Testing. One. This is Rick Strot. I’m interviewing Victoria or Vicky Ward on February 5, 2004. We’re at Hillcrest Professional Development School [PDS] in Mrs. Ward’s classroom. Vicky, thank you for being part of this interview and for the third time because we’ve had some technical difficulties. We’re starting again. Describe for me again when you—how you first became involved with Hillcrest Professional Development School.

Well, when I first became aware of Hillcrest Professional Development School, I was invited to be on the hiring committee as the elementary personnel for a principal for the school in January of ’93. I was the only elementary person on the committee, and I was—the committee was headed by, at that time, Dr. Rosanne Strickland(??), who was the assistant superintendent of schools. And we were interviewing because they had brought this into being, and that was my first knowledge of a professional development school.

Now, when you joined that committee then, and you had been a veteran—you were a veteran teacher.
Ward: Right. I had—
Strot: You were—taught in the district for many years.
Ward: Twenty-one years. I had been a teacher at North Waco for twenty-one
years, and I was piloting, as I said, a multi-age classroom, first and
second grade there.
Strot: So, you were a cutting edge teacher at that time.
Ward: Right, right. I'm sure Mrs. Bishop or Mr. Elsberry(?) was over the
elementary schools at the time, and he had a lot of input or say into
what the elementary principals and teachers were doing at the time.
Strot: Now, as part of the hiring committee for the principal of this school—
was it called Hillcrest School at that time? Did they know where it was
going to be built at?
Ward: Yes, they knew where it was going to be. They were already working
on remodeling the school.
Strot: Okay. And as you became, then, part of that committee, what kind of
input were you given as to what kind of school Hillcrest PDS was
going to be?
Ward: We were given the input that we were looking for a person that was a
people person. We were looking for someone that could be a
collaborative facilitator rather than a traditional principal that was more
of a dictatorship. We were looking more at a collaborative person that
although—when they share, things would move smoothly, but it
would be a more collaborative, and the teachers would have more input than in your traditional school, and that they would also—he would also—or she—would be able to work with the Baylor component of the school because Baylor (static on tape) was going to play a major role in this professional development school. And so, these are some of the qualities that we were looking for in hiring a principal at the time.

Strot
Okay. So, you’re on the committee. How many people were on that committee?

Ward
There were seven of us. There was about seven of us.

Strot
Now, as—then, you started interviewing _______________(??) and the people on the committee talked together. How did your—what were your first impressions then of what a PDS should be doing? You mentioned the qualities of the principal. How did those relate to what your conception of what the school was all about?

Ward
Well, the conception of what the school was all about was that Baylor would sponsor early teachers—teachers that were pursuing an education, an elementary education degree, and they would have these students at Hillcrest to learn how to work with urban—and that was a big word at the time—in an urban setting. And what they were saying, is that the school would have—would be just like Waco district is as far as ethnicity, the curriculum, what was going on in the school, and
they would have a sample in your inclusionary students. Everything that Waco ISD offered (microphone falls) this school would have a taste of that. You might say taste. And these students that were pursuing an education degree would be able to get a first hand experience working with all levels of all socioeconomical children.

Strot: Okay. Good, good. Now, as you—talk a little bit about the principal interview process. Now, I know—I realize that legally you can’t disclose information. How many—

Ward: We interviewed about six.

Strot: About six. And were they all from outside of Waco, or were some inside Waco already working here?

Ward: They were outside of Waco.

Strot: So, was that one of the criteria that it would not be an existing Waco principal?

Ward: Well, I am thinking that with this kind of school, they didn’t think at the time that we had a person that with the qualification to start or begin a PDS school. They were looking for someone where they had some kind of experience.

Strot: And eventually, the group settled on Dr. Ron Macintyre?

Ward: Right.

Strot: And I assumed then that, say a little bit about this, that he fit this criteria—
Ward

Fit the profile, fit what we were looking for. Dr. Risinger(??) and I went and stayed and visited with him from morning when the children first arrived until they left at three o’clock to get a glimpse of how he runs the school, and we interviewed some of his teachers. We talked with some of his teachers about his process of running a school and what he did as a principal, and we were impressed with some of the non-traditional aspects of even the school in Seguin, and it was not a professional development school. But you could tell from what they were able to do there that it wasn’t just a dictatorship or a dictatorial kind of system.

Strot

Now, was he the only principal candidate that you visited?

