What Nourishes the Spirit of Adolescents in the Classroom?
A Qualitative Study into the Gateways of Adolescents' Souls

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

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© August, 2002
Abstract

This thesis investigated the question, "What nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom?" Action research was conducted by the teacher of 16 grade 8 participants. By undergoing Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program," the students participated in 6 sessions which exposed them to a holistic intrapersonal curriculum. Student journal responses were documented after each session. The action researcher also kept journal reflections after each session. Upon completion of the 6 sessions, a postinterview was conducted which posed the research question.

The research found that the adolescent spirit gets nourished through encouragement by the teacher, peers, and parents. This increases their competency, which increases their confidence, and ultimately their self-esteem goes up, which affects their self-concept. In addition, the role of the teacher permeates every aspect of what nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom. In addition to the encouragement of the student, how a teacher teaches plays a vital role. A holistic approach to teaching provided the best atmosphere for the adolescent. It promoted creativity and choice, which stimulated the spirit of the adolescent. By working from a holistic philosophy, the teacher/action researcher created an environment conducive to teaching the whole person, which ultimately nourished the participants' spirit. The research
highlighted that in order for this type of environment to exist the teacher needs to make a conscious and deliberate effort to look within and develop their inner self before they can begin to promote this type of classroom for the adolescents they teach. When teachers and students develop an inner life together, they can begin to work in harmony to achieve an atmosphere where the teaching and learning environment becomes one seamless transaction. Only then can one's whole potential be realized.
Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express her gratitude to her family for their support and inspiration throughout my lifetime starting with my mom, Jackie Matte, who provided me with so many opportunities to experience the world while always allowing me to experience it in my own way and in my own time. To Mary Monette, my “other” mother, whose sense of humour and kindness have affected my life beyond words. To my husband, Geoff, who provided me with nourishment not only in the form of sustenance but for my spirit as well the past 12 years. I would also like to extend my thanks to Susan Busby and Nicole Dolson, two outstanding administrators who provided me with encouragement to pursue a Master’s degree. I would like to thank my colleagues who supported and encouraged me this past year. Last, but not least, I would also like to thank every student in my homeroom class, all of whom participated in the Council meetings and embraced the opportunity openly and honestly and to the 16 participants who enlightened us with their view of what nourishes the adolescent spirit.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to Dr. Sandra Bosacki, the researcher’s advisor, whose advice and support have been limitless. Your time and energy will always be greatly appreciated. Special thanks also to Dr. Kris Kirkwood and Dr. Susan Drake for their insights and advice.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Throughout my life I have pondered the questions that have no answers and have found meaning in their mystery. These questions have challenged my spirit and have guided my inquisitive life. Such questions, I believe, have led me to teaching. I love teaching; it is a passion that has evolved over time and left me with a feeling of contentment and satisfaction. As Palmer (1998) explains:

When you love your work that much - and many teachers do - the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but to serve our students well. (p. 2)

With that in mind, this is a study to “go deeper in” to search for the gateways that nourish the spirit of the adolescents whom I teach. What is it that sustains them and nourishes their spirit in the classroom? An answer to this question, I believe, will allow me to “serve my students well.”

From the outset I make it clear that in this context nourishing the spirit is not related to organized or formal religion. The inner
life of a student with its immaterial, intelligent, sentient characteristics can be defined as that unique attitude or frame of mind specific to each individual. As Nel Noddings discussed in conversation with Joan Halford, "spirituality is an attitude or a way of life that recognizes something we might call spirit...it does not require an institutional connection" (Halford, 1998, p. 28) when differentiating spirituality from religion. This study encourages adolescents to explore their "inner landscape" as Palmer (1998, p. 4) aptly calls it. I hope to reach out to the whole person and in doing so provide an opportunity for the students to reach their potential by developing their spirit in the classroom; that is, I aim to develop their mind and body (Groome, 1998) in unison and not as disparate parts.

Given Kessler's (2000) gateways to the soul as a foundation, this study isolates the emergence of patterns created when students are allowed to speak and the teacher listens to their voices. Kessler found that "certain experiences - quite apart from religious belief or affiliation - had a powerful effect in nourishing the spiritual development of young people" (pp. 15-16). She identifies seven gateways to an adolescent's soul. Each of the following gateways represents a set of key experiences embedded in their stories: deep connection, silence and stillness, meaning and purpose, joy,
creativity, transcendence, and initiation. An integral role is played by each gateway in the development of an adolescent's spiritual self.

Suhor (1994) states that "teachers at all levels are exploring inventively" (p. 13) and a growth in spirituality ensues. This growth can be called a heightened awareness of the inner space where nascent spiritual strands are shaped and reshaped constantly into rich layers of soul matter. This research examines an inventive teaching strategy that aims to nourish the spirit of an adolescent in a classroom setting. Today an outcome-based curriculum directive permeates the educational system, but in this study creative means are used to give the imagination full rein, thus diminishing the power of a suffocating curriculum-driven climate.

Background of the Problem

In general, our intellectual intelligence is what we use to solve logical or strategic problems. Intelligence quotient (IQ), has been the signpost of a student's academic ability since the early part of the 20th century (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). To investigate this ability, psychologists devised tests to measure degrees of intelligence. A person with a high IQ had a higher intelligence and therefore, the psychologists theorized, could realize greater academic success.
Further research by Howard Gardner (1983) on multiple intelligences theorizes that there is not just one kind of intelligence that can be measured by a single test, but at least seven key intelligences. Gardner believes that people can have multiple intelligences in addition to the standard academic kind such as verbal and mathematical-logical. That is, individuals also possess spatial intelligences, the "personal" intelligences; inter- and intrapersonal- and even a bodily/kinesthetic intelligence.

By the mid-'90s Daniel Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence, "an awareness of our own and other people's feelings" (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p. 3) found that people who possess a heightened awareness of their own emotions in terms of compassion, empathy, and motivation may be better able to effectively utilize their intellectual intelligence. That is, emotional intelligence is a basic requirement for the effective use of intellectual intelligence. Therefore, intellectual intelligence is not the sole signpost of a successful academic life.

A further kind of intelligence has been introduced as the "foundation for the effective functioning" (Zohar and Marshall, 2000, p. 4) of both intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence, and that is spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is the intelligence where, according to Zohar and
Marshall, "we address and solve problems of meaning and value and can even assess that one life direction is better than another" (p. 4). The main body of this research focuses on nourishing spiritual intelligence in adolescents.

There are several issues in education today which impact on the nourishment of the spirit of adolescent students. They stem from educational practice and policy (Hart, 2001; Ministry of Education and Training [MET], 1997), the complex transformation into adolescence (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999; Parrott, 2000; Siegler, 1997), teaching strategies employed by teachers (Miller, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1999), and the false belief that spirituality is a religious practice (Haynes, 1998; Kessler, 2000; Miller, 2000). Each of these issues will be discussed in turn.

**Educational Practice and Policy**

According to Kessler (2000), educators are beginning to identify a "spiritual problem" or "spiritual emptiness" in our culture. This "spiritual darkness" she suggests must be addressed through the education system. The present trend in outcomes-based education in Ontario lacks a spiritual dimension in its curriculum content. Curriculum documents developed and approved for implementation by the Ministry of Education and Training outline the overall expectations and the specific expectations ruled as absolute
in each subject area. According to the Ontario government, education should provide students with the "required knowledge and skills that will help them compete in a global economy and allow them to lead lives of integrity and satisfaction both as citizens and individuals" (MET, 1997, p. 3). This spiritually empty statement prefaces each of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training curriculum documents in their Introduction. There is no mention in the MET documents that each student is unique and must be educated as such.

The inner life of the student must be respected and promoted. As Palmer (1998) discusses, many teachers teach in an outward fashion, forcing students to memorize facts without allowing them to address their inner self. As a result, many students lack the desire to pursue an existence of lifelong learning. "The kind of teaching that transforms people does not happen if the student's inward teacher is ignored" (Palmer, p. 31).

A strong transformational learning approach to education is not evident in the MET outlines. The Ontario curriculum promotes a transmission approach; that is, an outcome-based approach is at the center of the educational directive in Ontario. The dichotomy between an outcome-based education system and what many researchers (Hart, 2001; Kessler, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Suhor, 1994)
essential elements is vast. Hart reinforces this point by discussing the importance of not simply acquiring more information and skills which teach us how to "navigate" in the world, but to learn how to use this knowledge wisely so that we "can grow the soul of the world and our own soul along with it" (p. 3). Wisdom and spirit are necessary qualities to nourish in the classroom if we are to transform our next generation. How can spiritual learning flourish effectively in a system which ignores individual differences and demands the same learning patterns for all?

*Transformation into Adolescence*

Adolescence is the developmental journey between childhood and adulthood (Harter, 1999). More attention is given to this topic than any other in developmental psychology. As Siegler (1997) explains, adolescence is a time of formations and transformations. As an adolescent matures, they form new capacities to address developmental tasks in the present, while at the same time they transform old solutions to developmental tasks in their past.

Self-systems play an integral role during adolescence. Self-concept is important at all stages throughout our lives, but it is most problematic during adolescence (Rosenberg, 1985). Self-criticism and other negative self-feelings are predominant during
this time, as well as self-understanding and self-reflection (Damon & Hart, 1988). Providing opportunities where students can express themselves openly and honestly, the adolescent may begin to realize that their peers are experiencing the same turmoil they are. This may alleviate their fear, and in doing so their self-esteem may improve. A "healthful self-esteem is like a vaccine against other common teenage problems" (Parrott, 2000, p. 208). By building a nourishing environment for the adolescents whom we teach, we can enhance their self-esteem and guide them on their journey through life with the tools they will require.

Adolescence is a critical time for cultivating a positive self-concept; that is, how an adolescent sees him or herself may also enhance or impair the adolescent's self-esteem or how the adolescent feels about him/herself. By nourishing the spirit of adolescents within a classroom setting, the teacher may facilitate the development of self, which will strengthen the student's sense of self-worth, allowing him/her to cultivate a positive self-esteem. This will provide a meaningful life experience for the adolescent.

Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers

Teaching strategies employed by a teacher are also a factor when nourishing the spirit of children in the classroom. Miller (1996) describes a fragmented education system as one that divides
knowledge into subjects, units, and lessons. By arranging the learning experience this way, the students cannot see the relationship between the subject areas, the relationship between facts within a subject, or the relevance of the subject to life (p. 2). As teachers, we need to employ teaching strategies that will promote a philosophy of holism so that students can see the connections to life.

Relationships and how they are developed by the teacher play a vital role in holistic education. As O'Sullivan (1999) maintains, "in opposition to a framework that separates values and facts, a more holistic interpretation brings facts and values together in dynamic interaction" (p. 95). By teaching holistically with a mind, body, and spirit connection at the hub of the student's experience, we are allowing the adolescent's own intuitions to be included in their transformation. How they see themselves in relation to the natural world will be explored on an individual basis. They make the connections themselves, rather than accepting a teacher-imposed point of view. By adopting this position as educators, we are also attempting to reconnect ourselves with the natural world. Selection of appropriate teaching strategies is paramount to a program where nourishment of the spirit is to be sustained.
Spirituality as a Religious Practice?

The deep connection between mind, body, and spirit when using a holistic approach to teaching is a powerful one. According to O'Sullivan (1999), holistic educators attempt to root education in a framework that goes beyond the fragmentation of people's lives but instead leads us to a hidden wholeness. When engaged in this type of approach, the intellect and spirit are integral parts of one another (p. 64). The spiritual aspect cannot be separated. The notion of "nourishing the spirit of students" may imply a religious meaning when it is taught in the public educational system today.

The term "spirituality" is often viewed in terms of organized religion. By clearly stating the language around terms such as "spirituality" and "spirit," teachers can avoid any undue problems that may arise from misinterpretation. Haynes (1998) advises that teachers should define their terms carefully and be clear about their goals when nurturing the spirit of students is the teacher's goal. Assuring parents that the use of "spiritual" has nothing to do with religion but with the inner life of the student may help lessen the fear that religious practices are being taught. Teachers must be clear on their intent when using terms that may be ambiguous.

In summary, educational policy and practice, teaching strategies, and the misunderstanding between spirituality and the
adherence to organized religion are elements to be weighed when considering the question, "What nourishes the spirit of children in the classroom?" The teacher must bring into play a rich repertoire of creative approaches generated by meaningful and varied experiences which will play a vital role in putting a stranglehold on the negative factors mentioned above.

Definition of Terms

Self: is best viewed as self-theory, a cognitive construction concerning one's attributes and characteristics. "It is how the changing characteristics of the I-self processes that define each developmental stage directly impact the Me-self, namely the self-theory that is being constructed" (Harter, 1999, p. 7).

Self-concept or self-representations: are how individuals see themselves, their beliefs; "attributes or characteristics of self that are consciously acknowledged by the individual through language - that is, how one describes oneself" (Harter, 1999, p. 3).

Self-esteem: centers primarily on the way individuals feel about themselves. "Self-esteem is the overall evaluation of one's worth or value as a person" (Harter, 1999, p. 5).

**Spirit:** Spirit is the breath of life that gives meaning and direction to our lives. This definition is a combination of the two definitions below. Oxford's (1976) definition: "the animating or vital principle; that which gives life to the physical organism in contrast to its material elements; the breath of life," and Miller's (2000) definition of "soul as a deep and vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives" (p. 9).

**Spirituality:** "deeper resources of the human spirit and involves the non-physical, immaterial dimensions of our being; the energies, essences and part of us that existed before and will exist after the disintegration of the body" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 259).

**Statement of the Problem Situation**

The challenge for teachers today is to provide a learning environment within which students can develop their spirit. That is, teachers need to create a place that enables students to develop the courage and confidence required to try new things, to explore, and to create. Such learning experiences may help students to develop the ability to engage more freely in holistic practices and eventually transformative learning. Transformative learning challenges the processes of creating meaning for the self and dismantles it. It does not just give the self a new way to think about the world, but "the self itself is inquired into, looked into," (Wilber, 1998, p. 141)
and that is where the transformation occurs, at a deeper, more spiritual level. Due to this lack of conceptual and empirical literature on adolescent self and spirituality, there is a lack of curriculum that addresses this "spiritual life" and/or emotional life of the adolescents. Current curriculum focuses on a cognitive approach, not holistic which addresses all aspects of the human being, heart, mind, and soul. That is, the majority of educational programs focus on mind and intellect in contrast to a more holistic approach that takes both academic and emotional needs into account.

A quality classroom is essential for this research to thrive or even exist. That is, if teachers can create that unique place where students can develop the courage and confidence required to try new things, to explore, and to create, then nourishing the spirit of students becomes a possibility. The teacher is present, the students are present, and the atmosphere is filled with communal energy. The student is not only mindful of learning facts but very aware of the student's feelings and emotions. Encouragement to promote this kind of quality classroom where nourishment of the spirit is an integral component is lacking.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study investigates how a holistic educational program may influence adolescents' understanding of self and spiritual
development. That is, the study intends to generate creative ways for teachers to provide adolescents with opportunities to develop their spirit and therefore develop a positive self-concept.

In addition, I hope that this research will assist teachers at all levels to begin to understand the importance of allowing students to explore their perceptions of self and spirituality. Perhaps teachers may then begin to incorporate opportunities into their programs for this type of transformational learning.

The purpose of the study is to describe adolescents' perceptions of self and spirituality within a holistic classroom setting that promotes the development of student's inner lives. That is, by incorporating Kessler's (2000) "gateways" into the curriculum, I aim to influence the adolescents' sense of self and spirituality. Ultimately, by developing a spiritual awareness within the classroom, the adolescent may begin to question what their role is in the universe (Miller, 1996). According to Miller, this transformation is one of the main goals of transpersonal psychology. Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" ultimately focuses on the big questions.

Objectives/Research Questions

To answer some of the "big" questions such as "Are adolescents able to articulate what spirit is?" and "Does the
nourishment of the spirit of adolescents in the classroom improve their self-concept?" the perceptions of adolescent students of self and spirituality before and after a holistic educational program were explored (Kessler, 2000). In addition, through emerging themes, this study aims to legitimize my regular classroom practice and validate my beliefs. Furthermore, I hope this research will influence the direction of education in the long term by giving me a voice in the quality control of teaching and learning that takes place, not only in my classroom but in the school where I teach, and also give me a voice at the board level as well. It is also my hope that this study will extend the knowledge base about spirituality and adolescence to my colleagues and in doing so may influence other teachers to embark on their own "living theory" (District School Board of Niagara [DSBN], 2000).

Rationale

As a teacher who believes in holistic education, I believe that students should be given every opportunity to explore their own path (Miller, 1996). A growth element must be present: growth that enables the mind, body, and spirit to be nurtured in harmony. Growth of the students, growth of colleagues, who continually ask the questions I ask, and finally my personal growth must follow (Miller,
Students are showered daily with all kinds of media from television and radio to computers and the internet (Postman, 1995). Technology has changed the way adolescents communicate with each other. They use e-mail and chat on the internet using conferences. They are bombarded with information faster and more efficiently than ever before (Postman, 1999). Where in all of the technological progress is there room for development of an adolescent's inner spirit?

The family unit has changed. According to Kurtz and Derevensky (1995), single-parent families are more prevalent today. The divorce rate in Canada has tripled since the 1970s. Children spend more time unsupervised at home than ever before. This lack of supervision continues to exist even when two parents are still together, due to the fact that the dual-income family is predominant in North America. This is when the mother and father both work outside of the home. This has been made possible due to daycare facilities. Is parental separation affecting the emotional growth of our children today? Today, families with their unique configurations make the type of introspection where opportunities for growth that enable the mind, body, and spirit to be nurtured in harmony more difficult for the students that I teach. The classroom
is the setting where I connect with these students.

Through this research, I aim to provide opportunities for students to become aware of their own spirit and to develop a place where they feel safe and good about themselves. A connected classroom aims to provide a setting that enhances the student's self-understanding and sense of spirituality (Noddings & Shore, 1998). Authentic experiences offered by this research could ultimately provide a blueprint that can be used by the students to meet life's other challenges.

My colleagues play an integral role in my life as a teacher. We share stories and philosophies and engage in daily dialogues around our teaching lives. These discussions provoke me to ask more questions, drive me to find the answers, and sustain me as a teacher. By sharing my experiences and engaging in discussions around my research topic with my peers, it may encourage all teachers who strive daily to instill the best in themselves and in the students they teach.

Last, personal growth as a teacher is another reason why I embarked on this journey. "Giving priority to the human spirit" (Miller, 2000, p. 12) is paramount to my value system. I believe my study will be beneficial to me as a teacher and a learner by furthering my own learning and development. If I can assist
adolescents to recognize spiritual moments and act upon them within the classroom, I will understand why I entered teaching with a passion.

