on awareness discusses the need for teachers to be aware of self and others (Dewey, 1933; Noddings, 2003; Schon, 1983; Sullivan, 2000) and the theory of Presence in Teaching specifies this awareness includes the “mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of the learning environment” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266). This references different types of student needs and places all these needs within the “context of the learning environment” (p. 266). However, findings from this study showed the participants experienced awareness of their students’ needs beyond this immediate context. This builds on the previous understanding of awareness and expands the construct to include awareness of students needs in four specific layers: 1) awareness of each student’s specific needs in the specific moment of instruction; 2) awareness of the general behaviors, mannerisms, communication styles, and ability level in each content area of each student; 3) awareness of any physical, medical, or family issues that student may be dealing with; and 4) awareness of any cultural or community issues that may affect the student. Awareness in these four layers gave the participants a depth of understanding of how each student’s needs were situated within the class, their bodies, their homes, and their communities. Without this previous delineation of student needs in multiple layers, this finding adds new knowledge to the construct of awareness in teaching and highlights the centrality of understanding students at each layer in teaching with presence.
The participants established relationships with their students to give them awareness of their students’ needs in multiple layers and understanding into issues each student may be struggling with. This builds on Schultz’s (2003) theory that relationships are necessary to listen to students, and connects relationships back to awareness as the participants became aware of their students’ needs through listening to them. The participants’ focus on establishing relationships with their students and developing a classroom culture where students are willing to take risks reaffirms research that trusting relationships between students and teachers creates an environment where students are more willing to engage in learning and take risks (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004; Raider-Roth, 2005; Raider-Roth et al., 2008; Schultz, 2003; Stieha, 2010). In addition, Tamara and Julie’s willingness to share personal stories, be vulnerable in the classroom, and take risks to build transparency in teaching and develop deeper relationships with their students reiterates findings from Lasky (2005), Heck and Williams (1984), and Schultz (2003).

The participants’ observation of their students through monitoring the classroom to gain these awarenesses corroborates previous research on the importance of monitoring students during instruction to identify needs (Borich, 2000; Doyle, 1986; Heck & Williams, 1984; Schultz, 2003, 2009; Skowron, 2006). The participants’ focus on student behaviors adds to the research from Hruska (2008) and Schultz (2003) that teachers need to monitor individual students’ body language, behavior, and communication patterns to understand their response to instruction. The participants’ unconscious monitoring of students extends Clark’s (1988) findings that teachers depend on routines and habits in making decisions to include a dependence on routine habits in
monitoring the classroom. Additionally, the participants’ conscious focus on monitoring students who were quiet supports Schultz’s (2003) emphasis on the need to hear the voices of students who may be self-silencing or self-segregating, so the teacher can understand their perspectives as well.

**Making in-the-Moment Decisions**

In choosing which student needs to address first, the participants sought first to address students whose actions were creating a disturbance for other students, then used knowledge of their students in all four layers of awareness, combined with knowledge of their content area and how children learn, to decide which needs to address next. In addition, when choosing how to respond to students, the participants sought to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the class as a whole and considered the difficulty of the content being taught, the demands of time, and flexibility of teaching within the culture of the school. These varied and deep issues reiterate the complexity of teaching in today’s environment (Clark, 1988; Danielson, 2007; Hunter, 1979; Jackson, 1990), and suggests teaching with presence includes a consideration of these multiple factors in deciding how to respond “with a considered and compassionate best next step” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266).

Moreover, findings show the participants did not engage in conscious reflection-in-action as they responded to expected student needs, but their reflection became conscious when the students presented a new or unexpected need during instruction. This reaffirms Schon’s (1987) theory that teachers engage in Reflection-in-Action as they make in-the-moment decisions in response to unexpected or novel student needs. However, the participants did not consciously engage in educational theory generation.
and revision during their reflection-in-action as Schon (1987) suggests teachers do. Instead, their reflection-in-action processes support Roth et al.’s (2001) argument that teachers do not engage in theoretical considerations during reflection-in-action because the class moves too quickly to allow for this depth in thinking.

Shulman’s (1987) theory of Pedagogical Content Knowledge was also demonstrated by the participants’ reflection-in-action as they considered the specific content being taught in that moment and their knowledge of how to best engage students within that content area when making decisions during instruction on how to support student learning. This situatedness of thought in the moment of decision reflects Green’s (1973) notion of “wide-awareness” and Tremmel’s (1993) notion of “mindfulness,” and epitomizes the connection between awareness and teacher decisions/actions encapsulated in the theory of Presence in Teaching (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Additionally, the participants’ use of information about their students from all the layers of awareness to inform their decisions reflects the process of caring described by Noddings (2001) and suggests that teaching with presence may increase acts of compassion towards students as teachers use this information to inform their decisions during instruction. Furthermore, the influence of the administration and general school culture on the participants’ in-the-moment decisions reiterates research by Lasky (2005) that teachers need a supportive and trusting environment to respond creatively to students during instruction and reinforces the need for this type of environment in teaching with presence.
Experiencing Awareness

To date, awareness in teaching has only been described in terms of being mindful, alive, observing what is happening in the moment, being available to the student, and experiencing enlightenment (Dewey, 1933; Mutch, 2013; Noddings, 2003; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Sullivan, 2000; Tremmel, 1993). With no previous research on what this awareness feels like to the teacher, the participants’ unconscious awareness of routine student needs during instruction, combined with their conscious awareness of novel student needs or a new pattern of student behaviors, represents new information and adds to our understanding of how teachers experience the phenomenon of becoming aware of student needs during instruction. In effect, this combines the current conception of awareness in teaching as “mindfulness” (Tremmel, 1993) of interactions between students, environment, and content (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006) through being “fully in the moment” (Hruska, 2008) with Schon’s (1987) focus on unexpected or novel student behaviors and builds a new understanding that teachers experience a conscious awareness of their students’ unexpected needs as they purposefully observe interactions between students, the environment, and the content. Additionally, the finding that they experienced an initial emotional/physical reaction, followed by a cognitive reaction, adds to our understanding of how teachers experience becoming aware of unexpected student needs during instruction.

The participants’ reported responses to routine, expected student needs based on routines already established in the classroom and past teaching experiences without conscious thought processing confirms Clark’s (1988) findings that teachers depend on routine habits and actions in responding to routine student issues. Furthermore, the
participants’ expressions that it is exhausting and impossible to maintain this level of awareness all the time validates past research that teaching is complex (Clark, 1988; Danielson, 2007; Hunter, 1979; Jackson, 1990).

**Philosophy Informed Awareness and Cognitive Reaction**

While the participants were not consciously aware of a teaching identity other than “I am a teacher,” they all expressed strong and unique philosophies of teaching. These philosophies were influenced by their past educational experiences as students and beliefs about what “good” teachers do. This echoes Lortie’s (1975) Apprentice of Observation theory that teachers’ beliefs are informed by their own past educational experiences because the participants have observed other teachers as a type of apprentice during all their years as a student. In turn, the participants’ philosophies informed the specific classroom culture and focus each purposefully worked to establish. As such, their teaching philosophies represent an embodied expression of their teaching identity, which was informed by their beliefs. This supports the constructivist notion that identity is formed based on lived experiences (Von Glasersfeld, 1995), and that our identities are situated within the socio-cultural places we inhabit (Holland et al., 2001). Furthermore, it mirrors the focus on context in the formation of teacher identity, as the participants defined their roles in relation to the students and the content they taught (Stillwagon, 2008). Rodgers and Scott (2008) also recognized the connection between teacher philosophy and identity that is reflected in the participants’ experiences. In addition, the participants’ focus on developing a purposeful culture in their classrooms that supported their philosophy echoes the need for a strong teacher identity in establishing purposeful and positive relations with students found by Raider-Roth (2005) and Wilber (2001).
A strong connection was found between the participants’ personal teaching philosophies, the types of student needs they became aware of, their reaction to a conscious awareness. In other words, their belief of what a “good” teacher does overdetermined the types of needs they recognized and their cognitive reaction to a conscious awareness of a student need. Essentially, their philosophical lens limited their range of focus so they were cued in to identify and respond to needs that directly related to their self-identified philosophy. This expands previous findings that teachers’ beliefs and perceptions affect their instructional decisions (Mansour, 2010; Priestley et al., 2012; van den Berg, 2002) to include the influence of teacher beliefs and perceptions on the types of student needs teachers become aware of and teachers’ cognitive reactions to an identified student need during instruction.

