

Transcribed Interview with 1st Grade Student – M. W.

I: Interviewer

M: Interviewee

I: Hello M. As we talked about earlier, I'm going to be asking you some questions about school and the work you do at school. I want you to feel comfortable answering my questions. If you don't understand something I say, please ask me to stop and maybe I can explain it differently. Alright? I'm not going to share any of your answers with your teacher. Okay?

M.: Okay.

I: What grade are you in?

M: First

I: What school do you go to?

M: Willett

I: What city do you live in?

M: Davis

I: What is your favorite part of school?

M: (long pause)

I: If you have one?

M: Lunch

I: Lunch is your favorite time? Why do you think lunch is your favorite time?

M: Because you get to eat.

I: Okay. Do you think – was lunch always your favorite time at school?

M: Nope.

I: What did you favorite time used to be?

M: Recess.

I: Now I want to find out about when you're in the classroom. How do you feel when you learn something new?

M: (long pause) Let me think about that....(pause) Excited.

I: You feel excited. Okay. How do you know when you are learning something new?

M: Mrs. K gives us a clue or else she'll just say, we have something new to learn today and it's going to be fun.

I: Do you think Mrs. K ever teaches you something new and doesn't tell you about it?

M: (pause) Yeah.

I: Alright. Before you start doing some work at school, do you usually know what you are supposed to be doing? Do you understand the work that you are doing?

M: Hmm.

I: Let's say Mrs. K gives you some work to do and you are working independently, do you always know what you are supposed to be doing?

M: Usually. She'll tell us if it's something new that we've never done before. If it's not we just figure it out and know what we're supposed to do but if it's always the same thing we go – oh we know how to do this.

I: Got it. Okay. Can you tell me some of the things you have learned in first grade?

M: Times.

I: You've learned times. Okay. Anything else?

M: I learned like, I learned writing. (long pause)

I: Maybe you could think about it in terms of the work you do in the classroom. I know you do sentences and word problems.

M: Yeah, I do word problems.

I: Okay. Anything else?

M: (long pause)

I: Okay. We can talk about that later.

M: What did you say?

I: I was asking about what you have learned in first grade.

M: Lot's of things. Like, um, lots of stuff.

I: Do you think it's important to learn new things?

M: Yeah.

I: Why is it important?

M: Because you learn. Learning is good.

I: So, you think that just learning for learning is good.

M: (little giggle) Yeah.

I: Okay. Let's say you are doing some work in class on your own. How do you know if you are doing a good job?

M: I think really hard. If I'm doing hard work I'll really think. Like think good, write good. Like if I have 9 cats and you take away 3 of them then I'll use my fingers and stuff like that.

I: Okay. So you know you're doing good.

M: Yeah.

I: If it's hard how do you help yourself?

M: If people are talking next to me or something I'll say to them please can you be quiet I'm trying to get my work done. And like I'll umm – if Mrs. K says if we need help we can ask the people around us. I'll ask like K, G, and like (M starts fidgeting with a torn nail. We stop the tape to clip her hanging finger nail.)

I: So, you ask for help if you need it.

M: Yeah.

I: Do you sometimes not do your best?

M: Sometimes when I'm not thinking, I think about thinking. When I'm done.

I: What do you think about thinking?

M: Like, if I turn the paper I'll think, I wasn't thinking. And maybe I'll do it all over again.

I: So, sometimes you'll go back and do it again because you know you weren't concentrating.

M: Cuz it was too hard – I wasn't thinking. Like 8 plus 2 is 6.

I: What is it really?

M: 11, I mean 10.

I: Is it sometimes hard to concentrate?

M: Yeah.

I: Do you ever find your mind wandering in class – thinking about something?

M: What do you mean?

I: Have you ever done this - you are working on something and all of the sudden you find yourself thinking about lunch?

M: (giggle) Well sometimes, umm, I'll see S and she's working and I'll look at her. What did you ask me again?

I: Let me try to say it again. When you're working in class do you sometimes get distracted?

M: (Picks up tape recorder and talks right into the mike.) No!

I: Okay. Let's say someone is talking next to you. You said that you would ask them to be quiet. Do you ever find yourself having to forget about what's going on around you and really concentrate? Do you ever do that?

M: (Picks up a paper) I get the paper –

I: Oh, you're going to act it out for me? Good.

M: I'll get my pencil and I'll do $2 + 10 =$ (She writes this out.)

I: Do they ever not help you?

M: Umm – if they are really, really busy then I'll try to figure it out on my own. If they're concentrating really hard.

I: So you sometimes need help and you can't get it.

M: Yeah. I'll do it and then I'll see when I get it back that I did it wrong.

I: How does that make you feel?

M: Sometimes surprised, but I knew it too.

I: But, you know that you tried.

M: Yeah.

I: Do you ever not try?

M: Once I did that. I finished a page but then when I turned the page I said 'I'm not sure what I was just doing. I better go back.' (She picks up the tape recorder and talks right into it.) It's called thinking about thinking!

I: Wow! You're right. You did a great job. I might have a few more questions for you later. Would you mind talking to me some more.

M: No. I'll come over to play with G.

I: Okay. Thanks again.

Comments: The interview went for two half-hour sessions. I had to stop the tape on 3 separate occasions because M got distracted or was unable to focus. Overall, I feel like I overestimated the ability of a 6 year old to answer questions about how they learn and complete classroom work. However, I did feel like the interview provides an excellent jumping off point. It would be interesting to compare the comments of a 6 year old, to those of an 8 year old or 10 year old.