Hi, this is Rick Strot. I’m interviewing Dr. Elden Barrett. It’s November—I’m sorry, it’s February 24, 2004, at three o’clock in the afternoon, and we are in Dr. Barrett’s office at Baylor University.

Okay, well, Elden, thank you very much for agreeing to be part of this oral interview process. And the first question that I have for you is to describe for me, if you would, how you first became involved with Hillcrest Professional Development School or professional development schools in general.

Okay. We were one of the first schools invited to be a part of the Holmes project. And we used to have Holmes meetings all over at—Dr. Dean Cargon at A&M [Texas A&M University] was in charge of our area and we would meet many times in Houston. So, we would get arts and science folks like the dean and we would have chairs and different ones to go, plus we would have the provost at that time and faculty, different faculty, around and Waco ISD [Independent School District] folks.

And—and if you wouldn’t mind—I hate to interrupt your train of
thought over there, but could you describe what the purpose of Holmes group was? This was in the—this was early, the very—
(speaking at the same time) Well, mid- to late eighties. Right. This was after—it initially began in Michigan State University with just a few and was named after the former dean at Harvard, Holmes was his name, and named it after him. And the focus was to start working on professional development schools and setting those up and they also had an agenda to set up a five-year program. They had a number of things that had been adjusted over the years. But at that time we were meeting—I think there were a hundred universities or something like that invited, divided into regions. And we were meeting with Texas A&M and Texas [University of Texas] and folks. They were—it’s intended to be research universities or those kind of things. And so—but we—we invited folks from Waco ISD and all in arts and science down and we would go. And Fred Curtis had a van and we usually take the van and we’d pack up people in there and go. And we get to talking about it and talking about and got to thinking and dreaming and discussing and so forth. That’s where a lot of it—because we’d come back with ideas and so forth. And so the first thing that came, we had an assistant superintendent and I’ve lost her name—Bonnie Leslie(??).
Bonnie Leslie(??) was along and she said, “Well, we have a school, an elementary school that we’re—we needed—we have placed—you know, it’s been out of service because it was old and needed to be revitalized. Heck, we just donate that school. And let’s just—we give you the school and we’ll redesign it. We’re going to do it anyway. Let’s redesign it, make it—” So that initially part came from her. So Dean Lamkin(??) appointed myself, who was in charge—I was chair of professional field experiences, student teaching and all other field experiences—as co-chair with—came down to—this was a little bit later—um, I’m losing names already. She eventually became superintendent.

Dr. Stripling(??).

Yeah. Rosanne Stripling(??). Took over when the change, but we still had the commitment for the school which happened to be Hillcrest, it was Hillcrest Elementary. So in a—Dean Lamkin(??) appointed me and Waco appointed Rosanne Stripling(??), so we were co-chairs. So we set up a committee made of teachers from all over Waco, administrators, a group, and folks from Baylor, from different—Ed. Ad. [Educational Administration], Ed. Psych. [Educational Psychology], C. and I. [Curriculum and Instruction], a lot of different ones that to me—and we start meeting to design the Hillcrest Professional Development School. It just so—it coincided with a
grant that TEA [Texas Education Agency] had instigated that involved
a lot of money particularly it had been involved in technology. So we
decided to go for the grant, try to get—it was going to be awarded to
different ones around the state—certain number. And we were going
to design toward that, plus, we were going to design the Hillcrest site.
And so we divided into committees. One of the things we did was
send different ones of the committee around the country looking at
PDSs. We went to New Mexico, went to Lubbock, went to other
places. Rosanne, and I and two or three others took a trip up to West
Virginia. Just—we went and flew into Pittsburgh and went to a
school, an elementary school, and got a lot of really good ideas from
there. So we brought—or the different committees brought back
ideas. We divided into groups about into designing it. And it just
started coming together. One of the things that we initially came—the
idea of is combining the classes, having two classes together with a
beginning teacher and two student teachers or interns types being
directed by one master teacher. That was the initial plan. That came
from a committee, I think Jimmy Williamson(??) headed it. But they
came up with this idea and we all like the idea. Then we started going
from there. The idea being that if you had forty elementary students
with four adults—one master teacher, one beginning teacher and two
interns—that would be four adults in that classroom teaching them.
The beginning teacher would be mentored by the master teacher. The other two—the interns would be mentored. So that’s where it came from. And so we designed it and, in the process, we designed it architecturally. So we just designed—tear out those inner walls and take the two classrooms. That’s why those classrooms are that way because we designed them that way to combine the four. So a lot of what Hillcrest became was designed in this committee, put together and even though there was some adjustment it was particularly—it followed it pretty close. It—similar thing is happening now of that basics that we had.