I hope to explore the question, "What nourishes the spirit of children in the classroom?" I do this for the students I teach, the teaching community, and myself in order to become a better teacher upon conclusion of this study and to witness the proliferation of serious questions germane to these findings.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are two main theories that form the framework for my research: holistic education (Miller, 1996, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1999) and self-theory in adolescence (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999; Leahy, 1985). When a teacher teaches from a holistic position, the opportunity for relationships to be strengthened and stretched is prevalent. That is, both the student and the teacher have the opportunity to expand the following relationships:

1. the relationship between linear thinking and intuition;

2. the relationship between mind and body;

3. the relationship between various domains of knowledge;
4. the relationship between the individual and community;

5. the relationship with the earth; and

6. the relationship between self and Self.

In a holistic curriculum, the student examines these relationships and gains an awareness of them and the skills necessary to transform the relationship where it is appropriate (Miller, 2000, p. 86). By utilizing a holistic approach in the classroom, the spiritual dimension of each child can be illuminated through intuitive connections. Miller states that "intuition is a direct knowing" (p. 88). It comes from what a person experiences physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. For example, in the relationships among domains of knowledge, the integration of various school subjects enhances the relationship between self and subject matter as well as the connection between subject matter and community. During holistic teaching practices when teachers can provide opportunities for students to see themselves as part of the web of life, intuitive earth connections are made. "Ultimately the holistic curriculum lets us realize our true nature" (Miller, p. 89).

Teaching holistically challenges the students self-concept (Harter, 1999) in a positive way. Achieving particular levels of
"competence" may enhance students self-confidence or self-esteem. Because holistic curriculum works from the child's experiences on four levels: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, the child constructs what they have experienced and readjusts their sense of self. Both theories, holistic education and self-theory in adolescence, work in a synchronous fashion. That is, by strengthening various relationships, the adolescent is afforded opportunities to reconstruct their self-portrait and develop a deep sense of self.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study was examined in many different ways. First, educational qualitative research on students' spiritual views and self-perceptions remains sparse. Kessler (2000) outlines how to find connection, compassion, and character at school and has a set curriculum outlining courses directed specifically at this topic. Students interested in this type of curriculum sign up for courses that facilitate holistic learning. Today's outcome-based curriculum does not encourage holistic learning opportunities. As Miller (2000) describes:

We have had enough of machinelike approaches to education that deaden the human spirit. The present trends of outcome-based education and accountability can drain the vitality from
our classrooms. The pressure for quantifying all learning without concern for quality represses the student's soul. (pp. 11-12)

This study responds to the need for finding creative ways within a confined system for teachers to invent ways for students to nourish their inner spirit and thus improve their self-concept.

Second, this study could be used as a tool for educators who would like to adapt their existing program and integrate a holistic perspective, in particular, activities that focus on the spiritual aspect of self, into their classroom experience, thereby improving students' knowledge regarding self and spirituality. This research could also provide a framework for curriculum development for adolescents that aims to integrate self-understanding with conceptual knowledge.

Ultimately, the results of this study could benefit the adolescent learners themselves. The council process may provide them with the opportunity to voice their thoughts on important issues that are usually kept within the hidden curriculum and remain silenced.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations inherent in this action research
study. The researcher's perception of spirit in her personal and professional life, selection of respondents, limited sample of one class, interview technique, analysis of the data, and the conclusions drawn must be taken into consideration by the reader. These limitations will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapter Two reviews the related and relevant literature. The literature discussed here pertains to adolescence, self-views, spirituality and holistic education.

Chapter Three deals with the methodology and procedures used in this study. The recruitment process and ethical considerations are also discussed. In addition, qualitative research methods are a focus, with particular emphasis on their appropriateness for this study.

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. The major themes that emerge from the journal entries and the interview process are analyzed.

Chapter Five summarizes this thesis, presents the conclusions, and outlines the implications for theory and practice and provides suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter examines the theories, issues, problems and themes surrounding the question, "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom?" First, holistic educational practices, specifically the "perennial philosophy" that underpins holistic educational practice, experiential learning, and transformational learning, are discussed. Second, research on spirituality curriculum that focuses on the adolescent is described. The adolescent self-system, including personal intelligences: interpersonal and intrapersonal, are discussed, followed by a summary of the present research study.

Holistic Approaches to Education

Dewey (1859-1952) believed in experiential learning (Cahan, 1992). The methods of observation and reflection were important elements to be applied. The testing of personal hypotheses through the actual experiences allowed the person to create their own knowledge in an active manner (Cahan). Pragmatism which focuses on principles such as that the universe is in process and all things are changing, and hypotheses tested by experience constitute the
best form of knowledge. Dewey was a pragmatist, and his emphasis on reflective practice has formed the theoretical basis of many inquiry type approaches to education (Miller, 1996). According to Dewey, reflection is at the heart of a holistic teaching practice for both the teacher and student (Miller, 1996).

The position that we come into being from a single unfolding reality is one of the cosmological philosophies behind holism (de Chardin, 1959). The etymology of the word universe offers us a clue as to what the cosmos can offer us, uni-verse or one story. This gives us the sense of wholeness (O'Sullivan, 1999). Many theories and philosophies have originated over the generations in the area of holistic education. Thus, our attempt to situate ourselves in this cosmology is the essence of holism.

Ancient spiritual traditions underpin many holistic theories, which Huxley (1970) called the "perennial philosophy." Miller (1996) declares that the perennial philosophy holds that "all things are part of an indivisible unity or whole" (p. 20). Perennial philosophy is the basis of holistic education. In this type of educational practice, "the intellect and spirit are integral parts of one another" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 64). Thus, the basic principles of holism mirror the perennial philosophy, keeping in mind the mind/spirit connection.
Miller (1996) identifies the fundamental principles of holistic education. First, there is an interconnectedness in the universe and an intimate connection with the Self. Second, cultivating intuition is a key element of holistic education, and value is derived from experiencing the interconnectedness of reality. Most important, however, is the realization that this unity leads to social activities designed to counter injustice and human suffering. The present study focuses on this.

Teaching holistically allows the school curriculum to be viewed taking into consideration the surrounding social context at large. As O'Sullivan (1999) states, holism includes "events which are viewed dynamically and are systematically connected in time and space. Thus a holistic paradigm is an outlook that considers that all events can be seen from an evolutionary viewpoint" (p. 75). A holistic approach corresponds to a transformational position. This occurs when our conception of knowledge has moved beyond its component parts into a position which is concerned with how we learn, not with what we learn. Thus, "a transformational approach to learning sees mind, body, spirit, and the universe as connected and inseparable" (Bosacki, 2001, p. 5). This type of procedure promotes the "integration of both personal growth and social change where equal focus is placed on the individual as well as the social
community" (Bosacki, 1997, p. 35). Ultimately, a classroom that establishes a transformational environment creates a community of learners among students, teachers, and parents "resulting in the co-construction of knowledge" (Bosacki, 1997, p. 36).

A variety of models and theories for holistic education were evident in the literature; however, the present educational system provides little encouragement in promoting this type of teaching practice. That is, today's educational climate promotes a transmission (behavioural) and transactional (cognitive) approach to education, but not a transformational approach. A holistic model for educating students emphasizing a mind, body, and spirit connection with the ultimate goal of transforming how adolescents view themselves is not valued as important.

Self in Adolescence

The literature revealed a complex concept in which the "self" has been discussed and defined by philosophers and psychologists. William James (1892/1961) was the first psychologist who identified the subjective and objective selves. He divided the self into the Me-self (self as object) and the I-self (self as subject). The Me-self is the object of one's knowledge; its components include the "material-me" the "social-me" and the "spiritual-me."
Each identifies the self as unique. The I-self is the actor or knower. Here is where his theory pushes deep into the heart of the self's exclusive domain. The I-self requires a special "self" notion.

Components of the I-self include:

1. self-awareness, an appreciation for one's internal states, needs, thoughts, and emotions;

2. self-agency, the sense of authorship over one's thoughts, and actions;

3. self-continuity, the sense that one remains the same person over time; and

4. self-coherence, a stable sense of the self as a single, coherent, bounded entity.

(Harter, 1999, p. 6)

These four components integrated together formed the self-as-subject. In addition, the spiritual self, according to James was "considered to be an inner core compromised of thoughts, dispositions, moral judgments and so on, that were more enduring aspects of self" (Harter, 1999, p. 15). He created a hierarchal structure made up of the constituents of the self. The bottom tier housed the material self followed by the social self. The spiritual self, on the other hand, which James regarded as "supremely precious," occupied the highest tier. The spiritual self umbrellas
the multiple selves below it. With this metaphor in mind, Damon and Hart (1988) created a model of self-understanding which incorporated the Jamesian I-self and Me-self.

In their developmental model of self-understanding, Damon and Hart (1988) created a three-dimensional cube to describe their findings. Four developmental levels from early childhood through late adolescence were isolated up the vertical side. On the front-face, the Jamesian self-as-object (the Me-self) was described under the general organizing principal: physical self, active self, social self, and psychological self. On the side-face the Jamesian self-as-subject (the I-self) was described under the general organizing principal: continuity, distinctness and agency. They attempted to fill the gaps between the extensive research they reviewed on self-concepts from childhood through adolescence with their own longitudinal research. Self-understanding then according to Damon and Hart, is "one's cognitive representation of self, self-interest, and personal identity" (p. 16). Each representation has important affective components, such as self-esteem. This leads us to the psychological research which has generally stressed the affective component over the cognitive meaning. Damon and Hart are concerned with positive and negative self-representation rather than how the adolescent defines and understands the self.
The self-concept literature surrounding early adolescence and middle adolescence is of great importance to the present study. Harter (1999) has completed extensive research into self-representations during adolescence. Harter indicates that during early and middle adolescence some children are not able to develop a comprehensive self-theory for many reasons. To explore this issue, self-concept in early and middle adolescence will be discussed, followed by a discussion surrounding the link between self and spirituality.

During early adolescence, interpersonal and social skills that influence one's interactions with others and one's social appeal became high priority (Harter, 1999). Self-descriptions that emerged in early adolescence were abstractions about the self which were considered higher-order self-concept; however, these representations were quite distinct from one another (Harter, 1983). The adolescent was only able to think about these abstractions as isolated self-attributes. The ability to integrate the single abstractions to define the self in different relational contexts was lacking. Thus, the early adolescent was unable to construct an integrated self-portrait. Harter found that during adolescence there are multiple selves that vary as a function of social context (Harter, 1998), meaning the adolescents described themselves differently
according to whom they were with.

Feelings of self-worth or self-esteem were also judged across relational contexts. During this stage, the construct of relational self-worth is introduced (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998). It was reported that adolescents experienced a higher self-worth when around friends and lower self-worth was experienced around parents. The opinions of significant others also play a role in an adolescent’s sense of self-worth. Harter (1990) found that support within a given relationship was more highly associated with relational self-worth in that group. Rosenberg (1986) also found that adolescents demonstrated a heightened concern with the reflected appraisals of others. For example, the respect of the peer group counterposed to the critical stance of parents. This will lead to variability in the self-concept across the relations. As we move into middle adolescence, the emerging structures change as the development of self-concept continues.

During middle adolescence, “the tortuous search for the self involves a concern with what or who am I” (Broughton, 1981). Adolescents “become increasingly introspective as well as morbidly preoccupied with what others think of them” (Harter, 1999, p. 68). Continued differing levels of self-worth across relational contexts heighten during middle to late adolescence. The adolescent is likely
to experience conflict, confusion, and distress which could lead to lowered self-worth. In addition, the contradictory feedback from different sources can lead to lower self-worth across the interpersonal contexts. Unlike the previous stage, the adolescent now begins to make comparisons between single abstractions.

Fischer (1980) labels these "abstract mappings," whereby the adolescent can now map constructs about self onto one another. Due to the "multiple Me's that crowd the self-landscape" (Harter, 1999, p. 68), the adolescent is unable to fully integrate all self-representations in a way that would resolve contradictions. However, at this stage they are beginning to recognize that there is a discrepancy but are not quite ready to create their full self-portrait. In midadolescence, the preoccupation with what significant others think of self is evident, as well as their preoccupation with discrepancies between the real and ideal self-concepts they have created. This can lead to lower self-worth. This explains why such unpredictable behaviour, changing self-evaluations, and mood swings are observed in many adolescents during this stage of development.

Bosacki (2001) believes that a sense of self and spiritual awareness are one and the same. Since adolescence is a pivotal time for self-concept formation, a holistic approach to exploring
the links between self and the development of spirituality is necessary. Therefore, an adolescent's self-view may offer us a lens into their spiritual nature and help us answer the question, "What nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom?"

In conclusion, the literature surrounding adolescence and self-concept is extremely complex but essential for the present study.

The Personal Intelligences

The literature about the social and emotional learning has emerged from new understandings of the nature of intelligence, learning, and success. Gardner (1983) introduced the concept of multiple intelligences which proposes that there are seven intelligences that are crucial for life success. These are linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and finally, the personal intelligences. "This multifaceted view of intelligence offered a richer picture of a child's ability and potential for success than the standard IQ score" (Goleman, 1995, p. 38). The personal intelligences are broken down into interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. An investigation into the personal intelligences along with self-concept and spiritual development may allow us to understand the developmental milestone of adolescence better. According to Bosacki (2001), "an investigation of how
preadolescents understand concepts of spirituality and self may help to illustrate the linkages among the understanding of the genuine in both one’s own and others inner worlds” (p. 6). Both of these human capacities will be discussed.

Gardner (1983) described intrapersonal (emotional) intelligence as the development of the internal aspects of a person. The root of this intelligence is to develop the ability to have access to one’s emotions and then use these emotions as a means of understanding and guiding one’s behaviour. The shaping of an accurate model of oneself and using that model to function effectively in life is the foundation of intrapersonal intelligence. Simply, intrapersonal intelligence is the key to self-knowledge. It is the intelligence that provides the adolescent with the ability of self-understanding.

Interpersonal (social) intelligence, on the other hand, turns outward to other individuals. The root of this intelligence is the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals, in particular among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. Simply, interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand others.

During adolescence, a maturation of knowledge of one’s own person as well as knowledge of other persons is cultivated. As
Gardner (1983) explains, "adolescence turns out to be that period of life in which individuals must bring together these two forms of personal knowledge into a larger and more organized sense, a sense of identity or a sense of self" (p. 251). So many emotions are present during adolescence, such as coming to terms with one's own personal feelings, motivations, and desires-including sexual ones which are a result of going through puberty. The pressures an adolescent must contend with makes this a stressful period in the life cycle. How one deals with these pressures is a "process" and a "project" of great importance. This is where the emerging identity of the adolescent occurs. How one manages to work their way through this developmental time will determine whether the individual can function effectively within the social context in which he has chosen to live. Ultimately, how the adolescent develops and brings together their intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences will determine their sense of self. Linking this with the spiritual question, "What nourishes an adolescent spirit in the classroom?" this research may offer a richer view into an adolescent's self-concept. This in turn may determine how successful they will be in life.

**Spirituality in Adolescence**

Three themes emerged from the literature review surrounding
the adolescent and spirituality: first, that the educational system lacks a curriculum that nourishes the spiritual self (Bosacki, 2001; Hart, 2001; Kessler, 2000; Miller, 2000; Noddings & Shore, 1998), second, the benefits of developing the spiritual self within students especially during adolescence (Bosacki, 2001; Kessler, 2000), and third, that the teacher is the most important agent in this process (Kessler, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Suhor, 1994). The first two are discussed in this section. The literature on teaching from the soul is discussed in the next section.

Education should provide adolescents with opportunities to develop an inner life, and in doing so Miller (2000) outlines four reasons for educating the inner self, or soul as he calls it. First, the whole person, rather than a fragmented self, is educated. Second, the classroom becomes more vital and energized. Third, balance to our education between inner and outer and qualitative and quantitative practices is achieved, and last, the big questions of life can be confronted. By attempting to teach with the spiritual self in mind, a “deeper sense of purpose and meaning” is introduced into the classroom.

Hart (2001) uses the term wisdom instead of soul and describes a setting where “teaching for wisdom” is the educational aim. Hart defines wisdom as “the deepest insights, the authentic
revelation, the healing vision...as an intuition...such insight is described as an inner experience or inner knowing within ourselves" (p. 4). Using this definition, the development of wisdom can be viewed synonymously with the development of an inner life. Hart also described a classroom where "mystery questions" are not only to be posed but more questions are to be sought. He believes that "wisdom asks questions about questions" (p. 6) and by doing so, "awe, wonder, reverence and epiphany are drawn forth not by quest for control, domination, or certainty, but by an appreciative open-ended engagement with the question" (p. 7). The spiritual self is being cultivated through the guise of wisdom education.

Kessler (2000) is another supporter of developing the inner life of students through the educational system. She has developed and implemented curriculum to support her belief "to honour the spiritual yearnings in young people" (p. xiii). "The Passages Program" offers a modern curriculum that listens and responds to adolescent voices. The questions posed anonymously by the adolescents in the program form the curriculum. By honouring the adolescent voice, Kessler believes that this preventative teaching practice can reduce violence and self-destructive behaviours and can also strengthen identity and self-esteem and improve adolescent self-worth (Kessler, 1997). She believes that by
providing opportunities for spiritual development within the educational system, the inner life of the adolescent is nourished and their longing for something more than the ordinary, material, and fragmented existence they are living would be met (Kessler, 2000). Thus, by allowing their "whole selves" to come forth, "The Passages Program" can nourish the spirit of adolescence.

Bosacki (2001) takes another viewpoint and suggests that "a sense of self and spiritual awareness are one and the same" (p. 4). With this in mind, the adolescent in the middle of creating their self-portrait or self-theory during this pivotal time in their lives would require a spiritual curriculum to honour their needs. Therefore, the importance of a balanced approach to learning that sees the child's intellectual development in balance with their social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development is imperative.

In sum, adolescence is a time of searching for an identity: clarifying and identifying a self that can be separate and independent from one's immediate family and strong enough to find a place in a larger world. Kessler (1997) explains that in times past, social and religious traditions could help teenagers to make this transition by providing a larger social and spiritual framework and sense of meaning in which to embed this new, separate identity. In today's period of global uncertainty and change, this supportive
context and sense of meaning is often absent. The research makes a strong argument for creating a curriculum that addresses the inner life of adolescents so that they can deal with this struggle.

**Teaching to the Soul**

"If a student's soul is to be nurtured and developed, it follows then that the process must begin with the teacher's soul" (Miller, 2000, p. 121). A teacher must bring their authentic presence to the classroom and must possess an empathetic stance towards their students if the student's soul is to be cared for. The teacher must be cultivating an internal life of their own in order to teach from the soul. This can be accomplished through a process of self-reflection and contemplation. By engaging in these types of practices, a teacher is attempting to connect to their interior life, this is a prerequisite when attempting to create a spiritual life for students.

