Oral History Project: Grace Waters PART 1

Jan Duer  
*University of Dallas, jdueralvarez@udallas.edu*

---

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.udallas.edu/oralhistory](https://digitalcommons.udallas.edu/oralhistory)

Part of the Education Commons

**Recommended Citation**

[https://digitalcommons.udallas.edu/oralhistory/13](https://digitalcommons.udallas.edu/oralhistory/13)

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at UDigital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Interview Projects by an authorized administrator of UDigital Commons. For more information, please contact choertz@udallas.edu, sgayler@udallas.edu, sthenayan@udallas.edu, emay@udallas.edu, cvandervoort@udallas.edu.
Oral History Interview Transcript

Recording Links:

- Part 1:
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSr4WHkLNlVeWE1QzIcRS0dtQjQ/view?usp=sharing
- Part 2:
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxSr4WHkLNlVNHMwRkhRc1ppdnM/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 chosen 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:
Please tell me about your educational background? In addition to your academic endeavors, what influenced your decision to pursue the field of teaching?

Ms. Waters:

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

As far as my educational background:

- Elementary School: West Texas
- Middle School: West Texas
- High School: Anchorage, Alaska
- College – B.A. (Major: Elementary Education / Minor: Spanish)
  - University of Alaska: Anchorage, Alaska
  - Texas Tech University: Lubbock, Texas
  - Texas A&M: College Station, Texas
It sounds like your educational background and cultural awareness enriched your life at a very early age.

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

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

Ms. Waters:
In my opinion, my academic journey, teacher preparation program, actual hands-on teaching, and life experiences enhanced my skills, talents and abilities, requiring me to recalibrate my perspective, continually. Accessing my broad knowledge of subject matter, I planned well, gave directions in a clear manner with my strong communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, and using creative methods to build student interest and cooperation, I remained flexible in my lessons to allow for individual learning differences among my students. Because of my strong work ethic, with enthusiasm and perseverance, I put forth a superior effort in everything that I accomplished, including the tasks that others set before me. To attain the level of proficiency and be optimally prepared to meet curriculum goals, I engaged my students in learning experiences that addressed their needs, concerns, interests, knowledge, strengths and weaknesses. The many extra hours at school and at home translated into the development of my students’ higher level
thinking skills with the ability to reflect, assimilate and put into practice the concepts and skills as designated by school/district policy - curriculum expectations.

Jan:

In my teacher preparation program, I am participating in practicums, and soon I will be doing my student teaching in the school environment. I learned about school safety when I was a student. When did you have the opportunity to become familiar with any specific requirements for teacher preparedness, should a catastrophic event occur?

Ms. Waters:

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

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

I remember that, immediately after the school violence involving the use of guns in the school environment, the schools across the nation turned themselves into near fortresses. Security cameras and metal detectors were installed, backpacks were banned, students were required to carry ID’s and police were posted in the hallways, and an array of other measures in an effort to foster a sense of safety in the school community. At the present time, the evidence suggests that it’s not the metal detectors that discover weapons in the schools, but rather kids who come forth
and report it to an adult. Many of the security measures remain, but the focus has shifted from adding to the high tech gear, to training the school staff and student body to be highly alert.

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

The classroom teacher empowers the students into becoming productive members of the school, the community and ultimately, society, through her classroom management procedures. To create a classroom where students feel safe and learning takes place, the teacher must post rules with consequences and adhere to them, strictly holding students accountable. To equip all students socially, academically, emotionally, and physically and provide motivations for students to behave, the classroom manager must devise a set of rules that covers possible misbehaviors/disruptions that might occur in the classroom. They must be enforceable, not ambiguous, and very clear. The classroom management plan holds students accountable without using counter-productive methods. The teacher’s classroom management plan needs to be a contract that the teacher makes with her students. The contract promises that the teacher will protect the students’ right to learn and that she will ensure their safety. The students need to be able to see the rules wherever they are seated. In the beginning, the teacher should review the rules often. You should set aside a desk separated from the rest of the class for the purpose of time out. The personal disappointment of being separated from the rest of the class evoked feelings that make time out effective. The consequences need to be administered without
disrupting the class and are in play for one single day with the chance to succeed and be better
the next day. The effective classroom management plan has only two purposes:

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

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

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

Rules:
1. Listen and follow directions
2. Raise your hand before speaking or leaving your seat
3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself
4. Respect your classmates and your teacher

Consequences:
1st time a rule is broken: Warning
2nd time a rule is broken: Time out
3rd time a rule is broken: Letter home

Jan:

I am very interested in learning how you developed and wrote your philosophy of education.
When you wrote it, did you base it on your academic education, life experiences, or teaching
experiences?

