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Oral History Project: Grace Waters

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Oral History Interview Transcript

Recording Links:

- Part 1:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSr4WHkLNIVeWE1QzIIRS0dtQjQ/view?usp=sharing>
- Part 2:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSr4WHkLNIVNHMwRkhRc1ppdnM/view?usp=sharing>

Jan:

Good afternoon, Ms. Waters,

Thank you very much for agreeing to be my interviewee to fulfill the requirements for my Oral Interview in my History of American Education Class. It means a great deal to me to have your perspective, as a professional educator. My greatest desire in my chose profession is to give glory to God. By doing this interview, I hope to increase my knowledge and awareness, as well as gain a deeper insight into the many changes that have taken place in the American educational system. I will do my very best to use your expertise, not only to enhance my academic journey, but to apply the wisdom from this interview of your many years of experience in the field of education. In so far as the format for this interview, it will be very informal. I will ask you questions about your academic experiences, teaching and non-teaching experiences, your certification process, significant teacher attributes, instructional techniques and strategies, and about any advice or recommendations for pre-service and in-service teachers. Your answers can be brief or elaborate.

Jan:

26 Please tell me about your educational background? In addition to your academic endeavors, what
27 influenced your decision to pursue the field of teaching?

28 Ms. Waters:

29 Let me begin by telling you what influenced me to go into the field of teaching. During my
30 childhood, I experienced many relocations and it soon became evident to me that I had to adapt
31 and be flexible to the different environments, situations, along with the array of people and
32 cultures. I learned to become my own teacher at a very early age, to fill the learning gaps that
33 moving and changing schools brought about. My love of learning, independent study, and strong
34 work ethic gave me the attributes to excel in all of my classes. My daily life, as a youngster,
35 revolved around the peaceful West Texas countryside. Later on, as a teenager, I relocated to the
36 foothills of Anchorage, Alaska. The travel, social activities, and new experiences provided many
37 opportunities to relate to an assortment of people from around the world. This enhanced my
38 insight into the learning process as well as the learning differences of those around me. So, being
39 a teacher became a way of life.

40 As far as my educational background:

- 41 ▪ Elementary School: West Texas
- 42 ▪ Middle School: West Texas
- 43 ▪ High School: Anchorage, Alaska
- 44 ▪ College – B.A. (Major: Elementary Education / Minor: Spanish)
 - 45 ○ University of Alaska: Anchorage, Alaska
 - 46 ○ Texas Tech University: Lubbock, Texas
 - 47 ○ Texas A&M: College Station, Texas

48 Jan:

49 It sounds like your educational background and cultural awareness enriched your life at a very
50 early age.

51 Ms. Waters:

52 Yes, my education, teacher preparation program, ongoing professional development courses, job
53 endeavors, professional association memberships, and volunteer work cultivated my mindset to
54 remain open to experiences and opportunities, as well as equipped me to work with professionals
55 and non-professionals in all walks of life.

56 Jan:

57 In addition to your preliminary teacher preparation program, what other experiences helped to
58 become a masterful professional educator?

59 Ms. Waters:

60 In my opinion, my academic journey, teacher preparation program, actual hands-on teaching, and
61 life experiences enhanced my skills, talents and abilities, requiring me to recalibrate my
62 perspective, continually. Accessing my broad knowledge of subject matter, I planned well, gave
63 directions in a clear manner with my strong communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal,
64 and using creative methods to build student interest and cooperation, I remained flexible in my
65 lessons to allow for individual learning differences among my students. Because of my strong
66 work ethic, with enthusiasm and perseverance, I put forth a superior effort in everything that I
67 accomplished, including the tasks that others set before me. To attain the level of proficiency and
68 be optimally prepared to meet curriculum goals, I engaged my students in learning experiences
69 that addressed their needs, concerns, interests, knowledge, strengths and weaknesses. The many
70 extra hours at school and at home translated into the development of my students' higher level

71 thinking skills with the ability to reflect, assimilate and put into practice the concepts and skills
72 as designated by school/district policy - curriculum expectations.