Palmer (1998) also believes that the "inner landscape" of the teaching self cannot be ignored when working with the students we teach. He believes that when the human self and education are at their best it is when the teacher's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual paths are interwoven, dependent on one another for creating wholeness. Their "inward teacher" or authentic self is at
work. Palmer states that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and the integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). By identity he means knowing one's self, the inner and outer forces that make up who we are as human beings. Integrity refers to whatever wholeness one is able to find within the pattern of life or our identity. Teaching, therefore, from a place of wholeness is necessary when attempting to nourish the spirit of the adolescents we teach.

Suhor (1994) has observed that "spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence, rather than merely licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth" (p. 16). Teachers that have a deep connection to their inner self see themselves "as conduits for transcendence" and not just as facilitators of information. Once they "see" themselves in this light, then they are able to teach from the soul and nourish the spirit of the adolescents they teach.

The Present Study

According to Bosacki (2001), there is a need to apply a holistic approach to explore the linkages between self, social understanding, and the development of spirituality. In light of the aforementioned research, the present study explored Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" related to the question, "What nourishes the spirit of
adolescents in the classroom?” This inquiry aims to connect these three developmental milestones present during adolescence.

During the study, six council meetings were experienced by the participants. Each session focused on a different topic which elicited stories from the participants. As their stories unfolded, a sense of compassion, community, and empathy was felt by the group members. At the end of the study, a postinterview was conducted asking the research question, “What nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom?”

In conclusion, this chapter examined holistic educational practices, specifically the “perennial philosophy” that underpins holistic practice, experiential learning, and transformational learning. In addition, a “spiritual” curriculum focusing on the adolescent was presented. Self-systems were discussed, as well as the personal intelligences: interpersonal and intrapersonal. The role a teacher plays was also featured in this chapter. All of these influences affect the development of an adolescent and have an impact on this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the question, What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom? The design of the study was qualitative in nature, as this type of research aims to describe and understand adolescents' ways of interpreting a subjective experience, spirituality, and the meanings these individuals attach to the construct (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). A qualitative research design, specifically participatory action research adapted from Creswell (2002), was applied to this educational inquiry. The purpose of participatory action research (PAR) is to improve the quality of people's organization, community, and family lives (Stringer, 1990). This study addresses these qualities.

Description of Research Methodology or Approach

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study that utilized a participatory action research design. The study provided an explanation and understanding of the central phenomenon: What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom? A qualitative research approach was implemented because it enabled me to ask open-ended questions and allowed the participants to respond in
their own way. Lincoln and Guba (1985) initiated a naturalistic inquiry or constructivism approach to compensate for contrived research situations. An interpretivist approach was implemented in this study because it considers the participant's point of view which is central to the phenomenon being studied.

As an action research study, I conducted a systematic inquiry to gather information about and subsequently improve the way my classroom operates, how I teach, and how the students learn. It also explored the meaning the participants personally hold for educational purposes (Creswell, 2002, p.49). This study aimed to improve the practice of education by individuals studying issues or problems they face. The central phenomenon that was examined included what nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom. This participatory action research (PAR) study included Kemmis and Wilkinson’s (1998) six central features of participatory action research:

1. PAR is a social process where the researcher is interested in understanding how an individual’s identity is formed and re-formed through social interaction.

2. This type of inquiry is participatory. Individuals study themselves and examine how their own behaviours both frame and constrain their actions.
3. It is practical and collaborative.

4. PAR helps people release themselves from the constraints that limit self-determination and self-development.

5. PAR helps individuals free themselves from the constraints found in media, in language, in work procedures, and from the power found in educational settings.

6. This type of research is recursive and focused on bringing about change in practices. This occurs through spirals of reflection and action.

All six features are present in the study. That is, I aimed to understand how the adolescent self and spirituality are formed and transformed through the use of holistic teaching practices. While engaged in the participatory inquiry the students were actively involved in the process. Both the students and I worked collaboratively to develop a curriculum that was derived through the “mystery questions” the students posed. Journal entries allowed the adolescent participants to examine their own behaviours and freed them to express themselves in an authentic way. This released the adolescent from the constraints that limit self-determination and self-development and freed them from the power found in an educational setting. Last, by utilizing participatory action research, this study allowed me to bring about change in my
practice through my own reflections and actions.

Selection of Participants

Action research allowed me to gather information about and subsequently improve the way my classroom operates, how I teach, and how the students learn. Therefore, a sample of convenience, my homeroom class, was used for this study. My homeroom consisted of 11 girls and 19 boys.

Following the ethics approval received from Brock University and the Halton School Board (see Appendix A) a whole class oral invitation to participate in the study was presented (see Appendix D). In the oral presentation the study was outlined, with specific reference to the criteria the volunteers were accepting by participating. If they decided to accept the criteria and wanted to volunteer for the research study, information letters with parental and participant written consent forms were sent home with the students outlining the details of the study. Sixteen consent forms were returned with signatures of approval allowing their child participate in the study. The participants ranged in age from 13 to 14 years. The group consisted of 7 girls and 9 boys.

Ethical Considerations

The three main ethical issues related to the present study
were the use of human participants, the steps taken in consideration of the students not participating in the study, and the teacher/student relationship.

I planned and conducted all research activities according to the guidelines outlined in the Brock University Faculty Handbook. In the issue regarding use of human participants, parents of each participant were provided with information verbally and in writing, in the form of a Letter of Information (see Appendix B) and an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C). These verbal and written disclosures regarding the nature of the research, which included the study's purposes, methods of data collection, assurances of confidentiality, and use of the participants' responses as data for the study, were distributed to protect the welfare and dignity of the research participants. Prior to beginning the first session, each participant had their parent or legal guardian sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C) and Letter of Information (see Appendix B) to allow their son or daughter to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were used to maintain participants' anonymity. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the interview process or decline to respond to any of the questions. The participants were assured that they would not be penalized in their regular course of study in any way.
Students not participating in the interview or journalling process also participated in the Teacher Advisor Group sessions. They wrote written responses in their Reading Response Logs after each session while the participants responded in their study journals. This allowed all students to "appear" to be participating equally. The advantage of conducting an action research study is that I utilized structures within my regular program that blended naturally with the research study. That is, while I interviewed the participants for the study I maintained my scheduled reading conferences with the students not participating, which allowed the students to feel very much a part of the same program.

The teacher/student relationship also played a role in the ethical considerations of the present study. An assurance was delivered to each student that they would not be penalized if they withdrew from the study at any time. In addition, due to the very nature of the action research design my philosophy of providing a safe, risk-free environment played a vital role in allowing the students to participate without fear of answering in the "wrong way." The participants had the advantage of "knowing" me and thus making the decision of participating or not.

To conduct an action research study in the Halton District School Board, the Research Committee for the Halton District School
Board required a detailed outline of the proposed action research. The Brock University research ethics board application for ethics review of research with human participants was copied and sent to the Research Committee for the Halton District School Board. The Halton Research Committee met on November 21, 2001 and approved the study. A letter of approval was received on December 5, 2001 (see Appendix A). The Brock University Ethics Board met in January 2002 and approved the study on January 28, 2002 (see Appendix A).

**Instrumentation**

In this study, participants were asked through audio-taped interviews and journal reflections to comment on their perceptions of what nourishes their spirit in the classroom. The study consisted of six sessions over a 6 week period introducing Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" to the participants. (see Classroom Procedures for in depth step by step procedures.) The sessions took place during the Teacher Advisor Group (TAG) allocated time slot. Reflection journals were completed by each participant after each TAG session during school time for the duration of the study. This gave me a more in-depth view of the participants' experiences in the classroom during the "Passages Program." I also kept a personal journal for the duration of the research study to provide a richer and
more in-depth view from which this experience evolved. This offered me another lens from which to view this experience.

Upon completion of the 6 week study, postinterviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews took place at the convenience of the participants and required approximately 15-20 minutes per session. The interview consisted of the participant answering seven questions (see Appendix E). The interview invited participants to reflect on ways the nourishment of their spirit was enhanced and nurtured in the classroom and how they viewed themselves.

**Field or Classroom Procedures**

Utilizing a participatory action research design provided a framework for following Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" in the classroom research procedure. A 50 minute TAG (Teacher Advisor Group) time was used to implement the research procedure. It took place every Tuesday morning. The 6 week study only touched the surface of Kessler's "Passages Program." To experience a more holistic description of the classroom set-up, see Context in Chapter Four. An overview of the program in its entirety is discussed followed by an overview of the sections of the program that were implemented in this study.
Overview of the Passages Program

Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" is a human development curriculum for adolescents. Its roots originated in the Mysteries Program developed at the Crossroads School in Santa Monica, California. The Passages approach begins with students. After several weeks of building community in the classroom, students are asked to anonymously write their "mysteries" about themselves, others, and nature. It is this student-centered process that refines the Passages curriculum to suit the needs of each particular group. The asking and the witnessing of these questions are at least as important as the answers. Passages returns to the original meaning of education "to draw forth" by creating a safe container for the wonder, worry, joy, and wisdom within each child to emerge and engage in the learning process. The young adolescent is supported through the transition from childhood into adolescence and is provided with the information, ethical framework, and decision-making skills to face the many risks of teenage years.

Passages not only recognized social and emotional learning, but it also recognized spiritual development in the adolescent. Passages provided an opportunity for students to explore meaning or purpose in life, to experience stillness, silence, and solitude, to express yearning for transcendence, joy, and creativity, and to
experience a deep connection to themselves, others, and the wholeness of life. Thus, "health education" is returned to the original meaning of health: "to make whole." Health from this perspective is defined as the integration of mind, body, community, spirit, and heart.

The elements of Passages are: identity definition and self-esteem, communication skills, stress management, emotional education and mind-body health, preventative health education, playfulness and joy, celebrating human diversity, accommodating and validating different lifestyles, personal and social responsibility, and finally, spiritual development. Passages developed a framework for nurturing spiritual development that respected and honoured religious or philosophical beliefs, yet provided experiences which may be cultivated without violating any of those beliefs. The curriculum is designed to create a forum for students to explore the following needs:

1. The yearning for deep connection.
2. The search for meaning and purpose.
3. The longing for silence and solitude.
4. The urge for transcendence.
5. The hunger for joy.
6. The creative drive.
7. The need for initiation.

Kessler identified these seven explorations as the "gateways to the soul." This is where the present research focused its study, on spiritual development.

Kessler began her course with building community activities. When she felt the time was right, she continued with four practices she found proved crucial to inviting soul into the classroom: ground rules, games and symbolic expressions, the "mysteries" questions, and the council process. The present study focused on the last two: the "mysteries" questions and the council process.

**Classroom Procedures**

*Session one.* During TAG time, an introductory activity was presented where the students had to create a symbol that represented who they are and what they believe in. Once the symbol was completed, the students presented their symbol to the class and explained what they drew or wrote and why. Upon completion of this introductory activity a discussion ensued about the nature of "mystery" and our own unique thoughts. As a result of this class discussion, I asked all the students in my homeroom to anonymously write down their personal mysteries about themselves, others, and nature. "Please write about what you wonder about when you cannot sleep at night or when you're walking home alone. What do you
worry about? or feel curious about? or feel afraid or excited about? What are your questions about yourselves, about others, about life itself?” (Kessler, 2000, p. 11) Only when the process was completely anonymous did the students feel safe. At the end of TAG, the participants in the study reflected on their experience in their journals. The remainder of the class responded in their Response Logs. The journals were collected and the questions were typed by an associate so that even I did not know the identity of the author by their handwriting.

Session two. The mystery questions were read aloud in a sharing circle. Upon completion of the reading of the questions, the council had its first meeting. A few rituals were observed and followed for each session. A dedication was presented at the beginning of each council meeting such as, “I dedicate this council to honesty-and the friendships that come when we tell the truth” (Kessler, 2000, p. 14). Students provided future dedications at each council meeting. A stone was passed to designate who had the right to speak. It also protected the speaker from interruption. Students practiced “deep listening” that was central to the council process. Zimmerman and Coyle (1996) state that listening with complete attention, unimpeded by quick judgments and reactions, and hearing the speaker’s feelings and intentions as well as the words is central
to deep listening. The students commented on the questions themselves and offered further questions or comments. A response in the students' journals was made at the end of each council meeting.

Session three. Themes were provided at the next three council meetings which allowed students to find out more about one another and about themselves. The topic for session one was trust—A time when someone in your life was really there for you, and mistrust—A time when someone let you down. The council meeting rituals were followed.

Session four. The topic was a precious moment from childhood you never want to forget. The rituals were observed.

Session five. The topic for this council meeting was exclusion, being left out or excluding someone else. The rituals for the council meeting were followed.

Session six-final session. This session got to the spiritual question. I modeled this session after Kessler's (2000) description (p. 15). “We’ve been talking about wholeness in this class—about caring for ourselves as whole people. It’s pretty clear what we mean by mind and body and even what we mean by social and emotional needs. But what do we mean by spiritual?” At this point I had a brainstorming session as the students shared words
that came to mind. After this was completed I continued. "Would you be willing to each tell us a story about a time in your lives when your own spirit-whatever that means to you-was nourished or encouraged, stimulated, inspired-whatever comes to mind?" (p. 15) The rituals for the Council Meeting were adhered to.

**Data Collection and Recording**

Six sessions over a 6 week period introducing Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" was implemented. During and after each of the six sessions, participant reflection journals were completed. I collected the journals on the day of each session and read through them. I made notes regarding themes or specific comments made by the participants that were of particular interest to the study. The journals were returned to the participants prior to the next session.

I also kept a reflection journal for the duration of the research which provided a more in-depth, richer view from which the experience evolved. Reflections about each session were documented in my journal along with questions I had. I completed my entries at the same time as the participants, during and after each session.

Upon completion of the six sessions, a postinterview (one on one) was scheduled at a time mutually convenient for both myself
and the participant. The interview required approximately 15-20 minutes per session and was conducted in the classroom or in a quiet place in the hall. The interview consisted of the participant answering seven questions (see Appendix E).

After the postinterviews were completed, I transcribed the interviews. Member checking was adhered to; that is, copies of the transcribed interviews were shared with the participants to clarify meaning and accuracy of the responses. When member checking was completed a Letter of Appreciation (see Appendix F) was sent to the participants, for volunteering in the study, and to the parents for allowing their son/daughter to participate.

**Data Processing and Analysis**

An inductive interpretation and analysis of data starting with minute details and working up into big themes is the premise behind qualitative research (Creswell, 2002). In other words, after reading all the data that had been collected, identification of the details such as issues, factors, themes, items that came up repeatedly, or idiosyncrasies that emerged from the data (DSBN, 2000) provided the foundation for the big themes that emerged from the data. I will describe the process I went through as I read, absorbed, thought, sifted, and thought some more as I struggled to make sense of the adolescents' experience.
The following stages for qualitative data processing were outlined by Creswell (2002). A complete read-through of all the data to obtain a general sense of the content was suggested. Describing and developing themes was the primary objective at this point of the analysis. Next was the coding of the text and development of themes and/or descriptions from the common elements. By adapting Creswell's stages to my study, I was able to unearth the big themes in a vast amount of data.

The initial stage of the data analysis required the organization of the data. After each of the six sessions I transcribed the participant journals and read them over to ensure clarity. The session entries provided interesting information to each of the topics discussed in each session.

Next, a postinterview was conducted. When the member checks were completed and verified as correct, I read the transcripts over many times. I analyzed the individual sessions and interviews through the coding and the labeling of the text. Common themes began to emerge and take shape. During this stage of data analysis I labeled as many as 45 text segments or codes throughout the data. In successive readings I tabulated how many times each code occurred throughout the entire data collection. In subsequent analysis, the codes were collapsed to six to seven major and minor
themes through the process of eliminating repeated codes, codes that occurred only a couple of times, and finally codes that could not be categorized. Multiple perspectives were used to corroborate each theme. In other words, evidence for each theme was based on several viewpoints from different individuals. Triangulation among different data sources was also used to corroborate evidence from different individuals; in this study between the individual participants and the teacher and the method of data collection, journals, and interview transcriptions, were also was used to corroborate each theme.

Finally, as themes emerged so did their relationships. In order to visualize the connections between the themes I generated a visual diagram or web to illustrate the links that interrelate the emergent themes. This helped me to take in how the themes interrelated. It diagramed the complexity and yet the simplicity of how an adolescent spirit can be nourished within the classroom. The diagram will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

Last, the reflection journal that I kept during the duration of the study was reread. Data were highlighted that provided the study with any information that could be viable, such as observations of nonverbal responses made by the participants, personal and professional thoughts, ideas, assessments about the session,
feelings, reactions to the session, and any positive connections that could be made between the participants and me.

Utilizing multiple perspectives, for example, student-to-student, student-to-teacher and self-reports, as evidence for the themes generated from the data was essential when conveying the complexity of the phenomenon being studied.

Interconnecting the themes or layering the analysis brought a sophistication and complexity into the action research design.

"Action research has been described as peeling away layers of an onion. Removing one layer usually reveals another layer that prompts further explanation...this peeling away can help you move toward more complete understanding of the specific educational phenomena you are studying." (Sagor, 1992, p. 54)

After coding the data I started to analyze them. I chose to analyze each of the sessions individually because the topic for each session was so vastly different from one another. I didn’t want to lose the essence of each discussion by analyzing them all together. In addition, I didn’t want to lose the voice of the adolescent within the realm of each discussion. I felt that it was important to view the build up to the interview. The post interview was analyzed separately from the sessions because the interview specifically
asked the research question and questions about the sessions themselves. I analyzed both the sessions and the interview for descriptive elements and themes and layered and interconnected themes and I reported my findings in the form of a narrative. The narrative discussion was written highlighting the voice of the adolescent, the setting, the sessions, and the interview. Each element is inextricably connected to the big themes that were uncovered in this study.

Applying these methods to the present research, I can explore what nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom.

**Methodological Assumptions**

There are a couple of methodological assumptions that are evident in this study: first, that this highly complex idea of the "spirit" can be articulated through the interview process with adolescent participants, and second that students will feel confident enough to state their authentic perceptions on self and spirituality in the interview.

**Limitations**

Several limitations were inherent in this study. Qualitative methods of collecting and interpreting data are limited by lack of precision, clarity, and systemization of quantitative measurement.
which often raises concerns regarding the face validity of the data. However, the intended outcome of qualitative research is not the generalization of results but a deeper understanding of experience from the perspective of the participants. The findings generated in this study are relevant to the experiences of the 16 adolescents involved in the study and my own experience in the study. Sample size could also be a limitation when making generalizations. Generalizing, then, these findings across diverse populations is debatable due to the sample size.

