

**Client:** NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION  
**Project:** NIFDI VIDEO  
**Subject:** CITY SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Baltimore)  
EPILOGUE 2001  
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[EXTERIOR SHOTS]

**Narrator:** City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore was widely regarded as a hopeless case, located in the poorest area of the city, serving the most disadvantaged, largely African-American children, it had consistently failed earning a reputation of one of the worst schools in Baltimore. Today is the first day of a new school year, a crucial year for City Springs. Frustrated at dismal academic results, the state has put the school on probation. Unless it shows measurable improvement this year, it may be taken over.

**Mother:** I tell ya I'm gonna find out where they wanta 'em to go. It's raining out here. Where do you want these children to go?

**Narrator:** As in schools all over America, there are tearful young children facing a frightening rite of passage.

[CLASSROOM]

**Robin Shaw (Teacher):** Show me where some things are? Do you think so? Could you come to my classroom and work with me and help me out and help me - -



Narrator: In a swath of new teachers like Robin Shaw, a freshly mented graduate of the University of Oregon, eager to start her first teaching job but with little idea of the challenges she will face.

[AUDITORIUM]

Bernice Whelchel (Principal): If you can hear me, clap five times. One, two - -

Narrator: These teachers and students find themselves at a school battling for survival.

Principal Whelchel: Have your children stand, please.

Narrator: Armed with a radical curriculum it's resolute principal, Bernice Whelchel, is determined to finally make City Springs a success.

Principal Whelchel: - - children in the classroom and sit in the rear in the - -

[SCHOOL EXTERIOR]

Principal Whelchel: Loring, how you doing? Come on darlin' and get up off the floor. Come on, girls. Hurry it up. [HALLWAY] Got something in your mouth? Is it food? Or is it bubblegum. There's the trash can right there. Hurry up.

Narrator: Bernice never forgets that academic success depends upon maintaining a culture of order.

Principal Whelchel: Morning, Liz.

Student Liz: Morning.



Principal Whelchel: Do me a favor, darling-darling. Can you pick that up for me, please, and put that in the trash?

Narrator: The culture in which children obey rules respect each other and resolve conflicts without fighting.

[AUDITORIUM]

Principal Whelchel: Malcolm. Malcolm. You planning on eating lunch here and breakfast here?

Malcolm (Student): No. I - -

Principal Whelchel: Look at me. Look at me. Look at me. Look at me.

Student Malcolm: - - She saying I took my coat.

Principal Whelchel: You see any adults here?

School Staff: She's talking to you.

Principal Whelchel: You see any adults here?

Narrator: But as the year progresses Bernice finds that molding these children to her vision takes persistence and resolve.

Principal Whelchel: Come back. Do you see adults here?

Narrator: Fourth Grade Malcolm has been running around at breakfast.

Principal Whelchel: What's the word, Malcolm?



Student Malcolm: [?]

Principal Whelchel: Now, try it again. Do you see adults here?

Malcolm: Yeah.

Principal Whelchel: Yes, what?

Malcolm: [?]

School Staff: See, now you go on down there - -

Principal Whelchel: Sit down on that step and cool off.

Students: [UNISON]

School Staff: Louder.

Students: [UNISON] - - Education! We like it. We love it. We want more! More of it! - -

Principal Whelchel: Very happy. Thank you. On Wednesday I got the results of your CTBS test for Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Grade 1 did an outstanding job on CTBS in the area of reading. They ranked at the 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile for reading and that's one of the highest of Baltimore city public schools. [APPLAUSE] All of our grades did exceptionally well on CTBS. As a matter of fact, you—you have to listen— Are you the best?

Students: [UNISON] Yes.

Principal Whelchel: In the whole wide—



Students: [UNISON] World.

Principal Whelchel: Yes, you are.

[CLASSROOM]

Teacher: Qualification not admission. Are you finished with that?  
Finished - -

Principal Whelchel: I looked at "The Battle of City Springs" a couple of weeks ago and that was an infant. I mean trying to work with Direct Instruction and seeing the low points.

[KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM]

Kinder Students: [YELLING]

Kinder Teacher: Are you ready?