Ward

Right.

Strot

Did—were other principal candidates also visited by other committee members?

Ward

No.

Strot

So, this was kind of a finalist type visit?

Ward

Right. After we decided that he was the front runner, then they invited—they sent us down there to visit with him one day.

Strot

And then Dr. Macintyre got the job.

Ward

Right, in February of ’93.

Strot

February ’93, he came on board. Now he took—he received an office downtown temporarily, is that right?
Ward: Right. Temporary building we were on floor four, I think it was.

Strot: Okay, now tell me a little bit about then what happened after you were part of the hiring committee.

Ward: After we were part of the hiring committee and as we were leaving he said to me, “Now, if I get this job, I want you to apply.” I wasn’t prepared then even though I was hiring him on the hiring committee. He told me, uh “If I get this job, I want you to apply.” And so, after he was hired in February, then we started hiring at Baylor. We used the Baylor educational area up there.

Strot: So, you did your interviews out at Baylor?

Ward: Right, after we had hired him, we didn’t go back to WISD to do hiring. We hired at Baylor, on the educational, in the education department, Dr. Barrett’s area. And we did this on a Saturday. Started on a Saturday because he needed somebody to start working with him because he was new to the area.

Strot: Now, were you part of that hiring process?

Ward: Yeah. Yes, this is what happened—

Strot: Have you then been hired already?

Ward: No, no, let me tell you what happened.

Strot: Okay.

Ward: After then, then he called—they invited me to come the Saturday after he was hired. And then, Bianca Ochoa was there, and so what
happened was that Bianca was about ten minutes ahead of me, so they interviewed her. It was Dr. Proctor, Dr. Barrett, and Dr. Ron MacIntyre, just those three. And they hired Bianca. So, then it was my turn by 9:10. She was there at nine and it was my turn at 9:10. So, when we went in—when I went in at 9:10, they had already hired Bianca so they kept Bianca in there. And so, they interviewed me. Then, I was hired. So, we became the hiring committee, Bianca, myself, Dr. Ron MacIntyre, Dr. Barrett, and Dr. Proctor.

Strot

Okay. Now this all happened rather quickly you said.

Ward

Right. This was one Saturday.

Strot

The Saturday—still we’re still talking—

Ward

In February of ’93.

Strot

Ninety-three, okay. And go on with your story.

Ward

And we were—we were the hiring committee, and then we started other people coming in. We made a list of this is what we have to have here at this school. These are the—this is the personnel we need and then because Bianca and I were a season teacher within the district, we were asked to give names of people we might know that would apply, and then for the next two or three weeks we were at Baylor hiring.

Strot

Now, when you were hired, what was—what position were you hired for?
Ward  
I had a choice. What did I like teaching best? And, of course, I picked first, second, and Bianca picked second, third.

Strot  
Now, when you were hired then, and you picked first, second grade level to teach. So, you knew right away it was multi-age. That was part of the original—

Ward  
Right. The school was going to be an inclusionary multi-age school.

Strot  
Okay. And so, then did you start planning right away for your curriculum in classroom, or was the first focus on hiring?

Ward  
No. First focus was on hiring. So, we did like February, March hiring until we got a staff. Then, we started on the curriculum. We—first we had to pick out furniture. We went down—one of the best experiences of my life because we were not only hired to hire others to work on the personnel, but we also were used to decide what colors were in the building, how we wanted the buildings made, the entrance for the double room, and we also were—Dr. Barrett was interested in us having an office. So, that’s why we had the office down there. He thought we should be more on a college level rather than in a classroom.

Strot  
When you say that we should have an office, you mean—

Ward  
Yes, separate from your classroom. So, we had it—remember.

Strot  
Yes. So, part of picking out the furniture was not only for your own classroom but also—
For your—for you to have an office.

The office area and—

Teachers should have an office.

Was technology part of this as well?

Right. But it was not a focus. We were more of an inclusionary with a lot of special ed included because Dr. Proctor was from Baylor, and he wanted a lot of that input in there. But, we were and GT [gifted and talented], Dr. Johnsen did a lot of work with us. So, we were on the spectrum of special ed—from special ed to GT.

When you said, “We picked it out,” now, everybody who was hired then became part of the team that did these things?

Yes, and we were just a big happy family. We just—

Now, you were still teaching. So, all this was done after school, or were you given some release time to do this?