Observing Teaching with Presence

The large number of teacher decisions documented during my observations—417 in-the-moment decisions across 16 hours of observation, which averages to 26 in-the-moment decisions each hour—validates the research on the large number of decisions teachers make each day (Borko & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Danielson, 2007; Hunter, 1979; Jackson, 1990). Additionally, the wide variety of decisions made—28 different types of decisions—confirms Jackson’s (1990) findings that teachers engage in diverse interactions with students throughout teaching that cannot be preplanned before instruction.

The participants’ most common response of talking to students reinforces the centrality of relationships between students and teachers in creating an environment where students are willing to learn as the act of talking placed the teachers into direct
relation with the students (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004; Raider-Roth, 2005; Raider-Roth et al., 2008; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Schultz, 2003; Stieha, 2010). Additionally, the participants’ immediate responses to unexpected student noises situates the spontaneous nature of teacher decision making, and teachers’ dependence on routines in teaching, within the need for teachers to minimize distractions and maintain a classroom environment conducive to learning (Clark, 1988; Jackson, 1990).

While this study did not seek out to inform the field of teacher evaluation, the findings about what teaching with presence looks like in action have a direct bearing on observing teachers as an evaluative process. Many of the participants’ in-the-moment decisions were difficult or impossible to identify from an observer’s perspective. These ranged from subtle decisions like directing their gaze at a specific student or choosing to call upon a specific student to check their understanding, to decisions to wait and continue observing the student to see if he would self-correct the error. Additionally, an observer could misinterpret recognizable decisions without an understanding of the culture of the classroom and relationship between the students and the teacher. These findings reiterate the complexity of observing teaching for purposes of teacher evaluation discussed by Danielson (2010/2011, 2012). Furthermore, findings show that the participants sometimes purposefully chose not to intervene with a student in-the-moment based on their knowledge of the student in broader layers of awareness. Since these choices presented no observable action, this adds new insight into observing teachers and reinforces the need for post-conferences after formal observations so teachers can share their view with the evaluator (Danielson, 2010/2011).
Participants’ Experiences of Teaching with Presence

In relating the findings to the current theory of Presence in Teaching by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), and the research questions guiding this study, the participants’ experiences of teaching with presence are represented in Figure 3, which displays a revision of the model found in the first chapter (see Figure 1) and are discussed below.

Figure 3. Participants’ experiences of teaching with presence

The participants experienced awareness of student needs in direct relation to their philosophy of teaching, which represents a molding of their identity as teachers, their belief of what “good” teachers do, and their background experiences as students themselves. These awarenesses were not conscious when the student needs were routine or expected, but became conscious when the students presented novel behaviors or unexpected issues. When they experienced a conscious awareness, they had an initial physical/emotional reaction followed by a cognitive reaction that reflected their personal teaching philosophy. Additionally, the participants became aware of student needs in
multiple layers, including their needs in the moment of instruction, their needs and abilities in the classroom generally, their needs medically and at home, and their needs as members of a cultural community. Furthermore, the participants purposefully built awareness of student needs through developing relationships with the students and creating a classroom culture where the students felt safe enough to state their needs explicitly.

In deciding how to act upon identified student needs, the participants first addressed student needs that were creating a disruption in learning for other students, then considered their knowledge of the students in all of the layers mentioned above, and sought to balance their responses based on the needs of the individual, the needs of the class as a whole, the difficulty of the content being taught, issues of time and flexibility within the school culture, and the support and atmosphere of the general school culture itself. The participants did not engage in conscious reflection-in-action when the student needs were routine, but did consciously reflect in the moment when the students presented a novel behavior or a pattern of behaviors. In making in-the-moment decisions of how to respond, they considered theories of learning and child development generally, along with their pedagogical content knowledge. The participants commonly chose to talk to students to address an identified need.

Presence in Teaching was only directly observable through teacher actions made during instruction. However, this was difficult as the participants made a large number of in-the-moment decisions, and there was wide variation in the decisions made. In addition, many teacher actions during instruction were subtle and difficult to recognize
without conscious focus, and decisions to wait or not intervene could not be recognized as there was no observable action involved.

Limitations and Strengths

Limitations

My inexperience as a researcher may have affected the quality of data gathered and the analysis of the data. For example, while I attempted to only reflect back the participant’s ideas during the interviews, there may have been times I imposed my own thoughts or feelings into the interviews. Additionally, my lack of training in formally observing teachers may have led me to miss key elements of their teaching in my field notes, or to misinterpret what I was seeing. My personal bias towards the importance of teaching with presence also influenced the lens I used to analyze the data in this study. While I strove to bracket my assumptions and biases to separate them from the data and analysis, I could not change my personal lens and belief that good teachers are aware of their students’ needs and use this information to inform their instruction. The participants may have picked up on this belief, and felt pressured to give answers they felt were “good” or “right” in the interviews to show they were aware of their students. They may also have changed their normal methods of interaction with their students in the observations because of my presence in the classroom. I could only ask unbiased questions, reflect back their answers for confirmation, and conduct multiple observations with each participant to counter this possibility.

The methodology also presents additional limitations. The use of interviews and observations only did not allow me to go back and review what actually happened in the
classrooms during instruction. Using video would have added depth to the study and allowed me to revisit the observations multiple times to gather and check the data. In addition, the use of video would have allowed the participants to review their teaching with me and comment on moments I may not have recognized. The exclusion of the voice of the students presents another limitation. With the theory of Presence in Teaching focused on increasing responsiveness to students, hearing students’ voices would have added depth to the data and affirmed whether or not they recognized moments when their teachers responded to their needs. The short time frame of eight months also limits this study. With a longer time frame, more observations could have been completed and additional focus groups held to gather more data and further explore the connections in the findings.

Additionally, the findings are based on the experiences of a small number of participants who were all female, Caucasian, had at least seven years of teaching experience, and worked in the same rural elementary school. In addition, each participant had a unique educational background and personal teaching philosophy that strongly influenced how they experienced becoming aware of student needs during instruction, the types of student needs they noticed, and their decisions in responding to those needs. This small sample size and homogeneity by gender and ethnicity, combined with the unique background experiences of each participant, limits the transferability of findings to participants of similar demographics and backgrounds.

Self-selection bias presents another limitation as the participants chose to participant in this study from an open invitation to all the experienced elementary teachers at the school site. Their decision to participate in a research project regarding
their teaching may suggest a predisposition towards self-reflection on their teaching. This could have influenced the data as they might naturally teach with presence more than other experienced teachers. Furthermore, the participants themselves did not have a deep understanding of the concepts being researched, which may have limited their ability to discuss them in the interviews. While these multiple issues limit the findings of this study, the methodology and thorough analysis process were designed in an attempt to overcome these limitations.