Another possible limitation was the interview process. In this action research study I am the researcher and the participants' teacher. This may cause some anxiety on the part of the student participant. They may want to say the "right" thing because of the teacher/student relationship. However, it could also be viewed as a strength in this study because, when searching for answers to questions like what nourishes the spirit of adolescents, the participants must feel safe in the presence of the researcher. They must have a feeling of trust and a sense of community within the classroom setting. This preexisting relationship of trust was present in this study since I was the primary researcher.

A further limitation may be the very nature of the question itself. The participant may not know how to articulate what they
are feeling when their spirit is being nourished, or they may not know what their spirit is, or the participant may not possess the language competency they require to answer the interview questions being asked.

During the interview, the participant may feel uncomfortable in the presence of audio-taping equipment and may experience some anxiety in spite of the researcher’s efforts to promote a warm and welcoming environment. This could also be viewed as a limitation to this study.

A further limitation was that a random sample was not used for this study. A sample of convenience was used.

Despite these limitations, the researcher will discover personal meaning through the lived experience.

**Establishing Credibility**

Creswell (2002) describes triangulation as the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals. Using at least "three different windows" (DSBN, 2000) on the phenomenon being studied assisted in the validity and reliability of the data collected in this study. Triangulation was utilized by collecting three sources of data. Student journals provided evidence for thematic development based on self-reports. Student interviews provided evidence for thematic development based on student to teacher
interaction. Last, a teacher journal provided a third source of evidence for thematic development. This allowed me to ensure that the study was accurate due to the fact that the information was not drawn from a single source.

Therefore, triangulation was used to validate the findings between the various types of data. I searched for corroborating evidence between the participants' interview responses and journal entries and the my own journal entries identifying evidence that supports the major themes and descriptions that are pertinent to the study.

Restatement of the Problem

The challenge for teachers today is to provide an environment for students to develop their spirit, a place that gives them the courage and confidence to try new things, to explore, to create, to experience opportunities that have the capability of transforming them. There is a lack of research on the adolescent self and spirituality. Due to this lack of conceptual and empirical literature on adolescent self and spirituality there is a lack of curriculum that addresses the "spiritual life" of adolescents. Current curriculum focuses on the cognitive approach to education and not a holistic approach.

Nourishing the spirit of the students we teach needs to occur
if we are to provide a quality classroom for our students. If teachers can create that unique place where students can develop the courage and confidence required to try new things, to explore, and to create, then nourishing the spirit of students becomes a possibility. The teacher is present, the students are present, and the atmosphere is one filled with communal energy. Both the student and the teacher are not only mindful of learning facts, they are also aware at all times of the feelings and emotions which surround the learning situation.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings of this study were so inextricably interwoven with the community of adolescent learners, the teacher, the setting, and the class culture that it was difficult for me to separate them and enter into a discussion isolating these elements as individual, disparate parts, because they are not. I would lose the essence of the study, which was to explore the gateways that nourish the adolescent spirit in the classroom, and this involved all of the aforementioned criteria discussed in a holistic way.

This chapter presents the results and the analysis of the data collected in a way that will allow the reader to become part of the experience. The findings are interwoven with the methodology so that the voice of the adolescents and the teacher can be felt.

I start with participant descriptions which have the results of the first interview question, "How would you describe yourself?" embedded into each profile. My impression of who they are alongside their impression of who they are is described. This will give you an insight into the personalities of the adolescents that were involved in the study. Next, the set-up or context for the study is described, providing a more holistic description of the atmosphere than I
offered in Chapter Three.

The remainder of the chapter will unfold as follows: The sessions will be described followed by the interviews. Each of six sessions will be introduced individually. My thoughts will be shared as each session unfolds. This will be followed by selected participant journal excerpts that corroborate the themes that emerged from each session. I felt that by sharing the words, that is, the voice of the adolescent throughout each session, this would best reflect their experience. The themes from each session will be summed up at the end of each session, and at the completion of the six sessions I will summarize the overall themes that emerged.

The interview questions will be dealt with one at a time, highlighting emerging themes interwoven with the voice of the adolescent. At the end of the interview section I will summarize the overall themes that emerged. Finally, I will summarize the overall findings from both the sessions and the interviews and provide meanings from results.

Participant Descriptions

The first participant interviewed, Irene, (a pseudonym is used for each participant) is an all-round exceptional student. She maintains an overall average of 90% while actively participating in
many extracurricular activities. She is a perfectionist and knows it. Irene has an incredible thirst for knowledge but balances this with her keen sense of humour and wit. Irene describes herself as "very logical. I'm somewhat spiritual because I recently read a book which I was very interested in. It's called The Tao of Pooh which is about, ah, Taoism, which is very inspiring." Irene seemed nervous at the outset of the interview and was concerned about how her voice would sound on the tape, but when engaged in discussion quickly forgot about her concerns and let her thoughts flow. Irene was well prepared with detailed notes outlining her answers.

The second participant interviewed, Mickey, was held back last year and is repeating grade 8. He is a procrastinator. He is constantly looking for a pencil or needing to go somewhere in the school to get something he has forgotten. If he can delay working, he will. He is a daydreamer. He loves to dance and perform, but his passion is writing fantasy stories and drawing. Mickey describes himself "not as an emotional wreck but a complex of emotions, feelings like other stuff and I can draw pretty well." Mickey was comfortable from the moment he sat down for the interview. He was articulate and related a lot of his answers through story and metaphor. He did not require any notes to rely on throughout the interview.
The third participant interviewed, Jessica, is a quiet, soft-spoken, hardworking, diligent girl. She has maintained an 80% average the first two terms of grade 8 in spite of a learning disability. Jessica is a Christian and is not afraid to share her faith in God. She describes herself as, "I'm not really sure but I guess I'm friendly and I don't really, like, put people down a lot. I've had, like a tough time and like it's hard because I don't really have anybody I can call a friend." Jessica was nervous during the interview but did not seem uncomfortable. She had a couple of notes to rely on but did not require any more than that to answer the questions.

The fourth participant interviewed, Grant, is the class clown. He is an average student academically and relies on his absurd sense of humour to entertain his fellow classmates. Grant had an incredibly difficult time describing himself, but through much prompting on my part he managed to come up with, "short and friendly." Grant seemed nervous throughout the interview but settled down once he managed to describe himself. He did not have any notes on his question sheet and gave one-word answers.

The fifth participant interviewed, Janice, is a quiet and hardworking girl. She has a learning disability which requires her to work longer and harder than anyone else in order to understand a concept, but she never gives up. She is a gentle soul with a winning
smile. She claimed that describing herself was a difficult task, but in the same breath stated, “I would describe myself as a nice, kind, gentle, easygoing person. I’m special in my own ways and different from everyone else.” From that moment on Janice was at ease throughout the interview, allowing me to see into her world through her eyes.

The sixth participant interviewed, Jessie, is a lively gal with an infectious smile. She loves reading and math, maintaining Honour Roll status the first two terms of grade 8. She has a great sense of humour and giggles continuously. “I think I would describe myself by being friendly and caring about others,” states Jessie. Jessie was calm, cool, and collected throughout the interview. She did not rely on any notes and answered all questions comfortably and with ease.

The seventh participant interviewed, Jeff, is extremely introspective. He moved around a lot in the first 6 years of his life and has been in foster care with the same family since he was 6 years of age. Jeff has a learning disability but has worked incredibly hard to overcome the many obstacles that have stood in his way. He has come into his own this year through much perseverance and wants to be a teacher one day. Jeff describes himself as “an easygoing person, like um...I will go all the way with
people and understand what they do and I'm a loving and caring person and I work well with people, and that's basically it.” Jeff breezed through the interview. He was comfortable and answered all questions with ease.

The eighth participant interviewed, Susan, is a quiet, carefree girl. She has a high academic standing and has maintained Honour Roll status the first two terms of grade 8. She has challenged herself to overcome her quiet nature. She has a genuine way about her that exudes kindness. Susan describes herself “like an onion because it's hard for me to get to my inner self.” Susan was a bit shy during the interview. She came prepared with extensive notes and diagrams outlining her answers. She gave concise, thought-provoking responses.

The ninth participant interviewed, Jim, is a student who needs to work hard to achieve academic success. He has lived with his grandparents since he was 3 years of age after his mother abandoned him. His courage and strength as a human being are inspiring. Jim describes himself as “unique in my own way, like everybody has their own special, like, thing.” Jim was a bit shy during the interview, but that didn't last long. His answers were long and detailed. They described stories, events, and even his own theories about why we are here. He needed no prompting to elaborate on his
answers. This concluded the first day of interviews.

The very next day six more interviews were conducted. Once again, the participants were provided with the interview questions the morning before their interview. The second set of interviews took place in the hall outside the classroom. There was one interruption, which will be documented in the next participant profile.

The 10th participant interviewed, Norm, is extremely personable. He is the class president and is actively involved in the running of all the Student Council functions around the school. He is a hands-on learner and is a constant chatterer in the classroom. Norm describes himself as follows: "I'd say I care about people, like, um, I have a younger brother and I care for him a lot." Norm was at ease during the interview. There was one interruption during Norm's interview when an autistic student being chaperoned to the washroom decided the tape recorder I was using looked like an interesting piece of equipment to play with. I simply turned off the tape recorder, engaged in conversation with "Randy" and waited for him to continue on his way. This interruption was brief, but it did interfere with the flow of the interview. Norm, however, was not adversely affected by this interruption. He did not rely on any notes and gave brief answers to all the questions.
The 11th participant interviewed, Don, is an outgoing person. He always has a smile on his face. He is an average student who struggles with reading and writing but excels in mathematics. He describes himself as "helpful and emotional." When asked to elaborate, he replies, "Ah, I don't know, just like family stuff." Don was comfortable during the interview and gave brief answers to the questions.

The 12th participant interviewed, Pete, is a mark-driven student. He bases his success on his report card marks, specifically his overall average. Pete has maintained Honour Roll status the first two terms of grade 8. Pete describes himself "as funny sometimes and athletic and adventurous." He seemed at ease during the interview process and gave short, concise answers to all the questions.

The 13th participant interviewed, Marie, is a kind, supportive student. Her academic success does not come naturally. She puts forth consistent effort in order to reach her goals. Marie describes herself as "caring, helpful, um, intelligent in most areas. I work hard." Marie was at ease during the interview. She answered each question thoroughly and with poise.

The 14th participant interviewed, Kendra, is fun loving, outgoing, and vivacious, yet sensible at the same time. She manages
to hold both sides of her personality in balance. She excels academically with ease and has maintained an over 80% average for the first two terms of grade 8. Kendra describes herself “as energetic, friendly, funny, and serious at times.” During the interview Kendra was at ease. She answered all the questions with depth and concern. You could tell that she took her role quite seriously.

The 15th participant interviewed, Daniel, is an easygoing boy who likes to be active and work with his hands. He has a learning disability and struggles in all areas of the curriculum. He describes himself as “nice.” Daniel seemed quite shy and nervous to be participating in a one-on-one interview. His responses were often one-word answers which required some elaboration. This concluded the second day of interviews.

The last day of interviews took place the following week. I interviewed the 16th participant, Jack, in the classroom during morning recess. Jack is an incredibly sensitive person. He is a kind student who cares about everybody and everything. He has an infectious laugh and giggles quite frequently. He struggles academically but gives it his best effort at all times. Jack describes himself as “a caring guy, like I care for things like people and animals.” Jack was a bit nervous during the interview,
concerned about whether he said the "right" thing. He was brief in his responses but to the point.

The Context

The confining four walls of a classroom can be transformed into a place of mystery with a bit of creativity and imagination on the part of the teacher. Such was the case with the six sessions that were going to define my research into what nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom. The desks were pushed back against three walls, opening up a wide expanse of hard, tiled flooring. The throwing of blankets, small rugs, and pillows around the perimeter of the open space softened the area. The curtains were drawn and the lights were turned off, creating a mysterious atmosphere of wonder. The class of 30 students were ushered in. Without instruction, they immediately took off their shoes as they nervously chatted to one another while they found their spot in the circle. There was an uncertainty that one feels only when something unequaled is about to occur. You could taste the excitement in the air. Some students were sitting, some were lying down with their hands cradling their chins, others were stretched out resting their heads on their folded arms, anticipating what was to come next.

I lit the candle housed in the clear glass holder and placed it in the middle of the floor. This called the council meeting to order
without any words, just a symbol of light. I held piece of soapstone in my hands, which let the group know that it was their turn to listen and listen deeply to each other. I dedicated the council meeting to honesty and the friendships that come when we tell the truth. As I slowly started to read their questions aloud, I could feel the intensity of 30 pairs of eyes gazing in my direction, even though my own pair were focused on the page in front of me. And so began the opening of the gateways to our spirit.

The Sessions

Session One

One week earlier I had started my first session in what some educators would consider a unique classroom set-up. The desks were configured in a horseshoe shape, two, sometimes three desks deep. Everyone could see each other. If I am to teach from a holistic stance, then the arrangement of desks and how they are situated will set the tone for our classroom climate. An inviting atmosphere echoes collaboration, echoes you are important, echoes speak and we will listen. Today I was finally going to start my research, the actual sessions themselves.

I didn't sleep well last night. I kept waking up wondering if it was all going to work out okay. I was
incredibly nervous as I started today. The adrenalin was flowing. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

As an introductory activity, I asked my students to create a symbol that represents who they are.

This is a challenging task that requires a lot of thought. Dead quiet and lots of puzzled looks. "Going in deep" requires this type of attention. The tension from the kids is one of uncertainty. The thought of not being correct or not understanding is felt loudly. We are not so different. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

The students presented their symbols that represented who they are, and what they believe in to each other. The majority of the participants created concrete symbols that illustrated their future careers such as a stethoscope for a doctor, an apple for a teacher and a movie camera for an actor. Some of the participants created more metaphoric symbols that represented how they see themselves in the world. For example, Irene drew a circle with a bird in the middle and many colours drawn on the inside of the circle. She explained, "the circle represented friends and life and that the bird represented freedom. All the different colours were the different paths she could take and the colours of life."

Mickey drew a dragon with a sword to represent himself. "/
believe that dragons inspire greatness, for instance one minute they are peaceful and in a fraction of a second they could explode in rage. I believe that I am this way."

Susan drew a sun and a happy face and explained, "I want to make everyone happy and I want to make this world a brighter place." Creating the symbols allowed the students to begin thinking about their future and how they see themselves fitting into this universe. As their teacher, it also gave me some insight into how they view themselves.

Drawing the symbol was a good introductory activity but nothing elicits stories more deeply than students' own questions. I asked them to write down what they wonder about when they can't sleep at night or when they're walking home from school. What are your questions about yourselves, others, about life itself? Anonymity is assured. My students are made aware that my student teacher, who is not familiar with the students' handwriting, will type up the questions and then shred the paper.

They took a long time to write the questions, which surprised me. I thought the symbol would be challenging but easy to do and the questions more difficult, but that was not the case. Each person asked many questions. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)
When I read the questions to myself for the first time, I was astounded at the sheer number of them. But as I dug deeper and read them more carefully, a pattern emerged.

_I do not know who wrote the questions but they are all quite similar and deep, which surprised me. I knew that students thought about these things because in the past I often discussed these things with various individuals-with those who showed an interest. Now I know I should have been discussing these things with everyone-for they all seem to be thinking these things in their private minds. I'm on the right path._ (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

I sorted the questions into categories: self, social (peers), social(family), cultural/world, metaphysical/ existential, and tangential/small talk. Some examples of the types of questions the students asked are indicated under each heading. A full, unedited list of questions asked is in Appendix G.

_Self._ Am I a mistake? Will I get married? What will high school be like? What do people think of me? Will I have enough money to survive? What will I be?

_Social (peers)._ Why are people cool and not cool? Will I be together with my friends at high school? What do other people think
of me? Will I meet my old friends again?

**Social (family).** Why is my brother such a menace? Why are my parents always mad at me? What do my parents think of me? Is my family safe? What will happen to my family? I worry about my family.

**Cultural/world.** Why does racism still exist? Why does colour still matter? Will there be world peace? Why are there so many bad guys out there? Why is there war? What will the world be like in the next decade? Why have people been made to cause problems? What has money done for us and what has it not done for us?

**Metaphysical/existential.** Why am I here? When will I die? What will it feel like? Is there life after death? How did the universe become what it is? How was the earth created? What is the meaning of life? What if there was no God? Is there a hell or do we live in it now? What will life be like in the future?

**Tangential/small talk.** What book will I choose to read next? What do I have for homework? What would it be like to be a teacher?

Will I get my writing done? What should I wear tomorrow?

**Session one-selected participant journal excerpts.**

Jack responds by letting me know that he has gained self-
understanding.

*Powerful session, I learned about my inner feelings. Thank you!*  

Jessica expresses her disbelief in the fact that anyone would want to know what she thinks about.  

*The questions I asked seem kind of dumb to me and I never thought anyone would care what I wonder.*  

Don shares his struggles and triumphs but finds them enjoyable never the less.  

*I think that this TAG period was one of the toughest, with the challenging stuff that we did and I had fun. The challenging part was to find a symbol because I really had to think about it, but the questions were easy because I have been thinking of these questions for awhile.*  

Mickey comments on his self-understanding and the nature of an intrapersonal curriculum versus an outcome-based curriculum.  

*The experience in this session was fun and it makes me look deep inside myself. I mean anyone can do addition, subtraction or anything like that but only I can look inside myself. That is much more harder. I believe that I will develop through this program into a better person with new skills.*  

Grant feels empowered by the freedom of expression that he has experienced.  

*I liked doing this and want to do it again because it let's us express ourselves.*  

Kendra shares her thoughts about self-understanding and the intrapersonal and interpersonal nature of this session.
I think this session was a good idea because everyone learned things about everyone else. I believe that the session was a good experience for everyone because they had to look deep down inside themselves to find their aspirations and dreams and everyone learned something about someone that they might not have known about them.

**Emerging themes from session one.** The themes that emerged from the participants of session one, creating a personal symbol and writing your personal mystery questions, are: intrapersonal connections being examined with specific reference to self-understanding; interpersonal relationships being discovered; freedom of expression, creativity and enjoyment being expressed as positive outcomes of this type of curriculum.

**Session Two**

When I finished ceremoniously reading all of the unedited questions from session one, you could cut the tension in the air. I asked if anyone wanted to make a comment and started to pass around the speaking rock in a counterclockwise direction. As the rock passed from person to person, most students chose to pass. Very few people shared their thoughts. Inwardly my heart started pounding a thousand beats per minute, while on the outside I remained calm. Once the rock touched each person in the circle it landed back in my hands. I asked everyone to write a response in their journals. Every student in my homeroom class completed a
response after each of the six sessions. Some wrote in their Reading Response Log, and the other 16 who volunteered for my study wrote their response in a journal I had given them at the outset of the study.