Sometime, we would get release time.

Well, that’s good. They’d hire a sub for you?

Right, right, right.

Okay. What attracted you to Hillcrest?

I am a—I have a passionate passion for working with interns and they was telling us that—

And at that time, it was student teachers because we—intern was a new concept.
Right. And we would have—we would be labeled as master teachers, and the master teacher would have an early career teacher, a teacher that hadn’t taught before plus two interns. And I thought that would be great, and I was saying to Dr. Risinger, but this is going to take a person that can really work with people, and she said, “Well, that’s why we’ve given you enough room.” Because I could see if you were going to collaborate—in fact, there was three people that didn’t have any experience. So you were going to have to—the master teacher, as we were called, would have to be able not only to work with student teachers, but you are going to have to be able to carry the load really, and so we had—that was one of the concepts, and that’s what drew me out. I am very interested in the work of student teachers, or interns as we call them, because they make you more effective teachers, and I think sometimes they have to be guided. They may be educated, but yet still, they have to learn a lot within the classrooms. And that was one of my pet peeves because I had worked with Baylor student teachers from 1979 and this was ’93. And I had seen some things that I didn’t think was real helpful for the student teachers, and I didn’t think that they were given fair treatment in some areas and it just turned me on to—

So, this idea of spending a longer period of time with them was very attractive for you and the closer support was kind of—
Ward: Right. To support them.

Strot: So, it was a different way of working with them.

Ward: Right—working with them. Um-hm. And also the school was also going to be year-round.

Strot: Now, was that new in Waco at the time?

Ward: Right. It was going to be year round—but more schools than ours was year round, but we were going to be year round.

Strot: Now, you’ve done this a little bit. Well, you’ve done a lot of it actually, but once again, could you kind of describe what the vision for Hillcrest was in those early—right, you know, before it opened—

Ward: Okay, the vision was that this school would be well-known for training interns to be effective teachers in the urban surroundings, and not only that, they were suppose to stay at least two years within the Waco district to help our students, the students of Waco ISD.

Strot: Part of the vision was that some of these teachers would stay and become teachers. Okay.

Ward: Right. Right. And be a part of—not only—they would not be here, but they would be—they would spread out through the district. That was one of the great ideas.

Strot: And during those early times as people were being hired, did you guys discuss the vision a lot?

Ward: Oh, yes. We had several consultants to come in and—I’m trying to
think. We had two I know from Austin, one was from Austin. The other one—I can’t think of his name, but they came in, and how we would spend hours going over how to work with the vision, and we would proceed with the vision and who would be in charge of making sure the vision was—become a reality. We did a lot of that. It was very interesting. We did a lot of role-playing, and a lot of acting out what the vision would be, and what we expected our children to look like educational-wise. What was the final product if a child had been at Hillcrest all the way through fifth grade?

When you think about that, what was your role then in formulating an implement in this vision?

My first role was—I was assigned to build the personnel committee. So, we were to hire—interview people that we knew would fit in and be a part of the vision. The other thing was that—my part was as a master teacher, I was to be sure that we follow the curriculum that the school decided to use, and that it would be implemented the way that it was supposed to be implemented. So, that was one of the major things I was part of—of doing.

All right. Tell me a little bit about the people who collaborated with you at Hillcrest PDS in the early years.

Well, in the early years, we were surrounded with Baylor personnel like Dr. Conway(??), Dr. Johnsen, GT, Dr. Proctor. We also had, as I had
before stated, consultants to come in to teach us how to collaborate, how to agree to disagree, how to compromise, how to be team players because this was a job where team building. So, we did a lot of team building. We had several, several workshops on team building. We even had—where we went out to Whitney and Aquilla and stayed three or four days, just Hillcrest staff, to be empowered with the team playing and to be associated with knowing how that we may not agree that there was always a way to work through what we were going through.

**Strot**
When you think of your own work in getting your—becoming part of this collaboration with Baylor, as a teacher when the school opened, who did you primarily collaborate with?

**Ward**
At the time, it was Dr. Conway and Dr. Proctor and Dr. Young.

Those were the three—

**Strot**
And myself when I was hired.

**Ward**
Right, right, right, right.

**Strot**
Okay. How was this collaboration at Hillcrest both within the staff and at Baylor and with central administration different from what you’ve seen at other schools?