**Strengths**

This study addresses a gap in the literature on how elementary school teachers develop and experience awareness of their students’ needs during instruction, how they use that awareness to inform their in-the-moment decisions, and what this process looks like to an observer. In exploring these research questions, the multiple forms of data gathered with each participant allowed for comparison of their experiences and observations both within and across cases. These varied forms of data also allowed for rich context and thick description of each participant’s experiences, which established trustworthiness of the data. Member checks after analysis was completed provided verification of the findings and added additional depth of understanding to the participants’ experiences with becoming aware. In addition, coding of a portion of the data by a qualified peer produced an inter-rater reliability of 93%, which established trustworthiness in the coding process of data analysis. Furthermore, the explicit coding and analysis process built transparency of the research methodology, and the inclusion of data analysis and quotations by participants created an evidence base for the conclusions, which established warrantability (Denzin, 2009). Even with these limitations and
strengths, the findings still have significance within the field of teaching and teacher education, and present important implications to teachers and teacher educators. These are described in the sections below.

**Significance and Implications**

Given the complexity of teaching in today’s schools, increasing presence in teaching will increase effective teaching as teachers are responsive to students’ needs during instruction. This will increase opportunities for student learning. The findings from this study present important implications for teachers, as they suggest ways teachers can increase their presence in teaching. They also present implications for teacher educators and professional developers to encourage beginning and current teachers to teach with presence in their classrooms. In addition, there are implications for teacher evaluators who use observation to evaluate teachers. These implications are presented below.

**Implications for Teachers**

The findings in this study suggest teachers can increase their presence in teaching in order to make their teaching more responsive and effective through four specific actions. First, becoming aware of their personal teaching philosophy and acknowledging the past experiences that led to that philosophy can help them identify possible types of student needs they are overlooking and patterns in the types of responses they make. This increased self-awareness could foster more conscious awareness of different types of student needs and conscious decision making during instruction in response to those needs. Second, teachers can also increase their awareness through building and
maintaining trusting relationships with their students by sharing personal stories, creating a classroom environment that invites risk taking, and encouraging their students to add their voice to the collective of the class. Third, gathering additional information about their students in each layer of awareness can also help inform the in-the-moment decisions they make. This can be done through building relationships with the students, purposefully monitoring the classroom and listening to their voices, and establishing a culture where the students can state their needs directly. Finally, developing a habit of self-reflection can increase their reflection-in-action and add consciousness to their in-the-moment decisions.

These actions could help new and current teachers develop broader layers of awareness and engage in more conscious decision making during instruction in response to student behaviors and needs. This could increase the effectiveness of their teaching as students would have their needs addressed in the moment of instruction, allowing them to engage more fully in the teaching of the moment.

**Implications for Teacher Educators and Professional Developers**

This study’s exploration of the phenomenon of presence in teaching fits Clark’s (1988) description of research on the complexity of teaching as it sought to reveal how teachers experience awareness during instruction and explore the connection between awareness and decision making. With the high number of decisions teachers have to make each hour and day of instruction (Borko & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Danielson, 2007; Jackson, 1990), and the situatedness of those decisions within the complex contexts of classrooms (Jackson, 1990), the more teacher educators and professional developers understand about teachers’ decision-making processes, the more
they can prepare beginning teachers for the demands of teaching and help experienced teachers become more effective.

Many of the aspects of teaching with presence are already incorporated into the fields of teacher education and professional development, including: having beginning teachers identify their personal philosophy of teaching and how this is situated in their past experiences; developing awareness of students’ cultural, socio-economic, educational, and family backgrounds; fostering the habit of self-reflection in new and current teachers; and a focus on building relationships in education (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Presenting these issues through the lens of presence in teaching, and exploring how this process plays out in their teaching, will help beginning and experienced teachers connect them and understand how they relate to effective teaching and student learning. This may help them increase their presence in teaching in their own classrooms. In addition, reinforcing the importance of relationships in teaching and continuing to give teachers ideas of how to build and maintain those relationships will support the development of presence in teaching among today’s teachers. In the focus group, Pam discussed the effect of *simply talking* about these issues had on her:

This topic that you brought – I think we do it unconsciously but now that we’ve, we’ve talked about and brought it up we’re thinking about it and we’re aware of that. That is important. I like that it’s been brought to my attention because I didn’t really… focus on this part. I just did my job. (focus group)

If just talking about these issues can increase the presence of an experienced teacher, surely it will help beginning teachers also develop these skills.
Additionally, including discussions of presence in teaching in teacher education and professional development programs will help teacher educators meet the InTASC (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011) standards for teachers to:

- become aware of student needs during instruction (p. 17)
- through listening and observing the students thoughtfully, and (p. 12)
- making “appropriate and timely provisions” to meet those needs (p. 11)
- which shows flexibility in adapting instruction to meet those needs (p. 17).

Finally, not only do teacher educators and professional developers want to prepare future teachers, but they also want to bring potential teachers into the field. One way this can be done is through increasing presence in teaching in all instructional venues. This will not only increase the effectiveness of instruction with students in these classes, but also plant seeds in those students to become teachers themselves in the future as they experience the caring, responsive teaching embodied in teaching with presence. Julie affirmed this possibility in reflecting on why she became a teacher:

Maybe what this really just all comes down to is that for me, and for various other teachers that I’ve talked to, it was a teacher that did something along these lines that we’ve been talking about when they were in school that inspired us to become teachers ourselves. It was one teacher that stood out for me. I was like, “Oh! I want to do that for these other kids when I grow up.” For me, and a couple of my good close friends who are also teachers, it’s just been the one person over the course of their schooling that has stood out and done something for them that wasn’t necessarily thought of as being “teacher-like” where they built that relationship and that trust of some sort to inspire them to then become the teacher themselves. (focus group)

**Implications for Teacher Evaluators**

While this study did not intend to inform the field of teacher evaluation, the findings do reaffirm the importance of evaluators taking the time to conference with
teachers after formal observations to give the teacher being evaluated an opportunity to
share information that helps interpret their actions. This sharing is reflected in
Danielson’s (2012) description of a teacher/evaluator post-conference after a formal
observation of teaching:

The overwhelming focus of a conversation following a lesson should be dialogue, with a sharing of views and perspectives. After all, teachers make hundreds of
decisions every day. If we accept that teaching is, among other things, cognitive
work, then the conversations between teachers and observers must be about the
cognition [emphasis added]. (p. 35)

These post-conference conversations become especially important in light of the finding
that sometimes teachers purposefully chose not to respond to a perceived student need
during instruction based on student needs the evaluator may not be aware of. Since there
is no observable action in a decision not to intervene, these decisions would not be
collected as evidence of effective teaching in a formal observation, and would only be
identified during the “sharing of views” in a post-conference described by Danielson
(2012) above (p. 35).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study represents only a beginning understanding of how teachers can
experience presence. I recommend exploring the theory of Presence in Teaching with a
much larger sample size, with more diversity by gender, race, and class, and with
teachers at multiple grade levels from preschool through college to identify how
differences in experiences may influence teachers’ experiences of teaching with presence.
I also recommend exploring this theory with beginning teachers, as they may experience
awareness, reflection-in-action, and decision-making differently based on their status as
new teachers just entering the field of education. Taken together, these multiple studies will begin to build a cohesive picture of how teachers in a wide variety of situations experience presence.