And—and these decisions that you’re talking about that were made such as to have the configuration of the teachers, now, did these ideas come as a result of the Holmes meetings? Would you say?

Well, partly. They—that triggered the initial idea and it triggered the most important thing was getting Bonnie Leslie to commit with the school district—for the school. She committed for the school and she could do it. You know Bonnie, she knows it. She committed it. She just said, “You take this school. We can—it’ll be yours.” And that’s where that commitment came from. What we designed was uniquely our own. The ideas were not necessarily Holmes’, but they came out of varying areas. Nothing is new in education. There’s always a variety of things coming, so these came from ideas that
different ones had had. And we kind of polished it off. Individually came up and then we put them together as a group and it came out of a whole group, but ideas came from varying sources. And this committee submitted it. It was approved by Waco and Baylor. Baylor faculty was involved in the decision about it and they approved it. The Waco ISD went through their processes to approve it. And then we began to design it and put it together and that was the initial part.

Once we had the basic design and basic information and the building remodeling and stuff was going on and all that came—the way it looks now came out of that whole process of the design part. The next step was for us to hire a principal. So we had, again, the committee of myself and Rosanne(??) and several others were involved in the process. They allowed me to sit in being from Baylor even though they’re hiring a Waco principal to do the—it be part of the interview process. So I sat in on that and as a result we hired Macintyre(??), came out of that interview process. We interviewed a number and we selected and had involvement and so forth so that they were—he was directly interviewed with that. Now, when he came on board, Tom Proctor decided that he wanted to spend time out there with the way the whole thing was organized and so forth. So Macintyre(??) got Tom Proctor and myself to be the initial three to screen for teachers. So we had applications from all over Waco and we started interviewing. And
we hired—I think the first one was for the first grade teacher—what’s her name?

Vicky Ward.

Yeah. Vicky Ward was the very first one. So we went through the screen(??) and we decided to hire her. Then she sat in with us as we hired the next one. And then that one sat in with us and we just hired the next. So we just kept adding as we kept—hired the—so those master teachers were hired through that committee—initially the three and then expanded to involve all the other teachers.

And those were the master teachers not the first year teachers that you were hiring.

No, no, no. Those were the master teachers. There was some adjustment in what we initially planned in those ideas. And the theory was that we would hire—those master teachers would stay there, there would be a master teacher for each two classrooms. Then the beginning teacher, this would be a brand new teacher, would stay there a year and then move to another school in Waco. The two interns would be—stay there for a year and then they would go somewhere else. Ideally, Waco might hire some of them. But over the years that has been changed a little bit. The intention was to get that to train and do the first-year teachers so they could move. A lot of them stay from the way I understand it. It’s—that—there’s a number of things that
we had that kind of was changed, which is natural. That's part of it. And then once all of the faculty was hired, Macintyre (?) was leading it and one of the good things—there are a lot of advantages of hiring the principal and letting them be involved in it. One of the things that he did well was shared decision. He put everything together. It was—it's a very—system where everybody had input. He brought everybody in that worked. And when it started working, since it was basically an elementary situation and the whole thing in to play, then I backed away. As—once it got going, we didn’t need to do that anymore. So as a result, it was put in, you know, Tom took a lot of lead in that and a lot of other ones that had classes and so forth worked on it. So I would go back occasionally for different things, but the basic—my basic involvement was in the creation and design and putting it all together and getting it off the ground. And once that was done, then my work was done, somebody else takes over.

Strot: Well, you have a unique perspective on those early forming years. So if you don’t mind, I’d like to concentrate on those a little bit.

Barrett: Sure.