Ms. Waters:
As I developed my educational philosophy, I was influenced in part by my academic education,
life experiences, and teaching experiences, but for the most part, by who I am as a person, and
whom I hope to become as an individual member of God’s kingdom. Based on my personal beliefs, I used the Beatitudes, the Sacraments, and the Commandments to guide and direct me. When wrote the first copy of my philosophy of education statement, I focused on what I perceived as the purpose of education, the role of the student and teacher in the learning process, as well as the interrelationships between the teacher, student, parents, teaching colleagues, administrators, and the community, keeping in mind why I had decided to go into the teaching profession.

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

As you write your own philosophy of education, keep at the forefront of your mind that an individual’s personal philosophy of education is simply a statement of their personal beliefs, and how they are going to put them into practice in the classroom. The philosophy statement is not a theoretical paper based on what you have learned throughout your teacher preparation program, but rather, how your experiences have influenced your ability to transfer the learning process to your students as they learn, reflect, assimilate, and put into practice the concepts, that will transition them from student to lifelong learner. In essence, using the scope of your academic education, life experiences, teaching experiences and pedagogical theories, your statement becomes an action plan that facilitates your classroom management, instructional strategies, curriculum design and assessment procedures, using of cooperative learning, parental involvement, and the community resources, along with technology, to embrace the needs, concerns, interests, background knowledge, strengths and weaknesses of the students. It is really important when you write your own educational philosophy that it become a description of your
own goals and beliefs as a teacher. It needs to reflect your experiences and training. You will be
required to submit an up to date philosophy with your student teaching application. Many school
districts require you to submit your philosophy education along with your other application
materials. Administrators often times use it to see what kind of person you are and what kind of
person will be teaching the students in their school. Needless to say, your philosophy of
education is going to change as you mature in the profession, through your experiences. Try to
keep copies of your first philosophy and compare it as you progress because it will help you
understand why you make the decisions that you make when you plan your lessons and
implement them.

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

Jan:
When I obtain my standard teaching certificate, I will be required to renew it every five years. Can you elaborate on the types of teaching certificates and your experience with the certificate renewal process?

Ms. Waters:

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

- Provisional – lifetime classroom certificate (issued prior to 9-1-99).
- Professional – lifetime graduate-level certificate such as counselor or administrator (issued prior to 9-1-99).

Today, the standard teaching certificate is issued to all individuals who complete all of the certification requirements. The basic requirements include holding a bachelor’s degree, completing a teacher preparation program and a general teaching certification exam, and passing a criminal background checks, including finger-printing, and confirmation of certification. They do vary from state to state. If you are degreed in another state and hold the acceptable certification or from another country, you can obtain a one-year certificate that will allow you to get a teaching position, while you get your credentials in order. If you are involved in a Texas Educator teacher program, you can also apply for a probationary certificate to serve as a subject level teacher. If you are a certified teacher and the only position available is working as an aid, you do not have to have aid certification to qualify for the job. Once you have a standard certificate, it is valid for five years. You can renew it six months before the expiration date. To renew your standard certificate, you are required to complete 150 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE).
Each state is unique in the amount of time and level of ongoing education or certification required to maintain a license. Some states require a certain amount of time spent in the classroom, while others require teachers to attend classes or programs for ongoing certification renewal. There are various approved methods for acquiring your CPE hours. You can Google this and get all of the information you need on the Internet or by calling the Texas Education Agency, or you can call your school district. But it is entirely up to the teacher to keep accurate, written documentation of all CPE activities. Educators must comply with federal, state and district requirements for professional development, including maintaining their professional development records. In addition to the Continuing Professional Education requirement, the teacher must also submit another criminal background check, including fingerprinting. If you don’t renew your teaching certificate, or if it is denied, it is placed on an inactive status. Then, to reinstate it, you will have to pay an additional fee, and meet the CPE requirements for renewal. There are some hardship exemptions to CPE requirements like health-related and other extenuating circumstances. The renewal of your license will be denied if you don’t comply with student loans, child support obligations, if you don’t pass the criminal background check, or if you give false information, you can be subject to criminal charges and your certificate can be sanctioned.

Jan:

What kind of teaching certificate do you have?

Ms. Waters:

I have what is called a lifetime certificate.