**Concluding Remarks**

This phenomenological study was designed to identify commonalities in how practiced elementary school teachers in rural public schools experience awareness of student dynamics during teaching, to connect how their awareness informs the decisions they make in the moment of instruction, and to explore what this process looks like to an observer. This is to inform the current theory of presence in teaching, as defined by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006). With multiple research participants over time, a collection of individuals’ experiences of teaching with presence, like individual puzzle pieces, can come together and create a more thorough and cohesive picture of how teachers experience and express presence in a variety of educational contexts. With this further understanding of how educators teach with presence, this skill can be fostered in current and future educators, which will hopefully increase their teaching effectiveness and in turn increase opportunities for student learning.
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APPENDIX A

First Interview Protocol for All Participants
Thank you for meeting with me today. I’m interested in understanding how you experience awareness of what’s happening with students while you teach. The term I use is to describe this awareness is “presence,” which for the purposes of our conversions, refers to being aware of how individual students and groups of students are responding to instruction in the classroom, and how that awareness informs the in-the-moment decisions you make as you are teaching. For today, I’d like to get to know a little about you and your experiences teaching, and then explain the journal I’ll ask you to write over the next few weeks. Then, we’ll talk in more depth about presence in your teaching in a later interview and our next focus group.

Personal – getting to know their background and beliefs

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. What is your experience in teaching – grades, subjects, etc.?
3. Why did you go into teaching?
4. What were your first few years teaching like? Can you give me an example?
5. What do you feel your role as a teacher is?

School site – situating their current experiences

6. Does your school have an overall philosophy of education? Can you tell me about it?
7. How do you feel about the school’s philosophy?
8. How do you choose what to teach throughout the school year?
   a. Is there a specific curriculum you have to use?
      i. Do you feel the curriculum you use is a good fit for your students?
         Why or why not? Can you give me an example?
      b. Do you feel you can teach the way you feel is best for your students?
9. Is there anything that would help you meet your students’ needs, or possibly remove a barrier to meeting their needs?

Wrap up

10. Is there anything else you’d like to add about what we’ve been talking about today?
APPENDIX B

Second Interview Protocol for Pam
Thank you for talking with me today. I hope your school year is going well! I’d like to talk today about how you experience “being present” in teaching. This refers to becoming aware of a dynamic with either an individual student or a group of students, and how this awareness affects the decisions you make in the moment of teaching. These dynamics can be about anything that you become aware of while teaching: social, academic, physical, emotional, or anything else you notice.

1. How is your year going so far?
2. In your journal entry about students creating pictures with leaves, you said you “noticed most of my students were excited.” How did you recognize that? What about the students led you to that thought? (specific behaviors?)
   a. How did you recognize that some students were “struggling” with the task?
      i. What part of your body recognized this? What did the recognition feel like?
   b. You said it “bothered you” when you noticed they were struggling. Can you tell me more about this?
      i. What did being “bothered” feel like?
   c. You also said you “chose to help” the student who was crying. Are there times when you choose not to help?
      i. What might be your thinking in a situation like that?
      ii. What things can affect your decision to do something or not?
         1. Can you think of an example when you did not do something?
3. In your journal entry about teaching the students how to write the letters, you said you “noticed the kids were showing they were not able to take in all of the letters” you were practicing. How did you notice that? What did it look or sound like?
   a. You also said you “felt like I might be overwhelming them.” What part of your body felt this? Was it a thought or a feeling?
      i. Did you have an emotional reaction to recognizing they were overwhelmed?
   b. You also said you “shortly thought through” your decision to only cover 4 letters by remembering information on teaching kids in smaller chunks. Where did this information come from?
      i. Did this knowledge come from past reading, education, experience, or professional development?
      ii. Did you have to actively search through your mind to decide what to do, or was that information more instinctual?
4. What goes through your head in the moments between noticing something, and making a decision about what you noticed?
   a. Do you often consciously think through your options?
   b. Where do you think that knowledge of possible options came from?
   c. How do you come to a decision about what to do, or not to do?
      i. What factors might affect that decision?
   d. Can you give me an example of a time you thought through a decision?
5. Thinking back generally on times you’ve become aware of a dynamic with a student or group of students while teaching, what types of things do you feel catch
your attention most often? (For example: social issues, academic issues, physical issues, emotional issues or anything else you notice.)
   a. Why do you think those issues catch your attention?
   b. Do you feel you tend to notice individual or group issues more often?
      i. Why do you think you notice those issues more?
   c. Have you had any past or current training to look for certain issues?
      i. Can you tell me more about that?
6. Are there times when you become aware of multiple needs at the same time, from various students and/or the whole group?
   a. How do you choose which needs to address in those situations?
   b. Do some needs take precedence over others?
   c. Why do those needs take precedence?
      i. Can you give me an example of a time you had to negotiate this?
7. Is there anything else you’d like to share about being aware while you teach, or about making decisions during instruction?
APPENDIX C

Second Interview Protocol for Julie
Thanks for talking with me again today. I hope things have calmed down since report cards and conferences! Today I’d like to ask you some questions about your journal entries, and then some general questions about becoming aware of student needs.

1. In your journal entry about the math lesson on graphing data, you said your awareness when the students struggled “felt like chaos”. Can you tell me more about that?
   a. Did you feel this in your body or mind? Can you describe the feeling?
   b. Did you have an emotional reaction?
   c. You then described your actions to try and help the students: “I stopped the class and made a list of what the two charts needed to be complete…. When they were finished I paired them up as a peer tutor to help those that were still confused.” How did you choose to make that decision?
      i. Was your choice a conscious choice, or was it more automatic?
      ii. Where do you think the knowledge came from to help you make that choice?
      iii. Were there any specific factors that affected your choice? (student background; emotional, social, or physical issues; time; resources; curriculum demands)

2. In your journal entry about introducing the concept of multiplication, you said you “noticed that 3 students in particular were not engaged.” Given that you were teaching the whole class, how did you notice these 3 in particular were not engaged?
   a. You then describe the actions you took to help them: calling on them, having the class share the directions with their neighbor, calling on them again, then keeping “a close eye on those 3 students” when the class started working. How did you know to do that?
      i. Where do you think your knowledge of what to do to address a student need comes from? (teacher preparation program, experience, master’s degree, professional development)
   b. As you started working with the 1 student who was still struggling you said “I could see the light bulb turn on” and you knew he understood. Can you tell me more about this?
      i. What about the student made you recognize he understood?
   c. You then wrote about how sometimes you choose not to intervene because you are “aware of difficulties that the child is having outside of school” and you have “found that when a student is overwhelmed with emotion or distress at home, there will be little learning at school.” How do you become aware of these situations?
      i. What’s your thought process in deciding whether or not to intervene?
      ii. Can you give my an anonymous example?
   d. You mentioned some of the factors that affect your decision about whether or not to intervene are “basic needs, ability level, and type of instruction.” Can you tell me more about this?
i. Are there any other factors that might affect your decisions about intervention during instruction? (school demands, curriculum, resources, time, etc…)

3. When you are working with the whole class and you need to call on a few students to participate, how do you choose who to call on?
   a. Are there any other criteria you use to call on students?

4. Thinking back generally on times you’ve become aware of a dynamic with a student or group of students while teaching, what types of things do you feel catch your attention most often? (For example: social issues, academic issues, physical issues, emotional issues or anything else you notice.)
   a. Why do you think those issues catch your attention?
   b. How do they catch your attention?
   c. Do you feel you tend to notice individual or group issues more often?
      i. Why do you think you notice those issues more?
   d. Have you had any past or current training to look for certain issues?
      i. Can you tell me more about that?

5. Are there times when you become aware of multiple needs at the same time, from various students and/or the whole group?
   a. How do you choose which needs to address in those situations?
   b. Do some needs take precedence over others?
   c. Why do those needs take precedence?
      i. Can you give me an example of a time you had to negotiate this?