Strot: Um, when you think back to those early conversations in the van from the Holmes group meetings and then when the committee formed, how would you describe your feelings about the enterprise?

Barrett: Well, it was exciting. What we were doing was we were—because it
came out we said, “All right. Somehow or other,” best I remember somebody said, “Well, wouldn’t it be wonderful—” It came out of some discussion, I guess, we had at Holmes’. “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we couldn’t—if we didn’t have to take a ready-made school.” Which is generally what happens, you have to take one, make it into a PDS. “What if we could just do our own? What if we could start from scratch and have it any way we wanted to? So let’s just dream.” That was the idea. So then everybody was just, oh, it was exciting because if we could start from scratch, we didn’t have to worry. Then we had all kinds of wonderful, great ideas and a lot of them were pie in the sky, absolutely. But it was a great way to come up with ideas. And that’s what lit Bonnie(??) into it. She says, “We—well, you know what, we can do that. We’ve got a school. There’s nobody in it. We’ve got—we’re going to do it anyway. We’re going to put”—I can’t remember, a million, two million—something—some—quite a bit of money to remodel it already. It’s already in the books. So why don’t we just start from scratch and build it like we want to, hire the teachers. We start from scratch, no other PDS—very few have been—had the opportunity. So it was—it was exciting. Everybody was really excited. We got a lot—we had—those were just fun times to travel because we got to dream and plan and, you know, I don’t know that anything definite came out of it as per se that—what we
eventually did, but it was the spark that got it going and got the, at least the beginning from scratch is where it would have put it. And that’s the main idea that came out of it.

And that was under Dean Lamkin(??) that all that started.

Barrett (speaking at the same time) Yes, yes.

Strot Um, I’m going to continue with some of the things on the interview outline, but tailor them to those—those very early years before the school even started. And if you would, when you think of those early years—you’ve already touched on this a little bit, but could you try and describe what the vision for this elementary PDS was that became Hillcrest PDS?

Barrett Well, it was intended to be a PDS in the whole sense, all the different Holmes prospects of it. For instance, it was intended to improve instruction of the teachers that were there. Even though they were master teachers, the intention was if they were involved in a cohort of master/beginning teacher, those two, they’re going to learn because—we all know—if you’re the teacher you learn more than the student in many cases because you’re on that end of it. So the theory was the—they would be able to learn and develop that. We would also use best practices, we would set up things to work that we could do—that we couldn’t do at any other school. So the idea of creating a school that we can use best practices, everybody learns, everybody gains. The
other thing is we could use this also to have others come to observe and sit in. We could use it as an inservice type thing where they could come in and get some ideas about how to—and we could also, since this was a team teaching situation in many ways—if we could develop that then we could also have them go out to do some training as well as bringing people in. So we used both of those. So we’re gaining in learning. We also could use it as a research model where we could look at what’s going on and maybe how we do best practices. The problem, I think, that came about because of this—because of going through all that because of what we did, it’s very difficult to replicate as a whole. So it’s not—it—and I don’t know that we ever just dreamed and thought, Well, we’ll just have a lot of Hillcrest all over, because you can’t do it. You can’t replicate it. But what we can do is have it as a lab for people to visit. We can have a lot of things to go—you know, to learn through the process. So I think the initial part was to follow the PDS model by doing those things and making it true not only to teachers, the preservice teachers, others around to be developed professionally through the system, the way it was worked.

Strot
Okay. How would you describe your particular role—your personal role in formulating that vision for the professional development school(??) (unintelligible)—

Barrett
Well, it was—it was strictly a leadership in that we were co-chairs. I
was in—take the lead to get the committees together, setting up agendas and leading discussions, but when we met we would divide into smaller groups to go off and do some things, come back to report and share. So it was strictly administrative and, through the process, contributing, but more of an administrator or a manager than anything else.

**Strot**

If you wouldn’t mind talking about that collaboration a little more, how was this collaboration similar to or—and also different from previous collaborations? Because you had a lot of experience in those previous field experience collaborations.