73 Jan:

74 In my teacher preparation program, I am participating in practicums, and soon I will be doing my
75 student teaching in the school environment. I learned about school safety when I was a student.

76 When did you have the opportunity to become familiar with any specific requirements for
77 teacher preparedness, should a catastrophic event occur?

78 Ms. Waters:

79 School safety, whether it's a weather-related emergency because of an impending tornado, the
80 possibility of a terrorist attack, or school fire, etc., is covered during your teacher orientation at
81 the school level. I would encourage you to explore this question with the principal at the school
82 where you are participating as a practicum student. I am sure that they would be delighted to let
83 you look over their emergency preparedness plan, etc. You can also visit the school district
84 office to ask for information regarding this topic, or via the Internet.

85 Jan:

86 Has school safety changed over the years since you've been in the field of education?

87 Ms. Waters:

88 I remember that, immediately after the school violence involving the use of guns in the school
89 environment, the schools across the nation turned themselves into near fortresses. Security
90 cameras and metal detectors were installed, backpacks were banned, students were required to
91 carry ID's and police were posted in the hallways, and an array of other measures in an effort to
92 foster a sense of safety in the school community. At the present time, the evidence suggests that
93 it's not the metal detectors that discover weapons in the schools, but rather kids who come forth

94 and report it to an adult. Many of the security measures remain, but the focus has shifted from
95 adding to the high tech gear, to training the school staff and student body to be highly alert.

96 Jan:

97 Did the classroom management procedures that you established change to meet the needs, after
98 the school crime and violence erupted nationwide?

99

100 Ms. Waters:

101 The classroom teacher empowers the students into becoming productive members of the school,
102 the community and ultimately, society, through her classroom management procedures. To
103 create a classroom where students feel safe and learning takes place, the teacher must post rules
104 with consequences and adhere to them, strictly holding students accountable. To equip all
105 students socially, academically, emotionally, and physically and provide motivations for students
106 to behave, the classroom manager must devise a set of rules that covers possible
107 misbehaviors/disruptions that might occur in the classroom. They must be enforceable, not
108 ambiguous, and very clear. The classroom management plan holds students accountable without
109 using counter-productive methods. The teacher's classroom management plan needs to be a
110 contract that the teacher makes with her students. The contract promises that the teacher will
111 protect the students' right to learn and that she will ensure their safety. The students need to be
112 able to see the rules wherever they are seated. In the beginning, the teacher should review the
113 rules often. You should set aside a desk separated from the rest of the class for the purpose of
114 time out. The personal disappointment of being separated from the rest of the class evoked
115 feelings that make time out effective. The consequences need to be administered without

116 disrupting the class and are in play for one single day with the chance to succeed and be better
117 the next day. The effective classroom management plan has only two purposes:

- 118 1. State the rules of the classroom
- 119 2. State exactly what will happen if those rules are broken

120 However, few behavior problems, respect that flows from teacher to students, students to
121 teacher, students to students, and everyone to guests.

122 An example of a simple plan of rules and consequences is as follows:

123 Rules:

- 124 1. Listen and follow directions
- 125 2. Raise your hand before speaking or leaving your seat
- 126 3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself
- 127 4. Respect your classmates and your teacher

128 Consequences:

- 129 1st time a rule is broken: Warning
- 130 2nd time a rule is broken: Time out
- 131 3rd time a rule is broken: Letter home

132 Jan:

133 I am very interested in learning how you developed and wrote your philosophy of education.

134 When you wrote it, did you base it on your academic education, life experiences, or teaching
135 experiences?

136 Ms. Waters:

137 As I developed my educational philosophy, I was influenced in part by my academic education,
138 life experiences, and teaching experiences, but for the most part, by who I am as a person, and

139 whom I hope to become as an individual member of God's kingdom. Based on my personal
140 beliefs, I used the Beatitudes, the Sacraments, and the Commandments to guide and direct me.
141 When wrote the first copy of my philosophy of education statement, I focused on what I
142 perceived as the purpose of education, the role of the student and teacher in the learning process,
143 as well as the interrelationships between the teacher, student, parents, teaching colleagues,
144 administrators, and the community, keeping in mind why I had decided to go into the teaching
145 profession.

