CHILD-INITIATED LITERACY EPISODES:

SITES OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING IN

EARLY EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted by

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Abstract

This teacher-research explores child-initiated literacy episodes within the literacy-learning context of a particular Year One classroom. The aim of the case study was to identify and explore the elements, effects and outcomes of the literacy-learning context and the ensuing child-initiated literacy episodes that occurred. Data were collected daily using qualitative data techniques and classroom experiences were documented using observations, field notes, journalistic notes, written comments of interactive sessions, samples of student work and a reflective journal.

Child-initiated literacy episodes occurred within scheduled literacy practices of the classroom and arose from child interest in an environment of co-operation and collaboration where literacies and learning embodied children's lives. The interactive literacy episodes encompassed children's sharing and volunteering information as they demonstrated understandings and literacies. The teacher-researcher acknowledged literacies as social practice and considered construction of learning, co-construction of knowledge and interactive scaffolding as effective early childhood pedagogy. The open-ended scheduled literacy practices built on the children's literate identities as they called on lived experiences, immediate and global worlds in everyday classroom life.

The research conclusions illustrated children as dynamic and powerful learners as they initiated meaningful learning, made connections and demonstrated multiple ways of knowing in building their literate identities and using everyday literacies. In addition, the 'enabling' teacher established classroom conditions that were

underpinned by core assumptions and key understandings about how young children learned. Such classroom conditions enabled child-initiated literacy episodes to occur within the rich literacy context and become sites of significant learning.

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Chapter One

Introduction

> I reach a hand into the mind of the child, bring out a handful of the stuff I find there, and use that as our first working material.
> (Ashton Warner, *Teacher,* 1963, p. 34).

1 . 0 Introduction

Views and theories of literacy, learning and early childhood education have changed over time. In a teaching career spanning three decades I have seen 'learning to read' become 'developing literacy' which in turn, has become building learners' 'literate identities'. Pedagogically, 'reading and writing' has been overtaken by a concern for 'multiliteracies' and pencils and paper now share space with keyboards and screens. Over time, I have been influenced by methods, approaches and philosophies of teaching and learning as well as theorists, principals and colleagues. But most of all I have been influenced by the young children I worked with who showed me they learnt what they were interested in and they learnt in many different ways. On *my* learning journey, I seemed to metamorphise. My concern changed from a teacher teaching, to a concern for children learning, and now, to teacher and children teaching and learning together. The child-initiated literacy episodes of this thesis presented a glimpse into the significant learning worlds of one such group of children and their teacher.

1 . 1 Overview

In this introductory chapter I briefly raise the matter of changed views of literacy and learning that have framed my teaching. I note the nature of changes in my views of literacy and learning throughout my career as well as my learning and growth during

this period of university study and classroom research. I locate the research reported here as case study with the literacy-learning context of my Year One classroom as the specific case. I discuss the significance of the study in terms of my role as both practising teacher and researcher. From the outset, I acknowledge my position of power as classroom teacher and emphasise that this reported research is seen through my lens. However, from this rare vantage point of Year One teacher/researcher, the study has the character of an intensive investigation of everyday literacies and learning in a Year One classroom that may contribute new insights to literacy education. In addition, it may prove informative and useful to colleagues in a very 'practical' sense. Lastly, I present an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1 . 2 Changing views of literacy and learning

Views and theories of literacy, learning and early childhood are grounded in histories and cultures of societies as part of existing social, political and philosophical environments (Barratt-Pugh, 2000). Contemporary views posit literacy as dynamic, everyday social practices constructed and used by human groups in society (Luke, 1994; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003b) and embedded in people's 'ways of being' (Gee, 1990, Cairney, 2000a). Contemporary early childhood theorists acknowledge that young children acquire language and literacies by participating in social practices that make up everyday lives of families in communities (Wells, 1999; Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Rivalland, 2000; Gee, 2001a; Jones Diaz & Makin, 2002; Martello, 2002). Contemporary early childhood educators acknowledge that young children enter school understanding and using community literacies, and today, literacy is seen as much, much more than 'reading and writing' (Gee, 1990; McNaughton, 1995; Freebody & Luke, 2003; Healy and Honan, 2004). But it wasn't always so.

1 . 3 Background

As I undertook this research, I had been teaching Year One for many years and I was always intrigued by the interconnectedness of elements of literacy learning in my classrooms. There were connections *between* literacies such as talking, listening, drawing, writing, reading and interacting and connections *across* curriculum areas like language, science, maths, Health and Physical Education and Studies of Society and the Environment. Children in my Year One class connected *with* classroom practices as they talked, wrote and read of lived experiences and there were constant connections *to* children as their lives, learnings and skills were incorporated into classroom activities. Language, literacies and practices connected *to* the real world as local communities and events were explored. Later, class activities and events connected *to* real-life using literacies and technologies as part of everyday living.

Additionally, children continued to surprise me with their personal connections to learning and understanding. They connected to tasks and topics, revealing different ways of seeing and different ways of knowing. Children shared objects and items of interest from home adding aspects of their lives and personal pursuits to literacy practices in class. It seemed that literacy learning was a perpetual flow of literacies, learning, practices and products that connected and interconnected in and out of the classroom.

Thinking back, I realised I was always interested in ‘connections’. In the 1960s theories of reading and writing centred on maturational development and ‘reading readiness’. Reading, handwriting and spelling were viewed as hierarchical skills and taught as separate subjects. Literacy was not mentioned. Reading and writing were

considered unitary skills that one learned as one progressed through school. In contrast, my 1968-69 Prep classes and I worked with the fledgling ‘language experience’ and ‘integrated day’. It seemed that even then I was ‘making connections’ because Language Experience relied on children’s oral language to create texts for reading, and topics for Integrated Days came from children’s interests.

The 1970s found me in First Nations’ communities in northern Canada and I continued to work extensively with language experience, sometimes co-operating with interpreters in English as a Second Language. We talked, drew, made, wrote and read texts from the students’ lives and their immediate worlds of the isolated communities. Sylvia Ashton Warner (1963) influenced me with her students’ key words as meaningful reading material. Additionally, my early childhood beliefs of ‘learning by doing’ were strong and my Dogrib, Tutchone and Inuit students explored, experimented and discovered using materials both in and out of the classroom. Basal readers and workbooks did not seem relevant in this environment but photos of the students were significant in personalising language and print.

In the 1980s I was influenced by theories and philosophies of emergent literacy (Clay, 1979; Teale and Sulzby, 1986), whole language (Smith, 1981; Goodman, 1986; Cambourne, 1988) and process writing (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1983) with their emphases on learners’ meaningful language. Developing literacy dominated the educational landscape and included speaking, listening, reading and writing as integral parts of becoming literate and coping in an increasingly technological world. The reading-writing connection (Clay, 1979; Butler and Turbill, 1984) gained prominence and I saw children’s writing assist their reading. Children creating and

reading their own texts dovetailed nicely with ‘learning by doing’ and the vital role of teachers’ ‘scaffolding’ children came to the fore. I also saw benefits as children made choices in writing and reading, taking some personal responsibility for learning. Occasionally a child surprised me with his/her choice of books to read because in some cases I had underestimated abilities and skills. Other children amazed me with their originality and creativity when they responded to open-ended tasks, engaged with problems and represented understanding in their own ways. I realise now this fits with a contemporary view of learning where we construct our own learning and co-construct knowledge with interested others (Wells, 1999; Hammond, 2001).

Many of my beliefs about how children learned crystallised in the 1980s. Throughout the 1990s I continued to revise and refine classroom practices by trying new ideas, noting children’s literacies, reflecting on practices and participating in professional reading and university studies. However, some things did not change in my classrooms: children learned from their interests, they learned in different ways and their lives and worlds connected to class activities and skills. Interestingly, much of what I practised in early childhood education and literacy learning now falls under a sociocultural view of literacy and learning – but I did not know that then. Recent studies opened my eyes to literacy as social and cultural practice, literate identities building from birth, literacy as repertoires of practice and multiliteracies in daily life. However, this sociocultural view of literacy learning also caused me to examine the power of language and text in informing young children in the course of daily literacy lessons in the classroom. I frequently questioned teaching and learning practices and endeavoured to empower children to voice their thoughts, ideas and points of view.

1 . 4 Case study

I began this study considering the interconnectedness of literacies in my classroom but it soon narrowed to an intensive investigation of child-initiated events within the literacy-learning context of the classroom and this lent itself to qualitative case study methodology.

I was the fulltime teacher working in the naturalistic, real-life environment of the classroom and I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the complexities of the literacy-learning context which the children helped create. I wanted to better understand my role as the teacher - to challenge assumptions and question teaching practices that appeared to underpin the everyday social milieu of the classroom. I wanted to investigate when and how the children built on the many literacies, learnings and skills that they brought into school.

The child-initiated literacy-learning context of my year one classroom was the specific case, 'bounded' (Stake, 1998) by participants (25 Year One students and teacher), space (the classroom) and time (one school year). The study provides a 'thick description' of the literacy context and may become valuable as an intensive investigation into literacy learning of Year Ones in this classroom. It may also be of added interest and significance because of the scarcity of Australian teacher-research in Year One particularly with respect to teaching and learning of literacy.

The purpose of this research was to identify and explore the elements, effects and outcomes of the child-initiated literacy-learning context in a Year One classroom.

Specifically this research attempted to:

- **identify the elements of the literacy learning context of this classroom;**
- **identify and explore how these elements came together to develop and support the students' literacy; and**
- **examine the literacy-learning outcomes of the students in this Year One classroom.**

1 . 5 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis reveals the organisation of the research process with the introductory chapter setting out the plan of the study. In Chapter Two I review the literature in terms of changing views of literacy and learning over time, including a brief historical perspective as these views shaped my teaching visions and practices.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology of case study as an intensive and in-depth investigation aimed at building greater understanding of the classroom literacy-learning context. It details research methods used to compile rich descriptions of the classroom and to gather data including observations, field notes, reflective journals and students' work samples. I also signal my intention to focus on child-initiated literacy episodes as one aspect of the literacy-learning context.

Chapter four provides a description of the classroom to create a partial view of the physical, social and temporal environment in which the children and I lived and worked each day. I also describe the scheduled literacy practices as they usually occurred. These descriptions set the scene for Chapter Five that describes the data collected throughout the year from the students' participation in this child-initiated

literacy-learning context. As the data accumulated it was obvious it could not all be used in this thesis.

Chapter six is an analysis of the data that concentrates on child-initiated literacy episodes as they occurred in the classroom. In re-reading all of the collected data this feature emerged as the dominant pattern. I decided to focus more intensely on this aspect of class learning because it intrigued me how the children demonstrated significant learning during and after such episodes. At the beginning of this study I did not know that child-initiated literacy episodes would be the focus. I also examine how the literacy episodes reflect emphases in current research literature and early childhood theories.

In the final chapter I present some conclusions about children's learning in the child-initiated literacy-learning context of my classroom. Interestingly, this time last year I could not have come to such understandings.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

> I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day, Bills to be Enacted into Law, the diaries of Lorenzo Dow – anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night.
> (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1960, p. 24).

2 . 0 Introduction

Views of literacy, learning and early childhood education have changed over time and throughout my teaching career I have been influenced by teaching, learning and literacy theories that came and went during those years. In this chapter I provide a brief historical overview of various theories and approaches in early childhood education and make connections to the ones that influenced my teaching. I then consider contemporary views of literacy and learning that frame early childhood teaching today.

2 . 1 A brief historical overview of early childhood education

In the mid 1960s, I was amongst the student teachers who studied developmental theories of early childhood that posited young children passing through developmental stages of physical and cognitive 'readiness' on the way to reading. Theories were based on past and present knowledge as well as 'the political, social and philosophical context of the time' (Barrett-Pugh, 2000, p. 1). Pearson and Stephens (1998, p. 87) claimed, 'The previous half century …had been dominated by a behaviourist perspective in psychology that shunned speculation about the inner

workings of the mind.' Instead, as student teachers, we observed specific behaviours that showed student progress and learning.

2 . 1 . 1 Reading and reading readiness

The concept of reading readiness grew from developmental theories of psychology. Prereading tasks that indicated readiness to read were carried out prior to actual reading. In the late 1960s, I gave my Prep children prereading activities such as visual discrimination (matching colours, shapes, clown faces and letters), auditory discrimination (listening games) and pre-writing activities (tracing dotted lines) to discern whether they were 'ready' to read. The Bullock Report (1975, p. 102, cited in Walshe, 1977, p. 31) emphasised that 'the teacher has to help the children towards readiness for beginning to read. There is no question of waiting for readiness to occur; for with many children it does not come "naturally" and must be brought out by the teacher's positive measures to induce it.' This acknowledged that maturation and development were not enough and more could be done to 'help' children read. However, I sometimes questioned the 'help' that I gave my Preps. I questioned the value of discriminating between pictures of flags, flowers and clown faces when letters, words and print were the symbols used for reading. However, as Pearson and Stephens (1998, p. 78) pointed out,

> In the mid-1960s, we tended to view reading as a pretty straightforward perceptual process. Readers, we thought, accomplished their task by translating graphic symbols (letters) on a printed page into an oral code (sound corresponding to those letters). After that they "listened" to the sounds and to the words they had produced in the translation process. Comprehension of written material was nothing more than comprehension of speech produced by the reader. Reading was not viewed as a language process. Instead it was thought of as a perceptual process…

Certainly in my experience, teachers talked about children's development – physical, social, emotional and intellectual. Preschool teachers talked about children being 'ready' for school and Prep teachers talked about children being 'ready' to read. Children who had difficulties were often referred to as 'immature' and 'not yet ready' for school or reading. More than one child repeated Prep or Year One because of teacher-perceived 'immaturity' of the child. I remember recommending that a young, struggling reader/writer repeat Prep only to see him grow into a large and somewhat unruly child after sudden cognitive and physical growth spurts. From that point on, I observed possible repeats more thoroughly and used an array of diagnostic evidence to determine abilities and skills. Perceived developmental 'immaturity' was not enough. Interestingly, from then on I rarely recommended that a child repeat a class.

2 . 1 . 2 Part-to-whole

Along with developmental 'reading readiness' teachers directly and explicitly taught reading (not literacy) as a hierarchy of skills. Teachers decided *what* to teach, *when* to teach it and *how* to teach it. Reading was broken down into parts; specific skills were taught in isolation and later connected to make the whole (Beecher & Arthur, 2001). Emphasis was on learning the alphabetic code and word recognition by explicit teaching (Hill, 1997). Australian teachers knew this approach as 'part-to-whole' but Crawford (1995) referred to it as the connectionist approach. Reading, spelling, handwriting and composition were taught as separate components and these language 'subjects' did not necessarily relate to each other.

2 . 1 . 3 Alphabetic or phonetic approach?

I did not use an alphabetic approach in reading (Holdaway, 1979) where a child spelled an unknown word to pronounce it. This contrasted with a phonetic approach where a child learned sound and letter associations. I taught the children to 'sound out' the letters and blend them to get the sound of the word. However I was frequently frustrated by the number of times phonics did not help children in learning to read because many words, such as *house*, did not make sense when sounded out. Holdaway (1979, p. 27-28) argued that a difficulty with the phonetic approach is that 'some letters like 'a' have as many as nine common sound associations – at, ate, all, ark, away, head, wash, oar, ear' and pointed out that both the alphabetic and phonetic approaches 'detracted attention from the nature of reading as the creation of meanings'. As a reader and an early childhood teacher I maintained that both letter names and sound associations were necessary in reading.

2 . 1 . 4 Phonetic or whole word (look-and-say) approach?

I used whole word and look and say methods in teaching reading as well as phonics and 'sounding out'. Harris and Hodges (1995, p. 278) described whole word methodology as 'an approach to reading instruction that deals with the learning of words as wholes.' The look-and-say approach also taught words as wholes, and readers later, broke up and analysed words (Holdaway, 1979). My beginning readers gained 'sight words' by perceiving the word as a whole and we had lists, charts and flashcards as children played 'games', such as Tic-tac-toe, to recognise the words. According to Holdaway (1979, p. 28) however, 'great harm was done as proponents of both approaches began to influence publishers to produce 'readers' which lacked literary worth or interest, and destroyed natural language use – whether they were

phonetic readers or look-and-say readers'. I remember some phonetic readers being available at my first school, but I tended to use others that seemed to focus on a variety of words in simplistic 'stories'.

2 . 1 . 5 Whole word and/or sentence method

The sentence method of learning to read had meaning vested in the sentence rather than the word. Just as whole word reading was a 'look-and-say' method, sentence reading was also a 'look-and-say' method. Beginning readers often memorised the sentences and the 'readers' (books) so teachers tested isolated word recognition to ensure that children were 'really' reading (Holdaway, 1979, p. 29). Harris and Hodges (1995, p. 231) defined sentence method as 'a method of teaching reading in which "the sentence first being presented as a whole, the words are discovered, and after that the letters composing the word" (Farnham, cited in Huey, 1908)'. Interestingly, they did not mention getting meaning from the sentence. Language experience soon followed with its emphasis on the child and 'meaning'.

2 . 1 . 6 Language experience

Walshe (1977, p. 40) described language experience as a simple idea: '…in real life, *experience* and *language* interact all the time: so hyphenate the two words to remind us that language and experience must also interact in the classroom as we teach reading and writing'. Harris and Hodges (1995, p. 134) defined it as 'an approach to language learning in which students' oral compositions are transcribed and used as materials of instruction for reading, writing, speaking and listening.'

In the late 1960s, language experience for me was an exciting shift from teaching skills to constructing texts from experiences. It was fun to scribe meaningful words, sentences and stories as children spoke of their activities. Best of all were shared class experiences. As the children suggested sentences about the events I scribed in large print directly in front of them (Depree and Iversen, 1994). Alphabet knowledge of letters and sounds occurred in the context of writing as we constructed sentences together. Sounds and formations of letters were necessary and relevant information as children created texts that related to them. In 1969, scribing children's sentences from experiences was not called 'joint construction of text'. That came later in 'whole-language' theory, practice and terminology (Cambourne, 1988).

In language experience I used children's language as I wrote, but this interactive activity included explicit teaching and I ensured Standard English appeared in print. I saw it as my job to have my Australian, Italian, Greek, German, Yugoslav and Turkish learners using Standard English. I later displayed the charts of texts and illustrations for group and individual reading. Most children were interested in talking and writing because I attempted to make class experiences meaningful. For example, the whole class went to Luigi's house to see his pet rabbits in the backyard. After the excursion our dialogue went in various directions: the walk to Luigi's house, the rabbits' antics in the hutch, how Luigi cared for his rabbits, the biscuits and cordial Luigi's mum offered for morning tea and the numerous, big trucks that thundered past us on our walk back to school. Class sentences became large 'wall-stories' that hung across the room and children re-lived experiences as they re-read the 'stories'. The children also drew individual pictures and dictated personal sentences about their experiences. Print was meaningful as children read and re-read their chosen words.

With language experience, children and I worked together to make little books for reading. An advantage of this approach was that reading and writing came together (Holdaway, 1979). Children made connections between life experiences, reading, writing and letter names/sounds because they watched and worked with me as I scribed their oral language. Children also read other books and ‘readers’ but for some, the transition from their own language stories to ‘readers’ was difficult. Additionally, it was a lot of work to make little books for all the children. In the end of course, I used a combination of approaches to teach reading and I remember frequently describing my Prep program as an ‘eclectic’ approach.

2 . 1 . 7 An eclectic approach

An eclectic approach meant that I used a variety of methods to get children reading and writing and as Holdaway (1979, p. 30) explained, ‘research indicated that different methods tend to suit different children’. An eclectic methodology gave children opportunities ‘(a) to learn words as wholes; (b) to learn the sounds that letters record so that sounds can eventually be blended to form words; and (c) to learn to write words’ (Durkin, 1993, cited in Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 68). But it was more than this.

Throughout the seventies I used several approaches and reflected on ‘what worked’ to have children become competent, confident and enthusiastic readers and writers. There were ‘hands-on’ experiences, grounded in theories of learning in early childhood where children talked and ‘learned by doing’. In writing language experience sentences and stories we dealt with letters, sounds, spelling, capital letters, punctuation and ‘sounds of language’ (Martin & Brogan, 1972). Boxes and walls held

flashcards, charts and lists of meaningful words, useful words, sight words and word families. Children chose home reading from a wide variety of books and 'readers', but I monitored closely to ensure that children developed and extended their reading. Children learned to handwrite by copying correct formations of letters and copying short sentences with common beginnings like, I can… I like… and We went… There were days when all of these things happened around a child's contribution to 'show and tell'. Here I was drawing on an approach called 'The Integrated Day.'

2 . 1 . 8 An integrated day

An integrated day meant that most subject areas revolved around an object or topic of child and/or class interest. For me, the integration of 'subjects' across the curriculum emerged from realising that children learned 'what they were interested in' - and children were interested in their immediate worlds, especially the objects and information they brought for 'show and tell'. When Guiseppi brought a spider in a jar, the day became a feast of talking, listening, drawing, making, counting, writing and reading about spiders. When we went to Luigi's house to see his pet rabbits the topic spread over ten days and encompassed a bus trip to a nearby Pet Shop. The Plowden report (cited by Rathbone, 1971, p. 150), in referring to "the center of interest" maintained, 'It begins with a topic which is of such inherent interest and variety as to make it possible and reasonable to make much of the work of the class revolve around it for a period of a week, a month, a term, or even longer.'

The integrated day was part of a broader approach to education as Rathbone (1971, p. xi) explained: '"Open education" refers to an educational phenomenon associated with recent reforms in British primary education. Also known as the "integrated day,"

"Leicestershire model," or simply as the "informal" infant school approach, open education is characterised by certain philosophical principles and certain classroom practices,' including '…children learning from self-initiated actions, direct experiences, freedom to explore, formulating questions, making meaning from experiences, understanding self, and learning as *'process'* with *'product'* of secondary importance' (p. 101, italics in original).

Flexibility was built into the 'integrated day' as my Prep classes studied topics of interest as well as a variety of pre-planned experiences (Rathbone, 1971, p. 103). One term in 1970 we made weekly trips (Kohl, 1970, p. 74) to a building site across the street to observe and note the processes involved in constructing a block of flats.

At the time, I had permission from my Melbourne Principal and Infant Mistress to write the integrated day as a daily diary to record what actually happened in the classroom. This was in contrast to the usual practice of writing the Day Book up in advance with curriculum details and specific activities for the next week. The Infant Mistress then collected Day Books on Fridays to check what teachers were covering in classes. In addition, I had permission from a nearby Teachers' College for my student teachers to forego the usual practice of preparing a specific lesson (for example, teaching 'g') because it may not have been appropriate if a child brought a caterpillar or turtle or toy dolphin or helicopter that day. Instead, my student teachers practised flexibility as they prepared objectives and broad outlines of a lesson that incorporated several generic steps to accomplish a task. For example, student teachers outlined steps for language experience sentences about an object or interest as well as

a relevant letter/sound with associated activities. As the Plowden report (cited in Rathbone, 1971, p. 149) noted,

> The idea of flexibility has found expression in a number of practices, all of them designed to make good use of the interest and curiosity of children, to minimize the notion of subject matter being rigidly compartmental, and to allow the teacher to adopt a consultative, guiding, stimulating role rather than a purely didactic one.

The Literacy Dictionary (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 172) listed open classroom as 'a style of teaching that takes into account curriculum integration, flexible use of space and group size, varieties of learning materials, and student choice of activities.' The Dictionary (p. 118) did not list 'integrated day' but it quoted Smith and listed 'integrated method' as 'an instructional approach in which reading is viewed as "a tool in furthering the interests and activities of the children, and both reading and the other subjects are drawn upon as they are needed and as they enter naturally into the children's in-school and out-of-school enterprises" (Smith, 1965)'. This sounds like an integrated day where objects and/or topics of interest became vehicles for children's learning of 'reading, writing and 'rithmetic', but it sounds more like integration across the curriculum where several subjects centred on one topic (Routman, 1991; Wilson, 2002). In all these 'open' teaching approaches, children's senses were not forgotten.

2 . 1 . 9 Kinaesthetic approach

During the 1970s I connected children's learning with their senses as we discovered kinaesthetics. According to Holdaway (1979, p. 31), the kinaesthetic approach was explored and developed by Grace Fernald when she pioneered 'the use of tactile and kinaesthetic modes in literacy learning' and 'broke down the dependence of traditional procedure on visual modes.' In revising letters, words and numbers my

Preps wrote in sand and salt. They touched and manipulated fabric and sandpaper letters and made names and numbers with play dough, plasticine and cooked spaghetti. Large paintbrushes and water saw letters and numbers 'painted' on the school's wooden fence. Letters and words from newspapers were cut out and glued on charts. Children also used their bodies, individually or with partners to represent numbers and letters. These young learners used their physical, cognitive, sensory and social selves to develop reading, writing and number in Prep classes.

2 . 1 . 10 Organic vocabulary and key words

Across the Tasman, one teacher was already using children's senses and emotions for early reading and writing. Sylvia Ashton Warner (1963) worked with Maori children in rural New Zealand and developed 'organic vocabulary' from the children's life experiences. Combining 'look-and-say' with language experience (Holdaway, 1979) she established children's initial vocabularies and built reading materials from there. Ashton Warner (1963, p. 34) made books from the children's words and worlds:

> Back to these first words. To these first books. They must be made out of the stuff of the child itself. I reach a hand into the mind of the child, bring out a handful of the stuff I find there, and use that as our first working material.