**Barrett**

Well, we—we did involve—we limited to Waco. It was Waco and we hadn’t done other than through different schools—hadn’t done anything with the Waco administration per se that much. So this was a new movement into areas that we hadn’t been before. We were directly involved with schools. So we got into the administrative system. We got good information from them. They were ready—and at this point, there was a—at the very time we were doing it, we had the school, they had a change in the administration. So we had the possibility of working with new—and it just so happened that the ones that came in—Rosanne(??) was here, so she’d been involved from the very beginning. So she’s already sold. She was an assistant superintendent, so as co-chair, she’s already had a step in there. Now,
when she moved—when she, you know, she moved into superintendent that carried over. But the superintendent at that time was Zachary and he was in—all involved in that, and he knew Macintyre. The two of them had—when Macintyre had been a superintendent I think down in the coast, Houston, some area or—and he taught at University of Houston. So he and Zachary had run together, so they had a history of working together. So there was involved that. So, I think the involving them into it was a new kind of a collaborative effort.

Now, as Hillcrest started up and began, you had a change in deans at the School of Education as well. Talk a little bit about from the School of Ed.’s viewpoint then as the new dean came on how PDS involvement was or was not important in looking for a dean.

When we brought him in—his name was Smitts and he—as he was brought in, each of the ones that were in the final three—one of the very important pieces was to take them there and let them see it. It was fully operational then. So we would take each candidate over, let them go through it, see what was happening. And every one of them were very impressed, so whoever would have been elected dean, I think, or selected to be dean would have been impressed with what was going on at Hillcrest. So that was a pretty easy sell, but they were—they were all supportive and Smitts was, too. He liked what
was going on with it.

Strot

Do you remember in the early planning stages were any parents involved at all?

Barrett

Yes. Yeah, we had parents, business people, that type of thing. It was—the committee was made up of all of the above. I mean, we had a certain number of teachers, a certain number of the administrators around, plus we had parents involved, some business folks involved, Baylor faculty members involved throughout. So we had a combination of all those. It was a fairly large committee per se, but when we broke it into groups it worked, you know, they each body had an area to look at. But we involved every—all the aspects.

Strot

And as part of the original talk and as people shared their visions for what the school would be, what part did technology play in talk at that time, remembering this was in the early nineties when technology was just coming into schools?

Barrett

Well, it was part of this grant process we were going for. So not only were we designing it, but we’re designing it to get the technology in the grant.

Strot

So—and that came from the state level.

Barrett

Yes. That was a TEA back then, it was before SBEC [State Board for Educator Certification] and the commissioner had decided he was going to give these—and I can’t remember what they were called, but
we made the proposal. We didn’t get it the first time around. I think it was the second or third time it was awarded. We got it eventually, but that was where the technology was coming in was through the grant to be the—a high-tech school. And we continued—we were going to try to do that no matter if we got the grant or not we were still going to do the Hillcrest it would just be, you know, less involved because we didn’t have the money to do that for it.

**Strot**

Okay. Now, in those early years were any issues of equity or diversity talked about and dealt with in terms of the new PDS?

**Barrett**

Well, we had to—we decided that we would have to have it—make it at least the diverse percentage of the school district so that when students were selected they would have to meet that percentage so that it would be the same diversity. We would let them apply, you know, to do that, but—and then it would be a drawing and it was conducted that way where it was drawn so that you would have a certain percentage black, a certain percentage Hispanic, a certain percentage—from the ones that were—had applied, their parents had applied. We made—we sent out information and everything. We had plenty to do. But not everybody was selected, but they were just randomly selected to meet the diversity involved and special education. We hit all the needs so this school would represent a typical Waco student body.

**Strot**

Okay. And in terms of Waco and Baylor and the local situation, why
was the issue of diversity and equity an important issue to be followed?

Well, we didn’t want it to be an elite school. It would have been easy to do. The idea—we wanted to see if, by having this school, would it make a difference in the test scores—we were starting to get into the accountability stuff then. Back then it was something—TEPS or TOP, it was before TAAS [Texas Assessment of Academic Skills] even—I don’t remember what it was called.

TABS(??).

TABS(??), TABS(??) or something.

Or TEAS(??), TEAS(??)

One or the other. Yeah, it was one of those early things, but they were already starting to test and we wanted to be sure—make sure that it—we wanted to make sure we had the proper population so we could say, This does—school does make a difference. And I think if you look at it over the years, Hillcrest scores have outscored almost all other elementary schools in Waco because—and they have the same make-up.