146 Jan:

147 Can you give me some suggestions to guide me, as I write my own philosophy of education?

148 Ms. Waters:

149 As you write your own philosophy of education, keep at the forefront of your mind that an
150 individual's personal philosophy of education is simply a statement of their personal beliefs, and
151 how they are going to put them into practice in the classroom. The philosophy statement is not a
152 theoretical paper based on what you have learned throughout your teacher preparation program,
153 but rather, how your experiences have influenced your ability to transfer the learning process to
154 your students as they learn, reflect, assimilate, and put into practice the concepts, that will
155 transition them from student to lifelong learner. In essence, using the scope of your academic
156 education, life experiences, teaching experiences and pedagogical theories, your statement
157 becomes an action plan that facilitates your classroom management, instructional strategies,
158 curriculum design and assessment procedures, using of cooperative learning, parental
159 involvement, and the community resources, along with technology, to embrace the needs,
160 concerns, interests, background knowledge, strengths and weaknesses of the students. It is really
161 important when you write your own educational philosophy that it become a description of your

162 own goals and beliefs as a teacher. It needs to reflect your experiences and training. You will be
163 required to submit an up to date philosophy with your student teaching application. Many school
164 districts require you to submit your philosophy education along with your other application
165 materials. Administrators often times use it to see what kind of person you are and what kind of
166 person will be teaching the students in their school. Needless to say, your philosophy of
167 education is going to change as you mature in the profession, through your experiences. Try to
168 keep copies of your first philosophy and compare it as you progress because it will help you
169 understand why you make the decisions that you make when you plan your lessons and
170 implement them.

171 Jan:

172 So, the composite of your life experiences, academic journey, and teaching experiences
173 influenced your philosophy of education?

174 Ms. Waters:

175 Yes, throughout my teaching career, my acquired general and specialized knowledge, skills, and
176 abilities, have given me the attributes to enhance my students' perception of subject matter,
177 while making it relevant to their own lives. The foundation of my teaching philosophy remains
178 the same, based on my belief system and my belief system is based on God, but, as a lifelong
179 learner, I remain open to new and different ideas about teaching and learning, while working
180 effectively with students, teachers, principals, parents and community resource personnel to
181 stimulate the students' critical thinking skills.

182 Jan:

183 When I obtain my standard teaching certificate, I will be required to renew it every five years.

184 Can you elaborate on the types of teaching certificates and your experience with the certificate
185 renewal process?

186 Ms. Waters:

187 Yes, I remember that in my own professional education program, this topic was not covered
188 adequately. It was assumed that you would learn as you go. As far as certification in Texas, a
189 bachelor's degree, completion of an educator preparation program and passing scores on the
190 required certification exams are required. The following types of certificates were issued prior to
191 9-1-99:

192 Provisional – lifetime classroom certificate (issued prior to 9-1-99). Professional – lifetime
193 graduate-level certificate such as counselor or administrator (issued prior to 9-1-99). Today, the
194 standard teaching certificate is issued to all individuals who complete all of the certification
195 requirements. The basic requirements include holding a bachelor's degree, completing a teacher
196 preparation program and a general teaching certification exam, and passing a criminal
197 background checks, including finger-printing, and confirmation of certification. They do vary
198 from state to state. If you are degreed in another state and hold the acceptable certification or
199 from another country, you can obtain a one-year certificate that will allow you to get a teaching
200 position, while you get your credentials in order. If you are involved in a Texas Educator teacher
201 program, you can also apply for a probationary certificate to serve as a subject level teacher. If
202 you are a certified teacher and the only position available is working as an aid, you do not have
203 to have aid certification to qualify for the job. Once you have a standard certificate, it is valid for
204 five years. You can renew it six months before the expiration date. To renew your standard
205 certificate, you are required to complete 150 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE).