To me, this was pure gold. I connected with her words and adapted the ideas with children on their varied learning pathways. Organic vocabularies were especially helpful with children of different cultural backgrounds and/or second language situations like European children in Melbourne and First Nations children in Canada. Key words from children's worlds, written on chunky cards were remembered because of emotional and/or physical attachments to the words – like snow and sled. Harris and Hodges (1995, p. 125) listed 'keyword method' and defined it as 'an

instructional approach in which the emphasis is on a target concept, identified by a keyword, and the relationship of other concepts to it, as in clustering and brainstorming.' Interestingly, Harris and Hodges noted that 'This method was first used as early as 1531 by Ickelsamer (Adamik-Jaszo, 1993)' and one can't help but wonder what key words featured with children way back then.

2 . 1 . 11 Emergent literacy

The notion of emergent literacy came into prominence in the 1980s as literacy researchers questioned developmental theories. Barrett-Pugh (2000, p. 2), citing research of Clay, Goodman and Smith, described emergent literacy as 'an ongoing process which starts at birth and in which the child is an active participant' rather than seeing 'reading and writing as a set of isolated skills that have to be taught'. Beecher and Arthur (2001, p. 13) portrayed emergent literacy as 'the gradual development of understandings about literacy that occurs as part of most children's early experiences.' They explained that 'This term was first used in the 1980s in an edited volume by Teale and Sulzby (1986) to describe the many understandings of literacy processes and concepts that precede more conventional independent literacy.' However, Makin (2002, p. 73) attributed the term 'emergent literacy' to Marie Clay (1972) and explained that it 'refers primarily to reading and writing.'

The Literacy Dictionary (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 70) defined emergent literacy as the 'development of the association of print with meaning that begins early in a child's life and continues until the child reaches the stage of conventional reading and writing'. In the same Dictionary, William Teale (p. 71) explained that he and Elizabeth Sulzby used the term in the mid-1980s to describe a 'body of work relating

to how reading and writing concepts, behaviours, and dispositions precede and develop into conventional literacy.' He wrote, 'Currently, it is fair to say that emergent literacy is the lens that most researchers and educators use to focus on early reading and writing development.' McNaughton (1995, p. 7) explained,

> Descriptions of children were showing the presence of substantial amounts of learning before school (Clay, 1979; Teale, 1984). Much of what has been written in the last decade clearly shows that reading and writing have developmental roots. The term 'emergent literacy' has come to refer to this early learning. …I use the term emergent literacy to convey several ideas. One is that expertise in reading and writing has a developmental history before formal instruction. That expertise emerges from processes at work in children's everyday experience.

The notion that literacy understanding emerges as young children participate in 'everyday experience' is a contemporary view of literacy and literacy learning but that view itself was only emerging in the 1980s. Beecher and Arthur (2001, p. 14) agreed that '…emergent literacy comes from a developmental perspective'. Barrett-Pugh (2000, p. 3) meanwhile, saw whole language and process writing growing out of emergent literacy.

2 . 1 . 12 Whole Language

What is whole language? Strickland (1995, p. 279-280) initially explained it thus:

> Whole language is both a professional movement and a theoretical perspective. It embodies a set of applied beliefs governing learning and teaching, language and development, curriculum, and the social community. Historically whole language may be viewed as part of a long tradition of progressivism in education that reflects concern and discontent with prevailing practice. Whole language teachers have been influenced by theorists such as Lev Vygotsky, Louise Rosenblatt, Kenneth Goodman, and Frank Smith, among others. They make use of the implications drawn from language research, including studies of the writing process, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and emergent literacy.

In the 1980s, my understanding of language experience practice and theory merged with whole language practice and theory and both connected to my core early childhood beliefs of 'learning by doing'. In both cases 'making meaning' was the main concern. In both cases going from 'whole' language to smaller parts of language seemed to make sense because people used language as 'a whole' - not bits. (In parent information evenings I spoke of "People talking in words and sentences; not in letters and sounds"). In both cases oral language and ensuing texts were meaningful to learners. Goodman (1986, p. 9-10) argued, 'Language should be whole, meaningful, and relevant to the learners' and 'Language is learned best when the focus is not on the language but on the meaning being communicated.' The emphasis was on 'real' experience and 'authentic' learning (Edelsky, Draper and Smith, 1983) that connected children's learning to their lives. In both cases reading and writing were purposeful rather than exercises to practise reading and writing. Children learned from their interests, lives and surrounds. Importantly, the talking, writing and reading came from the children and I responded to their oral and written language. In the 1980s this psycholinguistic view was new and as Pearson and Stephens (1998, p. 92) argued, 'perhaps the most significant impact of the sociolinguistic perspective was that it heightened our consciousness about language as a social and therefore cultural construction.'

It was also in the 1970s and 1980s that Vygotsky's social constructionist theories were influencing and impacting on teaching and learning. Wells (1999, p. xii) referred to Vygotsky's influence in understanding learning and pointed out,

> In the place of traditional transmissional teaching on the one hand and unstructured discovery learning on the other, his theory places the emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge by more mature and less mature participants engaging in activity together.

Parents and teachers were usually the more mature participants in interactions that increased children's learning at home and at school. Vygotsky argued that spoken language '*enabled* thought and *produced* learning in interaction with others' making talking and thinking 'as central to literacy learning as reading and writing' (Reid and Comber, 2002, p. 17, italics in original). In contrast to Piaget's view that children 'naturally' learned from the environment, Vygotsky stressed the social interactive nature of learning (Moll, 1990) and '…underlined the role of an adult or expert co-participant in actively instructing the child so that they might come to understandings beyond what they could achieve alone' (Reid and Comber, 2002).

'Scaffolding' entered the educational landscape in the 1970s and according to Hammond and Gibbons (2001, p. 2), 'Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) were the first to use the term as a metaphor to capture the nature of support and guidance in learning.' Moll (1990, p. 138) elaborated,

> As the analogy implies, scaffolding refers to the gradual withdrawal of adult control and support as a function of children's increasing mastery of a given task. The work of Wood has shown that successful scaffolders focus children's attention on the task and keep them motivated and working throughout the session. …the scaffolding tutor demonstrates and models successful performance while keeping the task at a proper level of difficulty, avoiding unnecessary frustration and encouraging children's independent functioning.

Since my Prep and Year One classes always had twenty-five students, I found it impossible to scaffold all the children at their points of need. Realising there were various abilities and capabilities in the classroom, I encouraged children to co-operate, collaborate and help each other in activities. I scaffolded as much as possible and endeavoured to help everyone for a short time each day.

Apart from social interactive learning and co-construction of knowledge there were other influences from Vygotsky. Goodman and Goodman (1990, p. 225) maintained, 'Key ideas of whole language concerning social contexts and literacy development, learning in and out of school, teaching and learning, and the relationship between teaching and learning draw heavily on Vygotsky…'. Whole language is immersion in spoken and written texts both in and out of school and whole language teachers extend students' literacy as s/he mediates between the learner and the literate environment. Unlike a skills approach, aspects of literacy like phonics and spelling are taught in the context of students' talking, reading and writing. According to Moll (1990, p. 6), 'Vygotsky rejected artificial divisions and abstractions and insisted on what we would call a holistic approach.' This fits with the holistic view of literacy learning in whole language where speaking, listening, writing and reading 'authentic' texts in meaningful social contexts are central to a whole language classroom.

However, there were critics of whole language. Bitter criticisms centred on the philosophical approach where whole language teachers integrated phonics and spelling into meaningful texts that made up students' reading and writing. Strickland (1995, p. 280) explained, 'Because whole language teachers believe that all language systems are interwoven, they avoid the segmentation of language into component parts for specific skill instruction. The use of strategies taught in meaningful contexts is emphasized. Phonics is taught through writing and by focusing on the patterns of language in reading.' In the 1980s this seemed eminently sensible to me because sounds and letters were relevant as students wrote about things of interest. I saw children learn sounds and letters as 'just-in-time' learning through meaningful teacher-student interactions. However, not all teachers effectively responded to

children's writing and not all students learned necessary alphabet knowledge. Some teachers seemed to misunderstand that whole language teaching included explicit teaching. Edelsky (1999, p. ix) argued, 'What began as a local, grassroots movement of knowledgeable and courageous educators – who were struggling for the rights of teachers and students to control learning and teaching – was becoming just another trendy, new approach to literacy instruction.'

Heated debates about 'methods' of teaching continued through the eighties and nineties (Cassidy, 1996) and continue today (Taylor, 1998; Luke, 1998; Ohanian, 1999). Clay (1998, p. 252) noted that, '…reading acquisition might… have been viewed constructively – that is, as something that the child puts together, except that reading instruction has a long history of polarized theoretical positions. In lay minds, there are two superficial descriptions of beginning reading instruction, one at the letter level (phonics) and one at the word level (sight vocabulary).' Interestingly, the either-or debate about phonics and whole language appears to be re-igniting with recent articles in newspapers such as *The Australian:* 'Latham stutters over reading revolution' (Albrechtsen, 2004); 'Reading inquiry welcome (Pearson, 2004, p. 15), an editorial 'Getting it right on reading (2004, p. 14) and 'How we lost the plot in reading' (Donnelly, 2004, p. 29).

Whole language teachers and students incorporated 'real-life' reasons and 'authentic' purposes (Edelsky et al., 1983) for reading and writing and defined, discussed and tried to understand 'real-life' issues encountered in everyday lives. They read and discussed books rather than limited language 'readers'. Shared reading of Big Books (Holdaway, 1979) came into prominence as teachers tried to imitate the practice of

parents and children enjoying and sharing books at home. Brown and Mathie (1990) discussed a positive view of language and learning in the classroom and acknowledged the influence of Frank Smith (1981) and his views on learning rather than teaching, Donald Graves (1983) and his work on 'process writing' and Brian Cambourne (1988, p. 33) and his 'Model of learning as it applies to Literacy Learning' as keystones in changing the teaching/learning environments in their classrooms. I too, was profoundly affected by the work of Smith, Graves and Cambourne because I experienced 'children learning' rather than 'teacher teaching' as children assumed ownership of their writing, made choices in representing understandings and took some responsibilities for their learning. I was heavily influenced by the notion of 'immersion' (Cambourne, 1988) in oral and written language and to this day, my classroom is awash with oral, written, visual, textual and digital languages and print.

Cambourne (1988, p. 33) connected learning to read and write with ways children learned to talk in family environments. He developed seven conditions of learning that he understood as integral to children learning to speak and incorporated them into classroom situations. The conditions included immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation and response and in creating a literate environment in my classroom I incorporated these features. Integral to these learning conditions was 'engagement', a term borrowed from Smith (1981, p. 635) who explained it thus:

> Learning is an interaction, a concurrent event rather than a consequence of a demonstration. Learning is immediate and vicarious, the demonstration becoming in effect the learner's own learning trial. I termed this interaction *engagement* to indicate the intimate meshing of the learner's brain with the demonstration.
>
> Engagement with a demonstration will occur if there is *sensitivity*, defined as the absence of expectation that learning will not take place…

> To learn to read and write, children require 1) demonstrations of how reading and writing can be used for evident meaningful purposes, 2) opportunities for engagement in such meaningful uses of reading and writing, and 3) freedom from the unnecessary undermining of sensitivity (italics in original).

I related to the term 'engagement' and saw children focus and persevere with chosen tasks and activities. I saw children write, draw and read about things that mattered to them (Fox, 1993, p.3). Harris and Hodges (1995, p. 73) did not credit Smith with coining the term 'engagement' in an educational sense, instead defining it as 'the emotional involvement of the reader in the process of responding to the content of reading, as occurs in total absorption in a story or play.' Nonetheless, 'engagement' was a key ingredient in another development in 1980s classrooms: process writing.

2 . 1 . 13 Process writing

Research by Donald Graves (1983) into how children could write from the beginning of school impacted on Australian teachers during the 1980s (Turbill, 1983). Along with Graves, research by Calkins (1983) demonstrated how young children developed writing in classroom contexts. The emphasis was on personal writing about familiar worlds in narrative style. Teachers played a vital role in listening, responding to children's writing, modelling writing and encouraging quality writing. However, as Kamler (Kamler and Woods, 1987, p. 3) succinctly pointed out, '… children do not simply learn to write, but learn to write in particular classrooms with particular teachers…' Although I didn't slavishly follow process-writing suggestions, and I had difficulty with 'invented' spelling for a while, I came to realise that very young children *could* write.

I saw that writing helped children's reading and the reading-writing connection (Butler and Turbill, 1984) was very clear to me. Clay (1998, p. 252) observed, 'The study of how children learn to write, which had been constrained by beliefs about motor incoordination, a striving for correctness, a need to learn reading before writing, and a notion of getting images of spelling into the brain, began to expand with new vigor. Writing acquisition, it turned out, had surprising similarities to oral language.' I modelled writing with the children whenever possible and meaningful words, sentences, charts and stories flooded the classroom. Visiting adults dodged and ducked to avoid pictures, paintings, posters, charts, rhymes and stories that dripped from ceilings, walls and dividers.

I deliberately created a saturated literate environment where children participated in 'The Literacy Club' (Smith, 1988). Pearson and Stephens (1998, p. 85, citing Smith, 1971) maintained, 'the implication, which Smith made explicit, was that the "function of teachers is not to teach reading as to help children read" (p. 3)'. In the mid 1980s I experienced the teaching and learning dichotomy when I realised that by providing certain classroom environments for young children the emphasis was on 'children learning' rather than 'teacher teaching'. This came to the fore in my work on 'Maths in Literature' (Swan, 1988) when together, the children and I set the scene, shared the literature and posed open-ended questions and tasks. Children demonstrated awe-inspiring creativity and originality as they represented understanding in their products. Although the children made choices and had ownership of their work I saw that my encouragement, help, guidance and explicit teaching were integral to the children's growth and development.

Whole language teaching and process writing challenged traditional ways of teaching such as reading readiness with its scope and sequence hierarchy of skills, isolated views of phonics, spelling and writing, and limited vocabulary in basal readers. Children's writing revealed that on entering school, young children already knew much about print. In process writing the children wrote on topics of their choice and interest but we also shared a range of messages, notes, lists, cards, letters and personal stories because our emphasis was on a variety of meaningful and purposeful writing relevant to everyday lives.

During the 1980s, in schools across Australia teachers began to speak of 'developing literacy' rather than 'teaching reading' as teachers made literacy decisions in their classrooms based on what children said, read and wrote in meaningful contexts. Edelsky (1999, p. 5) argued, 'Whole language teachers' understandings of language lead them to avoid exercises and instead to teach language in or closely related to contexts of actual use.' As Newman (1990, p. 3) explained, 'A profound philosophical shift is necessary – a shift supported by constantly updating our theoretical knowledge, by learning more about what is involved in how language is learned and used, and by always questioning our instructional objectives and practices.'

Unfortunately, not all teachers articulated clearly defined philosophies of process writing and whole language and too often in my experiences, poor quality writing, erratic spelling and uninspiring reading were explained away with, "I can't make him write more; I don't teach him spelling but he'll get it eventually; and she just chooses really easy books all the time." According to Rose, Gray and Cowey (1999, p. 55) process writing in some classrooms became 'endless recycling of simple recounts in

personal writing activities.' This was not the case for my classrooms because there were varieties of genres and representations, but I do remember grappling with the notion of quality writing without removing writers' ownership (Newman, 1991, p. 285). It was a dilemma and I had to ask myself serious questions: How do I teach quality writing? Is it more than modelling writing? How many changes do I suggest before the child loses ownership? What do I say and do if a child says, "It's finished," but I see poor quality writing? Sometimes it was a fine line between discouraging the children and providing adequate support.

For example, one year in a Second Grade in Canada, I encountered numerous imaginative stories of princesses in castles (usually from girls) and superheroes with good guys fighting bad guys (usually from boys) and I struggled to find a balance between establishing clear, well-structured writing and interfering with children's ownership over their efforts. I also struggled with children's 'stories' becoming rehashed popular culture from TV, videos and magazines. I decided to increase class experiences to include events like treks outside for picking cranberries, looking for animal tracks and studying pond life. Children were actively involved when wildlife people came in with birds, bearskins and owls' pellets. We bought day old chickens and watched them grow – only to have foxes later take them from the outside cage. Another year we had a large fish tank of cold water (four degrees Celsius) in which we put seventy-six salmon eyed-eggs. We watched them all winter as they grew into alevins and fry before releasing them into their river in the spring. My revived language experience, learning by doing and real world topics led to inspirational, high quality and varied reading, writing, drawing and making.

Reading ‘real’ books (Goodman, 1986), enjoying shared reading of Big Books (Holdaway, 1979), modelling and demonstrating writing and texts, flooding the room with print (Cambourne, 1988) and studying real life issues (Edelsky et al., 1983) were exciting and inspiring activities for me and many children ‘flew’. Some however, struggled with the hundreds of words in the classroom and for them we established word boxes of meaningful key words and built from there. Some children from seemingly ‘literate homes’ also needed fewer words and a handful returned to the repetitive language in the *Ladybird* Books (Murray, 1964). In some cases, I scribed for children way longer than anticipated. The important thing was to find and use ‘what worked’ for individual children. But through all those years of division, decisions and debate, some things didn’t change - I didn’t stop ‘hands on’ explorations, field trips, art activities and reading aloud to children. I read hundreds of books - picture books, storybooks, factual and poetry books, rhymes, chants and songbooks, recipes, comics, magazines, newspapers, taped books and chapter books.

However, problems lay ahead for process writing and whole language theorists and practitioners. Edelsky (1999, p. 1) acknowledged that whole language educators failed to reflect on the ‘non-neutrality of curricular choices’ and authentic questions of real-world problems unsettled some students, teachers and authorities. Literacy is NOT neutral. Literacy is social practice embedded in the political, cultural and historical structures of society. Talk and text represent certain views of the speaker and writer and those views may differ from those of the listener and reader. Beecher and Arthur (2001, p. 9) maintained, ‘Literacy is not neutral. It is ideological, and represents particular worldviews.’ Kamler (2001, p. 126) argued, ‘a critical writing pedagogy may be seen as ‘risky business’ because it does not simply treat language as neutral

communication.' Luke, Comber and Grant (2003, p. 21) reminded us that 'the texts of everyday life are not innocuous, neutral texts requiring simple decoding and 'appropriate' response. They are key moments where social identity and relations of power are established and negotiated.' Prevailing views on literacy and learning were changing yet again to focus on the 'social' and 'cultural' basis of literate practice.

2 . 2 Literacy as social practice.

Sociocultural theorists argue that literacy is a dynamic social practice constructed and used by groups of people as they go about their daily lives in societies. Luke (1994, p. 2) explained that 'literacy is constructed by individuals and groups as part of everyday life' and Cairney (2000a, p. 94-95) maintained that 'literacy is viewed as a practice that cannot be separated from the people who use it.' What then is social practice?

Everyday actions and interactions make up social practices that form parts of daily lives. Social practices of today are directly related to the history and culture of the past. Lankshear and Knobel (2003b, p. 69) elaborated:

> Social practices are negotiated forms of interaction with the (social and natural) world within recognised contexts of interaction. They are *mediated* by tools, signs, rules, and other shared and communicated constructs (de Haan, 1999, p. 22). It is because they are mediated that social practices can be *negotiated* around more or less shared understandings, and be transmitted, modified or reconstructed. Participants in social practices negotiate what is being done and employ tools, procedures, goals, standards and the like on the basis of their existing knowledge and experience.

A family attending Church on Sunday is a social practice. Within the Church service there are more social practices – routines, rituals, actions and interactions that are steeped in historical traditions of the Church. Families employ social practices within their homes and communities as part of their day-to-day living and these practices are

grounded in traditional and cultural ‘ways of doing things’ (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003b). Similarly, a child attending school is a social practice and many routines, rituals and ‘ways of doing things’ are maintained in classrooms and schools. Since many everyday social practices involve print and text, they are also literacy practices.

2 . 3 Literacies are situated

Literacies are situated in spaces, places and times. Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000, p. 1) argued, ‘All uses of written language can be seen as located in particular times and places’, and that ‘all literate activity is indicative of broader social practices.’ For example, my weekly grocery shopping is a social practice but embedded within such outings are literacy practices as I read signs, take note of prices, check information on packets, glance at magazine covers, read names and prices of foods on the checkout screen and talk to the cashier. The literacies are specific to a particular time (today) and specific to a particular place (a supermarket) but they are also specific to the purpose of the activity – that is, grocery shopping as part of everyday family living.

In classrooms there are specific practices associated with school life such as marking the roll each day and informing parents of school events through a weekly newsletter. However, some literacy practices in classrooms may not reflect everyday life and living. For example, some classroom worksheets do not connect to the personal worlds of children who do the exercises and as Fox (1993, p. 128) argued, ‘No one in real life fills in ditto sheets.’

2 . 4 Specific literacy practices for specific life purposes

Literacies occur in everyday social practices and specific literacies occur in the process of accomplishing something else in one's everyday life. Imagine the social and literacy practices families experience as they go to a doctor's office, Post Office, chemist, video store and ice-cream shop. Although there are similarities in the practices and literacies offered, there are also differences because of specific purposes connected with each place. Now, imagine the social practices and associated literacies as families go to Saturday football, a hospital emergency room, a movie theatre, a neighbourhood toddlers' playgroup and a fast food restaurant. Specific literacies are associated with each site according to the purposes of activities in each site.

When my own children were little they helped make our weekly shopping list by writing milk, butter and weet-bix on the kitchen white board. They took telephone messages, wrote appointments on the calendar and checked the TV guide for *Inspector Gadget*. Today, children may continue such literacies but they also email friends, watch DVDs, send text messages and view phone numbers on mobile phone screens. Children *learn* a variety of literacies and learn *about* various literacies as they *use* multiliteracies in daily life because they experience specific literacies for specific purposes in the family context. Demonstrations of literacies occur every day and as Martello (2002, p. 48) pointed out, 'Embracing and capitalising on a wide range of community literacy practices extends the learning possibilities for all children.'

2 . 5 Literacies encompass discourse and 'ways of being'

Along with places, spaces, times and purposes, there are also 'ways of being' in social practices where talking, dressing, acting and presenting oneself is integral to the specific situation. Gee (2003, p. 5) referred to this as discourse and defined it thus:

> Discourses are ways of coordinating and integrating words, signs, acts, values, thoughts beliefs, attitudes and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, objects and settings. A Discourse is a sort of 'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognise.

For example, doing an aerobics class at a neighbourhood gym is a social practice and to comfortably participate one needs to understand the discourse of the aerobics class – that is, the participants' language, actions, dress and body positions as well as 'props' (Gee, 2003) like exercise balls and step boxes. One must understand the embodied languages of the aerobics class; not just the verbal language. Likewise, schools and classrooms have distinctive discourses and many children entering school learn languages, actions, dress and body positions associated with school life. Learning classroom discourses is easier for some children than others because school may represent practices of the broader society. For example, read-aloud may be a family practice at home and when children experience read-alouds in school it does not surprise them. Children unfamiliar with this practice must *learn* this aspect of classroom life to feel they fit in and belong. Conversely, teachers can learn some aspects of the children's home discourses to help the children 'feel at home' (McNaughton, 2002) in class. Teachers should perhaps remember that children's literacy learning begins early and it begins at home as emergent literacies.

2 . 6 Literacies are learned at home

Children acquire language, social practices and literacy practices of their families as they participate in everyday actions and interactions in homes and communities. As McNaughton (2002, p. 67) pointed out, 'Children learn various ways of using language as they are socialised, developing expertise as they become communicating members of their families and communities.' Children build their emerging literate identities as they learn rituals, roles and routines of shops, Churches and fast food restaurants when families interact with these community institutions in the course of everyday life. Barratt-Pugh (2000, p. 3) reminded us that 'Learning is embedded in the socio-cultural practices that children are involved in.'

2 . 7 Literacy is something we 'do'

However, what has become increasingly clear over the years is that literacy is not 'here' in a physical sense like a mountain or an ocean. We cannot grab literacy and hold it in our hands like soil or dough. Instead, we *experience* literacy and see the *effects* of literacy as we interact and go about our daily lives. Luke (1994, p. 6) explained, '…literacy is a social practice, which is 'done'. It is not an internal possession, but rather it is a form of human labour, a means for the production of and engagement with cultural artefacts and social relations'. For example, driving a car is a social practice. Drivers are 'doing literacy' and are engaged with 'cultural artefacts' as they read fuel gauges, speedometers, speed signs and names of streets and towns on the exit ramps. Passengers in the cars are 'doing literacy' as they read road maps to help drivers navigate unknown highways and byways. Children in the back seats are 'doing literacy' as they recognise company signs and logos like McDonald's and Retravision or play with their Game boys. Jones Diaz and Makin (2002, p. 9)

explained, ‘The various social practices used by particular members of society constitute the use of literacy, not literacy itself as a unitary object. Writing alone does not constitute literacy. The social practices associated with it are paramount to its use.’ The people in the car are not just reading ‘words’ but they are reading and ‘doing literacy’ in the context of everyday actions in everyday lives. Families constantly demonstrate literacies in the social practices of day-to-day living.

2 . 8 Multiliteracies, new literacies and technologies

Barton and Hamilton (2001, p. 7) argued, ‘The notion of *literacy practices* offers a powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape’ yet literacy practices today involve much, much more than ‘reading and writing’. As people participate in social practices of everyday living they employ a variety of literacies including speaking, listening, viewing, reading, writing and interacting with voices, prints, texts, pictures, signs, symbols, screens, images and icons. In referring to multiliteracies Kalantzis, Cope and Fehring (2002, p. 1) stated,

> Once, *literacy* could be understood as the business of putting words in sentences on pages, and doing this correctly according to the standard usage. Now, *literacies* are inevitably multiple in two major ways:
>
> - Many kinds of English literacy are at work in many different cultural, social or professional contexts. As much as English is becoming a global language, these differences are becoming ever more significant to our communications environment.
>
> - Through new communications technologies, meaning is being made in ways that are increasingly multimodal. That is, written-linguistic modes of meaning interrelate with visual, audio, gestural and spatial patterns of meaning (italics in original).