As predicted, very few shared their views to the group initially; however, there was no hesitation in responding on paper so I know they have a lot they want to say about the questions, just not publicly. I'm panicking at this point in time; will it be over before it starts? (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

After 10 minutes of silent writing, I passed the rock around the circle again. This time people started to share their thoughts openly. Maybe this was because they had time to write their thoughts down on paper. I don't know.

People started to open up about their "true" feelings and emotions. They need to discuss and be open to one another. They need to know that they're not alone. Jim spoke out about no one being a mistake. This broke the ice. A comforting thought for one of the students out there who feels confused by this troubling thought. Three or four students spoke openly about how much they are enjoying this process. I am inspired by my students. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)
When the second session was completed I was elated by the many positive discussions that ensued, especially after such a sluggish start. The students spoke candidly and openly about their fears, their concerns, their beliefs. Deep listening seemed to be being practiced. There were no put-downs by anyone. No one laughed at anyone’s comments. There was a feeling of community and belonging.

At the conclusion of session two I asked if anyone would like to blow out the candle as a symbol of the council meeting coming to a close. Everyone’s hand went up. I chose the closest person. Just before the meeting was brought to a close, I invited anyone in the group who wished to, could make a dedication at the beginning of the next session. With one breath of air, darkness fell over the room.

Session two-selected participant journal excerpts.

Jessie writes about her sense of belonging and her fears.

I worry about the future sometimes, but I didn’t think everyone did. Asking these questions just proved that kids may act like fools, but when we are alone we may have many unanswered questions. Like we act younger than we are. It seems that a lot of people asked the same sorts of questions. Listening to those questions was hard stuff to do. It makes you think of all the worries and troubles we have. It kind of seemed scary about all of the questions about death. It scares me to think of death because I don’t want to die any time soon.

Jeff writes about his sense of belonging.

It is very interesting how everyone is different but they all think about the same things.
Susan writes about belonging, community, empathy for others, and her positive self-concept.

I agree with Jim. No one is a mistake. We are all important. I also agree with Irene, why is everybody worrying about the future? We are all going through this together and you should be thankful for today. Not tomorrow. Who knows what's going to happen tomorrow? Maybe something good, maybe something bad. I also agree with Sarah, why is everyone worried about what they look like or what people think of them. All that matters is how you think of yourself. All these questions made me think a bit about things I normally wouldn’t ask. Adding onto being thankful for everything today, and not worrying about tomorrow, a father of three boys on my street has a disease which there is a slight chance that he will live. I think he probably worships life more than anyone else. Maybe having something bad happen to you makes you realize, “What can I do to make the world a better place?”

Irene reflects on the sense of belonging and the feeling of community that’s evolved from the sessions.

I found it very interesting how many of us shared the same questions even though our individuality is developed. I like the atmosphere of the session it was not uncomfortable and no rude comments about the questions of others. Everything that was read is very thought provoking. I think that some of these questions have baffled mankind for years. It is hard to grasp questions we can’t answer or our minds are not able to imagine things. Questions that can’t be answered make life interesting. Curiosity is a big part of our life. If we knew everything there would be no point to life.

Mickey uses his creative imagination to describe his self-experience as the questions were read and describes his ultimate transformation.
Today's session was like survivor but more spiritual. I saw myself flow through the fire and with every question I was changed. I felt all evil emotions slip away and grew. The flame was a pupae and I stepped into it transforming like a butterfly. The only difference is that when I stepped out I was a wise and noble dragon. I then became trapped in a statue of myself. Then suddenly I broke out and every evil image was gone. I felt happy but it grows back and it will plague me forever.

Jack reflects on his sense of belonging and self-understanding. He also reflects on transferring his experience in this session to a writing application.

I think a lot of people think alike and just as Jim said, "Everyone is put on this world for a reason." So far I really like doing these sessions because then you find out a lot about yourself and other people. What we are doing in these sessions ties in with what I'm doing for my Hard News Story in writing. I want to know how someone that killed someone can live with himself knowing that they took someone's life away.

Grant responds to his enjoyment and the safe environment created by the anonymity of the writer of the questions. He refers to set-up of the session and how it influences his experience.

We all shared our secret questions anonymously. I liked how we did that because it lets everybody ask questions they've never asked before. I liked the whole idea of the rock and fire and everything because it creates a kind of weird atmosphere. I enjoy doing these meetings because they are so fun and expressive and nobody is mean to anybody else while doing this. Sharing the questions secretly was a good idea because nobody can be embarrassed or sad because of their questions. I love doing these types of meetings, they're so fun!! I think there is more to life that just what we see.
Jessica responds to her sense of belonging and her thoughts on self-understanding.

Wow that was really deep. All people our age seem to be having the same thoughts and questions. It seemed like everyone is wondering, curious or worried about the future. Of course I am too but just from hearing all those questions kind of makes me want to live one day at a time. I'm glad to know I'm not the only one who questions life. People ask, "How do you know there is a God?" Well what I simply say is how can you believe in love or hate when you have never seen it. It's what you feel inside.

Janice reflects on her self-understanding.

I liked what we did today. As Mrs. Brown read the questions I looked around at everyone's faces and I could tell everyone was thinking about the questions. I tried to answer each question about me. Then maybe I would know more about myself and who I really am, and what is important in my life.

Not every teacher may feel comfortable doing this, but every teacher could do it. Trust is a factor and prerequisite for this to be successful. They [the students] must trust me implicitly. It is my hope that the group comes out of this closer, more trusting of each other and the knowledge that they are not alone. They need to know they are worthy of being on this planet. Why are we here? To help each other make it through the storm. I know after today nothing will ever be the same again-the class will transform. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)
Emerging themes from session two. The themes that emerged from the participants of session two, reading of the mystery questions, are: a deep sense of belonging and community; descriptions of positive self-concepts and self-understanding being revealed as a direct result of these sessions; transformational experiences were described.

Session Three

Specific topics for discussion were presented for the remaining four sessions. The topic for this session was Trust-describe a time that someone was really there for you, or Mistrust-describe a time that someone was not there for you. The session started with two boys volunteering to make a dedication to the group. Allan dedicated this session to “the class for being so wonderful.”

These moments bring out the best in people. It makes them [the student] aware of their own humanity and kindness.

(Brown, research journal, February 2002)

Jim dedicated this session to “my grandma and grandpa for taking 10 years out of theirs lives to take care of me where my mother failed.” This event single-handedly transformed the class. It made people look at their own world in a different light. It opened the
door for others to share their intimate stories, and they did. Later in the session Jim shared his story in more detail. I was fighting back the tears as he shared his life with us. I knew the story from reading his Ontario Student Record (OSR) and had met his grandfather at interview time, but hearing the story firsthand from the person who experienced it was very different. It brought the character to life from a document that I read in some file. I got up and brought a box of tissue to the circle. Many people needed it too. Others joined in and shared their experiences of trust and/or mistrust or both.

This was a tough session for me. It was very emotional. It was a heavy content, but this is the kind of curriculum that brings people together. Empathy and understanding bring people together. I’m blessed to have such a warm and inviting class. What a unique experience. I shed tears when Jim spoke about his appreciation for his grandparents and the fact his mother left him. This was a heavy session; it felt like therapy. A lot of people equally felt the emotional energy as people shared deep secrets. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

Family, especially parents, were the main source of trust and mistrust. Siblings played a vital role when the students were
talking and writing about when someone was really there for them, as did friendship.

Session three-selected participant journal excerpts.

Jessie shows her empathy for her classmates and feels grateful for what she has.

I can't really think of just one specific time [when I felt trust or mistrust] but my sister, Jill, has always been the one to stick up for me and really shows that she cares for me. I can usually tell her anything I want and she is ready to listen.

It is really sad about Jim and Mitch. My heart really goes out to them, but I can't relate to that because I still have both my parents and they are together. I don't know anything about what Jack said and I don't want to say the wrong thing, all I want to do is thank-you for being there for Jack and I am sure you would be there for me and anybody else in need.

It must really hurt Kevin to not be able to confide in anyone and hold it all in. I think I am learning more about people in this class.

My parents gave and give up so much for me and my sister and I wish there was a way to repay them. If I had a penny for everything my parents gave up for me, I'd be rich. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Susan reflects on her sense of belonging and empathy for her classmates.

As we went around the circle the one that touched me the most was Jim's. Although I don't know what not having a mother is like, I guess in a way I feel sorry for him. I noticed a lot of people had the most trust in family. I'm glad we had this discussion because I found out a lot of people are like me. We're practically all the same. We all have the same worries and thoughts. I guess that's why it's so easy to "spill your guts" to your friends and people that are close to you.
Jack expresses his sense of belonging.

I think trust is communication, respect and many other things and it doesn't matter if it is a person or an animal or anything else in the world. When my camp experience went bad and I almost died in an accident is when I experienced trust and when Mrs. Brown was there for me when Children's Aid came to see me.

This session was very powerful and I think that trust is very important because there was lots of emotion and I even wanted to cry but I didn't.

Jessica expresses how grateful she is for what she has, and shares her empathy for others and her faith in God.

I can't really think of a time when someone was there for me but I guess my parents have always been there but one person I can really say that has always been there for me in bad times and good is God.

From what I have heard I'm a lot more grateful for having my parents and that I have had an easy life compared to some people. I respect a certain person a lot more because if I was in their shoes I wouldn't be able to handle it and be the person I am.

Most people have older brothers or sisters that they can tell their problems to but I tell a lot of my stuff to God and the air it seems like because I have friends but they either move away or ditch me.

Marie shares her empathy for her classmates.

I feel bad and upset for the kids who don't have parents. This was a sad session. I am very lucky. I have a lot of people I can trust and communicate with. My friend Margaret and I are really close. We trust each other with anything and my family is always there for me. My younger brother always talks to me and he can trust me. That is very important to me.

Irene reflects on a sense of belonging and then transfers it to
the global community and world peace, and she ends back at the self.

So far in our life we trust our family. As years go on the bond gets stronger and we feel comfortable. We all relate trust to events and we live together. The world would be a much better place if everyone trusted each other. Can we imagine what it would be like, let's try to make it a reality and other things like world peace or other world issues. Marie said, "You have to trust yourself," and that is true. All things start small.

Mickey required some therapeutic writing time to release his hurt.

A time where someone was there for me was...I honestly don't know. I see my classmates all with problems. Some have happy lives while others go through hell on earth and they all have been let down one time or another! I've got no right to say anything, but I will! My father left me before I was born and I have rarely seen him. That no good rotten slime of the earth has 15 children in all! FIFTEEN for crying out loud and only takes responsibility for 'one' and that is my baby half brother! When I was little I never knew him and I think that's sad.

Jim reflects on his reliance on himself.

Trust means to me trusting someone. My mother wasn't there for me not when she gave me up my trust for her is long gone. What I heard today is that people say they trust their family or parents or their best friends. They communicate mostly with their family if not that then animals or on paper. Me, I sometimes talk to myself.

Jeff reflects on how everyone has someone they can trust no matter what their situation.

[Trust is when] my foster parents were there to help me through my life and taught me wonderful things. Everybody
trusts somebody and I feel proud about that.

The candle is extinguished and ends our third council meeting.

It's not hard to see that we all come from a different place but that we all have someone that we can trust, and that is comforting. Trust in yourself. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

**Emerging themes from session three.** The themes that emerged from the participants of session three, trust or mistrust, are: a sincere feeling of empathy for others; a deep sense of belonging and community; responses as a form of therapy; descriptions of self-reliance; transfer of empathy to the global community at large.

**Session Four**

The candle was lit and a dedication was made to the animals that are being abused.

Nothing that is alive and suffering goes unnoticed when one looks inward towards their core, their spirit. All becomes one in the eyes of the Great Spirit. Animals are our equals.

(Brown, research journal, February 2002)

The topic for this session was sharing a precious childhood memory. This session started off slowly. Many people were retelling
experiences such as trips to Disneyland, roller coaster rides, and birthday parties. No one was going deeper than they needed to. Maybe the last session was too heavy for them. After the topic was exhausted I asked the students to respond to what the sessions meant to them.

When discussing the topic "precious childhood memory" it was a tough go. I guess the topic hit a bit too close to home. People seem to enjoy the session, but many have a hard time expressing what they really want to say-however they wrote it down instead. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

Jeff exemplifies this. He did not share one comment orally in any of the the council meetings but poured his heart out to me in his journal instead.

Session four-selected participant journal excerpts.

Jeff has experienced these sessions as a form of therapy. It has given him the opportunity to release his innermost feelings and help him feel a sense of belonging.

I have a moment I would never forget. My parents left me because they couldn’t take care of me. I came to Burlington and met friends. I picked this event out of them all because it had the most effect on my life and it has changed it a whole lot. This would not have happened if my mom had taken her pills instead of thinking the pills were poison.

These sessions are helping people explain their feelings and they are letting out their feelings they have inside. I think that this is a good way to get to know the people around us and
how they think and feel. It helps us help people with their feelings.

Janice remembers a comical story and then shares what memories do for her; they help her to transform. These sessions have given Janice a chance to develop her interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills.

When I was a flower girl at my uncle’s wedding I remember this because it’s a funny story. I was walking down the aisle when my tights started to fall down. When I got to where my mom was sitting I whispered, “Mommy my tights are falling down.” I’ve never been in a wedding since.

I think it’s important that we have memories because we can learn from them. I know that we don’t like to remember the bad things but I still do. We can learn what to do then.

I have really liked these last few TAG periods. They have been fun and you learn to understand other people. It helps us to express ourselves. We learn each other’s deepest secrets.

Susan shares a precious transformational moment and then comments on the therapeutic nature of these sessions.

My precious moment is not necessarily good, but I’ll always remember it. When my parents got divorced. I’ll always remember it because it taught me a lesson. I never knew what it was like not being perfect and not having a perfect life. I think it made me realize there’s more than being perfect. Although it’s sad that it has happened, I think it’s made me a better person.

These sessions so far I think are good because they allow people to get out their feelings and thoughts.

Jessica reflects on the group and how it has opened up some people and allowed interpersonal relationships between students
that normally wouldn’t communicate with each other voluntarily.

These sessions have been very interesting. I think in some ways they have opened people up more and let them express feelings or thoughts they have never had the opportunity to express before.

Jessie experiences the sessions as a therapeutic release.

I really like these sessions. I think the session helped me along because life isn’t always easy and these sessions let me let everything out. It doesn’t really seem like I am talking to my classmates and teacher. It seems like I am telling really good friends. Thank-you for these sessions and your time!

Irene expresses the importance of family in her precious moment and shares her sense of belonging.

Family trips to PEI and Ireland and Alberta were something special that I will never forget. I think I chose these events because they were very special vacations that my family spent together. I think that they stick out in my mind because it is a place that is not familiar and vacations are where you see and learn new things about the place you are in yourself and your family.

When people in the class share things you learn more about them and I now see that some people share things or memories in common and I discovered that we are all unique but similar. I like these sessions they are fun and informative.

Pete expresses how important the set-up was to his ability to disclose information about himself.

These sessions that we do are very fun. I like the set up of it
with the candle and the "speaking rock". I find it makes it easier to open ourselves up and say things we wouldn't tell to just anyone.

This session was not as good as the last one as far as discussions go. I guess they all can't be brilliant! (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

**Emerging themes from session four.** The themes that emerged from the participants of session four, precious moment from your childhood, are: a deep sense of belonging and community; responses as a form of therapy; transformational experiences were described; intrapersonal connections were examined; interpersonal relationships were discovered; the influence of the set-up itself.

**Session Five**

Two dedications were made today. The first one was made to the poor people who are starving, and the second one was to Jessica’s dad’s health. He had been in intensive care at the beginning of the week and was now out of intensive care but still in the hospital. A fellow classmate reached out, after the dedication was made, and put her hand on Jessica’s shoulder offering Jessica her sympathy. This event was one that I was hoping would happen; however, I wasn’t sure six sessions would be long enough for this type of gesture to occur. The dedication alone shows a
transformation in the group, a move away from the "me." But the gesture of reaching out to someone who is hurting shows a sign of caring, compassion, and empathy. It brings into our classroom a sense of community and a feeling of belonging. We have shared our innermost thoughts and have grown as a result of this openness.

I'm moved by the hand touching and reaching out to Jessica.

This especially coming from April. She is so self-absorbed and not really that close to Jessica. This adds to the authenticity of this show of affection I think. It just goes to show you what kind of effect this type of curriculum can have on people.

(Brown, research journal, February 2002)

Today's topic is exclusion, being left out or excluding someone else. The rock makes its way ceremoniously around the circle, and many people in the group feel the need to speak today. Exclusion is a hot topic. This should not come as a surprise, I suppose, after all the journal entries about the desire and the need to belong, to connect to someone or something. Everyone wrote entries about exclusion as the worst thing that could happen to them. The opposite of exclusion is belonging, and that's what the participants want and need so desperately.

Session five-selected participant journal excerpts.

Jeff discusses a family exclusion-therapy is still paramount
in this experience.

I was taken away from my mom and put into foster care because my mom could not take care of me. It was hard to make friends because we moved all around.

Jack explores reasons for exclusion.

I can't remember [a time I was excluded] because I try not to remember those things. I think exclusion is worse today than it was back in the olden days because there are more styles of clothes now than there was back then.

Pete shares his daily struggle with exclusion and how he tries to transform his experience into a new one.

Almost everyday at school I get excluded from the "group". They always have an inner circle and an outer circle. Whenever my friend Scott comes over my brother excludes me. It bugs me when I get excluded but when I do I either try to get included or I do something else with other friends. Just yesterday Ken and I were excluded from the group so we made a new circle.

Don reflects on why people shouldn't be excluded and that, ultimately, being welcomed or belonging is what we should strive for.

I think that exclusion is not nice and we shouldn't do that to people. I think everyone should be allowed in the "hangout place" so then they feel welcomed anytime. I think that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover because they could be ugly and/or cute but inside nice and/or mean.

Norm describes the type of people who exclude him.

I was excluded and still am sometimes by the "cool" guys.
Mickey talks about excluding someone else.

There were many times when I was excluded and many times I've excluded someone for whatever reason. It is one motion the same as jealousy or hate.

Jim describes how exclusion makes him feel.

I think exclusion today isn't fun and I'm excluded from a lot of things and it's not fun. I've been there excluded from parties, groups, anything, you name it and it sucks!

Marie shares her desire for total inclusion of everyone, since everyone has been excluded at one time or another.

I have been excluded several times. This year I was separated from all my friends and I felt left out of my class. This session was the best one yet because almost everyone has been left out. I think that since everyone has been in that situation that everyone could be nice and friends with everyone but I think I am just wishing.

