Components of the Narrative
Sue Farris

**Introduction:** As part of the internship placement process, you are asked to prepare a personal narrative. This piece of writing will give potential mentor teachers, school principals, and university supervisors some idea of your background, experience, and beliefs about education. Because this is the first thing these important individuals will know of you, care in writing and production is vital. The material provided here is to assist you in preparing your narrative. Keep in mind that every candidate has a different story to tell, but there are some common elements you may want to consider.

**Format:** Do not use a title page. The heading of your personal narrative should contain your name, current email address and two addresses with phone numbers (your local/school address and a permanent address). Please include the second address, even if you do not ever plan to live at that address again. It is important for us to have some way to reach you if you should move. You may choose to double or single space your paper. If choosing a single-space format, please double space between paragraphs. Length is not an issue, though you should keep in mind the patience of your reader. The usual length of the personal narrative is a page and a half to two pages. Anything more than that is probably not necessary.

**Style:** Write in terms of what you would be comfortable saying to someone. Most people would not be comfortable saying, "My name is Peggy Pupil, and I was the blessed event experienced by Mr. and Mrs. Doug Pupil on February 3, 1978." Certainly you should strive to engage your reader, but remember your audience. You are writing for educated people who expect a certain degree of fluency and grace. Present yourself as a capable, educated person who is soon to be a college graduate.

**Content:** A few words of advice: Do not go into detail about things your reader does not need to know. You do not need to explain where you spend Christmases (unless this is somehow related to your teaching preparation, for example, you and your family tour Europe every December) or how your brothers and their wives work out holidays. Your readers probably are not interested in the names and ages of your nieces and nephews. No one is going to care about your prom night. Get the idea?

The following is a list of things you might want to include in your narrative. Remember, though, that you are the one who is best able to pick and choose what will present you to best advantage.

- **Background information:** family, hometown, high school, a selected few activities (not every club you ever joined, just the high spots), awards, honors, graduation date
- **College career:** course of study, major and minor, any courses beyond those required that might particularly suit you for teaching in an area (example:
Irish literature or coaching soccer), professional organizations, social activities (again, a sampling of those which would be of interest to your audience: the Spanish Club, the education fraternity, social sorority or fraternity where you filled a leadership role.)

- **Experiences with children:** field experiences which furthered your understanding of children, volunteer activities, community involvement with youth, Sunday school teaching, work with the youth choir.
- **Beliefs about education:** offer some idea of what you believe about the roles of teacher and student, the purpose of the curriculum, effective teaching methods, the importance of your subject area.
- **Strengths:** be candid about your strengths, what you think you bring to the role of teacher.
- **Interests:** if there is something you would like to do or see during the internship, you may want to address it. For example, if you have been to the Holocaust Museum and have an extensive collection of materials from there, you might mention this so the mentor teacher can consider planning an instructional unit around your interest and material.
- **Attitude toward the internship:** try to communicate your enthusiasm for teaching. The school professionals need to see your willingness to work hard and to benefit from their investment in you.

**Sample Narrative**

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Personal Narrative

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Becoming a teacher is a life-long dream. Since I was a child growing up in Cabot, I have wanted to be a teacher. My parents, Jay and Joyce Jordon, teased me about my years of playing school with my three younger brothers. Of course, I was always the teacher. When I began real school, I found being a student was fun too. I remained an active and interested student throughout my days in the Cabot schools. During my high school years, I was a member of the Beta Club and the Student Council. I played on the varsity basketball and volleyball teams and represented my school at Arkansas Girls' State. I graduated with honors in 1997.
Shortly after my high school graduation, my college career began at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). My interest in teaching and my love of sports provided a natural direction for my study. As a kinesiology and physical education major, I have taken courses to prepare me for teaching physical education at the secondary level. I have also gained coaching certification in softball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and tennis. In the Methods and Materials I and II courses, I learned to organize curriculum and to plan effective lessons and units.

While completing my course work at UCA, I have gained a wide range of experience working with children. I was placed at Poplar Middle School in Little Rock for part of my field observation. There I was fortunate to observe in a physical education class and in a science class. The science teacher enlisted my help in working with a student with a learning disability. I helped the student stay on task and showed her how to analyze and solve problems. My field experience also included working with young children at the UCA Child Study Center. Here I assessed the motor development of children through play. The insight I gained through this experience will be helpful in working with older children who need special help in achieving their fitness goals. I also spent time in a sixth grade physical education class at Carl Stuart Middle School in Conway. I observed the teacher's instructional techniques and management style. During this placement, I had the opportunity to teach a class by modeling what the teacher had done the period before. This was the highlight of my field placements.

My experience with children extends beyond the usual early field experiences. Last year, I served as the assistant coach of the Mavericks, a summer basketball league team in the Amateur Athletic Association. I worked with girls ages fourteen to sixteen. I have also worked in the UCA basketball camp every summer, beginning before my freshman year. I have done volunteer work with the Girl Scouts All-Sport Day Camp. I have been a supporter and participant in the annual Jump Rope for Heart event. My growth as a professional has been enhanced through memberships in the Kinesiology and Physical Education Majors and Minors Club and the education fraternity Phi Delta Kappa. I serve as chair of the Student Athlete Advisory Board and as a student representative on the Faculty Athletic Advisory Committee. In these activities, my contact with youth and professional educators has confirmed my choice to become a teacher.
**Typical Trouble Spots**

**Comma Rules**

1. Pay attention to comma placement in locations.
   - Examples: I have lived in **Pueblo, Colorado**, and in **Enid, Oklahoma**.

2. Use a comma between two sentences when they are joined by any of the FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
   - Examples: I enjoy surfing, **and** I do it whenever possible.

**Capitalization**

1. Do not capitalize subject areas unless you are referring to English or a foreign language. Do not capitalize biology, history, or social studies unless you mean a particular course like World History II or General Biology.
   - Examples: I am enrolled in **English**, **General Biology**, and **Calculus**.

2. Capitalize the names of clubs and organizations but not offices held or rank.
   - Examples: I enjoy courses in **history**, but I dislike **social studies**.

3. If you capitalize something once, do it every time.
   - Examples: I was voted **vice president** of the **Beta Club** my **junior year**.

**Semicolons**

1. Use a semicolon between two sentences without the FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
   - Examples: I enjoy meeting new people; however, I never talk to strangers.
### Pronouns

1. Subjects should agree with their referent pronoun.

   - The student is sitting at her desk looking at a book.

2. Be sure a pronoun has a clear subject. If its referent is unclear, you should not use the pronoun.

   - The students are sitting at their desks; the students are very still.

### Possession

1. Watch out for apostrophes. Remember *its* is possessive, and *it's* is a contraction.

   - The dog dug up its bone.

2. Pay attention to whether possession should be singular or plural.

   - I attended Girls' State and Governor's School in 1995.

### Formal Writing

1. Avoid using words such as *a lot, you, done,* and the abbreviation *etc.*

   - I have had many (not "a lot of") experiences since I graduated.