I too, have seen technologies play an enormous role in changes to language and literacy practices today. Healy (2004, p. 20) argued, ‘Literacy in the digital context

has become, in effect, a metaphor for navigating multiple textual landscapes…' and she maintained, 'The reality is that multimodality constitutes the majority of texts in social practice in private, professional and industrial lives.' Martello (2002, p. 38) also maintained, 'The ways of making meaning with which children may be familiar are increasingly multimodal and may emphasise one or more of spoken or written language and visual images. These three modes are intricately linked in many contexts and not seen as separate in children's lived experiences'. With constant use of computers and digital technology in the classroom the children move freely between home and school using current technologies as part of their everyday lives. According to Kellner (2001), young people today have access to technology and are competent users of technology more than any other time in history. In addition, people make sense and make meaning in the world around them using technologies that are *creating* new ways of communicating (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003a).

Imagine the variety of languages and cultures families hear, see and experience as they meander through shopping malls. Imagine the multitudes of literacies families encounter including visual, physical and audio images, objects and sounds. There are signs, screens, notices, labels, directions, instructions and advertisements in texts, prints, pictures, images, icons, symbols and sounds. In referring to many 'new' literacies in use today, Lankshear and Knobel (2003a, p. 16) explained,

> Established social practices have been transformed, and new forms of social practice have emerged and continue to grow at a rapid rate. Many of these new and changing social practices involve new and changing ways of producing, distributing, exchanging and receiving texts by electronic means. These have generated new multimodal forms of text that can arrive via digital code… as sound, text, images, video, animations and any combination of these.

Children in families, homes and communities function in these changed times and young people use technology to communicate rather than 'pencil and paper'. Carrington and Luke (2002, p. 10) argued, '…new generations of children… spend large chunks of developmental time at keyboards and mouse pads, rather than with pencils.' Early childhood teachers may need to question their classroom practices to ensure that young children are connecting home literacies and practices with school literacies and practices because it is clear that the 'old' classroom print is not enough.

2 . 9 Implications for teaching

Today, Queensland teachers are urged to see literacy as social practice including multimodal literacies and to these ends, our school staff has participated in numerous days of Professional Development. In the Education Queensland publication of Literate Futures: Reading (2002, p. 15), Anstey elaborated,

> Everything that individuals and groups do involves at least one of the modes of literacy and some type of social activity. This means that literacy is defined by, around and through social practices. Recognition of the importance of *change*, and the concept of *literacy as social practice*, means new goals for literacy education, requiring focus not only on the mastery of certain knowledge and skills, but also on the *use* of these skills in various *social contexts*' (italics in original).

Hence, if we view literacy as multimodal within social practice, our teaching needs to reflect this view. Literacy is more than reading and writing. It is also more than speaking, listening, decoding and encoding written texts. Luke (1994, p. 2) argued, 'Literacy is a dynamic, evolving social and historical construction. It is not a fixed, static body of skills.' Beecher & Arthur (2001, p. 9) maintained, 'Contemporary thinking takes a much broader view of literacy than just "a fixed, neutral system of language rules, symbols and conventions" (Knobel and Healy, 1998:9)'. Gee (1990) went further, arguing that defining literacy as the 'ability to read and write is

nonsensical' because 'literacy is always multiple, always tied to social practices that include much more than reading and writing, and is inherently ideological'. A traditional view of literacy as a unitary skill (reading/writing) has been overtaken by literacies as multiple, including multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) and 'repertoires of specific practices that are socially, culturally, geographically and historically situated' (Comber and Barnett, 2003, p. 7). Teachers identify a repertoire of literacy practices to employ in specific social situations that 'underpins and informs the whole curriculum' (Anstey, 2002).

2 . 9 . 1 Literacies as repertoires of practice

The writers of Literate Futures (Government of Queensland, 2000, p. 3-4) suggested, 'It is useful to think of literacy in terms of a *repertoire of practices* that, like the skills of a musician or tradesperson, expands and develops as one faces new technologies, techniques, possibilities, problems and contexts' (italics in original). However, rather than discuss methods to 'teach' the repertoires of practice, they discussed a framework 'which breaks the repertoire of practices students must master into four broad roles' after the 'four resources model' of Freebody and Luke (1990; Luke & Freebody, 2002; Freebody & Luke, 2003).

2 . 9 . 2 The 'four roles' model

Freebody and Luke (2003, p. 56) explained:

> The basic proposition of the 'four roles' model is that effective literacy in complex print and multimediated societies require a broad and flexible repertoire of practices. This repertoire we have characterised as a set of 'roles', later 'practices', that participants in literacy events area able to use or 'resource'. These are:

- Breaking the code of text
- Participating in the meanings of text
- Using texts functionally
- Critically analysing and transforming texts.

Freebody and Luke (2003, p. 58) argued that the 'four roles' model 'puts the focus directly on the flexibility and responsiveness of pedagogy' indicating that 'one method' or 'a best practice' does not work for teaching literacy. The one 'method' or one 'approach' for teaching reading and writing that historically we saw in schools is insufficient and unnecessary in literacy learning today (Luke, 1998; Freebody and Luke, 2003). Indeed, Reid and Green (2004, p. 15) went so far as to suggest that the 'four roles' model can be seen as an 'anti-method' model.

From the 'four roles' model, professional questions emerge 'of how to relate theories of literacy education to daily planning and classroom activity' (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 58) and they concluded: 'The four roles model thus offers a straightforward heuristic framework that can highlight the dynamic and tricky relationship between theory and practice'. Interestingly, Education Departments (Government of Queensland, 2000) pre-service teachers in universities, and researcher/writers of literacy use the 'four roles model' to underpin much of the theory of literacy learning for students and schools today (Rivalland & Hill, 1999; Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Rivalland, 2000; Wilson, 2002; Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001). However, as Freebody and Luke (2003, p. 57) summed up,

> The 'four roles' model is not a set of prescriptions about the conduct of pedagogy, curriculum or assessment. Rather, it is a way of interrogating practice. It provides a platform for assessing individual classroom or whole-school literacy programs.

Thus teachers might consider whether classroom practices reflect these elements of literacy learning and in turn, prepare students for complex living in the current and future world. Healy (2004, p. 20) argued, 'There is no question that print literacy repertoires continue to be important but the ways in which print now integrates with other media at the digital interface means that literacy education can no longer be restricted to the controlled and controlling domain of print.' Education Queensland's demands on schools for whole-school literacy programs, in-service training for teachers and new resource books, videos and CDs clearly indicate its intentions to bring teachers and schools 'up to date' with current literacy theory, thinking and practice (Government of Queensland, 2000; Anstey, 2002). Children however, are already 'up to date' because children acquire literacies and learnings in families, homes and communities before they enter school.

2 . 9 . 3 Different literacies and learning in families and cultures

Children come to school with lives, languages, literacies and learning but what 'counts' as literacy and learning varies with families and cultures. Since children build literate identities from infancy, children come to school with a variety of literacies (McNaughton, 2002). Teachers will need to recognise, acknowledge and respect home and cultural literacies of students and build on them. They may also accept and use multiliteracies and not only rely on print literacies of the past. Thompson (2002, p. 2) referred to the 'virtual schoolbag' of knowledges, narratives and interests that children bring to school and Reid and Comber (2002, p. 20) noted that some children leave their 'schoolbags' at the school gate. Teachers can change this by acknowledging young children as already competent learners and inviting them to talk, use,

demonstrate and share their multiliteracies, knowledge, interests and learning in classrooms – including Gameboys, toy computers and digital toys.

Early childhood teachers who invite young children to use familiar literacies and learning in the classroom context and to make connections to lives and interests, may take a sociocultural view of literacy (Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid and Rivalland, 1998; Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Makin and Jones Diaz, 2002) that acknowledges, respects and builds on children's home languages, literacies and learning as students and teachers co-construct new understandings in classrooms.

Teachers who share these views of literacy as dynamic, sociocultural practice encompassing much more than reading and writing may reflect these beliefs in classroom teaching and learning in several ways. Such teachers connect home language, literacies and learning to school language, literacies and learning (Hill et al. 1998; Makin and Jones Diaz, 2002). They acknowledge, respect and encourage children's home literacies (Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Dyson, 1993) and provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their home literacies in the classroom (Heath, 1983; Cazden, 1988). As well, they might highlight socio-cultural ways for children to compose narratives for effective literacy learning (Dyson, 1993). Teachers may incorporate 'repertoires of practice' (Freebody and Luke, 2003; Comber and Barnett, 2003), 'real-life' literacies and 'authentic' learning in classrooms (Edelsky, 1999; Comber and Nixon, 1999; Vasquez, 2001). By responding to students' comments and queries they capitalise on child learning in the immediate 'teachable moment' (Newman, 1991, p. 275-277). Since children are familiar with popular culture and the latest technology (Reid, 1998), teachers incorporate these into

classroom life with collaborative sharing of magazines, digital games, toy computers, CDs, videos, computers and Internet sites (Alloway & Gilbert, 2002). As Healy (2004, p. 22) noted, 'Multimedia and digital interactivity bring different conditions for children's apprenticeship to literacy.'

Many teachers constantly and positively encourage children to talk, listen, explain and demonstrate thinking about topics of interest, and scaffold (Hammond, 2001) children in their efforts in using and learning literacies. In addition, they acknowledge there are 'multiple ways of knowing' as Berghoff, Egawa, Harste and Hoonan (2000, p. xii-xiii) explained,

> We believe learners who are making meaning draw simultaneously on different dimensions of knowing – different forms of expression (sign systems), different kinds of ideas (knowledge systems), and different cultural frameworks (sociocultural frameworks). These different ways of knowing are both the source of and the result of our diversity. And the broader the spectrum of ways of knowing a learner can access, the richer the learning.

2 . 9 . 4 Home and school literacies – never the twain shall meet?

Much has been written about the mismatch often experienced between children's family/home literacies and school literacies (Heath, 1983; Cairney and Ruge, 1997; Knobel, 1999; Carrington and Luke, 2002; Makin, 2002; Comber and Barnett, 2003). Some research indicates that home literacies may not be valued in schools (Gee, 1990; Hill et al., 1998) and children may be disadvantaged in such classrooms. Other research highlights the diversity of literacy practices that exist in families and homes as Heath (1983) discovered in her renowned study of three communities. In contrast, Cairney (2000a, p. 95) noted, 'research evidence suggests that there is far less literacy diversity within and between schools than one would expect; given the varied communities they serve (Cairney et al 1995; Freebody et al 1995)'. Some schools

encourage families to 'take on' literacies that worked in the past such as sharing stories at bedtime (Fox, 2001) to lessen the mismatch between home and school literacies. But in many cases, teachers settle for a 'deficit' view of children and families blaming them for the lack of literacy learning, rather than looking to a broad spectrum of issues including teachers and inappropriate pedagogy (Freebody & Ludwig, 1998; Alloway and Gilbert, 2002). It seems to me that if children demonstrate home and community multiliteracies in school and if worthwhile school practices connect to the real world, children's lives and interests, mismatches are less likely to occur. Rather, children's literacies flow back and forth between homes and schools in the course of daily life. As Wells, (in Walsh, 1991, p. 64) explained in relation to 'old' literacies,

> …children are active creators of their own understanding. They can and do attempt to gain control over written language so that they can use it to achieve their own purposes. From the moment of entry to school, therefore, there are achievements to celebrate and a foundation to build on. Children also already have strategies of meaning-making that should be recognized and encouraged.

There is no reason to suppose that the same won't be the case in respect to 'new' literacies. In addition, families and schools can collaborate and develop partnerships to understand each other's views about literacy to improve literacy-learning conditions for students (Swan, 1995; Cairney, 2000a). As Comber and Barnett (2003, p. 5) pointed out, '…it is already clear that what children take up in the preschool literacy curriculum is inextricably connected to the repertoires of practice and knowledge that they already had from their home and community experience.'

A reconceptualised view of literacy and literacy learning has the potential to lead to reconceptualised literacy practices where children encompass multiliteracies and

engage in socially constructing language and learning in the classroom (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 6). In today's world children interact with technologies and classrooms must reflect this change too. As Knobel (1999, p. 5) acknowledged, '…language and literacy practices have altered in myriad ways.'

Literacies are constantly changing in human societies that are constantly changing. Technological advances in spoken, written and visual messages cast around the world today mean that most people have access to global messages one way or another. Literacies in families, homes and communities have also changed over time and early childhood education needs to accommodate such changes. As teachers, we need to review and renew our notions of early childhood education to ensure that children experience multiliteracies as they build on their literacies, expand their understandings and extend their learning through meaningful, worthwhile literacies and learning practices in classrooms.

In the following chapter I elaborate case study methodology chosen for an intensive investigation of the literacy-learning context in my Year One classroom. As teacher-researcher I gathered data from the real life environment of the classroom and attempted to understand the many complex elements at work in the literacy-learning context. I try to unravel these elements to discern how they work together to build on the literate identities of my students.

Chapter Three

Methodology

> "The first thing I've got to do," said Alice to herself, as she wandered about the wood, "is to grow to my right size again; and the second thing is find my way into that lovely garden. I think that will be the best plan." It sounded an excellent plan, no doubt, and very neatly and simply arranged; the only difficulty was, that she had not the smallest idea how to set about it; and whilst she was peering about anxiously among the trees, a little sharp bark made her look up in a great hurry.
> (Carroll and Zwerger, 1999, *Alice in Wonderland*, p.33).

3 . 0 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter the past four decades have seen considerable changes in views and theories of literacy, learning and early childhood education. Major technological changes have also altered literacies and learning and teachers are under pressure to produce literate students who can cope in today's changed world.

This research has been an attempt to understand the complex literacy-learning context of my Year One classroom to discern how my students develop literacies and build their literate identities. While elements of this context are yet to be defined, they are usually associated with particular literacy and learning beliefs and practices, in particular that literacy is a sociocultural phenomenon.

As teacher-researcher I chose a case study approach to investigate the literacy-learning context that is co-constructed and experienced by my students and me. The intention was to unravel the elements of the context and establish how they worked together to produce effective literacy outcomes for participating students. However, on re-reading the data, different patterns emerged with one feature re-occurring in all

literacy practices: child-initiated literacy episodes. Ultimately I decided to focus more intently on this aspect of the literacy-learning context.

3 . 1 Aim

The purpose of this research was to identify and explore the elements, effects and outcomes of the child-initiated literacy-learning context in a Year One classroom.

The research questions were:

- What are the identifiable elements of the **literacy-learning context** in my Year One classroom?
- How do the **elements** work together to support the students' literacy in the literacy-learning context of the classroom?
- What are the literacy learning **outcomes** for students who participate in the context?

3 . 2 Definitions

For the purposes of this study, I defined the bolded terms as follows:

Literacy-learning context: The literacy-learning context is the whole classroom (Figure 3.1). It included the physical, spatial, social, temporal and emotional space that enabled specific learning to occur. The literacy-learning context encompassed particular elements.

Elements: As I understood it there were five main elements that comprised this literacy-learning context. These were scheduled literacy practices, the physical environment, the social environment, the temporal environment and my role as teacher. Each of these is detailed in following data chapters. Of course, the co-

constructed classroom curriculum is another important element, which due to word limits is not fully investigated in this study.

Outcomes: Learning outcomes were those observed behaviours and artefacts demonstrated and produced by the children that indicated both their engagement in literacies and learning and the extent to which they established confident and competent literate identities. Students demonstrated their literacies and learning in the everyday world of classroom life. My observations of participation, actions, interactions and work samples helped determine learning outcomes. Interestingly, this reading of outcomes was in contrast to my original understanding of outcomes as specific measurable items, for example, reading level, sight words list, alphabet knowledge and writing samples that featured as part of ongoing student assessment.

3 . 2 . 1 Literacy-learning context of the classroom

As defined above (3.2) the literacy-learning context of this classroom included the physical, spatial, social, temporal and emotional space that enabled specific learning to occur (Figure 3.1). The literacy-learning context encompassed particular elements including scheduled literacy practices, the physical environment, the social environment, the temporal environment and my role as teacher. As the teacher, my beliefs about literacy and learning affected the way I viewed my students, the way I set up the classroom environment (physical, spatial, social and temporal) and the literacy practices and products that I modelled and scheduled for and with the students. Within this literacy-learning context the students and I co-constructed literacies and classroom curriculum as we interacted with literacy practices, literacy products and the classroom environment.

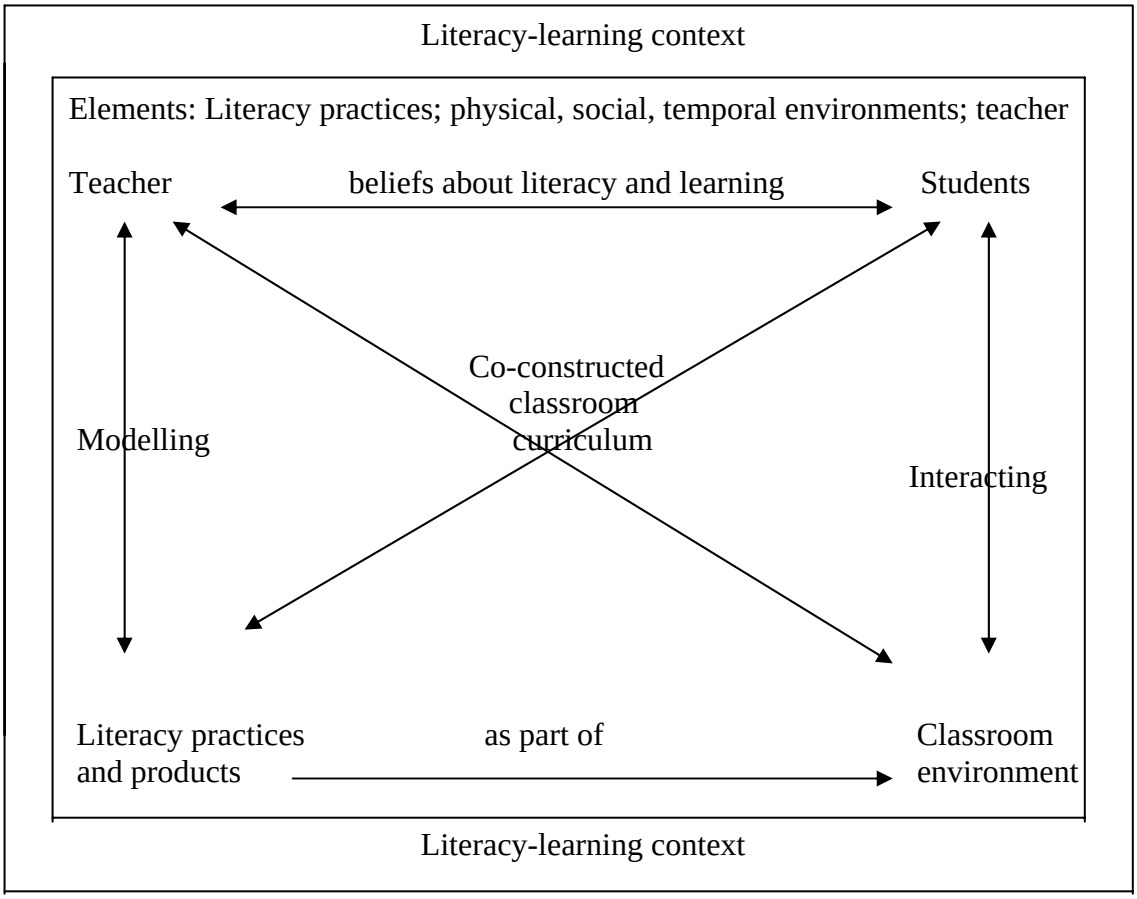


Figure 3.1 The literacy-learning context in this Year One classroom

While I was influenced by McNaughton's (1995, p. 3) 'Socialisation model of emergent literacy', my model is different in important ways. The literacy-learning context (Figure 3.1) is deliberately set up to model, demonstrate, encourage and use an array of literacy practices in the somewhat 'artificial' environment of the classroom whereas McNaughton's model stems from family practices that are part of everyday functional life and living with 'ambient, joint and personal activities' selected and employed by families. McNaughton (1995, p. 20) explained, 'ambient activities surround the child and provide a context for joint and personal activities' and in families the child's role may be peripheral to the activity and the experience. In

contrast, I deliberately model literacy practices as a system of learning, yet there are spaces for students to add their own activities and versions of literacy practices.

There are similarities in McNaughton's socialisation model of emergent literacy and the classroom literacy-learning context because there is co-construction of learning (1995, p. 26) in both. Students and I interact and co-construct understandings in scheduled activities enabling 'situated expertise' to arise in classroom practices. For example, in creating class news as a joint construction of text, students' skills develop over time until they become experts in composing, writing and reading texts.

3 . 3 Design: Case study

As I began this research, I was interested in an in-depth analysis of the interconnectedness of literacies in my Year One classroom. Although the emphasis later changed to an intensive investigation of a child-initiated literacy-learning context, the research always lent itself to the rich description and deep contextual analysis of case study.

I was a teacher working fulltime in the naturalistic, real-life environment of an early childhood classroom. I wanted to increase my understanding of the literacy-learning context in which my students and I worked. I also wanted a better understanding of my role as teacher and a key player in this literacy-learning environment. To this end I chose the qualitative method of case study to investigate how students were able to build on their literate identities in the complex literacy-learning environment. I felt that qualitative research methods would better uncover the nuances and complexities of classroom life than their quantitative counterparts. As Stake (1998, p. 92) pointed out, 'With broader purview than that of crafters of experiments and testers of

hypotheses, qualitative case researchers orient to complexities connecting ordinary practice in natural habitats to the abstractions and concerns of diverse academic disciplines. This broader purview is applied to the single case.'

The literacy-learning context of my Year One classroom was the specific case. It was an intrinsic case study to lead to 'better understanding of this particular case' (Stake, 1998). The literacy-learning context was an entity within the classroom and in the process of the study I focussed on discovery to increase my understanding. The literacy-learning context was 'bounded' (Stake, 1998) by participants (25 year one students and one teacher), space (the classroom) and time (one school year).

Throughout the year, students and I worked within the physical, social and temporal constraints of the classroom and school. The literacy-learning context included everyday routines, timetabled structures, curriculum requirements and scheduled literacy practices making the case a "bounded system" (Smith, 1978, cited in Stake, 1998). I was not looking to generalise results 'to a wider population' (Lambert, 2003, p. 66). As Stake (1998, p. 104) noted, 'The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case.'

I am not looking to dictate to others or to establish perfect teaching 'methods' but feel comfortable that others will take from my study what they find interesting and useful. As Burns (1996, p. 26) argued, 'Generalisibility is often left up to the reader, who may ask, "To what extent can I relate what is in this study to my own situation?"' The point is I am not looking to generalise. I am looking to understand the classroom literacy-learning context more deeply than ever, through my changing lenses. Case study as methodology lends itself to such deep investigation and analysis.

The research was a comprehensive and detailed study 'drawing on multiple sources of information' (Creswell, 1998, p. 62) such as observations, field notes, journal reflections and documents as well as students' drawings, writing and artefacts. Observations were made and detailed data were collected from the beginning of the school year in late January 2003 until late September 2003 however the collection of artefacts and evidence of students' literacies continued until December.

3 . 4 Teacher-researcher

As teacher-researcher I have subjectivities and biases from whose influence I cannot remove myself. Although objective research seems to be favoured in academic institutions and for policy research (McWilliam, 2004), I felt comfortable in reporting this study from my 'interested' point of view. As Stake (1998, p. 93) made clear, all researchers are implicated in research findings: 'Even though committed to empathy and multiple realities, it is the researcher who decides what is the case's own story, or at least what of the case's own story he or she will report.'

I was aware of my position of power in the classroom but I aimed to share power with the students and provided considerable space for them to talk and contribute to class learning. In referring to power relations in the classroom Larson and Gatto (2004, p. 34) pointed out,

> Power relations are asymmetrical in that the teacher remains the primary leader and the person responsible for the curriculum, but asymmetry does not preclude a sense of fairness. …the students realize that they have some power or 'say' in the direction of their learning and behaviour that is often manifested as the student tactic of negotiation. Thus, power is a shared, inter-subjectively negotiated process among classroom community members.

According to Avery (1990, p. 33), '…teacher-researchers document the ways they teach and the ways students learn. They research teaching and learning processes as they are occurring in their classrooms by observing and describing what they see.' I took on the role of 'participant-observer' (Lambert, 2003, p. 157) as I observed the students, collected the data and interpreted the data. However, I tried to remain critically reflective in viewing students' artefacts and documents as evidence of their work. In addition, I reflected on the various actions and interactions to better understand my role in continuing and/or developing the interactions. What did I say and do to encourage, direct, redirect and/or stop interactions? Although these observations were made through a very privileged and personal 'lens', the field notes record comments and explanations from the students that reveal their viewpoints, understandings and 'ways of knowing'.

Since I was a teacher-researcher and had responsibility for the Year One class, the teacher role predominated. Most of the time I was the teacher responding and interacting with the students, scaffolding, developing and extending them at every opportunity. Sometimes however, if talk, actions and interactions took an unexpected turn, I retreated to the background to listen and observe. Occasionally I hastily jotted comments and notes on 'stickie' pads as actions and interactions were occurring. At other times I observed closely and wrote field notes as soon as practicable after the literacy event. On especially busy days I made journalistic notes and reflective notes at night. Later, I made copies of relevant student work and filed the pieces for analysis and evidence of students' learning.