Now, Dr. Barrett, you’ve been in teacher education for a long time as well as in public schools and in hearing you describe professional development schools, you’ve mentioned the word lab school as well at one point and lab schools have been around for a long time. What, in your mind, was different about Hillcrest that would distinguish it from
a normal university lab school?

Barrett

Most of those lab schools at a university setting would be on the campus and they would take the students of the professors. I mean, it would be more of a private—a private school even if some of them were in public. But it wouldn’t be a true test of teaching because those kids would be easy to teach, generally. So it would— the diversity wouldn’t be there, generally, with very few exceptions. It would be a whole—and it would be—a lot of times you would have the best of materials and those type of things, which Hillcrest sometimes does have advantages in those kind of areas, but overall you wouldn’t have the—it wouldn’t be a true elementary school in the sense that it would be representative of the school district. If we’d have had it, say, on our campus of Baylor when—private one—I have no doubt it would be a high ability level, which would be another issue, but we were not looking for that.

Strot

Along those same lines, you’ve mentioned that Hillcrest was going to have best practices and so on. At the same time, it’s a regular school and has to meet all of the same testing requirements and state requirements that other public schools do. Was there any—or describe any tension between the idea of a school that would do new things and yet still have regulations that have to be followed.

Barrett

Well, I don’t think it was that big of a problem because of
Macintyre(??) and some of them knew how to deal with that. And the teachers that were hired were aware of that. I—it was not an issue because from the very beginning we wanted to be just like other schools as far as that they—whatever they had to meet. There was some—a lot of flexibility in the shared decision making and a lot of issues that made it different, but I don’t think anybody had problems with meeting all the guidelines and stuff.

I’m going to stop and turn the tape over.

Okay.

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

Okay. We’re continuing on side two. It’s still February 24. Um, as I interview teachers who were there in the early years of Hillcrest, one of the things that they mention about being a teacher in a PDS is that it was empowering that they were—this was part of what you mentioned the shared decision making. Now, that implies also that somebody else had the power before. So from the viewpoint of a Baylor professor and an ex-administrator, how did—how did this idea of letting teachers make decisions sit in relation to the usual way that schools were—are run?

Well, I think that’s a—that was a—it was difficult for a lot of teachers to accept it because they were used to being in schools where principals—there was a—an administrator that made the decisions.
And that’s the way it always has been. This was before it was even mandated by—the state tried to get in, they wanted the shared decision. But this was before that. But it was mainly due to Macintyre(?). Macintyre(??) had a belief in it. That’s the way he operated. And I think he was almost the perfect—I don’t think we could have found a better person to begin for that reason that what he did was get them all involved. They had committees that made the decision—he’d sit in and he’d say, “I’m only—I’m only one voter, I’m just here.” He didn’t—he didn’t mandate. He didn’t—I’m sure that he had some suggestions sometimes, but, I mean, he was listen—he was just part of the team. And it worked, I thought, beautifully, but it’s very difficult for the teachers who have been locking in something(?). It was harder for them to adjust, but I think the ones we hired were aware of that and I think they adjusted, you know, a lot easier. I can’t speak to what happens now, but I as—I hope—I assume that it carries on in a similar type fashion because it—it worked so well.

From—now, once the school started, you were no longer directly involved with the student teachers there—it was elementary, you are secondary. But as it started and as the years went on, as the first couple of years went on, did you pick up any issues of—from Baylor faculty—issues dealing with having to share decisions with teachers in
the field or—

Barrett

No, because the ones out there—I—best I’ve figured out, were totally involved in it, Tom and some of the others were—they’d bought into it including that part.