Irene needed to express her feelings about exclusion and how it makes her feel. This session was therapeutic for her.

Unfortunately exclusion will always be apart of our lives and this session allowed me to release those feelings and it felt like the class was a good friend that you can confide in. People should not judge people.

Janice needed this forum to express her problems and to try to find a resolution. This session was therapeutic for her.

Two friends of mine I felt always excluded me. It doesn't make me feel too good. It makes me feel worthless. It doesn't
feel good.

I think exclusion today is worse than ever before. People exclude people because they're different or some people don't like them. DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER! IT'S NOT WHAT'S ON THE OUTSIDE BUT WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE!

Susan reflects on how she feels when she is excluded and then transfers this feeling to others who are experiencing the same thing. She then goes one step further and questions what makes someone "cool" or "not cool."

Two friends of mine, I don't want to say names, almost always leave me out. They'll ask to be each other's partner right in front of me. It doesn't make me feel good inside. I really feel bad for people who are excluded. Especially "the cool people" group and "the not cool people." What makes you "cool" then? What makes you in the "inner" circle and not in the "outer" circle? It doesn't cost anything to be nice.

Exclusion had an impact on the group today. There was a lot more discussion than last week's session which relieved me even though I know that when there is no discussion something is going on inside their heads. It's just that it's not as easy for me to get to." Will the students who exclude people now think before they exclude someone else? Will there be a transfer of compassion for the kids who are excluded? Will I ever know if I've made a difference in someone's life? Will someone reach out and include someone as a direct result of these sessions? (Brown, research journal, February 2002)
Emerging themes from session five. The themes that emerged from the participants of session five, exclusion, are: a deep sense of belonging and community; responses as a form of therapy; transformational experiences were described; a sincere feeling of empathy for others.

Session Six

The same nervousness I felt before the first session came back with a vengeance. What had the participants internalized from the sessions? Would they be able to tell me what nourished their spirit? Did they even really know what their spirit was? There was a lot of nervous anticipation as we lit the candle, and a hush came over the group. There was one dedication today made by a group member. This session was dedicated to two groups of athletes that were competing in the winter olympics. First, the Canadian dance pair who earned a silver medal in spite of a flawless performance and the male speed skater who fell at the start of his race and lost his chance at a medal.

A dedication made for people they don’t even know demonstrates empathy. It is the beginning of a transformation for some of the participants. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)
Today's session is to be our last session. The topic parallels my research question. Today's topic is about the spirit. I asked the students to share a story about a time in their lives when their spirit was nourished. Blank stares were looking back at me. I hesitantly passed the rock ceremoniously around the circle. It came back around way too fast. I can't remember a session where the rock made its journey so quickly except for the first session. Few speak. I ask them to write a response in their journals. Some are unable to write anything down. Others take their time before they write anything down, and a few were off the mark with their thoughts.

Maybe Susan Drake is right. Maybe they won't be able to articulate what spirit is. I'm frightened by what may happen here. (Brown, research journal, February 2002)

This is the shortest session we've had. In all, only 10 students out of 30 in my class share their ideas of what nourishes their spirit in the classroom. Maybe the concept is beyond them. I didn't want to give too much information, so I deliberately said very little. A student not in the study, came up to me after the session and said that I should have explained what spirit was a bit more because he said he didn't know what I meant by "spirit." Maybe I needed to talk a bit more about the spirit, but I was concerned that I might say too much and that would interfere with the results of my study, so I
deliberately said very little. I know what I will do differently next year! The participant journal entries after this session were enlightening. Now I know a lot of them understood what “spirit” was but may have felt uncomfortable discussing it.

Session six-selected participant journal excerpts.

Jessie views the teacher and parents as the principal agents in bringing about nourishment of the spirit.

I think the soul/spirit gets nourished by how the teacher and you act. I think that if the teacher believes that the person can be nourished or is a good person and reacts off of what they believe then you or the student can amount to anything. I think it works the same way with parents or adults. We need some guidance on how to live our lives and I think you (Mrs. Brown) deliver that.

I thank-you with all of my heart for doing these sessions with us. They have been the best experience ever!!

Jim views books as the source of nourishment of the spirit: an escape from reality to an imaginary world.

What nourishes the adolescent soul? What nourishes my soul are books, (novels) because I like to escape reality. For one, it’s like you’re leaving your body and you go to your imagination world. The words in a book can paint pictures in your mind. Two, I live as the main character it’s as if I take the main character and live his life to its full extent.

Janice views competence and reading as sources of nourishment of the spirit.

I think that my spirit was encouraged to reach for my dreams
when I got my first basket in my basketball game. I agree with Irene. When I read I escape into another world, a better world. I think that these TAG periods have refreshed me each time we did them. It made me fresh and willing to work. It gets me ready to work. I think just walking gets me ready for a new day of learning. As I walk I wonder what we are going to learn today. The cold wakes me up so that I am willing to learn.

I also think that reading gets me willing to learn. Some people may not know but when you are reading you’re learning. It makes me ready to learn.

Grant initially states that he is not quite sure what nourishes his spirit but theorizes that adolescents in general are nourished when they wonder about the future and when they are engaged in learning.

I think spirit is when somebody passes away and their spirit still lives. I can’t think of anything really of when my spirit was nourished or stimulated. I think the soul is what lets you feel emotions. I think what nourishes adolescents in the classroom is wondering what you’re going to be when you grow up or learning new things, the excitement of what you’re going to learn. I think when somebody says your spirit lives on long after you die it means your influence as to whatever effect you had on the world will live on. People will remember you and things you used to do.

Jessica views competence, love, and friendship as sources of nourishment of the spirit. She sees God as something spiritual but does not connect God as a source of nourishment.

When I think of spiritual I think of God. A time when my spirit was nourished was when...I guess when I’m on stage singing. I love to sing and when I do I feel good and like when the audience claps it gives me such a rush.
Well I'm not really sure but I think like stuff like love, friendship and accomplishing something great. Love I think is a part of it because if you're loved you're happy and happiness is key. Friendship is important because they are usually the people that encourage you and praise you for your accomplishments and that makes you feel good and nourishes the soul. Unfortunately, sometimes people don't have many friends or don't feel loved and don't think they can do anything and their soul is not nourished and you can tell it in their personality and actions.

Mickey views creativity in the form of writing as the source of nourishment of the spirit: an escape from reality to an imaginary world.

I can write anything, in fact I feel well balanced by writing. I have created two worlds somewhere in my childhood and I write about it or I could get lost in it. My point is that my soul flies through my world and I feel alive when my imagination is allowed to soar. When I am allowed to open the door to my fantasy I'm enriched. My soul will always be in a fantasy world but my spirit will always be in tune with reality.

Jeff views his foster parents as sources of nourishment of his spirit. He also views kindness and confidence in oneself as sources of nourishment of the spirit.

Yah I could tell a story about those times because a lot of them have happened to me. Like when my mother left me and the time when my dad died my foster parents were there to take care of me. They understand how I feel. I believe that the soul and spirit work together if one of them was gone the other would lose. If you're nice to people then their soul will be fine and they will be nice to you. There is not enough kindness in people. I also think that a person can do what they think they
can do it they feel confident in themselves.

Susan views the teacher as a source of nourishment of her spirit. She also views encouragement, belonging, making people happy, along with self-understanding as sources of nourishment of the spirit.

Mrs. Brown nourishes and encourages my spirit. She always says the right things at the right time. When she writes things in my response log, it brightens my spirit. I think your soul is your inner self. I believe that’s what goes with you into another life.

People encourage me, nourish me. I like hearing people’s opinions. It lets me know I’m not alone. Making people happy always nourishes me.

I’m happy with what I’ve written and the way I’ve been thinking. I’ve discovered a lot about myself that I didn’t know before.

Norm views his parents, extended family, and friends as sources of nourishment of his spirit.

Our parents and grandparents help us everyday with food, shelter, and life. My soul is nourished by my family caring for me and also skiing lets me rewind myself and all thoughts are gone and the friends and family that ski with me are the ones who know me and really care.

Don views encouragement and wondering as sources of nourishment of the spirit.

When spiritual is said the past and future come to mind. I think spiritual is like a dream. When you’re in a dream you have an act then you wake up into another dream. What nourishes me are compliments. They make me feel that with help I can do anything. I wonder why spiritual stuff is
something that no one knows what it is or if it's a what or a who?

Marie views competence, encouragement, and self-belief as sources of nourishment of the spirit.

Accomplishing competing at the Canadians and winning gold when nobody thought we could.

I think that the spirit is a type of medicine that will heal you when you feel down.

Something that nourishes me is when somebody doesn't have faith in themselves and then I give them encouragement and that helps them have faith in themselves. The same goes for myself too.

Kendra views her parents as the principal agent in bringing about nourishment of her spirit. She also views reading, an escape from reality to an imaginary world, and friendship as further sources of nourishment of the spirit.

I'd have to say my parents nourish my spirit and bring me to a better place of mind. We have been through many hard times and they make me feel so much better when I talk to them. I agree with Irene. I think that reading does take you to another place. You can escape from your life to another by the power of words.

This session in my opinion wasn't one of the best that I've seen. I think that friends nourish the spirit and soul. You can talk to them about anything that's on your mind. Also family because they brought you into this world and your life has brought many joys to theirs and that makes me feel really good.

Daniel views his dogs as sources of nourishment of the spirit because they provide an escape from reality to a different world.
When I am with my dogs they make me feel happy and like I am in a different world.

Irene views her parents, the teacher, encouragement, and inspiration as the sources that bring about nourishment of the spirit for her. In addition, she goes on to describe a constructivist classroom as the type of setting she needs to experience in order for her spirit to be nourished in the classroom.

I think my spirit is stimulated every time I read or spend time with my family.

When I read my imagination can take me to unbelievable heights but then I can return to my normal life. It is almost like living two lives and you can be in whichever you like. Reading nourisheds the soul and spirit. The soul - lives on forever spirit - liveliness life source. Every day my family inspires me and nourishes my spirit. They help develop my individuality.

What nourishes the adolescent in the classroom? I think that encouragement and inspiration are key things. Trust is also a large factor. A teacher or elder must learn to be a complete person or someone that is in touch with their inner self. The other three things will follow and the teacher/elder must show the way or direction but not find the person's inner self for them. In school there is so much telling, why not experiencing? Encouragement and inspiration are things you need in the valleys of life (and even in the hills). These things will help the journey no matter the path.

The teacher must get in touch with themselves then not tell or give direction but show us the way and let us experience it for ourselves. Reading is a way to do this because there is not given direction or path in a book and the ending is unpredictable like your life.

I think this journey is helped by classmates with many different views which can help you on your journey by learning with and from them.
Emerging themes from session six. The themes that emerged from the participants of session six, what nourishes your spirit are: parents and the teachers are important agents; escape from reality in form of reading (learning) or writing (creativity); love, friendship, kindness, happiness and sense of belonging; confidence, competence and self-understanding; being inspired and experiential learning.

Summary of Overall Sessional Themes

The themes that have emerged from our varied discussions thus far all impact on one another. A sense of belonging and community emerged as a reoccurring theme throughout many of the discussions and is considered very important to the adolescent participants. The intrapersonal and interpersonal nature of the sessions enhanced this feeling of belonging and community by providing a forum where the participants could speak openly and honestly and where deep listening was practiced by the remaining group members. Empathy for each other surfaced from this experience and helped to further deepen the sense of belonging and community that has been developing since we came together in September but that has really jelled during these sessions.

The discussions and the journalling act as therapy for many of
the participants, which allowed for a transformational experience for a few of the participants. Family, friends, and teachers play a role in lives of the adolescents by providing encouragement, inspiration, kindness, friendship, and love. From this a feeling of competency is experienced and confidence, grows within the adolescent. As a result of this increased confidence a sense of self: self-understanding and self-concept, deepen in the adolescent.

Next, the responses from the 16 participant one-on-one interviews will be presented as the second leg of this research. Their responses to the questions will add depth and understanding to the question, what nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom?

The primary areas of focus were: (a) when is the adolescent spirit at its fullest in the classroom, (b) what nourishes or feeds the adolescent spirit in the classroom, and (c) how does an adolescent get to that place. The secondary areas of focus were: (a) any discussions the participants wanted to comment on after completion of all the sessions, and (b) why the participant felt that that particular discussion made an impression on them.

Each interview question will be dealt with at one time, with merging themes that corroborate the previous sessional themes discussed alongside the voice of the adolescent. I reiterate that by sharing the voice of the adolescent throughout the interview
questions that would best reflect their experience in the classroom and that they would best be able to articulate what nourishes their spirit.

Participant Interviews

*When you think of the word “spirit,” as in your spirit as a person, what words or images come to mind?*

All participants had an idea of what spirit meant to them. Three patterns emerged. First, spirit is something intangible outside of the body. Second, spirit is something intangible inside the body, and last, spirit is something that exists in nature.

Eight of the participants viewed spirit as something intangible outside their bodies, such as ghosts, people that have passed on, angels, and sparkly stuff. Six of the participants viewed spirit as something intangible inside our bodies, such as our inner self, or they viewed spirit as our mind and soul together. The last 2 participants viewed the spirit as something in nature such as a wind, the freeness of the spirit of a bird, and the sky. All three groups viewed spirit as something that exists but is something we cannot physically touch.

*In the classroom, when do you feel your spirit is at its fullest?*
All participants were able to articulate when their spirit was at its fullest, even though in the previous question for some of the participants their image of spirit was outside of their body. Many themes emerged.

A feeling of competency on a task is important.

*When I like, learn something new and I really like, get it and I’m good at it.*" (Grant, interview).

Receiving encouragement or praise for doing something was mentioned frequently.

*When someone gives me a compliment. When I’m given a compliment I feel really good about myself, like I feel I’ve done something good and somebody has recognized it for me.* (Jim, interview)

*When I’m being praised for doing something good. I feel happy and that’s I think part of your spirit too being nourished.* (Jessica, interview)

Enjoyment of a task and being provided with a “choice” activity allowing their creativity and imagination to flourish was significant,

*Like when I get to create my own things like the country that we’re doing because I already have a plan. I like creating things and writing up all my own stuff. I enjoyed writing the story that I got really good on and I enjoy creating things.* (Jeff, interview)

The classroom environment and the teacher were mentioned as the adolescent expressed when their spirit was at its fullest.
It's sometime when it's not loud and when it's a comfortable setting. You have people that you can trust, rely on and I think the person, the teacher has to be in touch with themselves not materialistic that kind of thing. (Irene, interview)

Last, friendship and trust were highlighted when adolescents were discussing when their spirit is at its fullest.

**What nourishes or feeds your spirit while you are in the classroom?**

Two major themes emerged: encouragement and competency. More than half of the participants mentioned encouragement as the source filling their spirit while in the classroom. Seven out of 7 girls mentioned encouragement as essential to feeding their spirit, where as only 2 boys mentioned encouragement as essential.

*If someone is saying I'm doing a good job it makes me feel good.* (Susan, interview)
*When something is going well that day like if I get a good test back or someone says good job or when we're doing a project and we do something well on it.* (Norm, interview)

Competency was another source of stimulation of the spirit. Five out of 9 boys mentioned competency as essential to feeding their spirit as compared to 1 girl who mentioned it in terms of understanding. This was the first finding that showed a strong gender difference.
When I'm in the classroom if I get good on a test or my report card is good, I get good grades, then it goes up because spirit goes along with self-esteem and if your self-esteem goes up your spirit will be high. (Pete, interview)
Yah, when I'm building machines I want to build to the best ability I can and in math I want to try to get every question right. (Daniel, interview)
When I'm successful at something and I feel good about it like answering the math question the other day. (Janice, interview)

Further themes that emerged from what nourishes or feeds your spirit while you are in the classroom are: friendship; choice activities; the use of imagination and harnessing it as a form of therapy.

Well, like when I get to let out all my feelings, like when I write and create my own story, I let out all my feelings and all that in the story. I write it down and try to let it make sense. That empties out my soul and stuff and lets all my feelings out. It cleanses me. (Jeff, interview)

Gaining knowledge and the teacher are two additional themes that emerged.

I think it's how the teacher reacts to like your answers or if they believe that you can do something then I think you tend to believe it more yourself. (Jessie, interview)

What allows you to get to this place?
Encouragement emerged as a theme, but this time internal or self-encouragement was articulated.

Like if I say good things about myself or things I do and if I'm
proud of myself. (Susan, interview)
When I feel good about myself and about everything I do then I can allow myself to have friends because if you don't feel good about yourself then you won't treat others well and they won't want to be your friend. (Kendra, interview)

Competency was a factor when adolescents were discussing what allows them to get to a place where their spirit was being nourished.

Choice activities are mentioned, as well as a quiet and relaxed classroom.

Feeling wanted played a role in nourishing the spirit of adolescents as well.

I think feeling wanted, feeling that I have a place that I'm supposed to be here learning and stuff. (Jessica, interview)

Last, the role of the teacher was also mentioned when adolescents were discussing what allowed them to get to a place where their spirit was being nourished.

Guidance, mentors, someone who's really in touch with themselves. (Irene, interview)

The last two questions of the interview will be presented together because they were often answered together and they are directly related to each other.

What discussions would you like to comment on and why do
you feel this discussion made an impression on you?

All sessions were chosen by at least one participant as discussions that were significant to them. The two sessions which had the greatest impact were the reading of their mystery questions, which was the second session, and the third session, where the topic was trust/mistrust. A precious childhood memory, exclusion, and spirit all had two participants refer to them specifically as meaningful, and the actual writing of the questions had one participant mention it as significant.

A deep sense of belonging and community emerged as a strong theme.

The reading of the questions and like how some were alike so I know some people are like kinda in the same position. It felt pretty good to know that I wasn't alone really, which builds our like self-esteem or it makes us feel better about ourselves. (Norm, interview)
Well I think it was a good idea to do the sessions and they just like let me know that I'm like I'm not alone like everybody's practically the same but different, but everybody's thinking the same thing. (Susan, interview)

A feeling of empathy for others emerged as a theme.

I liked it when we felt what everybody felt like inside and stuff. (Daniel, interview)
Because we all like got to like share our feelings and stuff, and nobody made fun of anybody else or anything like that. (Grant, interview)

Intrapersonal connections were examined.
I liked the trust [session] because everyone sort of opened up a lot more and like said what they actually really feel about people and stuff. (Jack, interview)
Well all of them because they were pretty eye opening because I wouldn't even think to look inside myself to see what I feel like. (Mickey, interview)
I liked them all because they're all different but they all make you think about who you really are and how you are different from other people and just basically who you are. (Janice, interview)

Interpersonal relationships were discovered.