**Ward**
Well, we had a steering committee and each stake holder as they would call it at the time played a major role in making suggestions. Not only that, but the Baylor professors—if they had a class, if they had a
theory, if they had something that they wanted to try out, they would bring it to the table and we would accept it or reject it. And what would—in the classrooms to see if these ideas would work.

When you had worked with student teachers before, what was the different about the collaboration with the students at Hillcrest from the normal student teaching?

Well, first of all, it was a year-round thing. Secondly, the student—you had a chance to meet the student teacher and the student teacher had a chance to meet you.

You mean before the school opened?

Yes, with early student teacher. They had the opportunity to want to choose you or you choose them.

Oh, you had a—I see what you mean. You had a meeting with all of them and you were able to—

(speaks at same time) Right—able to mingle and we talked and like personality—

(speaks at same time) Okay, before it had just been an assignment. So, this was very different.

Very different. Those other years I had, they were just assigning me somebody and I didn’t see them until the day they came the first day.

But with the Hillcrest, the way we did it at Hillcrest, in the spring, you met with the candidates, and you talked with them, and you
interviewed them. They interviewed you, and then you could pick up some personality traits of who could I work with or who I probably better not get with. These are some areas, you know, and so that was very different.

**Strot**
Okay. Tell me what influenced decisions in curriculum and in instruction at Hillcrest in those early years.

**Ward**
Well, student outcome was the main—we had a program in math that we tried for a couple of years, but it did not align with the state mandatory thing so we had to do away with it for a while. We also had whole language, but we found a lot of gaps in whole language that was not conducive to the type of learning that the state of Texas wanted us to do. So, we had to do away with it also, not totally, but we did.

**Strot**
And who made those decisions about curriculum?

**Ward**
We did.

**Strot**
When you say, “We,” who does that include?

**Ward**
That includes Baylor and Hillcrest.

**Strot**
And those were at faculty meetings?

**Ward**
Right. We had meetings. We had a cluster—we had different—in those clusters would come in small groups and talk about whether we were going to use the four blocks, or whether we were going to use everyday math. And then we would come back to the staff, and we would talk about the pros and cons of these particular curriculum
items, and then we would compromise.

Strot

And so, how was the final decision reached? Did people vote or secret ballot, or how did that happen?

Ward

(speaks at same time) Yes—no, we consented.

Strot

And how did that work? Describe how that happened.

Ward

We always met in a circle, and Dr. Mac, as the facilitator, would say, “You can pass. You can say yes or no, but the majority always wins. And then if you say no, then I will come back and ask, but can you live with it?” And so that’s the way the process works. We went around in the circle and every teacher would say what he or she felt about it, and then but can you live with it? Do you want to try it? Will you be—yes. And that’s the way we made our decisions.

Strot

And, now, how was that the same or different from other faculties you’ve been in?

Ward

Oh, you were told in traditional school. This is what you will do, and this is the way you would do it, and you didn’t have any say so in it at all. You just—these principals would come from principal meetings downtown and say, “We are going to do this, this way. You will do it this way.” That’s it. You didn’t say anything else. You were not allowed to express your opinion. You were just told what to do.

Strot

So, when you came to Hillcrest—because—how did it exactly make you feel?
Ward (speaks at same time) You became so empowered—you became so empowered with rhetoric and you could say what you want of it, and you weren’t afraid of being hired—fired. Until—we still have problems with that now talking to others. And we’ve had two new principals that have come in and their agenda is not like the beginning and that’s where we run into head because we were empowered to be our own decision makers.

Strot Now, when you went down to watch Dr. Macintyre, is this the way you felt he had run his school down there?

Ward Right. And those people were able to—

Strot This was his way of doing it. This was not something that Baylor told them to do necessarily although they wanted this.

Ward No. He believed in a self-directed school, and he was writing a book at the time about it, and that’s what he was writing about.

Strot I’m going to turn the tape over.

Ward Um-hm.

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

Strot This is Rick Strot continuing my interview with Vicky Ward. It’s—we discontinued yesterday afternoon. Now it’s the morning of February sixth. It’s 9:30. We’re in the Baylor Room at Hillcrest Professional Development School. Let’s pick up where we left off. We had talked about how decision-making was done at Hillcrest, and you had
described Dr. Mac and his—what did he call it?

Ward

Self-directed.

Strot

Self-directed.