Kinder Students: Yes. [YELLING]

Kinder Teacher: Remember, that's our signal.

Narrator: On this stained February day, the idea these children will be reading by the end of the year is slipping out of reach.

Kinder Teacher: I'm looking for a teacher - -

Kinder Student: [?]

Kinder Teacher: The teachers today are looking for two teachers - - work hard - - I'm looking for teachers - -



Narrator: Perhaps too much is being expected of these children.

Kinder Teacher: - - she came over to her group as she was supposed to.

Kinder Students: [?]

Kinder Girl: Nobody has to - -

Narrator: Perhaps they really are too immature to spend three hours a day in a structured academic program.

Kinder Teacher: When you're ready. Remember, wait till the teacher says you're ready.

Principal Whelchel: I wanted to prove to everyone that despite the fact that they were poor, that they were black, that they came from the toughest environments. City Springs was supposed to be the pits that those kids were capable of growing and they are and they have. [HALLWAY] Today if you visit City Springs, you will see order in the halls and all the Kinders finish the year at or above grade level.

First Grade Boy: [READS] His mom said, *That is a fine car. You are good at reading.*

First Grade Girl: [READS] Starts the same that you see early in the morning—

Principal Whelchel: The first graders are so good, any school would be proud of them.

First Grade Girl: [READS] Listen, that you see at the end of the day.



Third Grade Girl: [READS] I saw Dorothy and her companions. He asked, *What do you wish in the Emerald City?* We came here to see the great Oz - -

Principal Whelchel: And the children who build on this foundation in our upper grades can really shine.

Third Grade Girl: [READS] Answer that he sat down to think it over.

Third Grade Boy: [READS] *So he is*, said the green man, and he rules the Emerald City wildly and well. But to those who are not honest or who approach him out of curiosity he is most terrible and few have ever asked to see his face. I am the Guardian of the Gate and since you demand to see the great Oz I must take you to his palace.

Principal Whelchel: You talk to any kid in the building now, they know what reading mastery program that they're in and they know that when they get to the fourth grade the expectations for a City Springs student should be U.S. History and they know it's a seventh grade book. They want to take the vocabulary home so that they will be at or above grade level.

Fourth Grade Boy: [READS] The myth or simply how African lived and what they believed. The myths have done much damage to the, to the way African-Americans have been perceived and treated.

Fourth Grade Teacher: Good job.



Fourth Grade Boy: [READS] Most Africans taken into slavery were from West Africa which is shown on the map at [?] Frederick 11.1.

Principal Whelchel: In the U.S. History class this year is a child called Canot who made an appearance in "The Battle of City Springs" when he was a first grader.

[ANOTHER CLASSROOM]

Kenneth (First Grade): [READS] Get in the car.

First Grade Teacher: That was excellent reading. You read that whole story with no mistakes in one minute 20 seconds.

Narrator: In DI kids are continually tested and grouped according to their ability rather than their age.

First Grade Teacher: She's a first grade [?] teacher but that's not a first grade story you just read. That's a second grade story you just read. We need to do some—

First Grade Kenneth: I know.

First Grade Teacher: You know. How do you know?

First Grade Kenneth: 'Cause I did the work.

Narrator: First Grade Kenneth is moving up.

[HALLWAY]

First Grade Teacher: Think you could go into a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade classroom for reading?





First Grade Kenneth: [NODS]

First Grade Teacher: I thought you could, too. Alright, so—

First Grade Kenneth: [?]

[AUDITORIUM]

Boy (Student): What?

Students: [UNISON]

[SCHOOL EXTERIOR]

Principal Whelchel: It took five years for us to really understand it, to know the techniques and strategies, to get that team together—that committed devoted team. Now that we're at the fifth year with DI we know where to go. Now we know what the kids are able to do and it's gonna be fun. And I can smile whereas when you did "The Battle of City Springs" a century ago I wasn't smiling a lot. And even the people in Eugene had said, *Bernice, you can smile and we rarely saw you do that.* So DI is fantastic.

School Staff: What group usually reads on Wednesday?

Students: [UNISON]

School Staff: Yeah, but today I'm gonna break it - -

[READING SCORES]

[END]