206 Each state is unique in the amount of time and level of ongoing education or certification
207 required to maintain a license. Some states require a certain amount of time spent in the
208 classroom, while others require teachers to attend classes or programs for ongoing certification
209 renewal. There are various approved methods for acquiring your CPE hours. You can Google
210 this and get all of the information you need on the Internet or by calling the Texas Education
211 Agency, or you can call your school district. But it is entirely up to the teacher to keep accurate,
212 written documentation of all CPE activities. Educators must comply with federal, state and
213 district requirements for professional development, including maintaining their professional
214 development records. In addition to the Continuing Professional Education requirement, the
215 teacher must also submit another criminal background check, including fingerprinting. If you
216 don't renew your teaching certificate, or if it is denied, it is placed on an inactive status. Then, to
217 reinstate it, you will have to pay an additional fee, and meet the CPE requirements for renewal.
218 There are some hardship exemptions to CPE requirements like health-related and other
219 extenuating circumstances. The renewal of your license will be denied if you don't comply with
220 student loans, child support obligations, if you don't pass the criminal background check, or if
221 you give false information, you can be subject to criminal charges and your certificate can be
222 sanctioned.

223 Jan:

224 What kind of teaching certificate do you have?

225 Ms. Waters:

226 I have what is called a lifetime certificate.

227 Jan:

228 What is the renewal process for the lifetime certificate?

229 Ms. Waters:

230 It's interesting to share about House-Bill 72 that was passed by the Texas legislature in 1984.

231 This bill mandated that all persons issued valid Texas teacher certification before Feb. 1, 1986,

232 must pass a skills assessment test. Although lifetime certificates have not been issued since 9-1-

233 99, to revalidate a lifetime certificate, you must take the Texas Higher Education Assessment

234 (THEA), or you can also take a Texas Examination of Educators Standards (TExES) content test

235 to revalidate a provisional or professional certificate. When it is all said and done, choosing the

236 right area of certification is very important because if for instance, you earn an elementary

237 teaching certificate and later decide that you want to teach in junior high, you will have to go

238 through the certification process all over again.

239

240 Jan:

241 What activities count for CPE?

242 Ms. Waters:

243 There are many ways to write CPE hours.

- 244 • Workshops
- 245 • Conferences
- 246 • In-service and staff development through an approved provider
- 247 • Undergraduate and graduate coursework through an accredited college
 - 248 ○ One semester credit hour is equal to 15 CPE hours
 - 249 ○ Three credit courses are equal to 45 CPE hours
- 250 • Interactive distance learning, video conferences, on-line activities
- 251 • Independent study, not to exceed 20% of the required clock hours

252 • Developing, teaching, or presenting a CPE activity, not to exceed 10% of the required
253 CPE hours

254 • Serving as a mentor to another educator, not to exceed 30% of the required hours

255 Jan:

256 There are so many educational professional organizations. What professional organizations did
257 you join?

258 Ms. Waters:

259 Joining a professional organization in your career field can provide you with networking
260 opportunities by connecting you to others on a local and even global level, while giving you the
261 opportunity to develop skills, along with broadening your knowledge through courses, seminars,
262 and/or lectures that are offered to help members stay up to date on the latest research and trends.

263 The opportunities to give back to the community through social initiatives that support
264 community efforts are also available through these organizations. Ultimately, many of the
265 members find inspiration and motivation, within the ranks. So professional organizations can be
266 an option for you. The professional organizations that I was affiliated with are:

267 – American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

268 – Kappa Delta Pi (KDP)

269 – National Education Association (NEA)

270 – Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)