Ward

Self-director’s method and self-directed had the components of you empowered the teachers and the teacher—you have a vision. You have a goal. You have a student outcome component, and it is left up to the teacher to reach it using best practices as teachers. And his philosophy was that I will supply the physical needs as well as the support you need from other sources—resources to help you make the best decisions and have the best student outcome.

Strot

What was that vision for student learning at Hillcrest?

Ward

We wanted a student when they leave, to—when they had gone through Hillcrest to be productive, a lifelong learner, and when we say lifelong learner, they would have picked up the ways of being critical thinkers. Technology savvy or knowing about a lot of technology. Being able to make critical decisions to think for themselves and to move right into the middle school at a pace that most students—traditional children aren’t. But they will be able to be the leaders. They’ll be able to lead discussions and meet technology, knowing how to work the system when it comes to the technology and just be those students that are out front regardless of background.

Strot

When you think of the faculty then that came together as they
discussed their vision for how the school would help students, what was the feeling in the air as those things were talked about?

Ward It was so professional. We were professional and it seemed like it was a total different ballgame from what we had come from. We were not dictated to what was expected of us. We were enhanced with many workshops and seminars and areas to show how we could be a team—(pause in recording) effective teachers and collaborative stakeholders.  

We were all of these things as teachers and that was totally different from your traditional schools because you were allowed to make a decision, live by your decision, but make sure your decision was for what was best for not only the students in your room, but for the interns who were coming in your room.

Strot What about—well, let’s talk about the students a little bit. Describe the families who sent their children to Hillcrest PDS during those first couple of years of the school.

Ward The first couple of years it was—you know we were picked by lottery after then, but the first year Dr. Macintyre went to a principals meeting, and he invited the principals there to pick out your five percent worse or discipline problems or, academic behaviors, or parents that you couldn’t control or those people and send them to Hillcrest.

Strot Now, why would Dr. Mac do something like that?
Ward

We wondered too, but in the long run, you could see the vision that you had that regardless of background and regardless of your shortcomings at home or you can—if you’re trained to work in a collaborative setting to where everybody is as important as the next person, that every child regardless of your social background, economical background, but if you are taught the same way, treated the same way you will come out in the end the same.

Strot

So, did Hillcrest then in terms of the families as a magnet school, would you say it reflected the school district?

Ward

Yes. Because we not only had these children, but we had those people who had applied who were at the higher spectrum of socioeconomic. So, we had what we called the very lowest of socioeconomic level to the ones where your doctors, and your lawyers, and your judges, and your CEO’s children. So, we were able to put these children together to teach them the same—give them the same training but use it as a spread out. Those boys and girls who needed some GT or some challenging activities we were able to do that as well as those boys and girls who needed some more challenging from the other end that had some problems with learning discipline and we were able to supply that. We also had chosen one of the best counselors who went on to become an educational psychologist Tamara Kilgore(??) who dealt with—I mean she was outstanding, dealing with parents and students
who had social problems, and that was outstanding. So, we were able
to carry—take these children to this counselor. She was here everyday;
we had an all day counselor, and she would also come in the room and
help us with these problems in the room. And it became one of the
best I’ve seen, inclusionary of where children with emotional—who
had emotional disturb—who had emotional disturbed problems as
well as those kids who are having some academic problem. We had
also hired Foster.

Paul Foster.

Paul Foster, who was, I thought, an outstanding special education
teacher who worked with Tamara, and they had a system going that if
one couldn’t help academic the other one would help socially, and so
they worked so closely together until these children became really—the
majority of them became in the mainstream whereas in the traditional
school. They would have been isolated.

Well, when you think of those first years of Hillcrest, the families that
we brought in—how were issues of equity and diversity dealt with at
Hillcrest? Let’s talk about equity first in terms of everybody being on
an equal plane, receiving the same—

Right, when you came into Hillcrest, you were on the same level. It
doesn’t matter where you—who was your parents. It didn’t matter
where you were from. The vision was that you would be educated to a
level of your potentials.

Strot And in terms of the staff and the interns, were there issues of equity and equal treatment?

Ward Right. The staff and intern—we were all—the interns even had a part of say-so when we had meetings.

Strot Now, was that very different from the original student teaching?

Ward Oh, yes. Original student teachers they were second class I would call them. And the teachers made all of the decision, but when you came to Hillcrest, the interns had a voice, and so they would put on clusters, and they had a say-so in whatever went on at the school.