6. Is there anything else you’d like to share about being aware while you teach, or about making decisions during instruction?
APPENDIX D

Second Interview Protocol for Tamara
Thanks for talking with me again today. I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving break! Today I’d like to ask you some questions about your journal entries, and then some general questions about becoming aware of student needs.

1. In your first journal entry, you said you felt sometimes students acted out because “things are too hard for them and/or they have something major in their life going on.” How do you become aware of these issues?
   a. Do you do anything specific to build this awareness?
   b. Can you tell me more about that?

2. You also said you believe “good communication and compassion for each one of them individually is really important” and that you are a teacher that “needs to know my students”. Where do you feel those beliefs came from?
   a. Have you had any training past or present that you feel influenced your beliefs about teaching?
      i. Can you tell me more about that?

3. You talk about your actions when a lesson is “going poorly” and described some student behaviors that catch your attention as getting “very wiggly” and “talking to each other while I am talking” that get your attention. What other ways do you notice students have a need or issue?
   a. You said your first feeling you have is “frustration”. Where in your body do you feel this? (mind, heart, stomach, etc.)
   b. You then described a number of activities you use to address their needs - milling to music, jigsaw, and GoNoogle brain breaks for meditation. Where did these ideas come from?
      i. How do you decide your course of action when you notice a need?
      ii. Do you consciously think through your options, or would you say the process is more automatic?
      iii. Where do you think your knowledge of how to address a student need comes from? (teacher preparation program, experience, master’s degree, professional development)
      iv. You mention getting ideas from your “tool kit”. Where did this tool kit come from?
   c. You also talk about purposely establishing a culture in the classroom where it is all right to make mistakes, and you encourage them to talk to you about their lessons and that this gives them ownership in their learning. How do you establish this culture?
      i. How do you think this culture affects your awareness of student needs during instruction?
      ii. How did you learn to establish this culture in your classroom?

4. In your second journal entry, you say, “I still have the real quiet ones that I will a lot of times pull back or meet with to make sure they are getting the information”. How do you become aware of needs during instruction with these students?
   a. You also say you have learned “most of their mannerisms when they are engaged and when they are not” by this point in the school year. How do you become aware of student needs at the beginning of the school year?
      i. How does your awareness of their mannerisms develop throughout the school year?
b. You write that “there are times when I chose not to do anything in the moment other then I will walk around the classroom and put my hand on a shoulder or point to the book.” You mentioned that some factors that affect this decision are what you are teaching, time, and the students’ behavior. Can you tell me more about these factors?
   i. Are there any other factors that might affect your decision?

   c. You went on to say there are times you are teaching and are “snapped out of it” by a students’ behavior. Can you tell me more about this?
   i. What does being “snapped out of it” feel like? Look like?

5. When you are working with the whole class and you need to call on a few students to participate, how do you choose who to call on?
   a. Are there any other criteria you use to call on students?

6. Thinking back generally on times you’ve become aware of a dynamic with a student or group of students while teaching, what types of things do you feel catch your attention most often? (For example: social issues, academic issues, physical issues, emotional issues or anything else you notice.)
   a. Why do you think those issues catch your attention?
   b. How do they catch your attention?
   c. Do you feel you tend to notice individual or group issues more often?
      i. Why do you think you notice those issues more?
      ii. Do you feel you notice different things at different times of the school year?
   d. Have you had any past or current training to look for certain issues?
      i. Can you tell me more about that?

7. Are there times when you become aware of multiple needs at the same time, from various students and/or the whole group?
   a. How do you choose which needs to address in those situations?
   b. Do some needs take precedence over others?
   c. Why do those needs take precedence?
      i. Can you give me an example of a time you had to negotiate this?

8. Is there anything else you’d like to share about being aware while you teach, or about making decisions during instruction?
APPENDIX E

Final Interview Protocol for Pam
Thank you for meeting with me again today. I’d like to share the preliminary conclusions and get your feedback and comments on them. Then I have a few additional questions I’d like to ask. Do you have any questions? Let me begin by sharing the conclusions I’ve found that address my research questions:

**Question 1: How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?**

- Become aware through observation and listening
  - Student noise created awareness quickly
  - Sometimes teacher noise in responding to students created awareness
- Not consciously aware of the little things during instruction – just respond
- A large unexpected awareness brought on initial physical or emotional reaction followed by conscious cognitive awareness
  - For Pam:
    - “It bothered me that some of the students that were struggling were getting pretty emotional about creating something on their own.”
    - What part of the content or directions are they not understanding
    - Give directions again and help individual students - Content/Behavior management
  - This reflected personal philosophy of teaching new content to students
- Type of student need is connected to your philosophy – behavioral – social norms
  - Teacher’s philosophy is a lens that colors what they notice
- Issues with becoming aware:
  - Difficult to identify behaviors as a cognitive, social, physical, or emotional need.
    - Use calling on students to interpret their behaviors –
  - Difficult to become aware of quiet students’ needs – takes a conscious effort
  - Difficult to balance awareness of whole group and individuals
    - Switch back and forth, sometimes consciously
- Participants who believed having relationships with students was important and worked to build these had deeper levels of awareness. Do you feel it’s necessary to develop somewhat personal relationships with the students to help them learn? Is this something you try to build in your classroom?

**Question 2: How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?**

- Levels of awareness informed decisions
- Since levels of awareness are informed by relationships and teacher philosophy, these also inform their decisions

**Question 2.a: How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment?**

- How disruptive a student’s behavior is
  - “If it’s disrupting learning for everyone else then I take care of that right away”
• Doesn’t matter what is creating the issue (the hidden need) – deal with the disruption

• If no specific student need is being overly disruptive, but you still have multiple things going on, like students calling out, raising their hand, or moving around the classroom, how do you choose what to deal with first?

Question 2.b.c: How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something? Do they always take action? Why or why not?

• Most are unconscious choices – no reflection-in-action
  o “So if I’m teaching a lesson and I start to see… you know that blank stare. Or they’re not sure where I’m going with that, then that’s when I’ll - I’ll just back up.”
  o Based on past teaching experiences, collaboration, professional development, and master’s degree
  o Little influence from teacher preparation program

• Conscious choices were more often made when focusing on quiet students and when there was a struggle with a whole group dynamic.
  o Julie - “I am making a conscious effort to target students who have a difficult time focusing for extended periods of time.”
  o Julie - “I have a student like that this year, that she does – she kind of separates from everything. And it takes a while to recognize that a little bit more so than the outspoken behaviors, but once you’re cued in on it, you keep a closer look on that child.”

• Teachers always take action when they become aware of something, but they may not be aware of the action they take.
  o Julie - “I think if you have the awareness the action happens whether you realize it or not. Like I know a child has a certain need, let's say an attention need, I'm either gonna feed into that or not feed into that knowing what they have. And either course of those actions is an action. So as soon as you become aware of something the action happens whether you're realizing it or not”

• Sometimes the decision is to do nothing. This is informed by deeper levels of awareness.

Question 3: What does teaching with presence look like in the classroom?

• In-the-moment decisions are widely varied and sometimes difficult to identify
  o 40 different responses identified in the observations – coded 101 in-the-moment decisions for Pam (in about 5½ hours of observation)

• Your most common responses were:
  o Chose to help students with work (29)
  o Chose to talk to student (17)
  o I see a connection here between the ways you respond to students and your philosophy that teaching is about delivering content as helping students with work is focused on the content. Talking to the students often is too depending on what you're talking about.
An observer cannot see decisions to do nothing and may misinterpret those decisions as unawareness. Does the issue of being judged by an outsider ever affect the choices you might make during instruction?