Well, it sort of touched like a lot of people like 'cause some people had some tears in their eyes and stuff, so I think that's one of the ones that we have to take, like we need trust in people, I think that's why. (Jack, interview)
I think the one where we talked about...I think it was the trust one, because a lot of people let out a lot of their feelings. I think it was really good for them to be able to let everything out and maybe not let everyone know the specifics, just letting them hear their story. (Jessie, interview)

Transformational experiences were described.

Well I was listening to the questions and everything, and it just felt like I normally wouldn't talk about, it that much and I think, like, the pupa [the candle] represented all the things that I didn't talk about like all the things I had locked away. So when I stepped in I was like letting them all out and everything, and when I stepped out I was a brand new being like, and then I pictured myself like I felt like I was turning to stone and I burst out, and it just, well I really wasn't liking a person at that point in time and it just, it just slipped away, it just disappeared. (Mickey, interview)
Actually I think, like, overall the discussions helped us come together more as a class 'cause now I think people respect more people from their past and everything. People are more
kind to people. (Marie, interview)
I think that what has happened through that whole thing really made me think, like with the sessions, who I am and if I should be hanging out with them. Then I met Susan and it kinda made me think of who I really was and that when I was hanging out with them, like Ginny and April, I wasn't being myself, and now that I'm hanging out with Susan, I am. (Janice, interview)

Last, the influence of the set-up itself provided a safe environment.

The set-up of it with everybody in a circle, the candle, the speaking rock. In a circle it feels like you can open yourself up, and since it's a circle and it's closed nothing will get out. (Pete, interview)

This concludes the participants' responses from the interviews.

Summary of Overall Interview Themes

Two main themes emerged from the interview: one, that encouragement plays an important role in the nourishment of the adolescent spirit, and two, so does a feeling competency. The most surprising finding was that girls felt that being encouraged was enough to feel their spirit was nourished, and for boys, they had to feel competent or good at something for their spirit to be nourished. This will be discussed further in Implications for Further Research and Practice.

Other themes that emerged were being able to have a choice or
say in their work, which allowed for creativity and imagination. How a teacher approached their work, that is, how they taught and how they set up their classroom, was important, and a deep sense of belonging and community in the form of friendships and intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences were important in the nourishment of their spirit in the classroom.

**Summary of Findings**

The themes that emerged from the two methods of data collection, the journals from the sessions and the postinterviews, and my own journal entries corroborate the themes that emerged from both the sessions and the interviews. By identifying themes that weaved their way through the data, an interconnected system began to emerge, providing a system that, when working efficiently, provides the necessary stimulus to successfully nourish the spirit of the adolescent in the classroom. As shown in Figure 1, when an adolescent is provided with encouragement, their spirit gets nourished and they have an increased feeling of competency which may lead to an increase in their confidence. When this occurs their self-esteem increases and that may help to nourish the adolescent’s spirit in the classroom. In turn, as the students’ self-esteem increases, this may lead to an increase in their feeling of competency. All four components: encouragement,
Figure 1. Thematic representation of the interconnected components that nourish the adolescent spirit in the classroom.
competency/confidence, and self-esteem, work in a dynamic fashion. Providing a holistic teaching practice and curriculum also nourished the spirit of the adolescent in classroom. When teaching from a holistic stance the teacher allows choice, creativity, and the use of the imagination to drive his/her program and this nourishes the spirit of the adolescent. By using an intrapersonal curriculum the teacher helps to generate a sense of belonging and community into the classroom. For some students this opportunity is therapeutic in nature which nourishes their spirit. The teacher plays a vital role in every aspect of this interconnected system.

The themes that emerged from the data can further be identified under the headings self in adolescence, holistic approaches to education, the personal intelligences, and teaching to the soul.

Self in Adolescence

Encouragement dominated the participant responses as a circumstance that was necessary when the nourishment of the spirit was at stake. Encouragement provided by teachers, parents, and friends increased their feeling of competency, which in turn increased their confidence. Competency and confidence are intertwined and are reciprocal in nature. As one increases, so does
the other. Encouragement provided the stimulus that activated the competency/confidence cycle. In the next phase of the cycle, confidence and self-esteem link in a reciprocal fashion. As the adolescent's confidence increased so did their self-esteem, and when the adolescent felt good about themselves, this improved their self-concept, which nourished their spirit. A feeling of competence, propelled by confidence, increased the adolescent's self-esteem, which improved their self-concept, which nourished their spirit.

**Holistic Approaches to Education**

Holistic teaching strategies and curriculum emerged as factors that nourished the spirit of the adolescent in the classroom. Holistic teaching strategies which harnessed adolescent creativity, imagination, and sense of wonder were identified as factors that nourished the spirit. Allowing students to choose their own activities or utilizing their creativity in the development of a project nourished their spirit.

**The Personal Intelligences**

The sessions themselves provided a holistic curriculum which focused on the intrapersonal development of an individual, meaning it provided the adolescent with an opportunity to develop self-
understanding, which may ultimately improve their self-concept, and this also nourished the adolescent spirit. In addition, interpersonal development was also enhanced through the council meetings which inspired a deep sense of belonging and community within the group. In some cases, therapy was the result of the sessions. By being invited to release pent-up emotions and frustrations through the council meetings, where story telling and deep listening were being practiced, this experience alone nourished their spirit. For some adolescents, the journal writing became their mode of therapy, which in turn nourished their spirit.

**Teaching to the Soul**

The final theme that emerged was the role the teacher played in the nourishment of the adolescent spirit in the classroom. They play a vital role in all aspects from what to teach, how to teach, promoting the classroom climate, to the encouragement of the young people they teach. The role of the teacher permeated every facet of the nourishment of an adolescent’s spirit when teaching in the classroom.

**Meaning of Findings**

The teacher played a meaningful role in every aspect of the
nourishment of the spirit of an adolescent. The teacher created an inviting and safe environment. She utilized a holistic curriculum which allowed the students to choose activities that stimulated their creativity and imagination. She provided an opportunity to experience an intrapersonal curriculum which allowed them to look inside themselves and which also provided an opportunity for therapy in an educational setting. It also facilitated interpersonal connections between students who may not have communicated before. The teacher, alongside parents and peers, encouraged the adolescents, which increased their chance of feeling competent, which ultimately increased their self-esteem. The teacher was at the center of what nourished the adolescent in the classroom.

The educational philosophy or belief system of the teacher will influence how they teach. "Good teaching requires self-knowledge" (Parker, 1998, p. 3). Without self-knowledge, a teacher will not know who her/his students are and will not be able to provide the environment necessary to nourish the spirit of adolescents he/she teaches. Therefore, the teacher is the central agent who permeates every aspect of this type of curriculum direction.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter contained the voice and the spirit of 16 grade 8
adolescent students I teach. I felt that by sharing their words throughout the sessions and the interviews it would best reflect their experience in the classroom and that they would best be able to articulate what nourished their spirit. I also included my own voice because I believe that teaching and learning are reciprocal actions. I learn by teaching and teach by learning. By creating a safe, respectful teaching and learning environment, I created the atmosphere in which we could explore the gateways that nourish the adolescent spirit in the classroom in order for me to continue to evolve as a teacher and to "serve my students well." For this type of research to be duplicated, the teacher must be willing to look inward and "know thyself" before they can know their students. The role of the teacher was essential in the nourishment of the spirit of adolescents in the classroom.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the work presented thus far. It also presents a discussion and conclusions section which outlines significant results obtained from the study. It also provides implications for practice, which would allow teachers with courage to explore this avenue and in doing so nourish their own spirit within the classroom. Implications for theory are outlined with regards to holistic approaches to education, self in adolescence, the personal intelligences, spirituality in adolescence,
and teaching to the soul and make vital connections to the lived experience of the 16 adolescent participants. Last are implications for further research, which present new questions for further research into this topic. I end with a brief epilogue which summarizes my journey through the action research process.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary

The nucleus of this study lies in the inner spirit of adolescents in the classroom today. The research was based on Kessler's (2000) "Passages Program" which explores the gateways into the adolescents' souls. A review of literature pertaining to holistic approaches to education, self in adolescence, the personal intelligences, spirituality in adolescence, and teaching to the soul, in addition to the lived experience of 16 adolescent students, provided the information necessary to answer the research question.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine what nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom in order that the action researcher might improve her teaching practice and deepen her connection with her class community of students. The study involved an intrapersonal experience, utilizing a holistic approach to teaching whereby the participants engaged in six council meetings practicing deep listening and the sharing of stories. Data from these sessions were gathered from journal entries made after each session by the students and the action researcher, and from one-on-one interviews completed at the end of the six sessions.

Given the apparent benefits of practicing a holistic stance in curriculum implementation (Miller, 1996), holistic teaching
strategies (Miller, 2000), the importance of the developmental stage of adolescence (Harter, 1998) in the growth of their self-esteem, and the integral role of the teacher in this process, the study examined the relevancy of these assumptions as revealed by the perceptions and experiences of the participants and the action researcher, the teacher. This exploration led to implications for practice, theory, and further research and provided recommendations for the integration of a holistic approach to teaching in order to best meet the needs of the adolescents in the classroom.

Discussion and Conclusions

In today's educational climate, an outcome-based approach to teaching and learning is prescribed. This approach lacks a curriculum that nourishes the spiritual self (Bosacki, 2001; Hart, 2001; Kessler, 2000; Miller, 2000; Noddings & Shore, 1998). The curriculum does not encourage an emotional, spiritual, or an intrapersonal approach in order to develop the inner life of an adolescent. The present challenge is for teachers to provide a learning environment where students can nourish their spirit within the confines of an outcome-based curriculum content. That is, teachers need to create a place that enables students to develop the courage and confidence required to try new things, to explore, and to
create in spite of today’s outcome-based direction. This type of quality classroom is essential if nourishing the spirit of students is to occur.

Kessler (2000) believes that by providing opportunities for spiritual development within the educational system, the inner life of the adolescents is nourished and their longing for something more than the ordinary, material, and fragmented existence they are living would be met. This study responds to Kessler’s declaration by inviting adolescents, through Kessler’s (2000) “Passages Program,” to share their stories and to practice deep listening.

The questions that propelled the study are, what nourishes the adolescent spirit in the classroom and does the nourishment of the spirit of adolescents in the classroom improve their self-concept? Self-esteem centers around the way individuals feel about themselves, and self-concept is how individuals see themselves. If adolescents are experiencing an elevated self-esteem and feel good about themselves, then they will see themselves as capable, which will improve their self-concept.

The findings reveal that the role of the teacher, with specific reference to the personal qualities he/she brings to the classroom, encouragement, and feeling competent are essential ingredients that nourish the spirit of the adolescent in the classroom and in turn
improve their self-concept.

Encouragement provided by the teacher, parents, or fellow student, or in some cases the self-encouragement and the feeling of competency, were revealed as factors that nourish the adolescent spirit in the classroom. The findings specifically reveal that more girls felt that encouragement nourishes their spirit as compared to boys, who felt that being competent nourishes their spirit.

Encouragement and a feeling of competency work in a reciprocal fashion. As one increases so does the other, and so forth. When encouragement and competency are promoting each other, this results in a boost in confidence, which in turn increases the adolescent's self-esteem. As their self-esteem goes up they feel that their spirit is being nourished. These two factors also work in reciprocal fashion. As the adolescent's self-esteem increases they feel that their spirit is being nourished and when they feel their spirit is being nourished their self-esteem goes up. Harter (1999) found the same result: when particular levels of "competence" were achieved, students' self-esteem was enhanced.

In addition, the role of teacher permeates every aspect of the findings. The teacher decides how he/she is going to teach and in doing so sets the tone and atmosphere for learning in classroom. Miller (2000) notes that a teacher must bring his/her authentic
presence to the classroom and must possess an empathetic stance
towards her students if the student’s soul is to be cared for. The
teacher must be cultivating an inner life of her/his own in order to
teach from the soul. The findings reveal that a teacher using a
holistic approach to teaching, that is, using holistic teaching
strategies and a holistic curriculum, nourishes the spirit of
adolescents in the classroom. When adolescents are exposed to a
holistic curriculum, such as the council meetings where the
students engage in an intrapersonal experience, they indicate that
their spirit is nourished. The findings reveal that the council
meeting promotes a deep sense of belonging and community for the
adolescents and provides some students, the ones who need it, with
an opportunity for a therapeutic release of anger, sadness, and
frustrations.

When a teacher utilizes holistic teaching strategies where
students are allowed to choose their own activities, to create, and
to use their imagination, the participants indicate that their spirit
is nourished under those conditions too. Harter (1999) states that
teaching holistically challenges the students’ self-concept in a
positive way. Because holistic curriculum works from the child’s
experiences on four levels: physical, emotional, intellectual, and
spiritual, the child constructs what he has experienced and readjusts
his sense of self. When this readjustment occurs, this may generate a transformation.

The findings reveal that with some participants a transformation is experienced. As Bosacki (1997) explains, this type of transformational procedure promotes the “integration of both personal growth and social change where equal focus is placed on the individual as well as the social community” (p. 35).

Overall, the findings consistently reveal that an adolescent can articulate what nourishes their spirit in the classroom when a holistic curriculum such as Kessler’s (2000) “Passages Program” is implemented in the classroom. Programs of this nature can enhance educators’ understanding of adolescence, while contributing to an emerging body of related literature and action research. The implications may also extend into directing the course of meaningful teaching and learning opportunities for professional development and personal growth at this time.

Implications

Implications for Theory

Dewey’s (1859-1952) notion of testing personal hypotheses through actual experiences allowing persons to create their own knowledge (Cahan, 1992) forms the theoretical basis of a holistic
teaching practice. This approach to education is based on methods of observation and reflection for both the teacher and the student (Miller, 1996). The fundamental principles behind holistic education according to Miller are the interconnectedness between the universe and the self, that value is derived from experiencing the interconnectedness of reality, and that this unity leads to social activities designed to counter injustice and human suffering. In a holistic curriculum, utilizing Gardner's (1983) intrapersonal (emotional) intelligence, which is the development of the ability to have access to one's emotions and then use these emotions as a means of understanding and guiding one's behaviour, provides the adolescent with the ability of self-understanding. When our conception of knowledge moves beyond its component parts into a position which is concerned with how we learn, not what we learn, a transformational stance has been realized (O'Sullivan, 1999). Ultimately, a classroom that establishes a transformational environment creates a community of learners among students, teachers, and parents "resulting in the co-construction of knowledge" (Bosacki, 1997, p. 36).

The findings generated by 16 participants affirmed a holistic approach to teaching and learning as an approach where students experience a mind, body, spirit connection. The adolescent
participants shared how the sessions created opportunities for transformational experiences. They summarized that by learning in this environment they are able to be creative, use their imagination, and share their stories, and in doing so feel a deep sense of belonging and community. Irene, a high-achieving girl, stressed the need for experiential learning opportunities instead of solely knowledge-based learning in the form of the teacher just “telling.” These findings are consistent with the literature review.

The literature review on the concept of self in adolescence was complex. Harter (1999) found that during early and middle adolescence children were not able to develop a comprehensive self-theory, that is, how the adolescent defines and understands the self. Interpersonal and social skills and one's social appeal became high priorities (Harter). Feelings of self-worth or self-esteem were judged across relational contexts. (Harter et al., 1998) A higher self-worth in the early adolescent was experienced when around friends, and lower self-worth was experienced around parents. The opinions of significant others also play a role in an adolescent's sense of self-worth. During middle adolescence, “the tortuous search for the self involves a concern with what or who am I” (Broughton, 1981). Adolescents “become increasingly introspective as well as morbidly preoccupied with what others think of them”
(Harter, 1999, p. 68). The adolescent often experiences conflict, confusion, and distress, which could lead to lowered self-worth.

The adolescent participants in this study confirmed through the questions they asked in session one that the average adolescent experiences confusion, conflict, and distress continually. They are preoccupied with themselves. They feel isolated and alone. These findings are consistent with the literature review. However, through a holistic curriculum, such as the council process, the adolescent experienced a deep sense of belonging and community with their peers which was not present before. This increased their feeling of self-worth, which is consistent with the literature and Kessler’s (2000) “Passages Program.” In addition, the review revealed the benefits of developing the spiritual self with adolescent students (Bosacki, 2001; Kessler, 2000). Bosacki believes that a sense of self and spiritual awareness are one and the same. Since adolescence is a pivotal time for self-concept formation, a holistic approach to exploring the links between self and the development of spirituality is necessary.

The participants affirmed that their sense of self and what nourished their spirit were inextricably connected. As their self-esteem increased so did their spirit, and as their spirit was nourished their self-esteem went up. This heightened their self-
According to Miller (2000) the nurturing of a student's soul begins with the teacher. The teacher must be cultivating an internal life of her own in order to teach from the soul. Palmer (1998) believes that the human self and education are at their best when the teacher's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual paths are interwoven, dependent on one another for creating wholeness. This notion is affirmed by Irene, one of the participants, as she states that "the teacher has to be in touch with herself not materialistic." Some of the participants affirmed this in their journal responses by thanking me, their teacher for offering these sessions. I am not just a facilitator of information but a teacher who is continually trying to untangle the complexities of a teaching life in order to best serve my students well. This affirms the literature review on teaching to the soul.

**Implications for Practice**

In spite of Ontario's MET outcome-based curriculum, this researcher found a creative way to implement an intrapersonal curriculum utilizing a holistic approach to teaching. The study itself outlines how to creatively apply this type of curriculum within a confined system and find ways to nourish the inner spirit of
adolescents in the classroom. By following the methodology, educators can implement this type of curriculum into their program regardless of the educational climate.

The insights gathered throughout this study consistently reaffirmed Kessler’s (2000) “Passages Program” curriculum. The gateways to the adolescent soul that coincided with Kessler’s program were a yearning for deep connection, the search for meaning and purpose, the hunger for joy, and the creative drive. It affirmed the notion that spiritual development belongs in schools.

In the present study we shared the stories of 16 adolescent grade 8 students. They talked candidly about the times when their spirit is nourished in the classroom. The summaries of the study question will be presented here and then readdressed as they relate to the implications for practice.

*When is your spirit at its fullest?* Those things that allow an adolescent to feel their spirit is at its fullest include: a feeling of competency; encouragement; experiencing enjoyment; being allowed to create; being given an opportunity to choose what they read and write; a quiet classroom; a comfortable setting; when there are people you can trust; lunchtime with friends.
What nourishes or feeds your spirit while you are in the classroom? Those things that nourish or feed an adolescent spirit while in the classroom include: a feeling of competency; encouragement; therapeutic writing; choice writing; a teacher that makes learning fun; being inspired; experiential learning; how a teacher reacts to your answers - if they believe you can do something then I think you tend to believe it yourself; experiencing enjoyment; friendship; one's spirit goes along with self-esteem, and if your self-esteem goes up your spirit will be high.