Jan:

What is the renewal process for the lifetime certificate?
Ms. Waters:

It’s interesting to share about House-Bill 72 that was passed by the Texas legislature in 1984. This bill mandated that all persons issued valid Texas teacher certification before Feb. 1, 1986, must pass a skills assessment test. Although lifetime certificates have not been issued since 9-1-99, to revalidate a lifetime certificate, you must take the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA), or you can also take a Texas Examination of Educators Standards (TExES) content test to revalidate a provisional or professional certificate. When it is all said and done, choosing the right area of certification is very important because if for instance, you earn an elementary teaching certificate and later decide that you want to teach in junior high, you will have to go through the certification process all over again.

Jan:

What activities count for CPE?

Ms. Waters:

There are many ways to write CPE hours.

- Workshops
- Conferences
- In-service and staff development through an approved provider
- Undergraduate and graduate coursework through an accredited college
  - One semester credit hour is equal to 15 CPE hours
  - Three credit courses are equal to 45 CPE hours
- Interactive distance learning, video conferences, on-line activities
- Independent study, not to exceed 20% of the required clock hours
• Developing, teaching, or presenting a CPE activity, not to exceed 10% of the required CPE hours

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

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

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

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- Kappa Delta Pi (KDP)
- National Education Association (NEA)
- Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)

Jan:

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

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

- Hold bachelors degree
- Complete three full years of teaching
- Hold a valid state teaching license

Jan:

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

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

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

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

Teacher certification is the process that leads to the license to teach within a given area. An endorsement is a statement appearing on a license that identifies the specific subject or grade level that the license holder is authorized to teach. After obtaining a professional educator license, you can obtain content/subject area teaching endorsements to add to your professional educator teaching credentials. Fully certified teachers must meet all the requirements for teacher certification and hold a standard or lifetime (provisional or professional) certificate issued by the state board for educators certification. To provide a quality education for all students, and to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom, my Texas Educator Certificate certifies that I have fulfilled the requirements of state law and regulations of the State Board of Educator Certification and am hereby authorized to preform the duties as designated below:
• Elementary Self-Contained (Life)
  o Grades (1-8)

• Elementary Spanish (Life)
  o Grades (1-8)

• Elementary, All Regular Classes
  o Grades (1-6)

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

- DISD
  - Student Teaching
    - As a student teacher, when I was studying to be a teacher, as part of the teacher education program, I observed the classroom instruction and performed teaching in the elementary school environment during summer school. This position is also called being an intern or a practice teacher.
  - Evaluation Dissemination and Assessment Center for Bilingual Education
    - Specialist II Marketing and Distribution Specialist
  - Elementary Self-Contained (LIFE)
    - Grades 1-8
  - Elementary Spanish (LIFE)
    - Grades 1-8
  - Elementary, All Regular Classes
    - Grades 1-6
  - Programmatic Remedies (Grades 4, 5 and 6)
  - Teacher-5th grade
    - A person who teaches, especially in school.
  - Title I
  - Talented and Gifted Facilitator (K-6)
  - Bilingual Tutor
Curriculum and Development Specialist

Resource Teacher

- DCCCD
  - Adult Education Classes
  - ESL Classes
- Greenhills School
  - Substitute Teacher K-12
- The Highlands
  - Substitute Teacher K-12
- Anchorage School District
  - NewComer’s Center (7-12)
    - Career Counselor
  - King Career Center
  - Resource Teacher
- Plano ISD
  - Instructional Support Specialist (ISS Assistant)
  - Bilingual Education-7th, 8th, and 9th grade
- McKinney ISD
  - Special Education
  - Substitute Teacher K-12
- Frisco ISD
  - Substitute Teacher K-12
I collaborated with teachers, counselors, administrators, resource personnel, and the community, as I did my student teaching with DISD and later on managed a classroom as a regular and substitute teacher. My acquired skills, talents, and abilities made it possible for me to keep my focus on the students. Respecting the histories, and cultures of the different ethnic groups, as well as their diverse learning styles, I have incorporated my own culture and personal experiences into the instructional techniques that I have used to teach my students in the various positions that I have held, ranging from mainstream to multicultural (K-12). I worked to optimize student engagement, by adapting my methodology and approach to allow for transformative learning to take place and presenting information in a variety of formats, including class discussion, guest speakers, films, music, technology, field trips, and resources in the community.

With the Bilingual Program, E.D.A.C., I worked as a Marketing and Distribution Specialist II and coordinated with school districts throughout the country to evaluate, disseminate, and assess Bilingual Education Curriculum materials. I also worked as a volunteer in the community, teaching English as a second language to adults. These activities added to the wealth of my knowledge, natural talents, and teacher attributes, including communication skills, organizational and classroom management ability.

Jan:

What are some of your non-teaching career experiences?