Thank you for your feedback! Now I have a few extra questions for you based on the focus group and our interviews:

- What were your educational experiences like when you were in school?
- All: In the focus group, the conversation became quite animated when talking about the demands of teaching:
  - There’s never any “just teaching”. [All laugh] Never. No. It's constant emotional and physical need. Um, it's just constant. And if we don't have that... probably 50 - at least 50% of the class is gonna have a very difficult time learning if you don't... tack on that, that outside...
  - I: That outside piece?
  - Tamara: Mm hmm.
  - Julie: If we didn't we could probably all go home at contract time. [All laugh] Wouldn't that be nice?
- Do you agree with the idea that probably 50% of the class is going to have a very difficult time learning if you don’t deal with their emotional and physical needs? Or does this play out differently in Kindergarten?
APPENDIX F

Final Interview Protocol for Julie
Thank you for meeting with me again today. I’d like to share the preliminary conclusions and get your feedback and comments on them. Then I have a few additional questions I’d like to ask. Do you have any questions? Let me begin by sharing the conclusions I’ve found that address my research questions:

Question 1: How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?

- Become aware through observation and listening
  - Student noise created awareness quickly
  - Sometimes teacher noise in responding to students created awareness
- Not consciously aware of the little things during instruction – just respond
- A large unexpected awareness brought on initial physical or emotional reaction followed by conscious cognitive awareness
  - For Julie:
    - “The awareness of effective teaching felt like chaos."
    - How can I help them learn this?
    - Re-teach whole class or pair students together for assignment - Relationships/ Classroom management
  - This reflected personal philosophy of building relationships with students
- Type of student need is connected to your philosophy – social
  - Teacher’s philosophy is a lens that colors what they notice
- Issues with becoming aware:
  - Difficult to identify behaviors as a cognitive, social, physical, or emotional need.
    - Use calling on students to interpret their behaviors –
  - Difficult to become aware of quiet students’ needs – takes a conscious effort
  - Difficult to balance awareness of whole group and individuals
    - Switch back and forth, sometimes consciously
- Participants who believed having relationships with students was important and worked to build these had deeper levels of awareness

Question 2: How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?

- Levels of awareness informed decisions
- Since levels of awareness are informed by relationships and teacher philosophy, these also inform their decisions

Question 2.a: How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment?

- How disruptive a student’s behavior is
  - “I look at distractibility. Is it distracting the other kids from completing their task or not? If it’s distracting a bunch of kids I’m gonna go there first”
- Doesn’t matter what is creating the issue (the hidden need) – deal with the disruption
Question 2.b.c: How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something? Do they always take action? Why or why not?

- Most are unconscious choices – no reflection-in-action
  - “I've been doing this for so many years it just kind of happens”
  - based on past teaching experiences, collaboration, professional development, and master's degree
  - Little influence from teacher preparation program

- Conscious choices were more often made when focusing on quiet students and when there was a struggle with a whole group dynamic.
  - “I am making a conscious effort to target students who have a difficult time focusing for extended periods of time.”
  - “I have a student like that this year, that she does – she kind of separates from everything. And it takes a while to recognize that a little bit more so than the outspoken behaviors, but once you’re cued in on it, you keep a closer look on that child.”

- Teachers always take action when they become aware of something, but they may not be aware of the action they take.
  - “I think if you have the awareness the action happens whether you realize it or not. Like I know a child has a certain need, let's say an attention need, I'm either gonna feed into that or not feed into that knowing what they have. And either course of those actions is an action. So as soon as you become aware of something the action happens whether you're realizing it or not”

- Sometimes the decision is to do nothing. This is informed by deeper levels of awareness.

Question 3: What does teaching with presence look like in the classroom?

- In-the-moment decisions are widely varied and sometimes difficult to identify
  - 40 different responses identified in the observations – coded 119 in-the-moment decisions for Julie (in about 5 ½ hours of observation)

- Your most common responses were:
  - Talking to the student (27)
  - Calling on specific students (20)
  - Choosing to group students a certain way (14)
  - I see a connection here between the ways you respond to students and your philosophy that relationships are important to teaching as your responses centered on talking to students and grouping them in specific ways.

- An observer cannot see decisions to do nothing and may misinterpret those decisions as unawareness.

Thank you for your feedback! Now I have a few extra questions for you based on the focus group and our interviews:

- So an outsider’s presence in the classroom also affects the decisions teachers make, as they don’t feel as free to respond based on what the students need, but
they are also concerned with how their actions will be interpreted. So there is a performance demand that may override the students’ needs in the moment. Hmmm... Is presence overruled by power?

• Observing student’s behavior is one way you became aware there was an issue or need. Is it important to understand what’s driving the behavior before you respond? If so, how do you recognize what’s driving the behavior?

• If no specific student need is being overly disruptive, but you still have multiple things going on, like students calling out, raising their hand, or moving around the classroom, how do you choose what to deal with first?
APPENDIX G

Final Interview Protocol for Tamara
Thank you for meeting with me again today. I’d like to share the preliminary conclusions and get your feedback and comments on them. Then I have a few additional questions I’d like to ask. Do you have any questions? Let me begin by sharing the conclusions I’ve found that address my research questions:

Question 1: How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?

- Become aware through observation and listening
  - Student noise created awareness quickly
  - Sometimes teacher noise in responding to students created awareness
- Not consciously aware of the little things during instruction – just respond
- A large unexpected awareness brought on initial physical or emotional reaction followed by conscious cognitive awareness
  - For Tamara:
    - “It’s like a full body thing like [grunting noise]. What are you doing? I’m putting my heart and soul into this!”
    - What’s happening with this student to create this issue?
    - Talk to students about issue and how they can address it together - Individual management
  - This reflected personal philosophy of guiding students in learning standards and how to deal with life issues as it’s so individually focused
- Type of student need identified most often is connected to your philosophy – emotional
  - Teacher’s philosophy is a lens that colors what they notice
- Issues with becoming aware:
  - Difficult to identify behaviors as a cognitive, social, physical, or emotional need.
    - Use calling on students to interpret their behaviors –
  - Difficult to become aware of quiet students’ needs – takes a conscious effort
  - Difficult to balance awareness of whole group and individuals
    - Switch back and forth, sometimes consciously
- Participants who believed having relationships with students was important and worked to build these had deeper levels of awareness

Question 2: How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?

- Levels of awareness informed decisions
- Since levels of awareness are informed by relationships and teacher philosophy, these also inform their decisions

Question 2.a: How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment

- How disruptive a student’s behavior is
  - “The students that are having the biggest issue – melt down – generally come first. I’ll deal with the big issue at the moment and I usually tell the
other kids, you know, try to deal, try to get to a point where you can work together or WORK and then we’ll talk about this here in a minute”

- Doesn’t matter what is creating the issue (the hidden need) – deal with the disruption

- If no specific student need is being overly disruptive, but you still have multiple things going on, like students calling out, raising their hand, or moving around the classroom, how do you choose what to deal with first?

Question 2.b.c: How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something? Do they always take action? Why or why not?

- Most are unconscious choices – no reflection-in-action
  - “It sometimes feels like I am on automatic because I have to make decisions quickly”
  - Based on past teaching experiences, collaboration, professional development, and master’s degree
  - Little influence from teacher preparation program

- Conscious choices were more often made when focusing on quiet students and when there was a struggle with a whole group dynamic.
  - “Do I need to switch up what I’m talking about or doing? Do we need to get active?”