Strot And what about parents of children, how were their voices heard?

Ward We had the CDMC meeting.

Strot Okay, that’s the campus decision making committee.

Ward And we also had the steering committee where we had a representative on there, and the parents were—played a very important role in what went on at their school, and they were invited to be a part of everything that we had here.

Strot When you think back to the parents, the families who came to you, did you notice in those first years anything different in their expectations for their children at Hillcrest related to the expectations a parent had schools you’ve been through before?

Ward Right. They thought this was more of a like a private school, and they
expected that their kids were going to get the best and because we had four quote teachers in an environment. They knew that they we would have a lot of small group hands-on activities, and that really thrilled them because they knew even though they may not have been certified, but they had been educated. So, from the master teacher to all the way to your interns the curriculum was set up to make sure every child received the same amount of learning.

What about diversity? Were there issues with diversity and if so, how were they dealt with in those early years? We’re talking about mainly here about racial diversity because Waco is a very racially diverse town.

Right. When we first came here, Dr. Macintyre made it clear to the parents that this school was made up of sample of every kind of every ethnic group from the Waco area.

So did Hillcrest reflect then the proportions of the different ethnic groups in Waco?

(speaks at same time) And at the time—exactly, right. At the time, the African Americans were your most—you had more African Americans in WISD than any other. Now it’s Hispanics, but back then—so our school was like forty percent African American. I think it was thirty-eight or thirty-nine percent Hispanic. I think you had your twenty one percent Anglos. And that’s the way Hillcrest is. Now, we were tricked in a lot of areas simply because the school consisted a lot of mulatto
children because they put on their application whatever was open.

Oh, I see.

They might have been—they might have had a white mother and an
African American daddy, but if Hillcrest says that we only have an
opening for an Anglo well then they would put the child in Anglo, but
the child had an African American. And the insurance noticed that.

Why do we have so many mixed biracial children here? It's because
the parents were smart enough to put on the applications my child is
Hispanic even though that child may be Anglo and Hispanic or
African American and Hispanic. They put on there what they wanted
the child to be.

When parents applied to the school, how was—do you remember how
that was advertised in the school district?

Yes. First of all, it was put on the TV and then it was put in
newsletters that were going out.

So, every school child in Waco and elementary received one of—a
form about the magnet school.

Right, received—a magnet school this was a big deal from the school
board. This was something—

And so, when they did this lottery to select the children, were people
turned away?

Oh, yes. We had a list—gosh, a real long list because we were only
allowed to take three hundred.

Strot

This is one of the smaller schools in the district.

Ward

Right, so we were allowed to take three hundred, I think is the most, is the maximum we can have, three hundred.

Strot

All right. What about any issues about diversity within the faculty or between students? How were those handled?

Ward

Well, Dr. Mac was good at that, and if a person had real strong racial beliefs, he would tell them this is not the place for their kids.

Strot

And did that happen?

Ward

Oh, yes.

Strot

Was that with parents or with faculty or with both?

Ward

Parents. Both. It happened more with parents than it did with faculty.

Strot

Okay. What would be—without naming any names—what would be an example of how that was handled?

Ward

Okay, we had a doctor, MD, children that were here, and their parents were your high socioeconomic, and they looked down on some African American children when they went on a trip. You know, we have everywhere school, and so there was a situation that occurred on one of the everywhere trips where the parents were involved because they went, and they had made some racial statements there. So, when they came back, Dr. Mac invited them to leave the campus and take their children out because this is not the place for your children
because we’re here to blend. He always stated the word blend, and when he said that, he meant that because even in faculty meetings, he would not let the African American teachers sit together without some Anglo teachers or some Hispanic. He wanted us to blend in every way.

Strot

So, in the committee or cluster structure here at Hillcrest, there weren’t really—were there issues of diversity, or was it set up so that all those clusters had representatives?

Ward

Representatives of everybody.

Strot

And you said Dr. Mac was the primary one who was the leader in that.

Ward

Oh, yes. Right. He was just—I think leadership is the best—is a point of, the one who facilitates, sets the tone of what the school is going to be.

Strot

Now, let me ask you another question because Baylor has traditionally been and was when this school was set up a pretty much white school. They have—I know that they recruited minorities, but minorities were still a small portion of the Baylor congregation, and in terms of interns most of them were Anglos.

Ward

Exactly.