Many literacy studies come from a researcher's point of view as a distant observer, whereas this research is from my point of view as a practising teacher. As the teacher,

mine is the powerful position and my interpretations are subjective because I am integral to the literacy-learning context and literacy events. For example, I was aware that with twenty-five students it was impossible to hear and capitalise on all students' observations and comments. I was also aware that my responses to students' remarks usually determined whether topics were pursued and built on. It was inevitable that I capitalised on some students' remarks and not others in the hurly burly of the day, but I consciously created environments where students had space to talk and had their voices heard.

Additionally, it was impossible to scaffold every student at his/her point of need but by encouraging co-operative and collaborative learning students scaffolded each other. Students' strengths were recognised and used in the context of everyday living and learning in the classroom. Students made choices and decisions about their learning. Likewise, I made choices and decisions about literacy events to include or exclude in this research because the case study was from my point of view at particular times.

3 . 5 Significance of the study

As I set out on this research journey I felt it might be significant because this case study was from my dual role as teacher and researcher. It is important to hear teachers' voices as well as academic research (McWilliam, 2004). From both perspectives, more needs to be known about how children build positive literate identities and see literacy as everywhere a part of life. The case study has value in its own right and teachers can take from it what seems relevant and useful to them. Lastly, the complexity of students' literacy learning and the interconnected,

multilayered nature of building a literate identity may be better understood through the vehicle of a single and detailed case. As Stake (1998, p. 104) noted, 'case studies are of value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisibilty.'

This study gave me space to investigate more systematically the literacy-learning context and to try to make sense of what happened as my students continued to build their literate identities in the classroom. I wondered about the many interrelationships of literacies as my young students built on what they brought to school from families, homes and communities. This case study does much for the researcher and as McWilliam (2004, p. 121) pointed out, '…there is a need to provide practitioners with a means of discovering their situation anew while at the same time valuing the tacit knowledge that is produced out of their embeddedness in practice.' In addition, Stake (1998, p. 87) maintained, 'A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning.'

3 . 6 Location of the case study school

The case study was set in a Year One classroom in a suburban State School in regional Queensland. The school was located in a mainly white middle class suburb of a regional city and had a population of 600 students from Preschool to Year Seven.

3 . 7 The participants

The participants were students in my Year One classroom during 2003. These students had been allocated to my class 'by chance' except for four specific students who were placed in the class because the Preschool teacher thought they could benefit from my experience in early childhood settings.

There were twenty-five students in the class, consisting of fourteen girls and eleven boys; however two boys left the school (and the study) in March and June. The students were aged between five and six years and they all spoke English as their first language. The broad socio-economic status of the students' families ranged from welfare families, to single income families with the mother at home, to double income families with both parents working full time. The students' parents represented a mixture of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, small business operators, professionals and mature age students who were retraining.

All the students in the class had been to pre-school the previous year - either at a neighbourhood government pre-school or Day Care preschool. At the time of the study, Year One in Queensland meant the first year of formal school for students.

The children came from mainly white, middle class neighbourhoods of the immediate area. The class included one Papua New Guinea-aboriginal student, one Burmese-Australian student, one Swiss-Australian student and one English-Australian student. Most of the students lived in households with two parents. Three students lived with one parent but had regular and frequent access to the other parent. Two of the students lived with one parent – in both cases, the mother.

3 . 8 The parents at school

Although I was the teacher-researcher, parents saw me primarily as their child's Year One teacher. Parents were welcome in the classroom and I interacted with most parents each week. I often shared exciting class experiences and children's demonstrations of literacies and learning with parents. Likewise, parents told me of home experiences they saw as relevant to their children's understanding and growth.

I met with any parent who had a concern about a child – from the parents' point of view or from my point of view.

3 . 9 Ethics

In this case study there were ethical issues involved since the participants were young children. I was aware of the professional responsibility towards the students and the children's needs were paramount. To allow parents to voice concerns, the School Principal handled parent permission matters and documentation.

3 . 9 . 1 Permission

Permission to do this study was obtained from the School Principal and Education Queensland in January 2002. Approval for the study was obtained from the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee on 31 July 2002, with Ethics Approval Number H1412.

Parents' permission was obtained soon after informing parents of the proposed research at the Parent Information night, February 4, 2003. A copy of the 'Information for Parents' note is available as Appendix A. Since the researcher and the teacher were the same person, the School Principal managed parent permission and documentation. A copy of the parents' permission paper is available as Appendix B.

3 . 9 . 2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality has been preserved throughout the thesis. I have used pseudonyms for all participating students except Olivia whose parents said that there was no need. As a result of that exception, I included several literacy episodes involving Olivia and her name. Samples of work have real names removed and pseudonyms used for

identification. The parties involved were assured of rigorous confidentiality and integrity in gathering and reporting data and writing up the case study.

3 . 10 Method - Data collection

Data were collected daily using qualitative data techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Janesick, 1998) and classroom experiences were documented using observations, written comments of interactive sessions, samples of student work and reflective journal notes (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Rose, 1999). Actions and interactions, unexpected events and critical events in the 'everyday' lives of the students and teacher (Goodman, 1986; Cambourne, 1988; Avery, 1990; Shagoury Hubbard and Miller Power, 1993) were recorded as field notes and journalistic notes. It was a practical approach to address the classroom activities and 'to understand complex social phenomena' (Yin, 1994, p. 3) that was the literacy-learning context of this Year One classroom. Specifically, I gathered data and made detailed notes from the classroom happenings using:

- Observations and field notes
- Reflective journal
- Collections of student artefacts
- Think-alouds

These methods are explained in more detail in the sections that follow.

3 . 10 . 1 Observations and field notes

Observations of literacy-learning events were made constantly and recorded frequently – usually daily. Field notes were written 'on the spot' and/or as soon as practicable after the literacy event. The notes usually included details of participants, context, time, a summary of dialogue, actions, interactions and materials used in the

literacy event – the ‘outward’ thinking of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Like Knobel and Lankshear (1994, p. 27) I valued field notes ‘to record descriptive, analytic and other comments about research events and processes.’

3 . 10 . 2 Reflective journal

Reflective journals and journalistic notes (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999, p. 97) were written about observations and events of the day. I recorded classroom happenings in terms of student-teacher and student-student actions and interactions within scheduled literacy practices. I described literacy episodes including contexts of what happened, who participated, and what materials were produced. If possible, I detailed the initiation or the ‘trigger’ of the episode and the direction it took. I also noted my role in continuing interactions and /or redirecting interactions.

In recording class happenings in my journal I later wrote (and answered) the question, ‘What were the literacy features?’ of the day’s happenings. I reviewed class events in terms of literacy learning and frequently made references to theories about literacies and learning. Sometimes I asked, ‘How are some of these features arising?’ and went on to note the literacy practices where specific features and events occurred.

I constantly looked for significant events, issues and emerging patterns from daily class activities. I interpreted observations and information bearing in mind Stake’s comment that ‘the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the *multiple realities*, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening’ (1995, p. 12, italics in original). I also recorded my feelings and reflections of my actions as the teacher – the ‘inward’ thinking of Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

3 . 10 . 3 Artefacts and student work samples

Artefacts and student work samples were collected to track students' demonstrations of using literacies and as evidence of the variety of literacies they produced. Work samples revealed evidence of students' literacy growth and the multiliteracies they employed in everyday lives. Knobel and Lankshear (1994, p. 26) noted that 'Artefacts are the material objects and physical evidence of a culture' and may include written documents. The pertinent work samples that were written, drawn or made by students validated emerging patterns and themes being made in analysis of field data.

3 . 10 . 4 Think-alouds

Think-alouds occurred when a student 'talked through' an issue or problem-solving process explaining his/her understanding and learning. Think-alouds provided 'insights into a participant's thinking strategies and processes' (Knobel and Lankshear, 1994, p. 93) and were written down as soon as practicable after the event.

3 . 11 Data – analysis

As the teacher-researcher I was immersed in the data as I gathered and recorded information each day. At the end however, I needed incubation time for 'thinking, becoming aware of nuance and meaning in the setting, and capturing intuitive insights to achieve understanding' (Janesick, 1998, p. 49). In sorting and interpreting the data I constantly sought features, groups and patterns to increase my awareness and 'make sense' of the information. I re-read the recorded data and reviewed the 'features' I had listed in my reflective journal. I 'bracketed' (Janesick, 1998) them with examples of behaviours that demonstrated the features, for example, 'active participation' and 'active learning'. Another time I made different categories to describe class and

student activities such as observations, revisions, scaffolding, and taking risks and added examples of student actions that demonstrated each attribute. Yet another week saw a heading of ‘authentic literacy and learning’ with numerous examples of children’s ‘real-life’ experiences and ‘real-world’ activities. Throughout the journal I noted connections that children made as they displayed learning in their own ways.

Later, in re-reading data, I bracketed an emerging pattern of *child-initiated* literacy episodes occurring within scheduled literacy practices. Specifically, I reviewed the scheduled literacy practices employed and noted the interactions that occurred within them. As I recorded events and happenings each day, child-initiated literacy events - or episodes - began to stand out. I started coding them according to ‘type of learning’ demonstrated in the interaction. For example, students volunteered information, shared knowledge, clarified understanding, brought/shared literacy samples from home, and took on the role of ‘student-as-teacher’.

I finally decided to intensely investigate the many child-initiated literacy episodes that arose in the course of daily scheduled literacy practices. Not only were children constructing and co-constructing their learning, they were demonstrating, building and expanding their literate identities in the classroom context.

In Chapter Four I describe in detail the literacy-learning context of the classroom. It includes the physical, social and temporal environment and scheduled literacy practices. This sets the scene for the learning contexts and the child-initiated literacy episodes that follow in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

The Classroom Context

> "Read them," said the King.
> The white rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" he asked.
> "Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."
> (Carroll and Zerger, *Alice in Wonderland,* 1999, p. 33).

4 . 0 Introduction

The teacher creates the learning environment of the classroom. S/he establishes the physical setting, manages the timetabled tasks, sets the tone of the social atmosphere and creates a challenging classroom curriculum. Because the physical layout of my classroom reflects my beliefs about how young children learn, it incorporates spaces for play and talk, and easily accessed materials to encourage student choice and independence. Since I believe in immersion in oral, written and visual languages the room appears flooded with talk, texts, pictures, images and icons. There are several key interdependent features that create and establish the intricate context of my classroom. These include respect and responsibility for self and others, co-operation and collaboration with others, and regard and celebration of students' efforts and accomplishments. Most importantly, the room is awash with student input into all these aspects of the classroom context.

In this chapter I describe the classroom context beginning with a snapshot that could represent any school morning. I then discuss roles of parents in the classroom. Next, I describe the classroom in terms of physical, print, social and temporal environments.

Lastly, I briefly describe some of the daily scheduled literacy practices and how they usually occur in my classroom.

4 . 1 A snapshot: starting the day in Year One

Vivaldi, Mozart or *'Hairy Maclary'* wafts from the tape recorder as I greet the Year One children and their parents each morning. They enter the classroom from 8:15 onwards and the children hang up school bags, place lunches in the refrigerator and put home reading books in designated places. They chat and choose activities to do. Some children excitedly show me the toys they have for *Show and Tell*. Some children proudly show parents their journal writing from yesterday. Some quietly reveal that all is not well because mum was running late for work and they were rushed to school leaving their reading books at home. Some talk about their meals and treats from McDonalds or Hungry Jacks last night – and have the latest toys to prove it. One suggests that an argument with a big brother in Year Four is not yet resolved. Another declares she is going camping on the weekend and will not be at school on Friday. Yet another happily reminds all and sundry that it is only four more days until his birthday. This staggered entry – or come-in-as-you-arrive entry - means the children have an orderly and unrushed start. With each greeting, I hope the children feel safe and special in the classroom every day, just as I feel privileged and special to work, listen and learn from children every day.

The Year One classroom where this research was carried out was upstairs in an old wooden building that was the original Administration block and library of the school. To the left of the main door, the recently renovated classroom boasted a long counter with cupboards, two sinks, a refrigerator and stove. Large windows above the counter

opened out into the renewed, colourful courtyard with pavers, seats and tropical plants. The opposite wall featured windows that overlooked a large playing oval encircled by trees. The many windows provided an airy, spacious feel – but it also meant that display space was hugely curtailed. New paint and floor coverings gave a clean look and fresh feel to the classroom.

The front of the room contained the obligatory classroom boards – one chalkboard and one whiteboard – and the back of the room had heavy concertina doors to open or close as desired. Small tables and chairs dotted the landscape. Low shelves became room dividers and accessible storage space at the same time. Numerous bookshelves dominated the classroom - straight wooden shelves, triangular wire shelves and discarded shop shelves. There were books, books and more books – all displayed, with covers out. There were books in baskets, bowls and boxes around large, colourful cushions that parents and children shared as they read books together.

It was a bright and colourful room with children's pictures, paintings, drawings, photos, rhymes, charts, word lists and class graphs gently swinging in the breeze as they hung from strong wires and fishnets that criss-crossed the ceiling. The small tables held containers of crayons, wind-ups and lead pencils that children shared each day and a sense of community pervaded as children worked and played together.

> For example, on one particular day, four children sat at two class computers talking and interacting with the games and websites they loved. Was it Junkbot or Barbie? Was it Count On or Pokemon? Was it Mitzi or Comic Chat? Nearby, some children lay on the floor listening to *Bob the Builder* from a tape recorder, turning the pages when instructed to do so, and joining in with the songs when the music came on. At the fish tank, three children watched closely as tadpoles swam amongst rocks and pondweed. Prue saw front legs on a

tadpole and Zac found back legs on a bigger tadpole. They consulted the large 'Life Cycle of a Frog' chart above them to check the tadpoles' growth and wondered when the tadpoles would become rocket frogs.

Dane and Lucas arrived together and immediately put lunch boxes in the refrigerator, books onto shelves and home reading folders in the basket. It was also Library day so Library books and bags went into the Library box. The children saw the morning message. What did it say? They read together, helping each other with unknown words, until the message made sense: *Good morning everyone. We will have two visitors this morning, Welcome!* "Who are the visitors?" Dane asked me.

Parents sat with children - watching, talking, sharing and helping them. Five children sat at pale grey infant tables, drawing and writing with brightly coloured texta pens. They chatted as they drew, sometimes asking each other, 'How do you spell…?' Two girls shared a diary and *Barbie* magazine (Figure 4.1). Nearby, other children puzzled over jigsaws and pegboards. Several boys on the floor made cars, dune buggies and a semi-trailer from duplos (Figure 4.2) and alongside, two girls made a tower from large wooden blocks. Two more boys were in the corner spinning Beyblades, moving and chatting wildly as the toys spun at break neck speeds on the blue linoleum (Figure 4.3). It was another start to another day in this Year One classroom.

Figure 4.1 Sharing a diary and a *Barbie* magazine before school

Figure 4.2 A semi-trailer from duplos

Figure 4.3 Beyblades

4 . 2 Parents in the classroom

I was a teacher-researcher but of course the parents saw me primarily as their child's Year One teacher. Throughout this study I had daily contact with up to ten parents who came in with the children and/or helped in the classroom. I had twice weekly and/or weekly contact with another eight parents who came in with children. I saw other parents occasionally if they came to pick up or drop off their children. I met

with any parent who had a concern about a child – from the parents' point of view or from my point of view.

Parents were welcome in the classroom and the school. Most mornings, several parents stayed briefly as the morning session started. Six parents usually stayed for the Junior School Parade on Tuesday mornings. Five parents helped in the classroom on a regular, weekly basis. Their tasks included writing emails and word-processing class books with students, scribing sentences for students, scaffolding students in journal writing, reading to small groups, hearing individuals read, helping with maths and cooking activities, and assisting with supervision on field trips. We always had about twenty parents (or sets of parents) at planned opportunities to celebrate students' work such as a 'Sharing Breakfast', a 'Sharing Afternoon Tea', a 'Sharing Party' or sharing school events like the Fun Run and Sports Day.

4 . 3 The physical environment

It was exciting at the beginning of each year to plot and plan how to organise the classroom. I noted the stationary equipment, listed the 'areas' I wanted to provide and worked from there. The ensuing physical layout (see Figure 4.4 below) reflected my beliefs about how children learned. However, the children and I worked with initial plans and made changes as needs arose. In the sections that follow, I describe key components of the physical environment and the Year One classroom that featured in this study. They include space, tables, shelves, bookshelves, computers, art materials/supplies, play corner and science, sinks and stove.

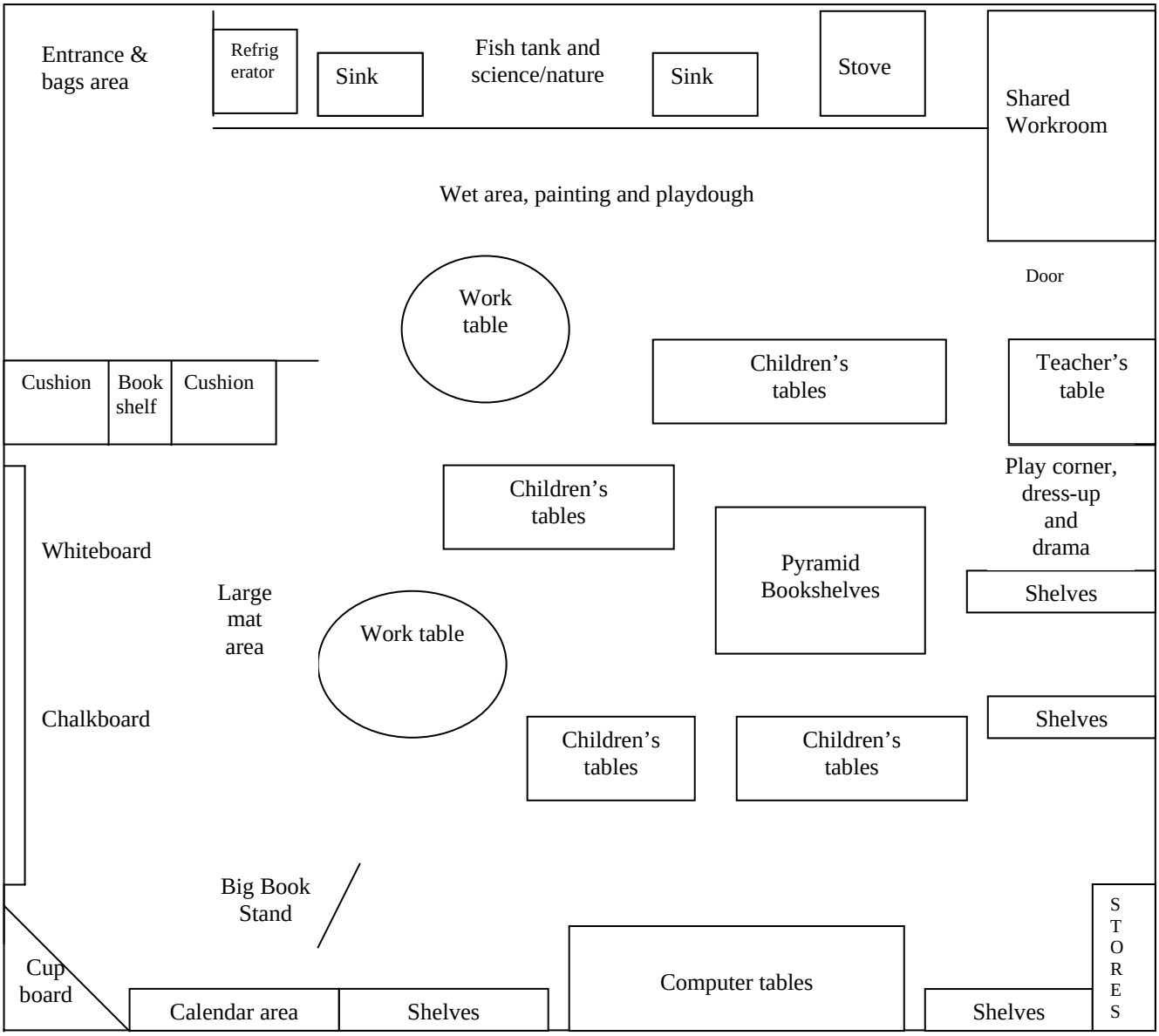


Figure 4.4 Physical environment of the classroom

4 . 3 . 1 Space

There were spaces for large and small group activities – spaces for children to play and work together. The large space for class discussions and whole group sessions was in front of the wall of chalkboard and whiteboard – easily accessed for literacy demonstrations, explicit teaching, brainstorming, reminders, lists and teachable moments. Adjacent to the chalkboard was the calendar area where our 'morning

session' rituals occurred. The children took turns to write and add everyday information such as the day, date, weather, attendance and a class favourite, the one hundred grid headed *'How many days have we been at school?'*

4 . 3 . 2 Tables

Clusters of hexagonal tables and groups of four, six or eight rectangular tables dotted the classroom encouraging children to co-operate and collaborate as they worked and learned together. Colour-coded containers held coloured crayons, coloured wind-ups (which did not need sharpening) and black-lead pencils that children used and shared each day. It was convenient and efficient to provide materials at tables because it encouraged co-operation and avoided children going to 'lockers' for individual pencil cases. As Briggs and Potter (1999, p. 155) pointed out, 'there are many learning areas that need careful planning to reduce the risk of frustration from over-crowding, jostling, accidental damage, loss of concentration, disruption and hazards.' A class electric pencil sharpener eliminated the need for children to sharpen pencils at the bin.

4 . 3 . 3 Shelves

Various shelves acted as room dividers and storage spaces. Materials were conveniently displayed, clearly labelled and easily accessed, increasing children's independence as they made choices at activity times. Returning sorted materials to rightful places helped the children understand the need for maintaining order in the classroom. Frustrations were lessened when children returned materials to the same places. Tidying up occurred quickly and effectively when children knew how and where materials were stored. For convenience, children did puzzles, number activities and literacy activities at nearby tables. Play spaces were available near shelves of

building blocks and construction materials such as mobilo, legos and duplos. Groups of children were encouraged to share, co-operate and collaborate as they built, created, pretended and played together. Cards, papers and felt pens were available on shelves for children to write names and to make labels for their constructions – a condition of displaying the masterpiece intact for a few days. This was an undisguised literacy task to encourage children to engage in meaningful writing. For example, I remember when one boy wrote this label for his mobilo construction:

> *Fred med ths car wen hy was pleain wef moblo. The funt uv the cor it can trn. Ther is a get awea helocotr on the bak*
>
> Fred (not his real name) made this car when he was playing with mobilo. The front of the car it can turn. There is a get away helicopter on the back.

4 . 3 . 4 Bookshelves

Several bookshelves dominated the landscape of the classroom with a pyramid of discarded shop shelves taking pride of place near the centre of the room. A triangular wire bookshelf was at the front of the room with large floor cushions strewn at the base. Children sat, sprawled and sometimes slept on the colourful cushions as they talked, whispered, shared and read books together. The books were displayed with covers out and revealed a wide range of topics and genres, including picture, story and song books; poetry, information and alphabet books; rhyme, number and musical books; pop-up books and chapter books. Colour-coded 'levelled' books shared labelled containers on low shelves and the floor so children easily flipped through and made reading choices. Bordering the large floor space at the front of the room was a combination easel-whiteboard-Big Book stand that was used daily in group sessions.

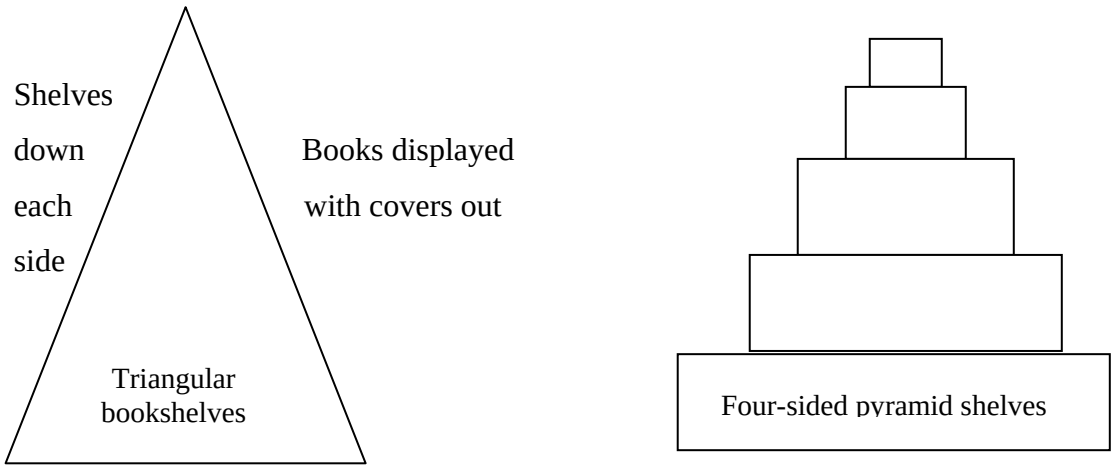


Figure 4.5 Bookshelves in the classroom

4 . 3 . 5 Computers

Two class computers and colour-printers were at child-sized tables beneath the windows. One keyboard had lower case letters placed over the upper case letters (Figure 4.6) to simplify word processing for children who did not know all upper and lower case letters. The computers had email and Internet access and took floppy disks and CDs. Children learned to open programs, word process, draw, paint and interact with a variety of software and Internet sites. As Healey (2004, p. 21) pointed out, 'A multiliteracies focus has potential to prepare students as interactive citizens and competent communicators across modes and media.'

Children contributed to writing emails to parents, grandparents, a buddy class and an email granny. The class digital camera was repeatedly in use and coloured photos of the children participating in class, school, community and neighbourhood activities appeared on large charts throughout the classroom and in class-made books (Figure 4.21). Children connected real world literacies and real life activities as they talked, dictated, wrote and read sentences and 'stories' about the photos – for example, class

excursions into the community and school events like the Fun Run or a visiting storyteller. The class website was frequently updated with class events on www.ieta.ash.org.au and to see Disco Duck go to IETA Learning Communities, then Travel Mates, then Disco Duck.