Ms. Waters:

That’s a very good question. My knowledge, awareness, and involvement in the field of education gave me the attributes to venture into other fields of interest. The scope of my education, professional training, employment experiences, along with my personal accomplishments, and volunteer activities provided me with an array of assets, as I ventured into
the field of sports management, as the owner and member of the executive committee of two semi-professional ice hockey teams, which were part of the Gulf Coast Hockey League.

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

- Review / Check for prior knowledge
- Direct instruction
- Guided practice
- Independent practice
- Oral drill as necessary
- Provide information (in a variety of forms)
- Model desired skills and outcomes
- Demonstrate (in a variety of ways)
- Provide examples to help transfer learning
- Integrated topics and concepts
Investigate / Observe (from a variety of angles)

Link new information and/or skills to prior knowledge (build background)

Check for understanding / Question

Re-teach (if necessary)

Evaluate / Summarize (Did we meet the objectives?)

Discussion to gain deeper understanding

Group / Individual Instruction

Large / Small Group Instruction

Problem-Solving

Cooperative Learning

Critical Thinking

Creative Thinking

Compare and contrast activities

Critiquing activities

Reflective activities

Observations

Simulations

Using various technology tools

Use graphic organizers (maps, charts, illustrations)

Model by "thinking aloud" the process

Provide "wait time"

Use questioning strategies that require learners to go deeper
Make objectives/targets explicit

Student self-assess (self-monitor)

Within a highly structured environment to effectively teach new ideas or information about a topic, I presented academic content to the students through the lecture, often referred to as a presentation, and direct instruction, where I spoke and the students listened actively, using graphs, charts, etc. to help the students process the information. I used the strategy of simulation, where students performed different roles in simulated situations to help the students master more complex tasks or skills in a safe environment and to connect the content to students’ personal experience and everyday life situations. The strategy of concept teaching, where students learned to think both inductively and deductively about the information that I presented, was used to teach concepts and develop the students’ higher level thinking skills. As a central method of teaching, the art of communication, through discussion, was modeled in the format of question and answer about the academic content presented. Within the context of the different ethnic backgrounds, gender, and mixed abilities, cooperative learning gave students the opportunity to work together in small groups, combining their efforts, and depending on each member to complete assigned tasks. Project-based instruction, inquiry learning, or authentic investigation was the basis for the students’ inquiry and investigation and promoted their higher level thinking skills. All of the strategies and techniques, as applicable, were used or adapted to meet my goals in Programmatic Remedies. To accommodate and meet the needs of my students, who had been labeled as underachievers with learning differences, and disregarding any preconceived notions and expectations, I maximized their learning environment to foster and nurture their motivation to learn. I designated specific areas that were rich with opportunities to interact in the learning process. Learning centers created throughout the classroom with visuals, bulletin boards, and
various other materials increased their overall vocabulary and enabled the students to hear, identify, and manipulate, etc., to become familiar, assimilate and put into practice learning concepts. The relationship between the written and the spoken language was readily available for the students using technology as needed within every learning center’s central focus. My recorded voice read aloud to the students and was an excellent way to build the vocabulary knowledge of English Language Learners. It also increased their comprehension. My ultimate goal was to help students communicate, effectively, by providing opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write to increase their overall awareness and comprehension of what they learned about themselves and the world they live in. The teaching experience gave me the opportunity to use my training, high expectations, hard work, positive outlook, and creativity to design, initiate and implement lesson plans that engaged all of the students in the active learning process, as they constructed their own learning to successfully meet school and district goals. Looking deeply at the goals that we set for our students in the classroom, the high expectations for all students to succeed make a lasting difference. I used cooperative learning to untrack, mainstream and multiculturalize, after identifying students’ current knowledge base, and building instructions with that in mind, I pushed all students to higher level thinking, maintaining high expectations, using a multicultural approach to recognize, value, explore, and incorporate the home culture in the form of multiple perspectives.

Jan:

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

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

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

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

Ms. Waters:

Absolutely...

Jan:

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

Ms. Waters:

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

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

– Creative to enhance any program

– Good judgment

– Deal with problems in ways that minimize fluctuations in classroom performance

– Compartmentalize personal issues rather than requiring time off to handle them

– Integrate new methodology into their teaching practice

– Able to face of difficulties and changes

– Skillful lesson design

– Honesty

– Depth of content knowledge

– Capacity to grow as a lifelong learner

– Think fast on their feet

– Do the best they can with the information they have

– Able to rise above what is happening and keep your focus on the task at hand

– Provide students with appropriate learning activities and experiences to help them fulfill their potential for intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth

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

Jan:

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