What allows you to get to this place? Those things that allow an adolescent to get to a place where their spirit is being nourished while in the classroom include: a feeling of competency; a high self-esteem; encouragement; therapeutic writing; choice activities; a sense of belonging; friendship; relaxation and quiet; one's imagination is stimulated; the teacher as guide, mentor, and someone who is in touch with him/herself.

It would appear that what nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom centers around a feeling of competency, which in turn elevates the adolescent's self-esteem. Encouragement plays a vital role in stimulating the feeling of competency. It would also appear that the teacher plays a significant role by providing a
holistic curriculum and holistic teaching experiences which provide the adolescent with choice activities which stimulate their creativity and imagination. In addition, friendships and a deep sense of belonging also nourish the adolescent's spirit when in the classroom.

The implications for practice regarding the nourishment of the adolescent spirit in the classroom, then, revolve around the teacher. The holistic teacher teaches from the self. The teacher sets the classroom tone and atmosphere. If an adolescent's spirit is to be nourished, it follows that the process must begin with the teacher's soul (Miller, 2000). The following section suggests a variety of ways that a teacher can nurture the soul and in doing so become better equipped to nourish the student's spirit as they teach.

Contemplation, according to Miller (2000), brings the lessons of the soul into our mind where we can retrieve them and use them in our daily life. There are a variety of ways to develop our contemplative capacities; two are described here: meditation and journalling.

Meditation develops our contemplative capacities by letting go of, as Miller describes (2000), the calculating mind by opening ourselves to the listening mind. It involves the quieting of the mind. There are many types of meditation, but one of the simplest forms is
breath meditation. The person simply focuses on his/her breath during inhalation and exhalation, becoming aware of the natural rhythms of the "in" and "out" breath. As thoughts enter this process, we simply let them go and come back to the rhythm of the breath. The key is to accept what is happening in the moment. Over time, as one practices meditation, it eventually leads to a oneness, a deep connectedness.

Journalling is another way to develop our contemplative capacity. Journalling is an outlet where we can write down our secrets, feelings, troubles, and triumphs. It provides a record written over time where moments in our lives are recorded and our soul is exposed. By doing this we connect with our self, our own truth.

As a teacher initiates a journey towards self-discovery, he/she starts to realize the inner and outer connection. Once this occurs, he/she can then begin to create a classroom environment which will provide a reciprocal teaching and learning environment. "Through contemplation we can nourish our own souls, which will in turn help create a positive environment for our children's souls" (Miller, 2000, p. 138).
Implications for Further Research

The framework of this study could be used as a tool for further qualitative research into the nature of education and spirituality, the teacher and spirituality, gender and spirituality, and finally narrative therapy for adolescents.

Further studies into spirituality at the educational level are important because they are missing in today's curriculum which is centered around an outcome-based educational directive. With the present "generation at risk" due to single-parent configurations at home and dual parents working outside the home the educational system needs to step up and provide opportunities for young people to experience a way to channel their energy constructively and to experience a deep sense of belonging.

Further studies into the lived experience of teachers who already teach from a spiritual place would add to the already existing literature on teaching from the soul and help improve a teacher's practice in the classroom. On the other hand, investigating the lived experience of teachers who do not teach from a spiritual place would also add to the literature on teachers and spirituality. The research question could be, can a teacher transform their practice after participating in a holistic teaching experience? Both are necessary in order to better understand the lived experiences of
all kinds of practice.

As a direct result of the findings of the present study, further research is necessary into gender issues, such as why boys need to feel competent in order for their spirit to be nourished as compared to girls who found encouragement alone sufficient to nourish their spirit.

Last, further research into narrative therapy for adolescents as a means of releasing anger and frustration needs to be explored further in order to provide another avenue to reach as many students as possible when teaching and learning in a classroom.

Epilogue-Reflective Summary

As indicated at the outset of this study, I intended to examine an inventive teaching strategy within the confines of an outcome-based curriculum directive with the hope of reaching the inner space of the adolescent students I teach. In doing so, I believe a heightened interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness among the members of our whole class was experienced. The whole person, mind, body, and spirit was reached in unison and not as separate, disparate parts. A community of teachers and learners was created.

The questions that have no answers have always challenged my spirit and guided my inquisitive life. But what surprised me the
most is that these mysterious questions that leave one pondering late at night also challenge the adolescents I teach. When one becomes aware of another's curiosities, it brings the community closer together. The teaching and learning environments become one, and this I believe has allowed me "to serve my students well."

It is the hope of this researcher that the contributions of this study will assist teachers to create a holistic learning environment where the lines between teaching and learning are one and the same and the gateways to the souls for students and teachers are opened.
References


District School Board of Niagara. (2000). A guide to action research and collaborative action research.


Appendix A

Ethics Approval
December 3, 2001

Hilary Brown
Rolling Meadows P.S.

Dear Hilary:

At its recent meeting, The Research Advisory Committee of the Halton District School Board approved your research application involving the “What Nourishes the Spirit of Adolescents in the Classroom? A Qualitative Study into the Gateways of the Soul”.

The Committee suggests that you review the interview questions and that student participants should have the opportunity to be critical of the process.

Regarding your request for release time to complete the study, I suggest you contact Camille Petch (Ext. 3228) when you have determined the days you wish to use and she will provide you with a project number.

Sincerely,

Heather Gataveckas
Chair
Research Advisory Committee

/cp
FROM: David Butz, Chair Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)
TO: Sandra Bosacki, Education
     Hilary Brown FILE: 01-152, Brown
DATE: January 28, 2002

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the research proposal:

What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom? A Qualitative Study into the Gateways of an Adolescents Soul

The Subcommittee finds that your proposal conforms to the Brock University guidelines set out for ethical research. Your research proposal has been approved through the expedited review process for the period of January 28, 2002 to June 30, 2002.

** Accepted as clarified.

Expedited Review of a research proposal (by 2 members of the Research Ethics Board and review by the Chair of the REB) is equivalent to approval provided by the full REB (i.e., it does not mean conditional approval). However, the Chair of the REB must report to the full REB on a monthly basis about any expedited reviews that they have conducted. At such meetings, the full REB could ask for additional changes to the research protocols being used in a particular study. If this were to occur, the decision of the full REB will always over-ride the earlier decision of the two REB members and the Chair.

Please note: Changes or Modifications to this approved research must be reviewed and approved by the committee. Please complete form REB-03(2001)Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application to Conduct Research with Human Participants and submit it to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board.
The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit *REB-02(2001) Continuing Review/Final Report* annually and at the completion of the project. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this is required. All projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, will require this form to be submitted to the Research Ethics Board upon completion of the project.
Appendix B

Letter of Information
Letter of Information

Title of Study: "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom? A Qualitative study into the Gateways of Adolescent's Souls.

Researcher: Hilary Brown
Supervising Professor: Dr. Sandra Bosacki
Name of Participant: __________________________

In this action research study I am a teacher/researcher completing my M. Ed. Your child will be asked through interviews and journals to reflect and comment on their perceptions of what nourishes their spirit in the classroom. The post interview (one-on-one) will require about 15-20 minutes and will be conducted in the classroom at the convenience of the participants either before or after school, morning or afternoon recess or during lunch recess. The study will invite participants to reflect on the ways the nourishment of their spirit is enhanced and nurtured in the classroom. The journals will be completed after each TAG session during school time for a period of 6 weeks. This will give the teacher/researcher a more in depth view of the participants experiences in the classroom. Finally, by studying what nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom this research aims to provide suggestions for a curriculum that integrates meaningful experiences for teenagers into the classroom and to provide professional development for teachers interested in utilizing such a curriculum.

This study will be in the form of an in-depth audio-taped interview with the teacher/researcher, Hilary Brown. All personal data will be kept strictly confidential. All information will be coded so that participants' names cannot be connected with responses, and will remain anonymous. Only the researcher named above (and Supervisor) will have access to the data. All material (tapes, transcripts, and journals) will be disposed of upon completion of the thesis.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that
I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers so that my identity will remain anonymous. Only the researchers named above would then have access to the data. I understand that at any time during/after the completion of the research, I will be given access to my responses. I understand that if I do not wish to retain my responses, all material (tapes, transcripts, and journals) will be disposed of upon completion of the thesis.

Parent signature:_________________________ Date:________________________

Child’s
Signature:_________________________ Date:________________________

Please note that this study has been approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board File #01-152. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation, you may contact Mrs. Brown (905) 332-6000 or Professor Bosacki (905) 688-5550, extension 4987. email sbosacki@ed.brocku.ca or contact the Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035 http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/

You will be contacted by Mrs. Brown once the interviews have been completed with feedback about the data collection. Written debriefings will be available for you upon request. Your time and valuable input are greatly appreciated! Please take a copy of this form with you for further reference.

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.
Researcher’s Signature:_________________________
Date:________________________
Appendix C
Informed Consent
Title of Study: "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom?" A Qualitative Study into the Gateways of Adolescent's Souls.

Researcher: Hilary Brown
Supervising Professor: Dr. Sandra Bosacki
Name of Participant: __________________________

I understand that my child will be participating in a study which will involve the exploration of what nourishes their spirit in the classroom. The study will invite my child to reflect on the ways the nourishment of their spirit is enhanced and nurtured in the classroom. Finally, by studying what nourishes their spirit in the classroom this research aims to provide suggestions for a curriculum that integrates meaningful experiences for teenagers into the classroom and to provide professional development for teachers interested in utilizing such a curriculum. This study will be in the form of an audio-taped interview about 15-20 minutes long by Mrs. Brown and journal entries written by the students after 6 TAG sessions.

I have fully explained the nature of the study to my child. In addition, I have explained his/her rights and he/she fully understands them.

I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that he/she may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty to school grades.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my child's name is not associated with their answers so that their identity will remain anonymous. Only the researchers named above would then have access to the data. I understand that at any time during / after the completion of the research, I will be given access to my child's
responses. I understand that if I do not wish to retain my child's responses, all material (tapes, transcripts, and journals) will be disposed of upon completion of the thesis.

Parent
signature:_________________________________________Date:____________________

Child's
Signature:_________________________________________Date:____________________

Please note that this study has been approved by the Brock Research Ethics Board. File # 01-152. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation, you may contact Mrs. Brown (905) 332-6000 or Professor Bosacki (905) 688-5550, extension 4987. email sbosacki@ed.brocku.ca or contact the Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035 http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/

You will be contacted by Mrs. Brown once the interviews have been completed with feedback about the data collection. Written debriefings will be available for you upon request. Your time and valuable input are greatly appreciated! Please take a copy of this form with you for further reference.

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.
Researcher's
Signature:_________________________________________Date:____________________
Appendix D

Script for Recruitment
To my whole class:

I am trying to become the best teacher I can possibly be. My journey on this road has led me to complete another university degree. As you know I am presently completing my thesis for my Master's of Education degree. In order to complete my degree I need to conduct research in an area of interest. My area of interest is in the "spirit" of the students I teach.

I am going to be conducting a study during TAG time for 6 consecutive weeks from late January to the end of February. The question I am investigating is "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom?" Everyone in the class will be participating in the TAG sessions regardless of their participation in the study.

In order to do the research I need people to volunteer to participate. I'm hoping to have an equal number of boys and girls represented in the sample so here's what a volunteer needs to do in order to participate. What I would like you to do right now is listen carefully to the criteria for participating and think about whether you can commit to this study or not.

After each of the 6 TAG sessions you will be asked to reflect
on your experience during the session in a reflection journal that I will provide you with for the duration of the study. This journal is similar to your Response Log entries that you do for reading. I will collect the journals after each session and read them. They will be given back to you the following day. After the final session I will collect the journals and use them in my data analysis.

In addition each participant will be interviewed at the completion of the 6 TAG sessions. You will meet with me at a mutually convenient time here in the classroom just like when we do our reading conferences. It can be at either morning or afternoon recess, lunch recess or before or after school. When we meet we will talk one-on-one about your thoughts on what nourishes your spirit. The interview itself consists of 7 questions. It should not take longer than 15-20 minutes. The interview will take place around the last week of February. I intend to audio tape the interview to avoid the distraction of note-taking and to ensure accurate meaning of your responses. You will be given the option to decline the audio taping if you wish. After the interview I will be transcribing the tape and you will be given a copy of the transcription to ensure accuracy of the content.

So to recap, what you would have to do is be interviewed in an one-on-one interview consisting of 7 questions for about 15-20
minutes at the end of the 6 TAG sessions and complete 6 journal entries after each TAG time while the rest of the class is responding in their Response Log.

If you are interested in participating can you please see me some time today. I will give you two letters to bring home to your parents to read. Your parents obviously must give you permission to participate. They must sign these forms and so should you as participants in this study.

I hope you will think about participating in my study but I totally understand if you don’t want to. There is no pressure whatsoever to participate and you will not be penalized in any way for not participating.

Thanks for taking the time to listen.
Appendix E

Interview Questions
Student Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself?

2. When you think of the word 'spirit' as in your spirit as an individual what words or images come to mind?

3. While in the classroom when do you feel your 'spirit' is at its fullest?

4. What nourishes or feeds your spirit while you are in the classroom?

5. What allows you to get to this place?

6. What discussions would you like to comment on?

7. Why do you feel this particular discussion made an impression on you?
Appendix F

Letters of Appreciation
Date:__________________

Dear:__________________

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for allowing your son/daughter to participate in my recent study entitled, "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom?" Holistic approaches to education that address spirituality and spiritual well being is lacking. Therefore, by allowing your son/daughter to share their time and contribute their thoughts to this emerging body of knowledge was highly relevant and welcomed.

The primary aim of this study was to provide students with the opportunity to create a self-portrait, one that focuses on their spirit. Second, was to provide curriculum suggestions that integrate meaningful experiences for teenagers into the classroom and last, to provide professional development for teachers interested in utilizing such a curriculum.

I genuinely appreciate your willingness to allow your child to share their thoughts and experiences with me during this study. Please contact me if you would like a written summary of the results and findings obtained from this research.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Brown
Brock University Master of Education Student
Date: ________________

Dear: ________________

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for your participation in my recent study entitled, "What nourishes the spirit of adolescents in the classroom?" Holistic approaches to education that address spirituality and spiritual well being is lacking. Therefore, your time and contributions to this emerging body of knowledge were highly relevant and welcomed.

The primary aim of this study was to provide students with the opportunity to create a self-portrait, one that focuses on their spirit. Second, was to provide curriculum suggestions that integrate meaningful experiences for teenagers into the classroom and last, to provide professional development for teachers interested in utilizing such a curriculum.

I genuinely appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences with me during this study. Please contact me if you would like a written summary of the results and findings obtained from this research.

I hope that your participation in this study has provided you with an opportunity that you may not have experienced otherwise and helped you begin to create a self-portrait. Thank you, again, for your time and honesty.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Brown

Brock University Master of Education Student
Appendix G

Unedited Mystery Questions
Adolescent Mystery Questions

Self
- Am I a mistake?
- Will I get married? If I do, to whom?
- How much heartache will I go through?
- What will high school be like?
- What will happen to me when I get to high school?
- What do people think of me?
- Will I have enough money to survive?
- What will I be?
- Will I get married?
- Will I have kids?
- Will I lose weight?
- Does HE like me?
- Where will I be in ten years?
- I'm scared to go to high school and I want to stay at this school.
- What do I want to be?
- Where will I go to college/university?
- What will happen to me after I graduate?
- Will I get married?
- How do you know when it's really love?
- How could I make the world a better place?
- Will I fulfill my dreams as to what I wrote on this card?
- What will happen to me when I die?
- What would my life be like if my parents didn't split up?
- What would happen if I was never born into this world?
- Where am I heading in life?
- Will I succeed in my dreams and goals?
- Who am I?
- What do I really want?
- Who am I?
- Am I being the real me?
- Am I who I want to be?
- What would I like to change about my life?
- Am I being someone else?
- What will happen to me?
- Will I have a family?
- Will I have money?
• Who do I really like?
• Can I get a job?
• How old will I grow up to be?
• Will I be a father?
• What will I become in life?
• What will my future be like?
• What will happen to me in the next five years?
• Am I going to pass grade eight?
• Am I going to make it to university?
• I sometimes ask myself how my future will be.
• Will I get far in life?
• Will I be able to do what I want to do?
• What will I do for a living?
• Will I have my own family?
• I am curious about life, high school, and college?
• I am excited about high school.
• Will I live a good life?
• Will I achieve my goals?
• How can I make everyone happy?
• How can I tell from right from wrong?
• When people tease you how do you know they're joking?
• How far can I go as an individual?
• Should I stay or should I go?
• Why did I do that way back when?
• Why was I so lucky to be a Canadian?
• I'm curious about what I'm going to be when I'm older?
• What's it going to be like when I'm in college?
• I want to know what I'm going to be so I can prepare for it.
• What job I will have?
• Will I make it to university?
• What will I be when I grow up?
• How will graduation and prom be? Who will I go with?

Social (Peers)
• I wonder if [he] actually doesn't hear voices in his mind?
• Why are people cool and not cool?
• Why did so and so do that today?
• Will I be together with my friends at high school?
• What do other people think of me?
• Will I meet my old friends again?

Social (Family)
• Why is my brother such a menace?
• I want peace. Why are my parents always mad at me?
• What do my parents think of me?
• Is my family safe?
• What will happen to my family?
• I worry about my family.

Cultural / World
• Why does racism still exist?
• Why does colour still matter?
• Will there be world peace?
• Will everyone stop fighting?
• Why are there so many bad guys out there?
• Why is there war?
• What will the world be like in the next decade?
• Why can’t the world be peaceful?
• Why is racism so bad?
• Why have people been made to cause problems?
• What has money done for us and what has it not done for us?
• I always wanted to know what life would be like without money.

Metaphysical / Existential
• Why am I here?
• What’s going to happen from now to when I get home?
• When will I die? What will it feel like?
• Is there life after death?
• How did the universe become what it is?
• How was the earth created?
• How were humans made?
• Why is earth the only planet that could have living things on it?
• What does death feel like?
• What is the meaning of life?
• Why is life the way it is?
• Is there anything past the universe?
• Am I living in a dream?
• If you had nothing where would you put it?
If a tree fell in the woods and no one was there would it make a sound?
What if there was no God?
Where do murderers and psychopaths go wrong?
What would dying be like?
How did the world start?
What's the meaning of life?
Is there a hell or do we live in it now?
What do I dream about?
Why am I here?
Will I be here tomorrow?
How will I die?
What's tomorrow going to be like?
What events are going to occur?
What age am I going to die at?
What will life be like in the future?

Tangential / Small talk
What book will I choose to read next?
What do I have for homework?
What would it be like to be a teacher?
Will I get my writing done?
What should I wear tomorrow?
Will it be cold?
Where do I live?