Figure 4.6 Friends working on a class computer

During computer experiences and explicit instructions on using certain software the children learned that software and website texts and presentations were very different from print and visuals in books. As Healey (2004, p. 23) explained, 'Multimodal text does not always conform to a left to right or top to bottom orthodoxy nor is its information read in a pre-destined order. Text can be brought to the screen at the will of the reader in ways that bear no relationship to turning pages.'

4 . 3 . 6 Art materials and supplies

Materials and supplies were stored on shelves where children easily accessed felt pens, scissors, glue pots and a variety of materials for collage and creations including gumnuts, leaves, twigs, seeds, boxes, fabrics, wool, yarn, pipe cleaners, cellophane,

tissue papers, wallpapers, scrap papers and toothpicks. Playdough was kept in the refrigerator for longer life and shapes, cutters and rollers were in a drawer nearby.

4 . 3 . 7 Play corner, home corner, dress up and drama area

This area was called different names at different times because the name changed as the area changed. It was located in a back corner of the room for children's pretend play. A low table, a small shelf and a 'box-on-wheels' held assorted clothing and materials for dramatization. Children used a variety of props including bowls, spoons, plates, saucepans, frypans, trays, small coloured discs, plastic 'counters', plastic fruits and plastic foods. However it was not all pretend cooking and cleaning because real cooking experiences took place on Fridays with the real stove, sink and refrigerator.

4 . 3 . 8 Science, sinks and a stove

Two sinks and a stove embedded in the long counter by the windows created a situation where making, baking and cooking were not just possible, but easy. Cooking and baking sessions became part of a 'real-world' curriculum on Fridays.

The counter was also home to creatures of nature. Tadpoles in the fish tank became rocket frogs and later guppies, goldfish and elodea shared the rocks and cool water (Figure 4.7). A variety of organisms graced the counter as children brought and displayed things of interest such as rocks, cocoons, shells, coral and a multitude of insects (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). At one stage we grew mould – much to the chagrin of the school cleaners. After experiments and observations with lunch scraps and foods from home our conclusion became 'moulds need moisture'.

Figure 4.7 Disco Duck with guppies, goldfish and snails

Figure 4.8 Bonnie's dragonfly wing on the science counter

Figure 4.9 Joanne's gecko on the counter

4. 4 The print environment

'Immersion in print' (Cambourne, 1988) and a 'sea of print' were catchcries in the eighties to describe whole language classrooms (2.1.12) the rationale being to increase students' awareness and interest in print. Teachers used meaningful print from class and student interests as well as functional print for labels, notices, directions, instructions and reminders. Word walls of common words, word banks of theme words, and long lists of interest words were created to help with writing and spelling. Interestingly, in this study I did all these things - and more. But with one major difference - the print was computer-generated instead of done by hand.

The classroom was flooded with print and texts because the children were early learners and as budding readers and writers they needed considerable models, samples and examples. Children came to school with different experiences, literacies (2.6 and 2.8), interests and abilities and I did not know what children were engaging with at any given time. Since phonics arose in all writing and reading we were constantly referring to letters, sounds and things that started with those letters and sounds. We made 'sound books' (Figure 4.10) from children's vocabularies and these were in constant use for reading, spelling and home reading. We also had *'Our book of tricky words'* to clarify words that sounded the same but were spelled differently and had different meanings, such as see – sea, to – too – two, saw – sore and one – won.

Figure 4.10 Sound and word books for everyday use

Rhymes, chants and songs were written in enlarged print on big charts. The large *Queensland Beginner* font was easy to see in large or small groups and made for direct pointing to each word as children chanted, sang and read in 'shared reading' sessions (2.1.12). Children's colourful drawings accompanied texts, adding brightness and personal representations to the charts. Language in rhymes, chants and songs was lyrical, rhythmical and memorable with children's actions complementing the enthusiastic renditions of songs and rhymes each day.

Much of the classroom print was functional print to build children's independence.

> For example, an inviting sign on the door welcomed visitors to Year 1s. Labelled cupboards and drawers assisted children to find and replace equipment. Containers and boxes were labelled for specific materials. Digital photos with messages reminded children about behaviours such as, 'We sit down to eat our lunch' and 'We work on the computer with a partner'. Charts reminded children about class behaviours such as getting drinks and resolving conflicts with talk (Figure 4.11). Children contributed to labels and notices as needs arose. Sally came up with a notice for the outside door because rather than pin the door back with the hook, children were opening it and letting it close – endangering people behind. She helped make a new notice: *We pin the door back when we all go outside.*

Figure 4.11 Class charts for all to read

4 . 5 Soft toys and backpacks

As part of the physical, social and print environment of this research we had numerous soft toys as characters in the classroom including Boris Bear, the Twin Teddies, Crystal, Danny and Sammy Dolphin and Disco Duck. The children suggested names and voted to determine the names of the toys. I will briefly describe the roles of each in daily classroom life.

Boris Bear was a very large bear that lived near the bookshelves and listened to children read. He often became a cushion as children read to him. The Twin Teddies were Tiny Tina and Tiny Tim. They were part of the Twin Teddies backpack (Figure 4.12) that went home each night. Along with the two teddies, the backpack held a journal (that children wrote in), several books about bears (fact, fiction, phonics and rhymes) and an Australian Football League (AFL) football. Some children added other books and toys to the backpack as the year went on.

Figure 4.12 The twin teddies backpack

Crystal, Danny and Sammy Dolphin (Figure 4.13) were part of the Dolphin Backpack that was given to us by our email granny (a retired friend who loved computers). According to the children, Crystal was the mother dolphin and Danny and Sammy were her children. We communicated frequently with email granny sending letters, notes, digital photos, cards and rhymes back and forth. The children kept her up to date on class events and activities with the dolphin family while she responded with letters of her happenings, frequently mentioning her granddaughter and cats. The backpack contained the dolphins, their journal, crayons and five books about dolphins including information books, ‘d’ books, true stories and picture books.

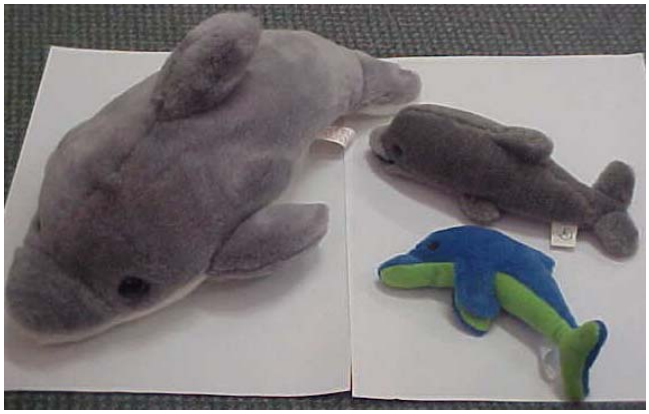


Figure 4.13 Crystal, Danny and Sammy Dolphin

Disco Duck (Figure 4.7) became part of a backpack when we studied a unit on food and farms. At about the same time we created a web page (with help from a colleague) and class experiences were reported with Disco Duck as a key figure (4.3.5). The children and I learned to insert information and add digital photos. One child's father helped insert videos and children's pictures. Disco Duck's backpack contained a journal, small farm animal toys and six farm books (easy reading, factual and storybooks). In term three and four I had children communicate with me why they wanted to take Disco Duck's backpack home. Many drawings, cards, letters and notes later, Disco Duck had visited all homes. We compiled a display book of communications about Disco Duck and this book also went home for reading.

To take the backpacks home children filled in permission forms indicating suitable dates. Parents agreed with the dates and signed the permission forms. Children's names were placed on the calendar for specified dates. Children brought the backpacks to school the next day and shared them with the class discussing journal entries, books read and associated family activities. The toys and backpacks took on 'lives of their own' and became integral to classroom life as children built on their literacies and literate identities through and with the toys and backpacks.

4 . 6 The social environment

Like the physical environment, organisation of the social environment reflected my beliefs about how young children learned. I did not assume that children came into school with 'taken for granted' or 'common sense' behaviours. Instead, from day one we created classroom behaviours or rules (Briggs and Potter, 1999, p. 156) that reflected safety and understandings of the children as well as school constraints. Occasionally my preferred practices were at odds with accepted school routines and I had to negotiate with Principals and colleagues to establish some practices.

> For example, after lunch I allowed the children to come into the classroom instead of lining up outside. I was usually in the room and in first semester, children got chalkboards, chalk and dusters, went to the floor and started drawing. In second semester they got books and went to tables for silent reading. On days when I had yard duty, I came in at the same time as the children. If I knew I would be held up, I alerted my colleague who checked on the children or I had the children wait downstairs.

> Sometimes toys in the classroom caused dilemmas. Bringing toys and objects was commonplace in my classroom because children used their interests to build on their literacies and literate identities. They shared, interacted, drew and wrote about interests such as popular culture like Pokemon and Yugioh cards, Bratz dolls, *Barbie* magazines and Beyblades. Part way through the year Yugioh cards were banned from school because of squabbles in the playground. Initially I discussed this with the Principal and Deputy Principal stating the case that the children in my class incorporated the cards into literacy, numeracy and everyday life learning. We agreed that if cards came to school they were to stay in the classroom. However, the children, the Deputy Principal and I discussed the dilemma about 'breaking' school rules. These events demonstrated to the children the need to respect others' views and their solutions to problems as well as the need to co-operate and 'be fair' in a variety of situations.

4 . 6 . 1 Talk

Talk was the core of my classroom environment because spoken language was the basis of communication for living and learning in our world. In the social milieu of the classroom community interactions and dialogue were constants between children and children, and children and adults. As Peterson (1992, p. 47) pointed out, 'In everyday life, talk is the primary medium for learning, and for that reason, talk is an essential part of community life.'

It is my belief that children learn what they are interested in – and they talk and inquire about their interests. They talk of meaningful, relevant and interesting matters including family activities, games, toys and local events. It is also my belief that I play a vital role as interested 'participant' (Wells, 1999) in hearing, responding, interacting, encouraging inquiry and scaffolding children's talk (2.1.12, Moll, 1990; Hammond and Gibbons, 2001).

In class, children had space to talk. They contributed to class learning by discussing interests and expressing thoughts and ideas. Their talk and dialogue helped to create and generate curriculum and my responsive-interactions to child comments, queries and questions frequently lead to meaningful literacy lessons. I agree with Comber and Barnett (2003, p. 10) that 'interaction and communication with others is fundamental to learning' and since I maintained that children learned by actively engaging in co-constructing knowledge with competent others, scheduled tasks and activities reflected this belief. Children were encouraged to talk, interact and inquire in class.

4 . 6 . 2 Classroom goals

In my attempt to create a classroom of confident, competent and independent learners the emphasised goals of the classroom were respect, responsibility and co-operation where 'children and teachers have rights and responsibilities toward each other' (Dyson, 1993, p. 35).

4.6.2.1 Respect

Children learned to respect others by noting similarities of people but at the same time acknowledging, accepting and appreciating differences. In developing an understanding of differences I encouraged children to value and appreciate the variety of classmates' views, strengths, efforts and artefacts.

4.6.2.2 Responsibility

Children learned to take responsibility for their own actions as they realised and understood that they *chose* their actions. To help children make responsible decisions, they made choices in everyday classroom life. For example, children decided where to sit on the floor in whole group sessions, where to sit at tables for journal writing, where to sit in the lunch area and which activities to do in activity time. As Briggs and Potter (1999, p. 156) pointed out, 'When children feel that they have a *responsibility*, they develop personal initiative and pride in themselves' (italics in original).

Children also made decisions in scheduled tasks such as what to show and/or talk about in show and tell, what to draw and write about in journals, what books to take for home reading and what story to interact with on computers. This was not to say that children had unbridled freedom in these areas – sometimes choices were limited.

We came to understandings about ‘quality’ work and products because it was my responsibility to monitor and ensure child progress and growth in curriculum areas.

4.6.2.3 Co-operation

Children learned to co-operate by showing respect for others, taking turns and sharing as they lived, worked and played together in the classroom community. In learning to co-operate children also learned to solve problems by talking (‘Use your words’) rather than physical actions. For example, in the year of this research we learned five steps to resolve conflicts and the chart looked like this:

If we have a problem…

1. Define the problem
   (What happened?)
2. What’s your side of the story?
3. What can we do about it?
4. List solutions
5. Choose one. Try it.
   Evaluate

Figure 4.14 Conflict resolution chart

4 . 6 . 3 Establishing classroom behaviours

On the first morning of the first day of Year One the children and I together compiled expected behaviours (also known as class rules) for our classroom. The list was written in positive language and the 2003 chart read:

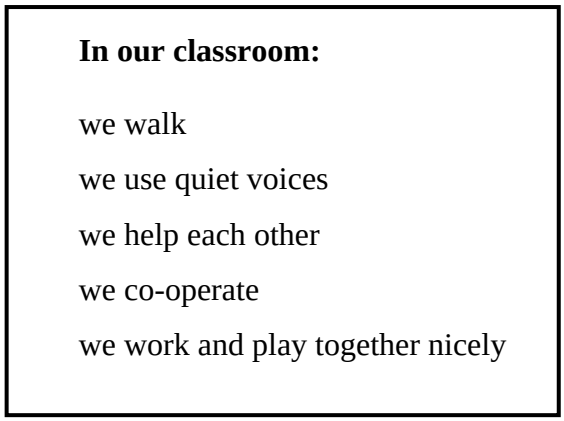


Figure 4.15 Classroom behaviours chart

Not surprisingly, one of the first words many children recognised was ’we’. The chart, in enlarged print with children’s drawings at the bottom, was prominently displayed and referred to as necessary, especially at the beginning of the year.

To practise and reinforce the concept of co-operation and ‘playing together nicely’ we brainstormed to understand what co-operation meant. The chart looked like this:

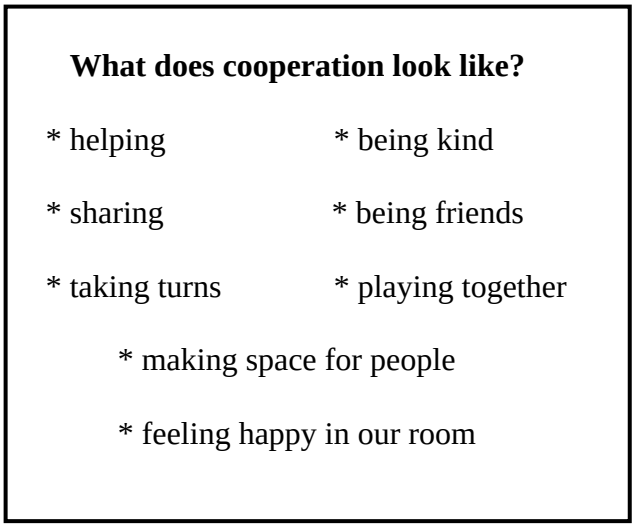


Figure 4.16 Co-operation chart

As needs arose throughout the year we discussed the issues and made charts together to deal with them.

> For example, at one stage safety became an issue when children ran down the stairs instead of walking. There were also some near misses as children raced to enter the room. Later, several children seemed to have difficulty gaining and maintaining friends and the resulting chart became *'How do we show that we are friends?'*

4 . 7 The temporal environment

The temporal environment takes into account the scheduling of practices and events throughout the day, week, term and semester. It also allows for 'periods of formal and informal curriculum activities in blocks of time, to cater for individual, group and whole class sessions' (Briggs and Potter, 1999, p. 342-343). In 2003 we co-operated within constraints of school timetables because Specialist teachers were shared. Every week we had thirty minutes each with the Music teacher and Health and Physical Education teacher. The class went to the computer Lab for one hour per week with the computer teacher. The children also went to the Resource Centre for thirty minutes each week and the Librarian introduced them to books and library skills. In addition a Junior School Parade was held at 8:50 each Tuesday morning and Religion occurred 8:50 – 9:20 on Friday mornings.

4 . 7 . 1 The timetable as a 'schedule of practices'

Unlike my timetables of long ago that listed Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Art as subjects, my 2003 timetable (4.7.2) consisted of a schedule of literacy and numeracy practices spread over two-hour time blocks. Scheduled practices included calendar time, shared reading, modelled writing, co-operative show and tell, journal writing, sharing time and choosing books for home reading.

Enlarged weekly timetables or schedules of practices were placed near my table and the calendar area for the children and I to see. In addition, the morning schedule was written on the front chalkboard for the class to see, read and use. The children were familiar with the morning format from 8:50-10:50 and the routine was usually predictable and stable. As Reid and Comber (2002, p. 21) pointed out, 'It is not that routines in literacy sessions are bad. Indeed, we recognize the importance of regular, predictable events and repeated patterns of activity. Such approaches scaffold children's learning and allow a focus on new concepts/skills to be learned. The challenge for Early Childhood teachers is to check what the routinised practice is actually teaching and to consider the effects for different groups of children'.

The children knew the sequence of practices and paced themselves as they finished the three tasks between show and tell and lunchtime (Timetable, 4.7.2). Scheduled practices were structured but not rigid and built-in flexibility allowed changes.

> For example, if a child's comment, query or question became a teachable moment and literacy event, I 'ran with it'. Occasionally, on a pre-arranged basis, a pet came to school with a child and parent. The child showed the pet in the first twenty or thirty minutes, then his/her parent took the pet home. After the pet left children often went straight to writing because they were excited about the event and had lots to draw, write and talk about. However, I learned that one could not assume that special events appealed to all for follow-up drawing and writing. One afternoon in February we had a 'Tea for Teddies on Tuesday' as a picnic under the trees and it seemed like everyone had fun. The next morning I suggested that drawing/writing could be on paper about the picnic. Quietly, Lucas asked, "Can I do my journal?" I said, "Yes, if you prefer," and within moments I was deluged with, "I'll do my journal, too," from others. Flexibility and child choice was built into the scheduled structure.

4 . 7 . 2 2003 Timetable/schedule of practices

This was the schedule of practices and activities throughout most days. My actual timetable in class was a grid format with days across the top and times down the side.

8:50 **Calendar** - attendance, day, date, weather, days at school, specialists' times

Shared reading – charts, Big Books

Modelled writing – (not every day) class news as joint construction of text

Co-operative show and tell - pre-writing time, sometimes a reporting time

Journals – scaffold, converse with students during writing

Sharing time – an audience, students read and discuss drawing/writing

Choosing and reading books – preparation for home reading

10:50 - 11:00 Lunch in the classroom

11:00 – 11:40 Lunch play outside

11:40 **Handwriting/phonics** (first semester) OR **silent reading** (second semester)

12:10 **Story/information books** (computers at Lab. one hour each Tuesday)

Literacy tasks /maths tasks/ science/ studies of society and environment

Activities and hearing home reading

1:20 – 1:40 Afternoon tea: eat and play outside

1:40 **Stories/rhymes/songs/chants**

1:50 **Maths activities, number, graphs, science activities**

Music (Monday); Health and Physical Education (Wednesday)

2:40 **Pack up and preparation for home**

2:50 **Home**

Figure 4.17 Class timetable/schedule of practices

4 . 7. 3 The children's timetable/schedule of practices

This is how the morning schedule appeared on the chalkboard for the children:

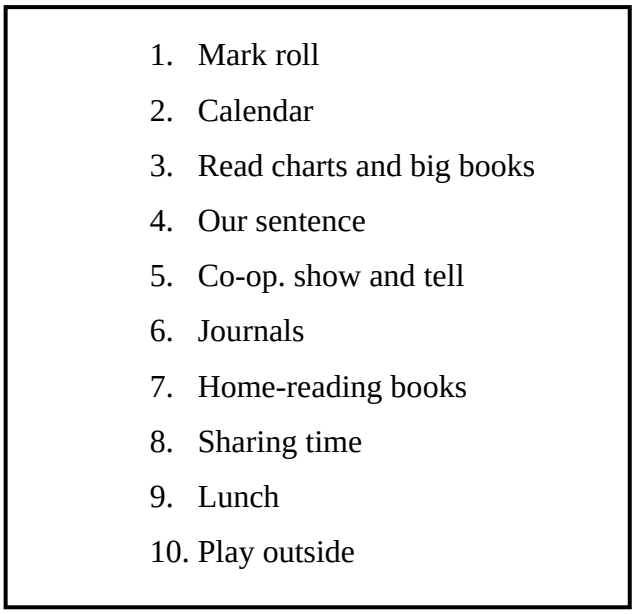


Figure 4.18 The children's timetable

Sometimes this schedule became a valuable literacy lesson as I noted in my reflective journal on March 25. It read:

> Doing the roll first thing this morning Brock asked, "When do we do show and tell?"
> I said, "Let's look at the board and see when we do show and tell."
> I pointed to the items as I read and some children joined in (see list above).
> We talked about the morning program of routine tasks and activities.
>
> What did the children comment on?
> 'c' for calendar
> 'c' for co-op - short for 'co-operative', and we revised the show and tell expected behaviours like 2, 3 or 4 in a group (but no more than 4)
> listening and asking questions
>
> mark (roll) is an 'm' word - and Madison's and Peter's dads are Marc and Mark.
>
> "Which one is journals?" asked Lucas.

> Emily said 'number 6 is journals' and I commented that it was J like Joanne.
> Sally observed that 'play' was on the bottom at number 10.
> I pointed again to 'play', re-read 'play outside' and said that if anyone needed to spell 'play' they could copy it from the board.

4 . 7 . 4 Scheduled practices as open-ended tasks

The scheduled practices were open-ended to enable children to construct their own learning and/or co-construct learning with knowledgeable others in the classroom. Open-ended practices catered to differences and allowed personalised learning. I monitored, scaffolded and helped children as they worked at the open-ended tasks. Children also co-operated and helped each other. For children, the task was the same - but content differed.

> For example, one literacy practice was journal writing and students wrote or word-processed. However, content differed because students used their knowledge and understanding of the time to draw/write in any way they could, on their topics of interest.

4 . 7 . 5 Changes to the schedule of practices

The children responded to the familiar and predictable routine of our class timetable and learned the scheduled sequence of practices. If a special event, such as a class excursion was coming up, we wrote it on the calendar. If a change was identified in advance, such as the Fun Run, we discussed it and wrote it on the calendar. Changes with short notice were written on the Morning Message board that children read as they came into class. Inevitably, discussion occurred. Sometimes changes occurred unexpectedly but most children coped with a calm and accepting explanation.

4 . 7 . 6 Schedule of practices and children's learning

The morning schedule of literacy practices was set in certain ways because of my beliefs about literacy and learning. It seemed that young children were usually

curious, alert and keen to actively participate in a variety of activities each morning. Throughout this research the literacy practices were varied and moved from individual and/or small group activities before school, into large group activities (calendar, shared reading, modelled writing), small group activities (show and tell) and individual or co-operative activities until lunchtime (journals, choosing books to read). In sharing time the sizes of groups varied.

Each morning scheduled practices moved from group listening/speaking tasks to individual writing and reading tasks – but with plenty of verbal interactions included. Movement and motions were scattered throughout the morning because six-year-old bodies needed plenty of activity (Hendrick, 1998, p. 158 – 160). Rhymes and chants were interspersed throughout group times to allow movement and actions. At writing time children were free to move around the room as necessary. They sometimes went to the name box, the 'toys' shelf, the 'People we know' chart, the word wall (where cards were attached with velcro so children could take the cards to their tables), the bookshelves or friends in the room. Sometimes they took journals to the charts or the calendar and copied information from there. Additionally, with a refrigerator and taps in the room children got drinks, as they needed them.

4 . 8 Scheduled literacy and numeracy practices

The scheduled literacy and numeracy practices occurred in blocks of time up to two hours. I will briefly describe the practices as they usually occurred in the morning block. I will then describe some of the scheduled practices in the middle block as they specifically related to this research.

4 . 8 . 1 The morning calendar

The morning calendar session set the scene for the day and children connected with the 'real world' and everyday classroom life. This was the usual order of events:

Marked the roll

Shared class backpacks (Figures 4.12 and 4.13)

Did the calendar: child wrote the date in the space on the large calendar

Sequenced the days: Yesterday was…

Today is…

Tomorrow will be…

Added events, birthdays, visitors and changes to the calendar as necessary

Did the class attendance: *How many children are at school today?*

Did the 100s grid as child wrote the next number in answer to the question: *How many days have we been at school?* The chart started on day one.

Figure 4.19 The morning calendar

All year the children took turns to be the calendar person and they experienced gathering information, recording information and reading information in the process. To physically engage the children and ensure accuracy, the boys and girls stood to be counted and then sat after being counted. They saw vertical addition as I filled in the numbers:

There are ----- girls
and ----- boys.
That's --- - children altogether.

In reading and writing about days, dates, months and the year, children related to time and real-life. By recording events on the calendar like class trips, visitors, birthdays and the school Fun Run children connected to 'real lives' and school life. By recording the number of days at school children learned to count, sequence numbers, recognise numbers and they experienced time in a meaningful sense. As Kamii (1982, p. 47) notes, 'Quantification constitutes an inevitable part of daily living… With a bit of organisation, the teacher can give these tasks to children… and create situations in which quantification can take place in a natural and meaningful way.'