271 Jan:

272 One of my Department of Education Professors is a National Board Certified teacher. What does
273 that entail?

274 Ms. Waters:

275 The National Board Certification is recognized as the gold standard in teacher certification. Its
276 mission is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by maintaining high and rigorous
277 standards for what accomplished teacher should know and be able to do. The National Board of
278 Certification was established in 1897 to address the issue of “rising tide of mediocrity,” and it
279 serves as the teaching profession’s vehicle for defining and recognizing accomplished teachers.
280 It was created by teachers and for teachers. Now more than ever, because teachers have to prove
281 themselves in this constantly changing educational horizon, board certification lets teachers
282 showcase their talent in their classroom and demonstrate their dedication to their students and
283 their profession. National Board Certified Teachers are recognized across the nation as having
284 met the highest standards set by the profession. They are identified to serve as leaders in their
285 schools. Many of the state and districts offer incentives for educators to get board certification.
286 The National Board Certification is an advanced teaching credential offered by the national
287 board for professional teaching standards. It complements teaching standards but does not
288 replace a state teacher’s license. You can get the national board certification by completing a
289 voluntary assessment program that recognizes effective and accomplished teacher. What it takes
290 to be a National Board for Professional Teachers

291 -Hold bachelors degree

292 -Complete three full years of teaching

293 -Hold a valid state teaching license

294 Jan:

295 What is the role of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence?

296 Ms. Waters:

297 If you already have a bachelor's degree but did not originally pursue teaching, you can still
298 become a certified or licensed teacher. One path is through The American Board of Teacher
299 Certification of Teacher Excellence, which is an alternative teaching program to get your teacher
300 certification. It is a non-profit organization established by the US Department of Education and
301 is dedicated to building strong communities through preparing, certifying and supporting
302 teachers. It offers online self-paced programs to certification in subjects to teach in public
303 schools in 12 states across the US. Each candidate is given a customized study plan.

304 Another path is to earn a master's degree in education. The third path is that different states offer
305 alternate pathways to certification where you don't have to start at the beginning.

306 Jan:

307 What teaching duties did the State Board for Educator Certification authorize you to perform
308 after you fulfilled the state law and regulation requirements for your Teacher Certification?

309 Ms. Waters:

310 Teacher certification is the process that leads to the license to teach within a given area. An
311 endorsement is a statement appearing on a license that identifies the specific subject or grade
312 level that the license holder is authorized to teach. After obtaining a professional educator
313 license, you can obtain content/subject area teaching endorsements to add to your professional
314 educator teaching credentials. Fully certified teachers must meet all the requirements for teacher
315 certification and hold a standard or lifetime (provisional or professional) certificate issued by the
316 state board for educators certification. To provide a quality education for all students, and to
317 meet the needs of all learners in the classroom, my Texas Educator Certificate certifies that I
318 have fulfilled the requirements of state law and regulations of the State Board of Educator
319 Certification and am hereby authorized to preform the duties as designated below:

- 320 • Elementary Self-Contained (Life)
 - 321 ○ Grades (1-8)
- 322 • Elementary Spanish (Life)
 - 323 ○ Grades (1-8)
- 324 • Elementary, All Regular Classes
 - 325 ○ Grades (1-6)

326 Jan:

327 With the various teaching and non-teaching positions that you have held, and with the mindset of
328 remaining open to new experiences and opportunities, what do you consider pivotal character
329 attributes to your success and accomplishments?

330 Ms. Waters:

331 With a single-minded dedication to the welfare of children, and generous with my time and
332 availability, while working with a wide range of students and adults in the various hands-on
333 teaching, management roles, and volunteer activities, I have been very successful in establishing
334 meaningful relationships with students, parents, colleagues, staff, resource personnel, and the
335 community as a whole. In addition to general and specialized knowledge, and with a broad range
336 of content knowledge, in sufficient depth to convey information in meaningful ways to students,
337 I can size up situations quickly and make appropriate decisions, whether managing a classroom,
338 leading students on a field trip, shifting from one instructional procedure to another, supervising
339 an intern, dealing with policy and curriculum issues in the school, or addressing discipline issues.
340 I transformed my passion for teaching to inspire the learning process and academic achievement
341 of students, using my natural talents, academic education, and work experiences, and contributed

342 to the efficacy of school and district goals with the following career pursuits in the field of
343 education:

- 344 ▪ DISD
 - 345 ○ Student Teaching
 - 346 ▪ As a student teacher, when I was studying to be a teacher, as part of the
 - 347 teacher education program, I observed the classroom instruction and
 - 348 performed teaching in the elementary school environment during
 - 349 summer school. This position is also called being an intern or a practice
 - 350 teacher.
 - 351 ○ Evaluation Dissemination and Assessment Center for Bilingual Education
 - 352 ▪ Specialist II Marketing and Distribution Specialist
 - 353 ○ Elementary Self-Contained (LIFE)
 - 354 ▪ Grades 1-8
 - 355 ○ Elementary Spanish (LIFE)
 - 356 ▪ Grades 1-8
 - 357 ○ Elementary, All Regular Classes
 - 358 ▪ Grades 1-6
 - 359 ○ Programmatic Remedies (Grades 4, 5 and 6)
 - 360 ○ Teacher-5th grade
 - 361 ▪ A person who teaches, especially in school.
 - 362 ○ Title I
 - 363 ○ Talented and Gifted Facilitator (K-6)
 - 364 ○ Bilingual Tutor

- 365
 - Curriculum and Development Specialist
- 366
 - Resource Teacher
- 367
 - DCCCD
- 368
 - Adult Education Classes
- 369
 - ESL Classes
- 370
 - Greenhills School
- 371
 - Substitute Teacher K-12
- 372
 - The Highlands
- 373
 - Substitute Teacher K-12
- 374
 - Anchorage School District
- 375
 - NewComer's Center (7-12)
- 376
 - Career Counselor
- 377
 - King Career Center
- 378
 - Resource Teacher
- 379
 - Plano ISD
- 380
 - Instructional Support Specialist (ISS Assistant)
- 381
 - Bilingual Education-7th, 8th, and 9th grade
- 382
 - McKinney ISD
- 383
 - Special Education
- 384
 - Substitute Teacher K-12
- 385
 - Frisco ISD
- 386
 - Substitute Teacher K-12

387 I collaborated with teachers, counselors, administrators, resource personnel, and the community,
388 as I did my student teaching with DISD and later on managed a classroom as a regular and
389 substitute teacher. My acquired skills, talents, and abilities made it possible for me to keep my
390 focus on the students. Respecting the histories, and cultures of the different ethnic groups, as
391 well as their diverse learning styles, I have incorporated my own culture and personal
392 experiences into the instructional techniques that I have used to teach my students in the various
393 positions that I have held, ranging from mainstream to multicultural (K-12). I worked to optimize
394 student engagement, by adapting my methodology and approach to allow for transformative
395 learning to take place and presenting information in a variety of formats, including class
396 discussion, guest speakers, films, music, technology, field trips, and resources in the community.
397 With the Bilingual Program, E.D.A.C., I worked as a Marketing and Distribution Specialist II
398 and coordinated with school districts throughout the country to evaluate, disseminate, and assess
399 Bilingual Education Curriculum materials. I also worked as a volunteer in the community,
400 teaching English as a second language to adults. These activities added to the wealth of my
401 knowledge, natural talents, and teacher attributes, including communication skills, organizational
402 and classroom management ability.

403 Jan:

404 What are some of your non-teaching career experiences?

405 Ms. Waters:

406 That's a very good question. My knowledge, awareness, and involvement in the field of
407 education gave me the attributes to venture into other fields of interest. The scope of my
408 education, professional training, employment experiences, along with my personal
409 accomplishments, and volunteer activities provided me with an array of assets, as I ventured into

410 the field of sports management, as the owner and member of the executive committee of two
411 semi-professional ice hockey teams, which were part of the Gulf Coast Hockey League.

412 Jan:

413 In my own teacher preparation program at UD, I have learned that, even though our educational
414 system has experienced rapid growth and progressive change since its inception, the teacher
415 remains a key component of the student's learning experience. What instructional techniques
416 and/or strategies did you implement or adapt to address the students' needs, concerns, interests,
417 strengths and weaknesses?