Strot

Now, were there any issues of diversity then with Baylor faculty or interns and if so, how were those—

Ward

We had one or two incidents where we had an African American
intern that had some problems with the Anglo teachers.

Strot: Okay. The Anglo interns or teachers?

Ward: No, the African American intern had some problems with the Anglo teachers.

Strot: Okay. Not the Anglo interns, the Anglo teachers, okay.

Ward: Right, here at Hillcrest.

Strot: And how was that handled?

Ward: Well, then the Baylor professors and Dr. Mac and all got together and had a conference with these people and it worked through it.

Strot: So, that the usual way to handle this was that typical of how this was handled, sit down and talk?

Ward: Right, talk, collaborate. Let’s see what the issue is, what could be done about it? Can we promise? He would always say, “Well, can you live with it? And if you can’t live with it, then you’re at the wrong school.”

Strot: Now, you had, of course, taught at other schools in Waco before. Now how would you characterize the way diversity was handled compared to other schools in Waco?

Ward: Yes, because—now I had only worked at North Waco.

Strot: But you had friends who worked at other schools as well.

Ward: Right. And when I first went to North Waco, it was predominantly Anglo, and so you had your parents there who were not too happy with having African American teachers, but as—
Strot

Now, just to set this in context this was—

Ward

(speaks at same time) In ’71—

Strot

Had Waco been integrated at that time?

Ward

No. We were—I was hired the year it was fully integrated. It did not become fully integrated until ’71.

Strot

Okay, and then by the time ’93 rolled around and Hillcrest opened—let’s bring it up to that point—at that point, when you came to Hillcrest, the attention paid to diversity and working together having the blend.

Ward

Exactly.

Strot

Would you characterize that as—how would you characterize that compared to what was going on in Waco generally at that time?

Ward

It was moving back towards segregation I called it, neighborhood schools rather than blending.

Strot

Was one of the reasons for setting up the magnet schools to have integrated schools?

Ward

Right. To—because we had what we called the White Flight, and we had a lot of Anglo families moving out of Waco. And so, they decided that this would be a good system probably for it to have a magnet school where you had a choice. Choice was important.

Strot

So, in this case, in being a magnet school—do you think most parents were aware that this was one of the valued things about this school
that it was going to be a blend?

Ward
Right, but a lot of them—the neighborhoods, the schools were confused. We would get remarks like, “Well, that school is only for UGT.”

Strot
Oh, really?

Ward
Then, you would get the other end of the spectrum, “Well, that school is only for U special ed.”

Strot
And this was kind of the community—

Ward
Right. That was the way they sort, and that was the way some of the schools in Waco saw this as the school for your elitist or the other way simply because we did have the component of special education but what they saw the special education was for the elitist children who had problems being here not just your regular people.

Strot
Right. Was that a fair characterization do you think?

Ward
No, that was—so you had to get them straight. No, this is a seven eleven school. And when I say, mean seven eleven, the language that you teach at—that you talk at the seven eleven stores—well, this is what this is supposed to—everybody can come in.

Strot
Okay. That’s a good analogy. Anything else about diversity or equity that comes to mind when you think of those early years at Hillcrest?

Ward
I thought it was the most idealistic school that I had seen. I think
we’re not there now. I think we need to go back to that, but every parent, in my opinion, would have been proud to have their child in this system kind of school because you knew that your child was going to get and be treated fairly regardless of their—of what was wrong or of what was right, you know.

All right. Well, let’s—let me ask you this then. We talked a lot about the original vision for the school. You’ve articulated very well what, as a teacher, that vision was, but can you tell me this? What part of that original vision has remained the same over the years as Hillcrest has gone on?

The way I see it, the partnership Baylor and Hillcrest are still strong. The partnership, the relationship between Baylor and Hillcrest works. It works. But there have been some falling away of the blend, and there have been some falling away of how we deal with problems, how we set the standard that every teacher—not only was it every child was going get it, every teacher was treated the same, and I think we have fallen away somewhere from that.

Now, the principals have changed twice since the original principal was here. Has that original version of having the school be self-directed as you described—has that changed as the principals changed?

Right. It has—it has left there. It’s not self-directed anymore.

And I should mention that at one point, there was a period when the
Ward: school did actually run itself wasn’t there?

Strot: Oh, yes.

Ward: Without a principal.