4 . 8 . 2 Shared reading

Enlarged print in Big Books helped children learn to read because as I pointed to the text, they *saw* the words, *said* the words and *heard* the words at the same time (Holdaway, 1979; Depree and Iverson, 1994). Big Books for early readers often contained lyrical language and repetitive refrains that invited children to join in and they gained confidence in reading because miscues and errors were less obvious in a group. Since illustrations and texts were clearly visible in Big Books children commented and queried the illustrations, story, content, text, sentences, letters, spelling, punctuation and different prints. In my teaching and research I welcomed children's active participation and discussion and as in read-aloud stories, children connected to books in their own ways, calling on past experiences and prior knowledge to make sense of particular books. Scaffolding and explicit teaching occurred as necessary.

Shared reading of contagious chants and rollicking rhymes in enlarged print meant that children read, enjoyed and moved to lyrical and rhythmical language.

4 . 8 . 3 Shared writing: Class News as 'joint construction of text'

Just as shared reading was reading together from enlarged print, shared writing was composing text together using large print. I modelled and demonstrated text as I scribed on the big whiteboard in front of the children. I called the shared writing 'joint construction of text' because the children and I constructed the sentences together. I also called the writing *Class News* because the content of the text came from class events and/or children's items of interest.

In the classroom we constructed relevant and meaningful news sentences together and I modelled conventions of writing such as sentence structures, letter formations, phonics, spelling, punctuation, capital letters and spaces between words. In composing texts, reading and re-reading occurred constantly and children made connections between spoken and written print, sounds, letters and punctuation.

After constructing the sentences together, I wrote the class news on an A2 page in *Our Big Book About Us* and children did colourful illustrations beneath the writing. I also printed the sentences onto A4 paper and the children illustrated their page before it went into their individual Newsbooks that went home for home reading. The Newsbook became a collection of child-illustrated class events and associated child interests featuring relevant and meaningful reading for the children. The Newsbooks went home as part of home reading and incidentally helped parents get a clearer picture of classroom life. An exciting feature of class news was the variety of topics we wrote about because sentences reflected real lives and real-life in the classroom.

For example, in the first semester of this research 2003, we constructed sentences about being in Year One, having tadpoles in the fish tank, making play dough, making magic mud (Figure 4.20), welcoming Jade into our class, playing AFL football, Holly, Brittany and Bonnie finding a hairy caterpillar, Greg's birthday, Sally's x-ray, Kurt's kitten, Holly's worms, school sports day and three visiting teachers from USA.

Figure 4.20 We made 'magic mud'

We also made class books about topics of interest and units of study. The digital camera was a vital part of this aspect of literacy learning because children added ideas and sentences to the pictures and the books. In addition, children took the class books home for home reading (Figure 4.21).

Figure 4. 21 Class books of interests and units of study

4 . 8 . 4 Co-operative show and tell

In the classroom co-operative show and tell was a conversational activity when all the children shared items of interest with classmates in a small group format. Children chose what to discuss, show, share and question. It was a time of talking, active listening and dialogue prior to writing time. Before children left show and tell groups I asked them to visualise what they might write about. This suggested connections between talking, and writing as representation of talk. Rarely did children say, “I don’t know what to write,” or “I’ve got nothing to write about.”

4 . 8 . 4 . 1 How did co-operative show and tell work?

Children sat in pairs (12x2) or later in the year, small groups (8x3 or 6x4).

Each child sat opposite a partner. They faced each other with their knees fairly close to allow for easy sharing and possible eye contact.

A talked to B. They conversed, questioned and shared.

B talked to A. They conversed, questioned and shared.

All groups quietly talked at the same time, i.e. 12 children talked to partners and then they reversed roles. (This took four or five minutes).

As they finished sharing, the children made a reporting circle, sitting next to his/her partner. I was a part of the circle too.

The whole group listened as some groups reported on their show and tell.

I asked: A, what did B talk about? B, what did A talk about?

After the pair reported, the toys and objects shown in the small group were placed in the middle of the reporting circle for all children to see.

The children then moved to journal writing.

4 . 8 . 4 . 2 Why hold co-operative show and tell?

I believed in co-operative show and tell as an integral part of the literacy morning because all of the children had space to talk and opportunities to talk of something relevant in their lives. They made connections to their lived experiences. Some children were reluctant to talk in large groups yet shared in small groups. The children were dynamic participants as they actively talked, listened and shared with peers. Reporting time encouraged active listening and showing respect for others.

I especially liked co-operative show and tell because the children shared in small groups and 'waiting for a turn' was not an issue. The session was not teacher dominated because twelve groups were sharing simultaneously. The children were engaged because they spoke of interests in short, dynamic interactions. It was also learning and teaching time because we invariably learned about beetles, bugs, caterpillars, toys, games, books, magazines, software or a special interest.

I considered co-operative show and tell to be a valuable pre-writing time because children who had something to talk about usually had something to draw/write about. A staggered start to journal writing meant that a small group ended up on the floor with me and we had 'substantive conversations' (Education Queensland, 2002) about items of interest as in Rare Yugioh Cards (5.5.1)

4 . 8 . 4 . 3 What items of interest did children bring to share?

During the research I compiled a list of toys that children brought to school to share. The toys were later instrumental in building students' skills, competencies and literacies. I listed the toys with a few words to demonstrate aspects that we discussed.

Beyblades (Figure 4.3) - fad, colours, patterns, speeds, real/fake ones

Yu-Gi-Oh cards – characters, numbers, actions, books, duelling

Pokemon – past fad, revived, phonetic spellings of characters, values

Calculators – number recognition and maths processes

Toy computers (Figure 4.22) - phonics, spelling, adding and subtraction

Figure 4.22 Two toy computers brought and shared

Bratz dolls – names, 'qualities' of dolls, taped voices and 'hidden' messages

'My Scene' dolls – names, features, 'scene' they represented

McDonald's toys – questioned value of toys, only get with meals, sets of four

Walt Disney books/films/CDs – traditional fairy stories 'altered', songs added

Books, comics, pamphlets, magazines – read, shared and discussed (Figure 4.1)

Toys catalogues – looked at them critically; toy sales and Christmas

Skipping ropes – ‘Jump rope for heart’ activities, charts of skipping rhymes

Balls – AFL, NRL, soccer balls, tennis balls

Assorted toys (Figure 4.23)

Figure 4.23 Assorted toys that children brought

This is the list of objects from nature brought by the children that developed and extended literacies and understandings in varied ways. Some topics were short lived and others continued as a thread of interest for some weeks.

Tadpoles into frogs – ten weeks first semester

Guppies and goldfish – all second semester (Figure 4.7)

Assorted bird’s nests

Assorted eggs (chicken, birds, gecko)

Snakes in jars (Figure 4.24)

Cicada, dragonfly and dragonfly wing (Figure 4.8)

Figure 4.24 Brock's snake from his garden at home

Red claw (Figure 4.25)

Caterpillar

Cocoons – three weeks

Branches, twigs and leaves

Flowering gum

Worms

Plants and flowers

Assorted pets - kitten (Figure 4.26), puppies, dogs, mice, day old chickens

Figure 4.25 Holly's red claw

Figure 4.26 Kurt's kitten at play

There were other topics of interest that children initiated for exploration, investigation and discovery: children's pets (as mentioned above), Dane's volcanic rock (Figure 4.27), Lachlan's science experiments (5.5.4) which continued all third term, Clare's biscuit recipe and Jade's German songs and books (second language), her twice broken arm (5.5.3) and her imminent trip to Switzerland.

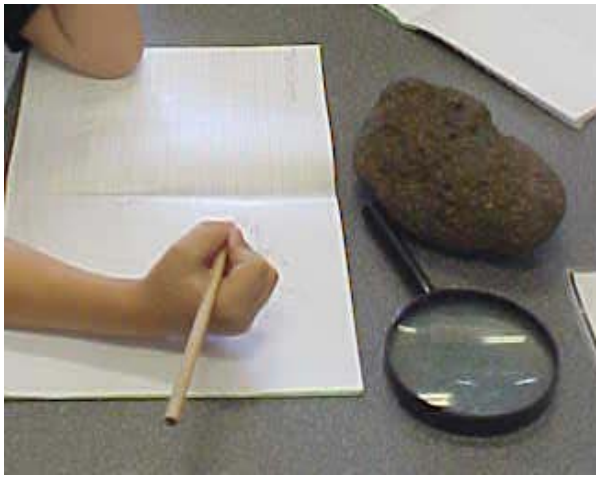


Figure 4.27 Dane writes about a volcanic rock

4 . 8 . 5 Journal drawing and writing

Writing time was one of my favourite times in Year One because children's originality and creativity came to the fore as they grappled to make meaning with pictures and print. They demonstrated knowledge and understanding of alphabetic principles, texts and images as they talked, drew, wrote and interacted (with people and screens) in the process of making messages.

Children demonstrated resourcefulness as they found and used words from friends, walls, lists, charts, books and boxes. They made connections between letters, sounds and words as one said, "How do you spell feather?" and another replied, "I know. It's in the 'f' book." Another added, "It's in the book about foxes," and rushed to a bookshelf to get the book.

Children made connections to their lives and brought their immediate worlds into school as they wrote about lived experiences. They called on prior knowledge and past experiences to integrate new understandings. Children developed independence as they gained self-confidence in practising writing and reading skills about topics of interest. Children made choices and solved problems throughout the writing session because they chose:

what to draw/write about

where to put the drawing/writing on the page

what words/sentences to write

how to write the words/sentences

how to form the letters in the words/sentences

whether to ask friends to help with spelling and sounding out letters

whether to look for letters and words in the room to help them with writing

when to re-read their writing as they wrote

when the writing was finished

All through writing time I conversed with individuals and/or small groups of children about their writing. I was:

listening to children talk about their drawing and writing

hearing children read their writing

asking children about their drawings and writing

encouraging children to try to write letters and words

scaffolding children as they sounded out letters to write words and sentences

asking ‘what do you hear?’ as they stretched their words in spelling attempts

commenting on attempts at making meaning by writing and reading

explicitly teaching aspects of writing and reading as needs arose

sharing with the class a child’s giant step in writing, and

celebrating small steps of individuals as they constructed readable writing

Journal writing is a demonstration of higher-order thinking as children ‘transform information and ideas’ (Education Queensland, 2002, p. 1). The Productive Pedagogies Classroom reflection manual states, ‘When students engage in the construction of knowledge, an element of uncertainty is introduced into the instructional process and the outcomes are not always predictable; in other words, the teacher is not certain what the students will produce.’ This was certainly the case in journal writing as children wrote in ways that they could, on topics of interest. The children and I celebrated their accomplishments as I moved from table to table

listening, questioning and conversing. As Judith Newman (1991, p. 221) noted, 'The important thing about writing conversations is to hear what students are trying to say and to be supportive; to share our 'expertise' but without smothering their efforts.'

Figure 4.28 Students writing in the company of friends

4 . 8 . 6 Sharing time

Sharing time after journal writing provided child writers with an audience. As children finished writing they came to the sharing circle - either on the mat or at the hexagonal worktable. There were specific goals in sharing time. First, children read their writing to peers and I. Second, we listened, commented and questioned. Early in the year I modelled comments and questions to demonstrate ways to acknowledge efforts, encourage clarification, give reasons for writing decisions and make connections between drawing/writing. Third, by talking about their drawing/writing children shared unique 'ways of knowing' and 'ways of showing'. Fourth, we became aware as children demonstrated 'multiple ways of knowing' (Harste, 2000). Fifth, I capitalised on skills that were demonstrated by the children and shared them with the class, explicitly teaching as necessary. Sixth, we celebrated accomplishments.

4 . 8 . 7 Books for home reading

Sandwiched between sharing journals and having lunch was a reading time. Children chose books to take as home reading. They sat at tables and read their selected books in preparation for reading to me after lunch. Monday through Thursday I heard children read to monitor reading progress and to check and understand reading strategies that individuals used. The children chose up to three small books that they could read and/or tried to read. Children also took their *Newsbooks* to read with families. In addition, some children chose to take a book for parents to read to them – usually books they had enjoyed in class as read-aloud books (picture, story, rhyme, information, puzzle or songbooks).

4. 8 . 8 Handwriting and phonics on small chalkboards

During first semester after lunch we took twenty to thirty minutes to do handwriting and phonics on small chalkboards. The children came into class, gathered chalk, dusters and chalkboards and sat down in front of the whiteboard. They drew freely until everyone was in and ready. The session was one of explicit teaching as I demonstrated letter formations to help children with handwriting. I emphasised starting points because they affected progress into cursive writing. We did letters and sounds at the same time so as not to treat ‘subjects’ (handwriting and phonics) in isolation. In forming the letter, we also talked about the name and the sound of the letter. Children drew pictures of objects that started with the sounds to emphasise the sound-symbol-word-object relationships. The children gave multitudes of words that started with the letter which added meaning to the handwriting/phonics exercise because children related to the words in everyday use, rather than sounds in isolation.

Compiling meaningful words from sounds/letters reminded me of George Dawson who went to school and learned to read at ninety-eight years of age:

> I've been coming everyday for three years, but I still remember my first day at school. I came right in through the door and then Mr Henry came over to talk with me. He asked me if I knew the alphabet.
> "No, son," I said.
> Mr Henry tried to break it down into little bits, thinking six letters at a time would be good. But I said, "No, son, I want to see all the letters. I want to put them together."
> Mr Henry said, "So, that's what we did and by the second day, Mr Dawson was set. He learned his letters in a day and a half. Then we moved on to phonics. You know, breaking words into small parts and sounding them out." Then Mr. Dawson said, 'I've waited too long, son, show me some words that make sense.'
> (Dawson, G. and Glaubman, R., *Life is so good*, 2001, p. 248).

After phonics on small chalkboards the children often did the new letter in their Alphabet Books (My Alphabet Scrapbook for Queensland, Macmillan Education, Australia). I liked these books to revise handwriting and to increase understanding of letters/sounds because the pages allowed for children to draw and paste meaningful pictures and words. Children also added pictures and words at home as 'homework'.

For example, a double page looked similar to this:

m m m m m m m m m mouse mouse	**Mm** m

Figure 4.29 Example of a page in Alphabet Books

4 . 8 . 9 Books for home-reading and activity time

After chalkboards we read and discussed a storybook and/or information book that connected with current topics and interests. The children then went to activity time where they chose from activities including painting or playdough, collage, drawing/writing (textas, wind-ups, crayons), computers, legos, duplos, mobilos, building blocks, dress-up corner, puzzles, small whiteboards, pocket chart, objects from nature (shells, gumnuts, beans, seed pods), Big Book reading and free reading. The emphasis was on making and creating rather than 'games' to practise skills.

> For example, children produced pictures, cards, letters, notes and phone numbers to give to others. They made pictures and notes on computers to send as emails. Partners raised the levels of difficulty as they took turns to play Internet games. Children constructed objects to go into streets and buildings they created with blocks and materials.

Whilst children were participating in activities, two children were at the reading table with me. As I heard individuals read I scaffolded as necessary, noted reading progress, checked reading strategies, briefly discussed content of stories and made notes of comprehension. As each child finished reading s/he put the reading folder into his/her bag ready for home. During activity time I tried to hear everyone read but I frequently fell short by five or six children. I scanned their chosen books for home reading and either heard them read after afternoon tea or noted their names and ensured that I heard them the next day.

In this chapter I have described the classroom context to set the scene for reporting the collected data. In Chapter Five I describe some of the collected data from scheduled literacy practices. I have recorded the data in terms of learning contexts, child-initiated literacy episodes and ensuing connections, follow-ups and revisions.

Chapter Five

Data: Learning contexts and literacy episodes

> …the worst enemy of equitable and socially just outcomes is the phenomenon that we could call "dumbing down". I am not here making an argument for more content – for more stuff – but rather for intellectual depth. We've coded classrooms for: higher order thinking, sustained conversation, critique, depth of knowledge and understanding. To exemplify 'shallow' or 'dumbed down' lessons, let me describe one: a 45 minute primary lesson on Flipper, shared reading of stories of Flipper, pictures and videos of Flipper, worksheets and art work on Flipper. There was no discussion of dolphin physiology, no mention of the seagrass beds or the ecosystem, the drift-net fishing that is decimating dolphin populations, John Lilley's experiments with dolphin communication and language, or changes in salinity that are effecting dolphins.
>
> (Luke, A. 1999. *Education 2010 and new times: Why equity and social justice still matter, but differently.* Prepared for Education Queensland online conference 20/10/99).

5 . 0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the classroom as dynamic child and teacher actions and interactions to further illustrate the literacy and learning context in the classroom. It is an attempt to paint a vivid and colourful picture of literacies as social practice and literacies as many and varied in daily life. Specific literacy practices (4.8) are embedded within the learning contexts and I hope to show how children's literacies develop and grow. Some literacy practices are in order of occurrence throughout the day but they are not necessarily in chronological order as shown in the timetable in the previous chapter (4.7.2 and Figure 4.17).

The *learning contexts* are numbered 5.1 through 5.10 and briefly describe immediate learning contexts and scheduled literacy practices as they usually occurred in the classroom. The *literacy episodes* arising from the learning context are numbered

5.1.1 and 5.1.2 and so on. These literacy episodes are the *child-initiated literacy episodes* as they occurred within the learning context of the classroom. *Connections, follow-ups and revisions* are added after the literacy episodes as 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.2.1 and so on to illustrate directions and extensions of the child-initiated literacy episode.

Throughout the data I use pseudonyms for all children and adults except Olivia whose parents said they were happy for her real name to be used. In several literacy episodes her name is vital to the interaction. In passages of dialogue T is the teacher (me) and letters signify the pseudonym's initial, e.g. Z for Zac. Speech passages are italicised.

5 . 1 Learning context: Self-selected activities before school

Children and parents come into the classroom from 8:15am onwards and this voluntary staggered start allows an informal, but informative opening to the day. Everyday social and literacy practices are part of the early morning as children, adults and I greet each other and chat. I gain different views, perspectives and understandings of the children as we mingle. Children share and demonstrate literacies often with classmates looking on or joining in and for a short time I give a few children my undivided attention as they talk about things of interest. Children participate in a variety of self-selected activities as when Sally chose to draw and write (5.1.1). Because children share toys, news, interests and happenings from home they often demonstrate personal literacies and reveal their literate identities, as when Dane shared his writing with me (5.1.2).

5 . 1 . 1 Literacy episode: Sally and the carat

I recorded this literacy event in my journal on March 12:

> Sally came in early this morning. She came in with her mother and little brother Jess. Sally asked if she could write in her journal before school.
> She wrote: *I see Jess Sally*
> She read it to me. I asked if it made sense. She re-read it: *'I see Jess Sally'* and realised it needed 'and' between *Jess Sally*
> I showed Sally how to put in a carat ^ and add the necessary word. I wrote in 'and'.
> She read it again: *I see Jess ^and Sally.*
> There! That makes sense. That's how we talk and write.

5 . 1 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Sally demonstrated this new knowledge later that morning when she taught Zac how to add a word using a carat because he had written a similar sentence and omitted 'and'. Sally showed the class and I reinforced how she solved the problem of a missing word in a sentence. Many children learned the use of a carat in writing that morning and many children experimented with carats over ensuing weeks.

5 . 1 . 2 Literacy episode: Dane and the backpack

It was a wet Friday morning in March when Dane excitedly brought in the Twin Teddies backpack (4.5 and Figure 4.12) that he had taken home Thursday night. He took the journal out of the pack and quickly showed me his writing and drawings.

> T: *Read it to me Dane.*
> D: (reading) I played blay blades (Beyblades) and did a puzzle with the twin teddies and daddy Then I went to sleep with them. From Dane
> He read it accurately, without pointing.
> T: *Well done Dane. How about you read it again and point to the words?*
> He read well and was aware of the words, eg. 'Then…' he really looked at the word. At the end it said 'them' but he read 'Tiny Tim and Tiny Tina', so I pointed and read 'them'.

On the drawing page Dane had drawn a boy between the twin teddies – with the same colours for the clothes.

T: *Who are these people Dane?*

D: *That's me and that's Tiny Tim with the red pants and Tiny Tina with the yellow pants. Just like in the pack.*

T: *Maybe you could label them so the other children will know who they are*.

D: *What's label them?*

T: *When we write their names to show who the characters are* – (accompanied by a demonstration (explicit teaching) as I added the names and arrows to the characters). *There. Now everyone who reads the journal will see the labels and they'll know that this is you Dane, and this is Tiny Tina and this is Tiny Tim.*

T: *So what does labelling mean Dane?*

D: *It means you put the names on to say that the people are*.

T: *I wonder if you remember the new word we learned on Wednesday when Sally was writing in her journal and Zac in his journal.* (Sally was nearby overhearing the 'labelling' episode and joined in…)

S: *Carat.*

D: *Yeah, carat and it looked like this* – pointed his fingers up in the shape of ^.

T: *And why did we use the carat?*

S: *To put in the word I missed out*

C: *To put in the word they missed out*, added Clare, who was also listening nearby.

Trudy (Dane's mum, who witnessed the whole episode) clapped and I said, "Great job. You really are becoming writers and learning lots about what writers do!"

5 . 1 . 2 . 1. Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Later, Dane shared the backpack with the class as a regular morning routine (4.8.1 and Figure 4.19) and read the Twin Teddies journal. Again he didn't point but read accurately – and said 'them' at the end. He showed his drawing and said that he had drawn "me with the two teddies." He added, "And Mrs Swan showed me how to label them so you'll know who they are."

"Dane, tell us again what labelling means," I said.

"It's when you put the names and an arrow showing which one it is," Dane replied.

'Had to get ready for gross motor activities outside at this time, so no further development' was the note concluding this episode in my reflective journal that night.

5 . 2 Learning context: Calendar and real-life literacies

Soon after the 8:50 bell the children and I move to the large mat area for our morning ritual of literacy and numeracy practices associated with everyday classroom life. The morning calendar (4.8.1) includes child attendance, the day, the date, the number of days at school, tuck shop orders, specialists' classes and specific school events. The children become very observant about things mathematical like number, time, money, sequence, order and patterns in daily life. Occasionally something special occurs as in the surprising coincidences of episode 5.2.2 and the exciting addition of episode 5.2.3. The calendar also serves the purpose of reminding us when special events are coming up as in episode 5.2.4. But one morning there was a special surprise before we even got to the calendar - episode 5.2.1.

5 . 2 . 1 Literacy episode: Wow or www?

Some days are special. Some days are memorable. Some days, group interactions and children's comments amaze me and remind me of what a pleasure it is to work with young children. One Monday morning was such a day. My journal read:

> It was a terrific morning with lots of active participation from the children – and they are observing so much now. The gems started immediately. I introduced Alison (a visiting pre-service teacher) and said that she had come 'to see my wonderful ones work this morning…'
>
> Z: *That's all Ws*
> T: *Oh, is it Zac? Let's listen again: '…see how my wonderful ones work this morning.'*
> I wrote 'wonderful ones work' on the whiteboard and the children read the words.

I marked the ‘w’ in wonderful and work, but then looked at ‘one’.

Zac again said he could hear the ‘w’ sound.

I wrote: Sounds like: w w w

Looks like: w o w

Tr: www.com I wrote that on the board too.

M: *It’s like c and k ‘cause they sound the same.*

I stopped.

T: *Madison, what do you mean?*

M: *The ‘w’ and ‘o’ sound the same and ‘c’ and ‘k’ are the same.*

I wrote c and k on the board – and stressed the <c> sound.

Br: *Cat starts with <c> and that kitten starts with <k>.*

I wrote the words – cat, kitten.

M: *The word cat is little but cats are big and kitten is a big word and they are little and only babies.*

Wow! What an observation! I quickly sketched a large cat beside the word ‘cat’ and a small kitten beside the word ‘kitten’.

Z: *There’s a word Kay like ‘k’.*

I wrote Kay on the board.

We revised ‘c’ and ‘k’: What’s its name? ‘c’ What’s its sound? <c>

What’s its name? ‘k’ What’s its sound? <k>

D: *‘c’ is like ‘see’, when we see with our eyes.*

I wrote ‘c’ on the board in a different area, then ‘see’, the word.

Peter reminded us that *‘see’ was already in* Our S s Book.

He went to find it – there it was: ‘see’ (with a picture of eyes), and ‘sea’ (with the blue waves of the sea).

T: We’ll have to start our book of tricky words! (Figure 4.10).

5 . 2 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

At lunchtime I made a big chart of the information showing comments and connections that occurred. After lunch I shared it with the class, revising sounds, letters, words and understandings from the episode – expressing amazement at their demonstrations of 'ways of knowing'. The chart was prominently displayed near the mat area for ensuing follow-up and reference. However, there were other sharing times with parents, Year One colleagues and the school librarian as we delighted in early learners' originality and understandings.

5 . 2 . 2 Literacy episode: What a coincidence!

February 10th was a Monday. As we did the calendar that morning Zac noticed it was also our 10th day at school and he commented that number 10 was on the calendar and the one hundred chart of *How many days have we been at school?* (4.8.1 and Figure 4.19). I expressed surprise at the coincidence because it rarely occurs. Tuesday was February 11th and our 11th day at school. On counting the boys for class attendance we realised there were 11 boys too. What a coincidence!

The pattern continued all week with Wednesday, February 12th and the 12th day at school, Thursday, February 13th and 13th day at school and Friday, February 14th and 14th day at school. There was great excitement on Thursday 13th because there were also 13 girls at school that day. I was amazed at the coincidences – and later made charts about them. The charts read the same except for 11/13 and boys/girls:

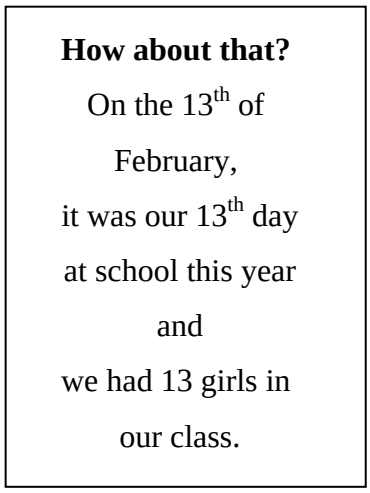


Figure 5.1 Coincidence chart

5 . 2 . 2 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

What happened on Monday, February 17th? On the calendar we counted and I wrote number 17. The children then counted *How many days have we been at school?* and I wrote 15 on the grid. Why? Brittany and Clare worked out that it was the weekend. "We don't count Saturday and Sunday because we're not at school," added Clare.