418 Ms. Waters:

419 The instructional strategies that I used in my lesson planning to provide students with a wealth of
420 experiences to enhance their abilities and skills varied, according to their needs and desired
421 student outcome, but were always correlated to the curriculum guidelines. Some of the
422 instructional strategies that I used are as follows:

423 Review / Check for prior knowledge

424 Direct instruction

425 Guided practice

426 Independent practice

427 Oral drill as necessary

428 Provide information (in a variety of forms)

429 Model desired skills and outcomes

430 Demonstrate (in a variety of ways)

431 Provide examples to help transfer learning

432 Integrated topics and concepts

- 433 Investigate / Observe (from a variety of angles)
- 434 Link new information and/or skills to prior knowledge (build background)
- 435 Check for understanding / Question
- 436 Re-teach (if necessary)
- 437 Evaluate / Summarize (Did we meet the objectives?)
- 438 Discussion to gain deeper understanding
- 439 Group / Individual Instruction
- 440 Large / Small Group Instruction
- 441 Problem-Solving
- 442 Cooperative Learning
- 443 Critical Thinking
- 444 Creative Thinking
- 445 Compare and contrast activities
- 446 Critiquing activities
- 447 Reflective activities
- 448 Observations
- 449 Simulations
- 450 Using various technology tools
- 451 Use graphic organizers (maps, charts, illustrations)
- 452 Model by "thinking aloud" the process
- 453 Provide "wait time"
- 454 Use questioning strategies that require learners to go deeper

455 Make objectives/targets explicit

456 Student self-assess (self-monitor)

457 Within a highly structured environment to effectively teach new ideas or information about a

458 topic, I presented academic content to the students through the lecture, often referred to as a

459 presentation, and direct instruction, where I spoke and the students listened actively, using

460 graphs, charts, etc. to help the students process the information. I used the strategy of simulation,

461 where students performed different roles in simulated situations to help the students master more

462 complex tasks or skills in a safe environment and to connect the content to students' personal

463 experience and every day life situations. The strategy of concept teaching, where students

464 learned to think both inductively and deductively about the information that I presented, was

465 used to teach concepts and develop the students' higher level thinking skills. As a central method

466 of teaching, the art of communication, through discussion, was modeled in the format of question

467 and answer about the academic content presented. Within the context of the different ethnic

468 backgrounds, gender, and mixed abilities, cooperative learning gave students the opportunity to

469 work together in small groups, combining their efforts, and depending on each member to

470 complete assigned tasks. Project-based instruction, inquiry learning, or authentic investigation

471 was the basis for the students' inquiry and investigation and promoted their higher level thinking

472 skills. All of the strategies and techniques, as applicable, were used or adapted to meet my goals

473 in Programmatic Remedies. To accommodate and meet the needs of my students, who had been

474 labeled as underachievers with learning differences, and disregarding any preconceived notions

475 and expectations, I maximized their learning environment to foster and nurture their motivation

476 to learn. I designated specific areas that were rich with opportunities to interact in the learning

477 process. Learning centers created throughout the classroom with visuals, bulletin boards, and

478 various other materials increased their overall vocabulary and enabled the students to hear,
479 identify, and manipulate, etc., to become familiar, assimilate and put into practice learning
480 concepts. The relationship between the written and the spoken language was readily available for
481 the students using technology as needed within every learning center's central focus. My
482 recorded voice read aloud to the students and was an excellent way to build the vocabulary
483 knowledge of English Language Learners. It also increased their comprehension. My ultimate
484 goal was to help students communicate, effectively, by providing opportunities to listen, speak,
485 read, and write to increase their overall awareness and comprehension of what they learned about
486 themselves and the world they live in. The teaching experience gave me the opportunity to use
487 my training, high expectations, hard work, positive outlook, and creativity to design, initiate and
488 implement lesson plans that engaged all of the students in the active learning process, as they
489 constructed their own learning to successfully meet school and district goals. Looking deeply at
490 the goals that we set for our students in the classroom, the high expectations for all students to
491 succeed make a lasting difference. I used cooperative learning to untrack, mainstream and
492 multiculturalize, after identifying students' current knowledge base, and building instructions
493 with that in mind, I pushed all students to higher level thinking, maintaining high expectations,
494 using a multicultural approach to recognize, value, explore, and incorporate the home culture in
495 the form of multiple perspectives.