- Teachers always take action when they become aware of something, but they may not be aware of the action they take.
  - Julie - “I think if you have the awareness the action happens whether you realize it or not. Like I know a child has a certain need, let's say an attention need, I'm either gonna feed into that or not feed into that knowing what they have. And either course of those actions is an action. So as soon as you become aware of something the action happens whether you’re realizing it or not”

- Sometimes the decision is to do nothing. This is informed by deeper levels of awareness.

Question 3: What does teaching with presence look like in the classroom?

- In-the-moment decisions are widely varied and sometimes difficult to identify
  - 40 different responses identified in the observations – coded 112 in-the-moment decisions for Tamara (in about 5 ½ hours of observation)

- Your most common responses were:
  - Chose to talk to student (12)
  - Chose to adjust assignment - activity (12)
  - Calling on students (11)
  - Chose to help students with work (10)
  - Chose not to respond to student (10)
  - I see a connection here between the ways you respond to students and your philosophy that teaching is about guiding students in learning standards and how to deal with life issues as your responses to students are
varied, showing a focus on individual students more than a common pattern of response.

• An observer cannot see decisions to do nothing and may misinterpret those decisions as unawareness. Does the issue of being judged by an outsider ever affect the choices you might make during instruction?

Thank you for your feedback! Now I have a few extra questions for you based on the focus group and our interviews:

• How many years have you been teaching 4th grade? Is that where you were teaching the highest reading group?

• Observing student’s behavior is one way you became aware there was an issue or need. Is it important to understand what’s driving the behavior before you respond? If so, how do you recognize what’s driving the behavior?
APPENDIX H

Journal Prompts
First Personal Journal Prompt

This week for the research, I’d like you to please email me a journal entry about becoming aware of student needs during instruction. You can write about experiences where you become aware of what’s going on with the students while you teach, and how that awareness changes your instruction, if at all; or you can reflect on how you feel your awareness as a teacher has grown over time; or you can share another thought that relates to this research project. This awareness can be about academic, social, physical, emotional, motivational, or any other needs you recognize. As an example, if you are writing about an experience of becoming aware during instruction, you might address these questions:

• What did you notice when you were teaching your students?
• What did that awareness feel like?
• How did you recognize it?
• Did you do anything to address what you noticed?
• Why did you do that, or choose not to do something?
• How did you decide to either make that change, or not to make a change?

You may write about experiences from past years teaching, or from your current teaching experiences. Feel free to include as many details as you feel are appropriate, and to write any thoughts or feelings you would be willing to share. Please remember to omit the names of specific individuals involved in the situation.

Second Personal Journal Prompt

I hope your week is starting well... For the 2nd journal entry, I’m focusing on what goes through your mind in the moments between recognizing a student need during instruction, and deciding to do something to address that need. For this week’s journal entry, I’d like you to think of a time when you became aware of an issue or need with a student or group of students during instruction. Once you became aware of this, how did you decide what to do to address the issue? Or did you decide not to do anything? Did you consciously think through your options to make a decision, or was the thought process more unconscious and automatic? Can you give me an example and share with me what was going through your mind between becoming aware of a student need, and deciding what action to take?

As always, feel free to include as many details as you feel are appropriate, and to write any thoughts or feelings you would be willing to share. Please remember to omit the names of specific individuals involved in the situation. Thanks!
APPENDIX I

Focus Group Protocol
Thank you all for talking with me again today. I really appreciate your thoughts and comments in the interviews. Today I’d like to share some of those thoughts with the whole group to explore these issues of awareness in teaching, and their connection to decisions made during instruction, at a deeper level.

- Let’s talk for a minute about the different kinds of student needs teachers might recognize. What do emotional needs look like? What do physical needs look like? What do social needs look like? How do teachers recognize students who might be self-silencing, or self-segregating? Are there any other types of issues or needs teachers might recognize that we haven’t discussed? Do you feel any of these issues are more or less essential to students’ learning?
- I’m starting to sense that there are levels of awareness – like being aware of a students’ behavior during a specific lesson, being aware of their mannerisms and overall attitude towards school, and being aware of their home situation and community. Do you have any comments on this? How do you think these levels of awareness might affect teachers’ decisions during instruction if they notice a specific issue or need during a lesson?
- How important do you feel being aware of students’ needs while teaching is to teaching effectively? Can a teacher be effective without being aware of student needs or issues? Can a teacher be effective without responding in the moment to those needs or issues? Would you call both of those situations being “present” in teaching? Or are both elements necessary to teaching with “presence”?
- Research shows that trust between teachers and students is essential in being present while teaching and helps to establish positive relationships. It also suggests this trust can be developed through listening to the students, being respectful of their ideas and feelings, and sharing your more personal, vulnerable side with students. How do you feel about this? Are there other ways teachers can build trusting relationships with their students?
- Given this quote: “Human beings who lack an awareness of their own personal reality cannot experience the mutual tuning-in relationship, the experience of the ‘we’ that is at the foundation of all possible communication…. Without the ability to enter a mutual tuning-in relationship, the teacher is in some manner incapacitated since teaching is, in so many of its dimensions, a mode of encounter and of communication.” What role do you feel teachers’ sense of personal and professional identity plays in their ability to be aware of student needs and make decisions based on that awareness?
- Looking at the big picture, researchers have stated that: “Teaching with presence becomes the difference between acting upon students, and acting with students. From the student’s point of view, a present teacher recognizes what is needed emotionally, cognitively, and physically in any given moment, and is able to respond to that need with seeming ease. From the teacher’s point of view, being present is bringing all your senses to full attention with focus on what is happening in each moment (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, Presence in Teaching, 2006).” How do you feel about this statement?
• Is there anything else you’d like to share about being aware while teaching, or about making decisions during instruction?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts together today!!!
APPENDIX J

Final Superordinate Codes
1. Awareness of student issues/needs
2. Classroom organization, management, and general lesson planning
3. Culture in the classroom
4. Issues teachers have to negotiate/balance
5. Professional identity and philosophy
6. Relationships in Teaching
7. School culture and philosophy
8. Student actions that informed awareness
9. Teacher in-the-moment responses to students
10. Teacher backgrounds
11. Teacher feelings/thoughts/emotions
12. Teacher knowledge sources
13. Teacher reflection during teaching
14. The act of teaching - content, instructions, behavior expectations
15. Trust and academic freedom vs. fidelity
16. Working with colleagues and administrators
APPENDIX K

Superordinate Codes Related to Research Questions
1. How do elementary school teachers experience awareness in their daily teaching experiences?
   - Awareness of student issues/needs
   - Student actions that informed awareness
   - Relationships in teaching
   - Culture in the classroom
   - Professional identity and philosophy
   - Teacher backgrounds

2. How does elementary school teachers’ awareness inform the “in the moment” decisions they make during instruction?
   a. How do teachers choose which student needs to address in any given moment?
   b. How do teachers decide what to do when they become aware of something?
   c. Do they always take action? Why or why not?
      - Issues teachers have to negotiate/balance
      - Teacher in-the-moment responses to students
      - Teacher reflection during teaching
      - Teacher knowledge sources
      - Teacher feelings/thoughts/emotions
      - Trust and academic freedom vs. fidelity
      - School culture and philosophy
      - Working with colleagues and administrators
      - Classroom organization, management, and general lesson planning

3. What does teaching with presence look like in the classroom?
   - Teacher in-the-moment responses to students
   - The act of teaching – content, instructions, behavior expectations
APPENDIX L

Informed Consent Form
Study Title: Towards a Richer Understanding of Presence in Teaching
Principal Investigator: Jennifer Gardner
Co-Investigator: Dr. Susan Martin
Sponsor: Boise State University

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

➤ PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

“Presence” in teaching is a relatively young field of study in education research, and is focused on how teachers are aware of what is happening in the classroom, and how that awareness informs the decisions they make throughout a school day. The current definition of presence includes being aware of the mental, emotional, and physical dynamics of both individual students and the class as a whole in the context of the learning environment. The definition also includes the connection between becoming aware of the dynamics mentioned above, reflecting on that awareness, and deciding what steps, if any, to take next. Presence is specifically focused on the in-the-moment decisions teachers make, as opposed to the preplanned decisions teachers make when planning what to teach in the future. However, with this basic definition of presence, there is no research exploring what being present feels like to the teacher, or looks like in the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore how elementary school teachers experience presence in their teaching, and how this presence informs the in-the-moment decisions they make in the course of the school day.