5 . 2 . 3 Literacy episode: "Three more days till the party," said Gemma.

My reflective journal read: *Thursday, May 15. Zac did the calendar today. He did '15' well and the days perfectly. He is really reading. (Sometimes I see him looking around the room reading and working out stuff, much as X did last year).*

When we got to *How many days have we been at school?* Zac said, 'Sixty-nine,' and wrote 69 in the space on the 100s chart (Figure 5.2, below).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	
									100

Figure 5.2 One hundred grid for *How many days have we been at school?*

T: *'What's it going to be tomorrow?'*

Pr: *6010* (funny how I get that every year because 10 comes after 9!)

Tr & Z: *70*

G: *Three more days till the party.*

T: *The 100-day party?*

Gr: *No not 3 days. 3 weeks.*

Z: *No. 29 days.*

Tr: *30 days.*

We counted the spaces and got 30 (70+30=100)

T: *Zac, how did you get 29?*

Z: *There's 10 and another 10, that's 20, and then 9 more spaces because on the 100 we'll be having the party.*

T: *Trent, how did you get 30?*

Tr: *There's 10 in each line and that's 10 and 20 and 30.*

T: I went to the board and wrote 70+30=100

T: *This is like last time - when you worked this out 10 days ago. What did we write then?*

Several children: *60+40=100* (I wrote this above the 70+30=100)

Gr: *50+50=100* (I wrote this above the 60+40+100)

T: *Can you see a pattern forming here?*

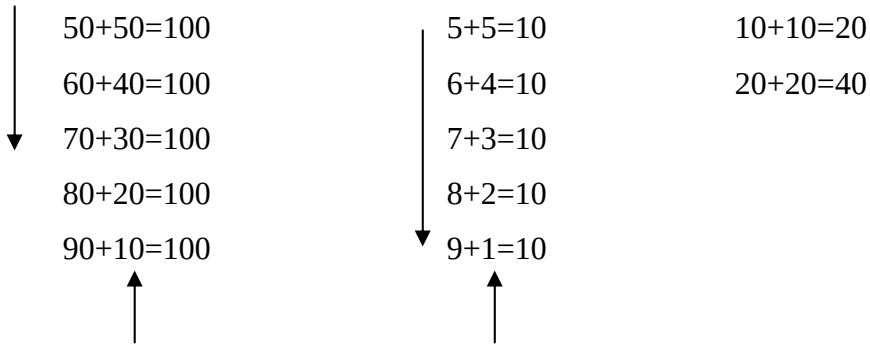
Z: *They're getting bigger, like 50, 60, 70 and they're getting smaller like 50, 40, 30* (and I indicated with arrows)

J: *It's like counting 5, 6, 7*

T: *Right. So what would the next one be after 70+30=100?*

Z: *The next one would be 80+20=100 and the one after that would be 90+10=100.*

T: Wow! I wrote them down and the board looked like this:



T: *So what will the last sum be?*

Gr: *10+10=20* (I started another column on the right hand side of the board).

P: *20+20=40* (I added this beneath Greg's 10+10=20)

Z: *100+1=100*

T: *Let's look at this again*: (revised the 5 sums on LHS) *and how would the pattern keep going? Remember we counted from 50, 60, 70, 80, 90…*

Several children: 100

T: *Yes. And add what to make 100?* (as I wrote 100+…=100

Tr: *0*

T: I wrote 100+0=100 at the bottom of the list of addition sums.

The children practised adding 0 with small numbers, e.g. 1 finger + 0 fingers makes 1 finger; 2 fingers + 0 fingers = 2, 5 fingers + 0 fingers = 5 and so on. They read the sums again – and counted up and down to show the patterns.

My journal concluded: *It was exhilarating. It was fun. It was exciting to hear some of the children express their understanding of numbers – all related to our calendar and 100s chart for 'How many days have we been at school?'*

5 . 2 . 3 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

After this episode we did a 'count down' until our 100-day party. Gemma realised it was 30 days and *not* three days until the party because we counted the spaces up to 100. The morning calendar ritual meant that numbers came up constantly and the children counted by *ones, tens, fives and twos.* They counted *backwards* from twenty. Children found *vertical patterns* as the numbers built up: 1, 11, 21, 31, 41 and 51 and *diagonal patterns* of 1, 2, 3, 4 as in lines of 1, 12, 23, 34, 45, 56 and 67 (Figure 5.2). Some children improved and learned addition and subtraction as they referred to the grid on the board: 91+9=100, 95+5=100 and 99+1=100.

5 . 2 . 4 Literacy episode: A special scientist

One Monday morning a note was on the calendar: Special Scientist. Several children also noticed the reminder note on the board: *12:30, Monday, Special Scientist.*

> What could it mean? Without giving details I silently wrote a sentence on the whiteboard and the children worked out the message as I wrote:
>
> *Today at 12:30 we will go outside for a special science experiment.*
>
> Suddenly, Olivia asked, "Is it noisy?"
> "Is that why you think we'll have to go outside Olivia?" I laughingly asked her.
> Immediately I wrote the question after the sentence:
> *"Is it noisy?' asked Olivia.* Then Trent asked about it being messy.
> *"Is it messy?' asked Trent.* And so on.
> *"Is it with wet?" asked Emily.*
> *"Is it hot? It might burn something in here," said Dane.*
> *"Is it using a bottle?" asked Peter.*
>
> "So you think the experiment might be some of these things, therefore it's better to do the experiment outside?" I asked.

It was forward thinking by the children and resulted in the information being presented differently. The question format with talking marks was meaningful in the context of finding out more information. (I had assumed the information would be in straightforward sentences about the activity). Olivia still seemed a bit perturbed that it might be noisy and I reiterated that it was not really noisy and added that Mrs K would make a small volcano for us.

5 . 2 . 4 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

At 12:30 we went outside to the Tuck shop and met Mrs K. We went to a treed area and the children sat in a semi-circle on the ground around the 'volcano' on the log borders. Mrs K's talk and demonstration was clear. She poured vinegar and red food colour into the paper-mache 'volcano' and each child took a turn to add a large teaspoon of bicarbonate soda. The red food colour added interest because the children could see the 'molten lava' more clearly. It was a great half hour – except the camera did not work for long. On our return to the classroom children drew and wrote about the volcano in Activity Books. We added two photos and several sentences to our Big Book of *Interesting Observations and Experiments by 1s* (5.5.4).

5 . 3 Learning context: Shared reading

Each day the children participate in shared reading (4.8.2). They chant, sing and read a variety of charts and Big Books that are presented in enlarged print. As we read together, I point to each word and the children *see, say* and *hear* the words simultaneously. The children are very observant and it amazes me what they see and talk about in shared reading times. They comment on characters, illustrations, facial and body expressions, different and unusual print, meanings, letters, sounds, spellings, words, sentences, repetitions, capital letters and full stops; talking marks, question

marks and exclamation marks. Teachable moments and literacy episodes occur during shared reading because of the children's astute powers of observation (5.3.1), their willingness to share knowledge (5.3.2) and their enthusiasm in contributing their ideas and literacies (5.3.3).

5 . 3 . 1 Literacy episode: 1s and 'is'

On the third day of school the students jumped and chanted the rhyme, *Jump:*

Jump
Jump
Jump all day,
Hurry back another way.

Jump
Jump
Jump all night,
Just because the moon is bright.

Figure 5.3 The *Jump* rhyme

They sat back down on the floor. I placed the chart on the Big Book stand in front of the children and picked up a new Big Book to introduce. Suddenly, Gemma said:

G: *1s (one s) is on the bottom of 'Jump'* (referring to the rhyme).
T: '*It looks like 1s' p*ointing to 'is' in the last line of the rhyme above, and writing 1s on the board in front of the children (1s (one S) is the name of this Year One class).
E: *It's 'is' - Just because the moon is bright.*
T: Nodding and writing 'is' on the board beneath 1s, with children looking at the text.
T: *What's this?* pointing to 'i' in 'is'
Several students said the letter name 'i'
J: '*i' sounds like <i> in 'is'*.
T: Nodding. *What's this?* pointing to 1

E: *That's number 1 for our class. 1s, One s*

T: On the board I wrote: 1 s is Is

Z: *The 1s looks like 'is' but the 1 is bigger.*

M: *But the big 'I' and the 1 (one) look nearly the same* (and a discussion of letters and numbers followed).

I showed the big flashcard of 'is' and the children read 'is' several times before I left it on the ledge for all to see. I also wrote 'is' in big letters on the chalkboard.

For the rest of the day the children were alert to hearing and seeing the word 'is'. Some children looked in books and excitedly showed me if they had found 'is' on a page. By the end of the day many children recognised the word 'is'. In a separate part of the chalkboard I wrote: *We know these words* and 'is' was the first word on the list.

Although Gemma mixed up '1s' and 'is', as a beginning reader and writer she was starting to discriminate between the shapes of letters and numbers.

5 . 3 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

On the fifth day of school Clare brought her *Clifford* book. She was looking at it in writing time and found 'is'. She excitedly showed me and then showed the class. Meanwhile Madison rushed to the chalkboard and pointed to 'is'. We continued to celebrate as children found 'is' in any print around them.

Interestingly, Gemma made another observation shortly after the 'is' episode, which again revealed how she was learning to discriminate between letters/numbers (5.9.1).

5 . 3 . 2 Literacy episode: Tuck us in…

On the second day of school I introduced the Big Book *Sing a Song* (Cowley, 1983) and the children quickly joined in the repetitive refrain: *Sing, sing, sing a song; sing a song together*. Although I rephrased the following comments to reinforce children's observations to the group, I didn't make 'teachable moments' out of the comments at that stage. Instead, I chose to keep the rhythm and flow of the story.

J: They've all got 'a' but it sounds like <u>, like "a song.

D: There are all Fs in a row (as in *Fast asleep* on the last page) and on the other page Rs (as in *Read a book*) and then Ts (as in *Tuck us in*).

G: This is another 'tuck'. Tuck yourself up in a ball (as she tucked herself into a little ball).

A week later in shared reading time, more comments came from the re-reading of *Sing a Song*. Lachlan saw 'A Read-together Book' on the front cover and pointed to it. I replied that it was called 'A Read-together Book' and that's what we do: "We read the book together." We did just that and read it together.

Near the end of the book the words were:

Tuck, tuck, tuck us in,

Tuck us in together,

Tuck, tuck, tuck us in,

Tuck us in together.

Lachlan commented that 'tuck' was like our 'Tuck Shop' (school canteen) and that it was another 't' word like tadpoles. Immediately other students added different meanings of 'tuck' and I jotted them on the board as definitions were given:

Tuck – 3 meanings

tuck in bed

tuck up in a ball

tuck shop

We read the definitions again then I suggested the children act out the words as I pointed and we read them.

5 . 3 . 2 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

At lunch time I made a large chart of the different meanings of ‘tuck’ and children drew accompanying pictures. The chart was displayed for reference on a low wall in the front book corner. I often saw children pointing, reading and talking about the chart as they lounged on the book corner cushions. Later, Holly quietly came to me and said, “Tuck your shirt in, is another tuck,” and I immediately invited her to share this with the class.

5 . 3 . 3 Literacy episode: The Lunch Song

We did shared reading today. We shared a Big Book called *The King’s Pudding* (Cowley, 1986). The purpose of the lesson was to increase the children’s enjoyment of story, rhythmical language, rhyme and rhyming words. In the course of reading the book some children discussed meanings of ‘delicious’ and ‘Knight’. Other children commented on the illustrations like the King’s facial expressions and the way the pudding disappeared. The children enthusiastically joined in the refrain:

So the Queen went
nibble, nibble,
munch, munch,
gobble, gobble,
crunch, crunch,
and some of the pudding was gone.

Madison said that it made her hungry and we should say it when we have lunch. Just before lunch she got the book, brought it to me and we all shared it together again. At the rhyme, however, Olivia changed the words to:

So the *children* went
nibble, nibble,
munch, munch,
gobble, gobble,
crunch, crunch,
and *all of their lunches were* gone.

We sang the new version several times, and then moved to lunch.

5 . 3 . 3 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Later, I made a big chart of the revised rhyme and Madison and Olivia drew a colourful picture beneath the enlarged print. Madison suggested we put the new chart on the door of the refrigerator and as the children sat with their lunches, they sang '*Our Lunch Song'*. It became a daily ritual as I pointed to the words and the children sang the rhyme before they ate their lunches.

5 . 4 Learning context: Class news as joint construction of text

Class news (4.8.3) comes from class related events and/or things brought by children to share with classmates. Class news recognises children's different interests and cultures (5.4.1) as well as everyday classroom life (5.4.2). Children and I construct the class news text together. I model and demonstrate writing conventions as I scribe children's sentences on the whiteboard in front of them. Later, the sentences are written into *Our Big Book About Us* and children illustrate the page. The Big Book is re-read in shared reading sessions to revise the sentences. Class news is also printed as an A4 page for each child's Newsbook, which goes home nightly for home reading. Thus, meaningful print about relevant events becomes repetitive reading for my budding readers.

5 . 4 . 1 Literacy episode: Greg's birthday

It was Greg's birthday and he wanted a sentence about it. He suggested we write: 'It is my birthday today.' We discussed 'my' but Sally suggested we write 'Greg' so everyone would know whose birthday it was as she added emphatically, 'because if we all say 'my' it won't make sense because it's not everyone's birthday.'

The class news became: '*It is Greg's birthday today. He is six.'*

Several children spelled and I wrote 'It is' (words that were already on our chalkboard list of *We know these words*).

I wrote as Greg spelled his name, added an 's and then wrote birthday. Suddenly,

> E: *The ' (apostrophe) is because it's Greg's birthday.*
> T: *You're right Emily. The apostrophe* (pointing to ') *shows ownership. It's Greg's birthday. It's like he owns his birthday.*
> Tr: *There's another 'th' – in birthday*

T: Nodding, and underlining th. *Yes Trent. Greg talked with me about the 'th' this morning when I was writing about his birthday on our Morning Message board. Greg, how come today is called your birthday?*

Gr: *It's the day I was born. It's like my birth – so this is my birth day.*

C: *And there's day just like day on the calendar*

T: *You're right Clare. Everyone, look at the calendar and see 'day' that Clare found* (as I pointed to 'day' on all the days of the week on the large calendar).

M: *There's 'is' and six is like 'is' too.*

T: *What's different about 'is' in 'six'?*

D: *It's back to front.*

T: *Yes, this one is 'is' and in six the 'si' are back to front* – demonstrating by pointing to the 'is' and the 'six' already on the board in the sentence.

Br: *There's 'is' in 'fish'*

T: Pointing to 'fishtank' in a previous sentence nearby. *You're right Brittany, there's 'is in fishtank as I underlined the 'is'.*

So is this word fis tank? Brittany just found 'is' in it. Do we hear 'is' in fishtank?

E: *No it's fish tank – like sh, sh.*

T: *Yes, the 's h' together says 'sh'* (writing 'sh' on the board).

E: *And the 't h' says 'th'. There are two now.*

T: *Hey you're right, Emily. Everyone, look what Emily has found out: The 's h' says sh sh sh and the 't h' says th th th. Wow, you people are so observant. You are learning so many things about writing – and you are reading so well! Give yourselves a clap. What a great job!*

5 . 4 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Interestingly, in re-reading the news sentences in *Our Big Book About Us*, Greg's birthday became an issue for understanding tenses. On May 26, my journal read:

We read the Big Books. We added new pages to *Our Big Book About Us* and the children read well. Sally said, "*We HAD lots of tadpoles"* – so the original sentence of We *have lots of tadpoles*, should be changed.

Gr: *We could say fish (*guppies had since been added to the fish tank so the word 'fish' could replace 'tadpoles').

We said both sentences: *We **had** lots of tadpoles in our fish tank.*

*We have lots of **fish** in our fish tank.*

T: *What about the picture?*

E: *If we change tadpoles to fish, the picture will still be tadpoles.*

T: *Let's cross off 'have' and write 'had' to change the tense and make it right for now.*

We read the other sentences and the concern of 'being right' came up again in Greg's sentence: *It is Greg's birthday today. He is six.*

T: *What do we do to change it?*

E: *Cross off the 'is' and put 'was'. It ~~is~~ was Greg's birthday today.*

S: *That doesn't make sense. Cross off 'today' too* – and I added March 14 as the date of his birthday.

Now the sentence read: It ~~is~~ was Greg's birthday ~~today~~ - March 14. He is six.

P: *Change the 'is' too. He was six.*

E: *Yeah because they are both past.*

T: *Yes. The 'is' meant it happened at the time, but 'was' means it has passed now.*

The revised sentence read: *It was Greg's birthday - March 14. He was six.* (The corrections were clearly visible on the page of the Big Book).

E: *That makes sense now because his birthday has passed.*

We read all the news sentences in *Our Big Book About Us* but none of the others needed changing: *We made playdough* and *We made magic mud,* were in past tense.

T: *What would be the present tense for playdough and magic mud?*

E: *We are making playdough*.

S: *We are making magic mud.*

5 . 4 . 2 Literacy episode: We have visitors

On Monday (June 23) some American teachers visited our school. We displayed a large map of USA at the front of the room to locate where they came from. Three of the visiting teachers came into our classroom around 9:20 just as we finished the calendar. After introductions we found Casper, Wyoming (their home town) on the map and marked it with blu tack. The children were highly amused at the name Casper and constantly referred to Casper, the friendly ghost. Peter went to the bookshelves and came back with a familiar book, *Cleo and Caspar*.

The children then turned to the whiteboard for joint construction of text. I asked for suggestions of a sentence and someone said we could write about our visitors.

T: *What could we say about our visitors?*

M: *We have some visitors from… where is it again?*

Several children: *Casper, like the ghost.*

T: (scribing and reading) *We have* (children spelled and I commented on silent e)

T: *Should it be 'some' visitors?*

Gr: *Three. Three visitors.*

Several children: *Some.*

T: *What if Mr Yates (Principal) was reading our sentence? Would he know how many 'some' were?*

S: *We have three visitors in our room… Then everyone knows how many visitors.*

T: *Yes. Three tells us exactly how many teachers are visiting us.*

I wrote *three* – as children spelled it, emphasising the 'th' sound, the 'r' sound then 'ee'

T: (pointing and re-reading) *We have three…*visitors. *How do we spell visitors?* (speaking slowly and stretching out the word 'visitors').

Children: *v…v…* I wrote v

Children: *z…s…z…s…*

Child: *i… vis… I can hear 'i'*

T: *vis…* (then I added lines to indicate the letters in the word: vis- - - - - Again I stressed *'visitors'* stretching it slowly).

Children: *t…t…* I added the 't' in the right place: *vis-t- - -*

Children: *s…* I added another 's' to the word: *vis-t- - s*

Children: *e… l…h…a?*

T*: Let's listen again. Tell me what letters you hear. Visitors…* and I stressed the second 'i'

E: *another 'i' – like 'it'.* I added 'i': visit- - s

P: *'r'.* I added the 'r': visit-rs

M: *'o'* (we had already eliminated e and a)

T: *You can't really hear the 'o' as a separate letter but it goes before the 'r': visitors.*

S: *Mrs. Swan, you don't say 'visitors' like that* (referring to my stretching it out)

T: *No we don't Sally, but I am pulling it out to help you hear the sounds in the word. We really say visitors* (said in a normal speaking voice).

We finished the sentence and read it together: *We have three visitors from Casper, Wyoming, in the United States of America. USA.* Interestingly the children knew USA but did not understand what the letters stood for although Trent said, 'America'.

5 . 4 . 2 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

After lunch in first semester we did handwriting and phonics on small chalkboards (4.8.8). It was a time of explicit teaching (and revision for some children) as I showed correct letter formations and introduced and/or revised sounds and letters as in the 'O, Olivia and 10' episode (5.9.1). I treated handwriting and phonics together and connected sounds and letters to meaningful words. I said to the children, "We talk in words and sentences; not sounds. But we need to know the sounds and letters because they help us with reading and writing." Children made sense of letters and sounds by using them in the context of their talk and interests. Handwriting, phonics, letters and sounds usually came from class events and topics of interest just as the class news did - like the visiting teachers from USA.

After lunch on the Monday our American visitors were in the classroom, I said to the children, 'What do you think our new letter could be?' Quick as a flash, Madison said, 'v for visitors.' I demonstrated 'v' on the whiteboard, stressing the sound and the starting point as the children practised in the air. With four squares on the small chalkboards, the children practised 'v' and as they began to say words that started with 'v' I jotted them on the board: *vase, video, van, visitors, voices, veto, Vicks, Venus, volcano, vacuum, very, velocity, violet, violin, vortex, Voltron, volleyball.*

After the chalkboards were put away, we went through our sets of alphabet cards and found *'v': vase, violin and violent volcanoes.*

Gemma: "What's violent?"

Discussion arose and several children defined violent. Then Olivia said clearly, "Something that hurts you." I nodded.

"Maybe we can have our visiting teachers take a small group each and write up the charts of 'v' words," I suggested. Fortunately, two of the teachers - Lana and Terri - volunteered. All at once it was Gemma again:

> G: *I've got a 'v' in my name – Harvey, Gemma Harvey.*
> Z: *My second name is Vivian and that starts with 'V'. Zac Vivian*
> T: *All those with 'v' in their names come out. Gemma (Harvey), Olivia and Zac (Vivian) worked with Lana.*
> M: *I said Vivian Venn* (from the story of *Goodnight Sleep Tight*, Fox, 1988).
> T: *Okay Madison.*
> Several children: *I said vase, Voltron, volcano….*
> A group of four children who had given 'v' words then worked with Terri. The two groups sat on the floor and compiled lists of 'v' words on violet paper.

The remaining visiting teacher and I heard two children read and other children were at various activities scattered around the room. Time passed. The 'v' charts were getting longer. Suddenly, a flustered Madison appeared at my side and whispered, 'Mrs. Swan, tell the lady about Vivian Venn.'

'Pardon, Madison,' I stumbled, not sure that I had heard correctly.

'Tell her about Vivian Venn. She doesn't know it's a 'v' word,' persisted Madison.

Then, I understood. I went to Terri's group and Madison explained that she had said Vivian Venn as a 'v' word. Visiting teacher Terri was not familiar with the story *Goodnight Sleep Tight* in which Vivian Venn appeared. Madison had said, 'Venn.' Terri thought she said, 'then' and responded that 'then was a 'th' word; not 'v'. I

explained the misunderstanding and Terri added Vivian Venn to the list. With the problem solved, I went back to hearing reading.

Shortly after, Lana appeared at the table with the chart of 'v' words in her hand and said to me quietly, 'Zac's 'v' word is 'vb' and I don't know what he means.' I laughed. 'VB is a well-known Australian beer and it's spelled like it sounds – VB. It stands for Victoria Bitter – the name of the beer,' I said and wrote VB on the board.

When the children went to afternoon tea the three visiting teachers and I spoke of the interactions. It was a clear reminder to us all of the importance of meaningful contexts when talking, hearing, writing and reading about letters and sounds. The charts of 'v' words, like all the word charts hanging in the room, were child-specific and context-specific to this class. That afternoon the children took their Alphabet Books (4.8.8 and Figure 4.29) home to draw/paste/write 'v' words and pictures on the 'v' pages.

5 . 5 Learning context: Co-operative show and tell

Co-operative show and tell (4.8.4) is an opportunity for children to talk and share objects and/or topics of interest with classmates in a co-operative classroom environment (Dalton, 1985). Each child chooses what to show and/or talk about (5.5.1). It is a time of active listening and participating in small group sharing, sometimes followed by a brief reporting time where groups report back to the whole class. For special individual events, the child talks to the whole group (5.5.2, 5.5.3 and 5.5.4). I treat co-operative show and tell as a valuable pre-writing time because, most often, children who have something to talk about have something to draw/write about. Before children leave the reporting circle, I frequently ask them to visualise what they

will draw and write about in their journals or on the computer. A staggered start to journal writing means that a small group may end up on the floor with me and we can delve deeper into information and ideas about their items of interest. That's how I learned about Yugioh cards - rare Yugioh cards.

5 . 5 . 1 Literacy episode: Rare Yugioh cards

Tr*: I've got my Yugioh cards and this new one is a rare one.*
Br: *Yeah, I've got that one*.
P: *Yeah, me too.*
T: *Trent, what makes a Yugioh card a rare Yugioh card?*
Several boys: *shiny and gold stuff and numbers and attack…*

Trent brought his Yugioh cards to share. Trent loves Yugioh cards and he sometimes goes to *Toys R Us* for duelling Yugioh cards on Saturday mornings. I was interested to hear him refer to a card as a 'rare' card – not usually a word one hears in Year One from a six year old. The boys in the group quickly told me what made a Yugioh card a rare card. Immediately I reached for large chart paper to write down the information. With the boys on the floor with me we worked together to make a chart. It read:

How do you tell if a Yu-Gi-Oh card is rare?

1. Number of stars
2. Gold writing
3. Shiny
4. If atk is a high number.

↓

attack

Figure 5.4 Rare Yugioh cards

Trent told me to write ‘atk’ for ‘attack’ and he showed me ‘atk’ on a card. I commented that ‘atk’ was an abbreviation, or a short way to write attack. Beneath ‘atk’ I wrote ‘attack’ in case others did not know what it meant. As I wrote down each point the boys found examples on the cards. We finished the chart and the boys read it together. Greg found ‘s h’ in shiny and said, “S h says sh, sh.” ‘Sh’ was underlined. At sharing time Trent and Brock read the new chart to the class. Then they found a space to display it for others to read.