496 Jan:

497 Within the spectrum of the student populations, whose lives you touched, using your expertise as
498 a teaching professional, did you find it difficult to transition from teaching low achievers to
499 teaching overachievers?

500 Ms. Waters:

501 No, with no preconceived notions and expectations, my efforts as a Math and Reading Talented
502 and Gifted Facilitator with DISD enhanced the overall learning process of my students, who, on
503 the other extreme, were labeled as overachievers with the need to augment their learning
504 experience within the regular classroom. There is no standard global definition of what a gifted
505 student is, but to provide gifted education, students, who are the most skilled, or talented in a
506 given area, are offered a combination of approaches at different times. Talented and Gifted
507 education can also be referred to as TAG, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), or G/T.

508 Jan:

509 Did your teacher training, continuing professional education, on the job experiences, professional
510 association memberships, and volunteer work equip you to meet the requirements and duties of
511 the many endeavors that you pursued in the field of education?

512 Ms. Waters:

513 As a professional educator and lifelong learner, with over thirty years of hands-on teaching
514 experience, I facilitated to meet the educational goals at the school and district level. Through
515 well-designed professional development, using research from campus/district goals and parent
516 /community input, educators pursue learning opportunities to meet the identified needs of the
517 students, while meeting their professional development needs. This experience gave me the
518 opportunity to facilitate the learning process of students, using my training, and creativity, to
519 implement lessons that engaged the students in the learning process. My acquired knowledge
520 within the academic setting allowed me to convey information in meaningful ways to students to
521 develop the students' higher level thinking skills while keeping in mind school policy and
522 curriculum expectations. The school environment, and relating to colleagues, students,
523 administrators, faculty and staff also gave me insight into students' learning differences.

524 Jan:

525 So, the teacher preparation program gave you the foundation to build on to prepare you to meet
526 the challenges that you encountered as a teaching professional.

527 Ms. Waters:

528 Absolutely...

529 Jan:

530 What advice and recommendations would you give to pre-service and in-service teachers?

531 Ms. Waters:

532 I would encourage you to become familiar with some of the teacher attributes that exemplify the
533 highest level of professionalism. Although no single teaching method, or approach works best
534 for every teacher with every student, great teachers select from the methods that are well
535 researched, and widely practiced at their grade level, to become experts in several instructional
536 methods, that fit their own style and the needs of their students. This awareness will give you a
537 standard of excellence to strive for. A random list of some of the key characteristics of great
538 teachers include the following:

- 539 – Generous with time and availability / willing to put in the necessary time
- 540 – Effective classroom management style
- 541 – Positive relationships with other adults (other teachers, administrators, parents...)
- 542 – High-energy personality
- 543 – Strong personal work ethic
- 544 – Single-minded dedication to the welfare and success of students
- 545 – Persevering character
- 546 – Well-organized

- 547 – Timely
- 548 – Creative to enhance any program
- 549 – Good judgment
- 550 – Deal with problems in ways that minimize fluctuations in classroom performance
- 551 – Compartmentalize personal issues rather than requiring time off to handle them
- 552 – Integrate new methodology into their teaching practice
- 553 – Able to face of difficulties and changes
- 554 – Skillful lesson design
- 555 – Honesty
- 556 – Depth of content knowledge
- 557 – Capacity to grow as a lifelong learner
- 558 – Think fast on their feet
- 559 – Do the best they can with the information they have
- 560 – Able to rise above what is happening and keep your focus on the task at hand
- 561 – Provide students with appropriate learning activities and experiences to help them fulfill
- 562 their potential for intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth

563 Ultimately, I leave you with the depth of encounter, being: teach students to learn how it is that
564 they learn so that they will be their own effective teachers, able to fill any learning gaps and
565 continue to augment their knowledge by becoming “life-long learners.”

566 Jan:

567 Thank you, so much, Ms. Waters, for the privilege of interviewing you. I will do my best to give
568 glory to God as a teacher by applying the all of the information and wisdom that you have
569 shared.