Strot

(speaking at the same time) Including the—

Barrett

Yeah. And you were there. Yeah, the other areas they bought into it. The only problems we had was in the initial design from other faculty that felt they were left out of the process in that when we were describing what—we had faculty involved, but it wasn’t them. So, as a result, they felt left—even though there were faculty representing in this situation, they felt—they didn’t know exactly what we were doing even though we were sharing with them. So we had a little, I think there was a little jealousy going on there. And we had a number of faculty members that didn’t—didn’t like the process, didn’t know exactly what was happening they said. I thought we reported to them on a regular basis, knowing exactly what was going on, the whole faculty was aware of it, but they wanted to more heavily be involved and I’m not sure how we could have done that because of the numbers in this initial committee was huge. The numbers—large to do anyway. I don’t know how you go back to do the thing. So it worked out well I believe. And I think there were probably some initial hurt feelings of some of the faculty that wasn’t involved in the decision making mainly
because it was in many ways such a success. So I think it was more of a jealousy thing in some way. I don’t know if that’s true.

Strot

I’ve heard it observed that Hillcrest happened, at that time ten years ago, that the planning and implementation of Hillcrest happened at a much faster pace than things usually happen on a university campus.

Barrett (speaking at the same time) Um-hm. Right. Yeah, that’s true.

Strot

So was that timeframe a little different in terms of deliberation and—

Barrett

It may have been. And the other part was that since Waco was driving it, they weren’t used to working with that and we had to operate on a professional—with the Waco.

Strot

Exactly.

Barrett

And in the public school sector and therein lies one of the—and one of the advantages, I think, of me serving as chair because I’d been in the public schools for twenty-one years, fifteen as a principal—I was used to operating in those kind of ways. So I think I was able to work with the Waco in that time system whereas a lot of the other faculty had not had that experience and probably were really uncomfortable that it was moving at a faster pace.

Strot

So you were in—so to speak, able to operate between the two cultures.

Barrett

Right, yeah. And maybe I didn’t do such a good job selling the university situation, but I felt like that—in what we accomplished was done and it worked out really well.
Now, Elden, on the other hand—and this leads me to my last question for you—the vision of having Baylor involved in a professional development school relationship has resulted ten years later now in Baylor having a network of professional development schools. So this is the question, what about that original vision has remained the same over the years? What part of it may have changed?

Well, I think from my vision or time working without—all over the univ—all over the country, of Holmes and PDS is kind of on the way out. It’s not—in a lot of places, they don’t call the PDSs, it’s not professional development schools as much. In many ways, they’ve failed in a lot of ways. We have one of the rare instances where Hillcrest is a great success, but it was an unusual—as I said, it couldn’t be replicated and we couldn’t do it again in another situation. What we’re calling PDSs now are not. We have a cooperation between Waco and the School of Education, but it’s very limited into a certain number and I don’t see quote professional development happening among the clinical instructors, among the folks that are involved in much as they’re doing—they’re just being kind of mentor teachers and stuff(??). We haven’t—there’s been no training involved in them. So I don’t see that there’s professional development. I don’t see a lot of things that the PDS is—and I don’t see it making an impact. Maybe it does in a smaller setting, but at Waco High it’s a very limited—very
limited number that we’re even dealing. I think a lot of those Waco teachers have no clue we’re even in. So I’m not sure how we—how we make an impact professionally developing the teachers. So I’m not sure. I think it’s a whole different view. I don’t know that it’s the same. Our vision for Hillcrest is to be a total professional development school. Everybody’s involved in professional development. It was all involved as a total thing, not a little piece of it. So I think it’s a big difference in what’s going on and what did go on.

Okay. Anything else you’d like to add about PDSs or those early years or anything?

Barrett (speaking at the same time) No, I was very pleased. I’m still very proud to be a part of it. I think Hillcrest is gone—it’s been—even more, I mean, I think it’s done an outstanding job. I do think we were lucky to have the right people in the right situations with Bonnie Leslie(?), she was one that could make a decision and boom we do it, and Rosanne(?) was good to work with and she and I can work really well with that part. And in finding Macintyre(?) I just believe was a perfect person. Maybe he would be, not in another kind of setting, but for our situation we couldn’t have found a better one to get it off the ground. So I—all those things being said, I think we were lucky in a lot of ways, but it was—it’s a—it’s a perfect example of what I think a professional development school should be and very proud to have
been involved with it.

Strot

Thank you, Elden. Let me—

Barrett

Maybe we—

Strot

If you think of anything you’d like to add, let me know, we’ll talk some
more. Where’s stop?

*End of interview*