➤ PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following:

• A series of three focus groups, about 60 minutes each, with all the participants in the study. The focus groups will have the following foci:
  1. Getting to know your personal backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences with teaching, introducing the topic of the current research project, and explaining the personal journal I will ask you to write.
2. Discussing as a group your experiences with becoming aware of student needs during instruction and how it affects your instructional decisions.

3. Discussing as a group the analysis so far and sharing your comments and feedback on the preliminary conclusions, and possible further discussion into issues of presence discussed in the second focus group.

- One interview, for about 60 minutes, where you and I will discuss how you experience awareness of student needs as you teach and how that awareness affects your instructional decisions. We will also discuss your personal journal entries and the observations.

- Writing a personal journal over a six-week period of time with a minimum of three entries where you reflect on how you experience presence, and how your presence affects your instruction and interactions with the students. This reflection can be based on past or current teaching experiences. I will provide a prompt during the first focus group.

- Allowing me to observe your class 4 times, for approximately 1½ hours each time, over a 6-week period of time. The first observation will be simply to allow your students to acclimate to my presence while I gather general information on the classroom culture and school environment. During the remaining 3 observations I will be observing decisions made during instruction.

These activities will take place along the following time line:

1. The initial focus group will take place in September.

2. The observations and personal journals will take place on alternate weeks throughout the months of October and November.

3. The interview will take place in November, towards the end of the observations and journaling.

4. The second focus group will take place in November, after the interviews.

5. After the winter break, sometime in January the third focus group will take place.

The focus groups and interviews will be conducted at a time and place of your choosing. The observations will be conducted in your regular classrooms at a time of your choosing. The focus groups and interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

➢ RISKS

Some of the questions asked may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are always free to decline to answer any question or to stop your participation at any time.
BENEFITS
You will receive a $50 grant for your participation in this study with no stipulations on spending. This grant will be given after the focus groups, interviews, and observations are completed. In addition, the information that you provide may help inform teacher preparation programs in the future, as we look for ways to help teachers’ instruction be more effective through increasing their presence in teaching, with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. All data will be collected and stored under a pseudonym to protect your privacy. Additionally, the school site, district, and city will receive pseudonyms to further protect confidentiality. After the audiotapes of the interview have been transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. Your name, your school site, the school district, and the city name will not be used in any written reports or publications that may result from this research. Only the principal-investigator and co-investigator will have access to the research data. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is complete and then destroyed.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY
You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

QUESTIONS
If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may talk with Dr. Susan Martin at 208-426-2809 or email her at smartin@boisestate.edu, or myself, Jennifer Gardner, at 208-995-9395 or email me at jennifergardner@boisestate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Boise State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (208) 426-5401 or by writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise, ID 83725-1138.
DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

____________________________________  ________________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date

______________________________  ________________________________
Printed Name of Study Participant  Signature of Study Participant  Date
APPENDIX M

Recruitment Email to Participants
Dear Teacher,

Hello, my name is Jennifer Gardner. I am a doctoral student at Boise State University, completing a degree in curriculum, instruction, and foundational studies with a focus in teacher education. I am currently beginning my dissertation into how teachers experience “presence” in their teaching as awareness of individual and whole class dynamics, and how that presence informs the in-the-moment decisions they make while teaching.

I have received approval for this research from Boise State University and from your school district and principal as well. I am looking for teachers with at least 7 years’ experience teaching in elementary schools, and would love to work with you. I’m emailing you today to ask if you would be interested in participating in this research project. As a thank you for your time and effort, each participant will receive a $50 grant at the conclusion of the third interview, with no stipulations on spending. Participating in this research would include the following:

1. A **first interview** with all the participants where the focus will be on getting to know your personal backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences with teaching, introducing the topic of the current research project, and explaining the personal journal I will ask you to write.

2. **Observing your class** 4 times, for approximately 1½ hours each time, over a 6-week period of time. The first observation will be simply to allow your students to acclimate to my presence while I gather general information on the classroom culture and school environment. During the remaining 3 observations I will be observing decisions made during instruction.

3. **Writing two personal journal entries** over a six-week period of time with a minimum of three entries where you reflect on how you experience presence, and how your presence affects your instruction and interactions with the students.

4. A **second interview** where you and I will discuss how you experience awareness of student needs as you teach and how that awareness affects your instructional decisions. We will also discuss your personal journal entries and the observations.

5. A **focus group** with all the participants where we will discuss as a group your experiences with becoming aware of student needs during instruction and how that awareness affects your instructional decisions.

6. A **third interview** with all the participants in January where I will share the preliminary conclusions and invite comments and feedback from you. It may also include further discussion into issues of presence discussed in the second focus group.

I look forward to working with you, as we work together to identify ways to help teachers’ instruction be more effective through increasing teachers' presence in teaching, with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning. **Please let me know if you are interested in participating; I welcome the opportunity to discuss this research with you further.**

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Jennifer Gardner
APPENDIX N

Institutional Review Board Approval
Date: September 11, 2014

To: Jennifer Gardner

cc: Susan Martin

From: Social & Behavioral Institutional Review Board (SB-IRB)

c/o Office of Research Compliance (ORC)

Subject: SB-IRB Notification of Approval - Original - 113-SB14-122

Towards a Richer Understanding of Presence in Teaching

The Boise State University IRB has approved your protocol submission. Your protocol is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance (#00000097) and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

Protocol Number: 113-SB14-122

Expires: 9/10/2015

Received: 9/3/2014

Review: Expedited

Approved: 9/11/2014

Category: 6, 7

Your approved protocol is effective until 9/10/2015. To remain open, your protocol must be renewed on an annual basis and cannot be renewed beyond 9/10/2017. For the activities to continue beyond 9/10/2017, a new protocol application must be submitted.

ORC will notify you of the protocol's upcoming expiration roughly 30 days prior to 9/10/2015. You, as the PI, have the primary responsibility to ensure any forms are submitted in a timely manner for the approved activities to continue. If the protocol is not renewed before 9/10/2015, the protocol will be closed. If you wish to continue the activities after the protocol is closed, you must submit a new protocol application for SB IRB review and approval.

You must notify the SB-IRB of any additions or changes to your approved protocol using a Modification Form. The SB-IRB must review and approve the modifications before they can begin. When your activities are complete or discontinued, please submit a Final Report. An executive summary or other documents with the results of the research may be included.

All forms are available on the ORC website at http://goo.gl/D2PYTV

Please direct any questions or concerns to ORC at 426-5401 or humansubjects@boisestate.edu.

Thank you and good luck with your research.

Dr. Mary Pritchard
Chair
Boise State University Social & Behavioral Institutional Review Board