Strot: Right, and I was part of the threesome. We had three teachers who stepped in, in February of '99. Dr. Mac left us in February of 1999, and he was so sure that he had empowered the teachers here that we could run the school, and we proved him right.

Ward: And the superintendent went along with that.

Strot: Right. So, we went down and met with the superintendent and the assistant superintendent, at that time it was Hazel Rose. Dr. Strickland was the superintendent at the time. And they laid some guidelines out for us. They were thinking that Mark Benot who was the technologist specialist at that time would be able to lead, but he didn’t have a teaching certificate. Okay, so then, Mrs. Hoover, who was the music specialist, did not have classroom experiences. So, it fell on me, Vicky Ward, to be head—the lead person simply because I was a certified teacher and well as a part of the curriculum writings and knew about curriculum more than just music. So, I was appointed by Dr. Strickland as the lead person. So, I took care of the discipline. I took care of the talk with parents and making decisions that a principal would make in that area.

Strot: And at the same time, you taught a classroom.
And I had a classroom. Right, and Mrs. Hoover took care of the staff, our staff development and our meetings and things, and Mark took care of the budgeted—the budget. So, we ran the school from February to July, until Dr. Mowery was hired in July.

And that was in nineteen—

Ninety-nine.

Ninety-nine. Okay. Now, what part of the—we talked about this just a little bit. What else about the vision has changed?

Well, we were going into—we’re becoming more a technology school, and I keep hearing the principals now say that that’s what we are. That was not what we were to begin with, but we were on the cutting edge at the time.

And in terms of the vision for the children at this school, what has changed or remained the same about that?

Now, I think the vision is the same.

For this—

For the children. I don’t think the interns are getting to play a major role in making decisions as they used to being partners, as in you say, partners in crime, partners in education. If I was stated, I would like to see that back and let them be a part of the clusters and making decisions. I think it makes better teachers.

Well, would you like to add anything else about Hillcrest?
Ward: I would like to see—if we could just pick up those things that have really become important and they have really worked and keep it going. I think the blend needs to be kept, and I keep saying that, but it’s not like that anymore because there’s more Anglos at Hillcrest now.

Strot: When people are hired, is it that Hillcrest hasn’t been looking for people to make the blend, or is it that they’re not stepping—they’re not coming up?

Ward: I think it’s a district problem. I think the district is having problems finding people to fill in for blending of staff. And I think we live like—

Strot: So, this is not just a Hillcrest problem, this is a problem of—

Ward: Of the Waco ISD.

Strot: Okay. Well, I’d like to thank you very much for being part of this.

Ward: I’ve enjoyed it.

Strot: And if you think of anything else you’d like to add, just tell me and we’ll have another interview.

Ward: All right. I think the everywhere school needs to be revamped. I like that.

Strot: Well, now we didn’t talk about the everywhere school very much. That happened during the years Dr. Mac was here. Now, did that then fall by the wayside?

Ward: Yes. We don’t have everywhere schools anymore. The only thing that
they do is the show time, and they take those kids on that, but you know back then, we would have two or three different, not only the fourth and fifth graders, but everybody would have a chance to go somewhere, you know, and learn something—

**Strot**

What kind of trips did—were you involved with then?

**Ward**

Well, with the lower end, and you know I always had the lower end, we went to NASA and we went to Sea World, to the Aquarium.

**Strot**

So, at the lower end, you did a lot of day trips to—

**Ward**

Right. We didn’t spend the night.

**Strot**

No, but you went to a lot of places.

**Ward**

But we went to a lot of things, and I think that needs to be continued. I think that is so important. We went to the caves in Round Rock, and we—

**Strot**

No. I’m sorry go ahead.

**Ward**

Uh-huh, and Fort Worth. We went to all of that.

**Strot**

Is what—let me just try and understand, did this kind of not continue due to budget or due to interest?

**Ward**

Right. And I think the budget should be set where every environment is allowed to do something everywhere some time during the year. I think that should be a part of the school. I plan it, and my parents have always worked with me because I’ve been told in the last two or three years that I couldn’t do it, but I’ve always done it because I
would get my parents in. Once you get your parents involved, you can do a lot of things.

Strot

So, it was important enough that you kept it going.

Ward

Exactly. In my—

Strot

Even when the budget was cut, you kept it going.

Ward

Exactly. And I think it should be kept. I think these children should be exposed to more than just the classroom. (pause in recording)

*end of interview*