5 . 5 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Trent loved Yugioh and Pokemon cards and he often drew/wrote about them in his journal. These are samples of journal entries about Pokemon and Yugioh from May:

Copied: symbols from Pokemon cards - looked like Japanese writing.
Wrote: *I have Pokemon car^ds and I can’t find my Yu-gi-oh ca^rds.*
Wrote: *I like Brock’s and Lucas’s Yu-gi-oh ca^rds. Lucas has a 10 satr* (star). *It is so good and Brock has a 8 satr* (star).
Wrote: *I like my ansatsu card. It’s a 5 satr* (star*) and I like the rast of my Yu-gi-oh car^ds.*
Wrote: *I like my Yu-gi-oh car^ds and I have 26 Yu-gi-oh cards.*
Wrote: *I like Flame swordsman. It’s good Mrs Swan, and the ATK is 1800 and the DEF is 1600.*
Wrote: *I have my Yu-gi-oh cards, my Happy meals and I have 69 Yu-gi-oh cards but on Saturday I will have 70.* (I responded with 69+1=70)
Wrote: *I have ^my Jimmy Neutron colouring Book, safety certificate and my Yu-gi-oh cards. 20+20=40 150+150=300 100+100=200*
Wrote: *I have my Yu-gi-oh official Rulebook, my Yu-gi-oh magnets, my Yu-gi-oh Millennium Manual and my Yu-gi-oh cards and I have 120 my strigarit* (strongest*) card is Blue Eyes White Dragon and it’s atk is 3000.*
Wrote: *I have a Yu-gi-oh Pin at home. I have 155 Yu-gi-oh cards. On the 13 of Dec I am goi^ng to go to Dremwald* (Dreamworld) *and I will go to Nickeneriue* (Nickoledeon?) *fou 1 day.*
Wrote: I wachd Yu-gi-oh with my dad on sat. I wochd It with my dad becuse I’m notalued (not allowed) to woch It buy my self.

I tracked some of Trent's interests as well as sentence structures, spelling, writing, handwriting development and some mathematical understandings through his extensive free writing about Pokemon and Yugioh cards. In addition, Trent and his friends often 'played' Yugioh cards in the classroom before school and their understanding of the cards, pronunciation of characters' names and fluency with adding and subtracting was obvious and often surprising to me.

5 . 5 . 2 Literacy episode: Peter's rugby trip

Sometimes we begin show and tell with the whole class when a child reports on a special event. Peter's trip to Brisbane for a World Series rugby game was such an event. Peter moved from his immediate and local world to the wider world. Our worlds expanded when he returned and reported on his trip.

Peter told us about the game of rugby and the score: Scotland 39 – USA 15. He showed us the tickets that got the family into the stadium. After examining and checking information on the tickets, he later stapled them onto his page of writing. Peter brought his dad to school and together they sang Scotland's National Anthem. The copy of the Anthem was displayed for classmates to see and discussion related to Australia's National Anthem that is sung each Tuesday morning at Junior Parade.

The rest of the discussion centred on the world map and this is how I remember the episode unfolding. Peter found Australia and Scotland on the world map and several students noted the distance between them. Then our resident Manchester United football fan, Greg, immediately found Manchester and England on the map. For some children there was still confusion over cities, states and countries - which we had

talked about before when we had new and visiting students from Portland and Lilydale, Victoria and Perth, Western Australia. It was also a challenge for some children to grasp *city* of Brisbane, *state* of Queensland, *country* of Australia and the *countries* of Scotland and USA. Size was a problem too with Scotland and England being so small compared to USA and Australia. At journal time Peter wrote:

> I went to see Scotland Vs USA. Scotland won 39 to 15. I sat at the very top of the seats. I went to see Rugrats go Wild with my granny. It was great.

In sharing time some children connected to the rugby because it was prominent on TV and in the media. Some children connected to the Rugrats movie because of its presence in popular culture and past experiences of those who had seen the movies. Some children connected to visiting Grandma in Brisbane because of past experiences. Later, in an email to our email Granny (see 4.5), Peter told her of his rugby trip and he was surprised to hear that she came out from Scotland as a young girl, many years ago.

5 . 5 . 3 Literacy episode: Jade's broken arm

This was whole class show and tell because it was a special event - a real-life event: Jade broke her arm. She told us about the accident, the trip to the hospital, the X-rays, the plaster on her left arm and the consequences since she was left-handed. Several months later Jade broke the same arm again. Comparisons occurred when she came into school the second time with plaster on her arm. We compiled a comparative chart as children spoke of the differences between Jade's plasters. The chart read:

What are the differences between Jade's first plaster and second plaster?

1	2
1. cannot go in water	1. can go in water because plaster is water proof
2. pink	2. blue
3. bent over elbow	3. straight on forearm
4. above elbow	4. below elbow
5. limited arm movement	5. lots of arm movement
6. arm in sling	6. no sling
7. plaster on for ten weeks	7. plaster on for two weeks
8. accident at park	8. accident at school
9. on a swing	9. on monkey bars

Figure 5.5 Jade's plasters

Several children drew pictures of Jade's arm in plaster; one with pink plaster and one with blue plaster. The chart was prominently displayed near the mat area. Jade struggled once again to write with her right hand but she had more time on the computer this time around.

5 . 5 . 4 Literacy episode: Lachlan's science experiments

Lachlan was a beginning reader when he came to school. Before long he read almost anything in sight and classmates went to him for help with reading. Lachlan and his older brother were doing science experiments at home from a book of simple science experiments. For show and tell Lachlan brought the book and told of his experiments. I suggested we could do the experiments at school to see if the results were the same.

The next day the children sat in a circle to observe and interact as I followed instructions that Lachlan read out for an experiment about a 'bouncing egg'. Two eggs were put in glasses of water and vinegar respectively and left on the counter for seven days. Each day the children looked for changes. Throughout third term we carried out many experiments - from Lachlan and others as the interest snowballed. We took digital photos of the experiments, wrote about the experiments and recorded observations in a class Big Book of *Interesting Observations and Experiments by 1s.*

5 . 6 Learning context: Journal drawing and writing

Journal drawing and writing (4.8.5) in books and on computers takes place after co-operative show and tell because the children's sharing and talking flows over into drawing, writing and representing their ideas and interests. The children choose what to draw/write and how to draw/write. They construct and co-construct their learning by solving problems about print as they make meaningful messages. Children take turns on computers, improving computer skills and solidifying letter/sound knowledge in the process, as they make messages using everyday technologies.

5 . 6 . 1 Literacy episode: Dane's early writing

On the third day of school Dane wrote:

> BrboicanfLi.icnFliovhils. ahEcan.et ecA fliov.clALs. hETcn fliov.LoLs
>
> He read: *The bird can fly. Can fly over hills. And he can eat. And fly over clouds. And fly over the world.*

I invited him to share his work with the class. Dane showed his drawing and writing and read the sentences to the class. Emily commented that it sounded like 'a real story.' Gemma commented that she could see the bird flying in his picture. In a

doubting voice Lucas asked, “Did Dane *really* write that?” Dane assured Lucas that it was his own writing. I then read it to the class pointing out specific words in the long line of writing – can, fli (fly), ov (over) and hils (hills).

5 . 6 . 2 Literacy episode: Trent leaves spaces

From the beginning of school Trent wrote familiar words like his name and *rat, Dan, dog* and *cat.* He wrote in capital letters and he put the words one against the other on the lines. When Trent read his writing to me in journal time the teaching point became leaving spaces between words. He responded to this over the next few days and at first he made squiggly lines between words to indicate a space but soon he just left spaces. In modelled writing I demonstrated leaving spaces and in sharing times we discussed leaving spaces between words. Sally left spaces too but one day she wrote it into her sentence and made her learning explicit:

I lookt at her face and I love her cat. Mrs Swan I left sass (spaces)

5 . 6 . 2 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

Gemma also made her learning explicit. She demonstrated understanding of rhyming words when she wrote in her journal: *I know that cards rhymes with car*

I broght some Yu-Gi-oh! Cards. I know that cards rims with car. It’s my Dady 41th party snak today. My mum is comeing.

5 . 6 . 3 Literacy episode: Joanne takes risks in writing

In journal writing Joanne experimented with letters/sounds to spell new words: *I like my fon* (phone); *Ilike my family cat fb* (Phoebe*); We wawdo sdra* (We watched

Cinderella); *I hd a nd* (I had a needle) and *Iam play y my mckp* (I am playing with my micropet). I noted 'y' for 'w' in with, and 'c' and 'k' for <c> in micropet.

On April 10 Joanne talked about having an x-ray and she showed us the actual x-ray from the hospital. She quickly took her journal and started writing. I didn't see her drawing and writing until she had finished (Figure 5.6). We celebrated her great effort at sharing time and children noted the drawings and labels as well as the quality work.

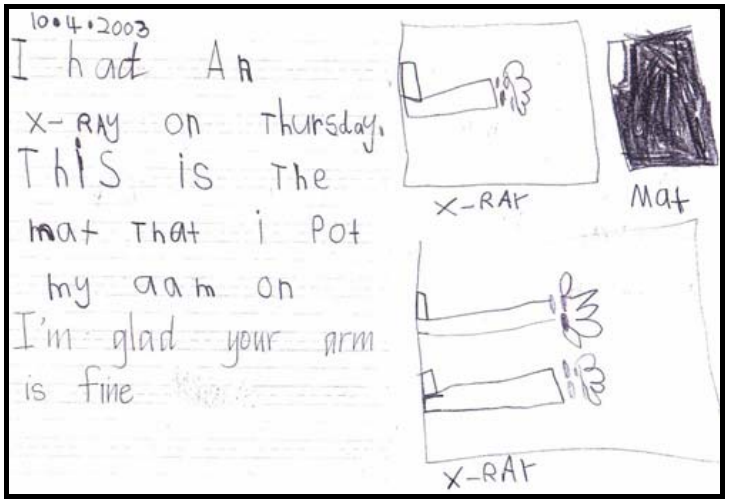


Figure 5.6 Joanne's writing about her x-ray

5 . 6 . 4 Literacy episode: Brock spells with dashes

Brock's detailed drawings were accompanied by direct sentences. He could not spell all the words and used dashes to indicate missing letters as in this real-life event:

L…..t N…t I s….	*Last night I said*
Ni my s….p	*in my sleep*
W…… is Luke B…it	*Where is Luke But it*
w… a d….m B….. HE w…	*was a dream But he was*
d….. s….. s…. I E….	*downstairs so I fell*
F… as…	*fast asleep.*

Another example:

I G….. R N….. car L……sNi……	*I got a new car last night*
And I D……t a wrestler	*and I brought a wrestler*
K…. you F….. me on the po..s…..	*Can you find me on the pages?*

The last question refers to his delight in challenging classmates to 'find' him in his pictures – an innovation on *Where's Wally?* (Handford, 1987).

5 . 6 . 4 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

In fourth term two policemen came to school and showed us the equipment they carry, a bullet-proof vest, a breathalyser and a police car. Children drew and wrote about the experience as a follow up activity. I viewed Brock's picture and writing with amazement. On the right hand page he had drawn the police equipment scattered amongst lines and swirls. On the left-hand page he wrote:

Finad the policemen siaf Tes re ter siaf

(Find the policemen stuff. These are their stuff)

…and drew small rebus-like pictures going from left to right, of a vest, breathalyser, radar gun (labelled gun) a shaker of capsicum spray (labelled C S) a belt (labelled Btal) and handcuffs (labelled H C). He challenged me to find the listed police equipment on the right hand page of pictures, lines and swirls. As I found each item, he touched the small rebus-like pictures on the left as if to check them off. Brock had great fun all afternoon asking classmates to find all the police items on the page. It was interesting to see the way Brock's pictures dominated the pages with textual print supplementing the visuals instead of the other way round.

5 . 7 Learning context: Sharing Time

Sharing time (4.8.6) after journal writing is an opportunity to celebrate children's accomplishments by showing their drawing/writing. Peer learning occurs because students hear and see a variety of writing and reading efforts and products of classmates. Children and I question writers for clarification, elaboration and added information about the writing. We also comment on aspects of quality writing/drawing. Frequently I draw attention to conventions of writing, originality and creativity that children demonstrate in their journals. In sharing time children often make connections to past experiences declaring, 'That reminds me of…' Additionally, children call on prior knowledge to connect to new learning. Sharing time creates an opportunity to recognise differences and appreciate strengths and abilities of learners in the classroom. There are always surprises as children reveal their different 'ways of knowing' (5.7.1) and their interests and literate identities through writing (5.7.2).

5 . 7 . 1 Literacy episode: Olivia's 3 Loves

You never can tell what children are thinking and learning. It was almost lunchtime when Olivia finished her writing and came to the sharing circle. Many children had already shared their journals and were getting lunchboxes from the refrigerator. The visiting teacher and I were ready for lunch too. I glanced at Olivia's pages (Figure 5.7), wondered about the hearts she had drawn and said, "Your turn, Olivia."

O: *3 loves.*

T: *3 loves?* (quizzically, trying to figure out the writing/drawing). *What do you mean?*

O: *Look! 33IIILLLooovvveee. 3 loves!*

T: *Oh, I see now. You've written the letters 3 times and here it says '3 love.' And you have done Bubble Writing! Wow. These are 'v's. You tricked me. I thought they were hearts. Let's look at it again*.

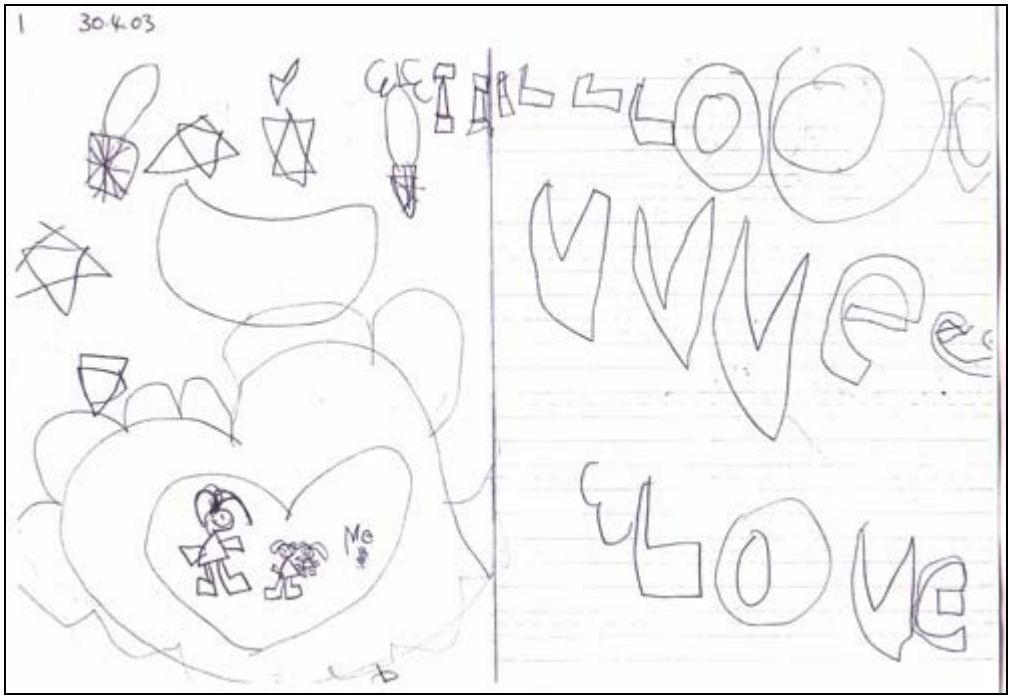


Figure 5.7 Olivia's 3 Loves

After Olivia left to get her lunch I looked at our visitor and said, "Amazing. You never can tell what children are thinking and learning. You never can tell…and that's why it's important that we let children talk - to talk about their work. To talk about what they've done. And we have to listen. Before she read it, I did not know that her writing said 3 loves." Together, we looked at the pages again. "Imagine if I had not heard her read it - if I saw this page later without Olivia's reading and explanation. What would I have thought? That's a good lesson for both of us!"

5 . 7 . 2 Literacy episode: Kate's birthdays and parties

In her journal Kate wrote about her friends' birthdays and parties. She demonstrated that literacy was definitely more than 'reading and writing' when she stressed the sequence of the upcoming birthdays and parties. The following is an account of how I remember the event. Kate wrote the two pages as shown below (but I have changed the names to pseudonyms):

> On friday It's Brock's party arphta ~~Schooh~~ School. On Sunday It's Clare's party on Saturday Trent is batln willph ~~Yu-o~~ Yu-o Yu-ig-oh! And I am going to yotsls. Clare's party is bphoa Brock's birthday. Arphta Brock's birthday It's Clare birthday. Today's ~~is~~ it Olivia's mums birthday we ben at ~~sch~~ school 166 Brock is tenin 7 and Clare is tonien ~~5~~6

This is the edited version:

> On Friday it's Brock's party after school. On Sunday it's Clare's party. On Saturday Trent is battling with Yugioh and I am going to watch. Clare's party is before Brock's birthday. After Brock's birthday it's Clare's birthday. Today is Olivia's mum's birthday. We have been at school 166 days. Brock is turning 7 and Clare is turning 6.

Kate read her writing to me before lunch and as I was uncertain of the actual days and dates of events, we went to the calendar to check the information and the sequence (information was recorded on the calendar earlier that week as children talked about the imminent birthdays and parties). We discussed her obvious excitement at the upcoming parties and she commented on the ages of the two children – 'Brock was turning seven and Clare was turning six so Brock was one year older.' I commented on her use of 'ph' for <f> and on another paper wrote the words *after*, *before* and *with* to demonstrate and explain. I also congratulated her on using so many apostrophes in correct places and pointed to the examples. I suggested that Kate might like to read her writing and share the information with the class.

After lunch I invited Kate to come to the front and read her writing. She read it to the class and several children queried the information - much as I had done earlier.

> T: *Kate, read it again slowly, so we can check each sentence with the calendar.*
> K: *On Friday it's Brock's party after school*. I pointed to Friday on the calendar.
> *On Sunday it's Clare's party*. I pointed to Sunday.
> *On Saturday Trent is battling with Yugioh and I am going to watch.*

I pointed to Saturday.

Clare's party is before Brock's birthday.

T: I pointed to Sunday for Clare's party and Monday for Brock's birthday and agreed: *Monday is after Sunday.*

K*: After Brock's birthday it's Clare's birthday.*

T: I pointed to Monday for Brock's birthday and Tuesday for Clare's birthday and again agreed: *Tuesday is after Monday.*

K: *Today is Olivia's mum's birthday. We have been at school 166 days. Brock is turning 7 and Clare is turning 6.*

P: *How come Brock is 7?*

Br: *I was at pre-school and my mum didn't want me to go to school.*

C: *Yeah and I went to pre-school too.*

Several children talked about being five, six or seven.

T: *Some other children are seven or nearly seven.*

E: *I'll be seven in December*.

Ku: *I'm seven and I had my party at Maze Mania. That's where Brock's party is too.*

Several children talked about birthdays and parties.

T: *Turn to your neighbour and talk about a birthday or party you remember.*

Children turned and chatted to partners or small groups.

T: *Let's look again at the calendar and see what's happening. And there's one more thing I want us to look at in Kate's writing.*

5 . 7 . 2 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

I held up Kate's journal and said that she had used apostrophes in the right places. I went to the board and wrote: *Brock's birthday* and *Clare's birthday* to demonstrate Kate's use of apostrophes. I also commented that she had used an apostrophe in 'It's – for It is…' and explicit (but brief) teaching followed for using an apostrophe in contractions (I am – I'm, I will – I'll, Here is – Here's, Do not – Don't). We left the list on the board for two days.

Children followed the next week with interest as the cultural and social events of birthdays and parties arose. It was as if Kate instigated an interest in time and sequence as children went to the calendar and worked out days, dates and the order of events. Brock and Clare talked about their parties and presents so other tangents came and went. I looked closely at Kate's writing and marvelled at what she had accomplished with her writing. I also realised how far Kate had come since the beginning of the year and that afternoon I excitedly shared the pages with her mother.

5 . 7 . 3 Literacy episode: Kurt's writing

Kurt wrote and drew at home last night and he brought the piece to show me. He wrote on a manila folder in a blue pencil. The message said:

> *I am going to the finding nemo movie that was the holidays and this is when I am going to go around the world I am going to playing in the snow and you can eat snow too.*

Large pictures of Kurt playing in the snow with his siblings and also sitting in the movie theatre watching *Finding Nemo* accompanied the text. He showed it to me and quietly read it pointing to the words as he read. I was confused over whether he saw the movie or his trip was in the holidays and he explained they were both in the holidays. When I expressed surprise and wonderment that he was going around the world his mum said, '…it was actually a trip around Australia that was being planned for next year.' Kurt's mother delightedly told me of his instigation of the activity and his engagement and perseverance with the task. She mentioned her role in helping him with spelling some words. I was thrilled with the product and the interaction and

invited Kurt to share it with the group. He did so in sharing time (significant, because Kurt was usually reserved and did not like the limelight) and children followed up with comments of their experiences of *Finding Nemo*, travelling and snow.

5 . 8 Learning context: Read aloud

Books, books and more books! That is the motto of my classroom. It always has been… and always will be. I love children's books and I love reading to children. Two years ago, after reading several books to the class, Matt said, "You sure do read a lot of books, Mrs Swan." Children frequently bring books from the bookshelves and ask me to read them again. They constantly surprise me with the connections they make to books and stories (5.9.1). I also read many poems, rhymes and chants (5.9.2).

5 . 8 . 1 Literacy episode: Cleo and Clare

After lunch on day two, I read *Cleo the Cat* (Mockford, 2000). Many children commented on the rhyming words like 'winks' and 'blinks'; 'inside' and 'hide'; 'leap' and 'asleep'. Just before afternoon tea Lachlan was looking on the bookshelves and found a second Cleo book entitled *Cleo and Caspar* (Mockford, 2001). He brought it to me and said, "Here's Cleo – another Cleo book. Can you read it?" I invited Lachlan to share with the class what he had found. He proudly showed the two Cleo books and asked me to read them. As I opened *Cleo the Cat*, Emily commented on the nice end papers of the book and we looked and discussed them. I read *Cleo the Cat* then proceeded to read *Cleo and Caspar*. Almost immediately, Madison interrupted:

> M*: It starts the same way. The same way as Cleo the Cat.*
> T*: Oh, does it Madison? Let's check.*
> *Cleo the Cat:* Cleo wakes. Cleo winks. Cleo yawns. Cleo blinks (Pages 1-4).
> *Cleo and Caspar:* Cleo wakes. Cleo winks. Cleo yawns. Cleo blinks (Pages 1-2).

M: *I was right* (smiling broadly).

T*: Wow Madison. What great listening. You are very observant!*

Throughout the reading of *Cleo and Caspar* some children again picked up on the rhyming words, 'sound' and 'around'; 'hello' and 'no'; 'tree' and 'me'.

At the end Clare said, *'Cleo looks like my name'.*

T: *Clare, it does. You are observant too. Get your name card and we'll have a look.*

The students looked at the words 'Cleo' and 'Clare' and discussed the similarities and differences:

Student 1: *the <c> sound in both*

Student 2: *the 'r' in Clare but not in Cleo*

Student 3: *they've both got an 'l'*

Student 4: *it's got 'eo' in Cleo but not in Clare.*

5 . 8 . 2 Literacy episode: What's wept?

In the poem *Little Tommy Tadpole* (Dennis, 1976) we came across the lines:

And his mother didn't know him

As he wept upon a log

"What's wept?" asked Lucas.

Someone said, "Sitting." Another said, "Falling." And Olivia said, "Crying." I nodded to indicate that Olivia was right and continued reading the poem:

And his mother didn't know him

As he wept upon a log,

For he wasn't Tommy Tadpole,

But Mr. Thomas Frog.

The answer to Lucas's question was of immediate interest to him to understand the line of the poem. Lucas took the risk of asking the question and within seconds Olivia had given the answer. There were no 'hands up'. There were no question/answer

rituals. There was a child's query and a peer's answer. We read the poem again to see if wept/cried made sense. It did. It seemed that each time we read the poem after this brief 'teachable moment', somebody volunteered that 'wept meant crying.' Most of the children in the class remembered this brief interaction and they remembered that it was Olivia who came up with the answer.

5 . 9 Learning context: Phonics and handwriting on chalkboards

During first semester after lunch we took twenty to thirty minutes to do handwriting and phonics on small chalkboards. Children came into class, got chalk, dusters and chalkboards, and sat down in front of the whiteboard. They drew freely until everyone was in and ready. The session was explicit teaching as I demonstrated letter formations to help children with handwriting. I emphasised starting points because they affected progress into cursive writing. We did letters and sounds at the same time so as not to treat 'subjects' (handwriting and phonics) in isolation. In forming the letter, we also talked about the name and the sound of the letter. The children gave multitudes of words that started with the letter and this added meaning to the handwriting/phonics exercise because children related to the words in everyday use, rather than sounds in isolation. The children also drew pictures of objects that started with the sounds to emphasise the sound-symbol-word-object relationships.

5 . 9 . 1 Literacy episode: O, Olivia and 10

On Monday of the second week (fifth day of school) I introduced small chalkboards for learning letters, sounds and handwriting. Twenty-five children sat on the floor facing the big whiteboard. Twenty-five children had little chalkboards in front of them. Twenty-five children had a piece of chalk and a cloth duster with them.

Twenty-five children looked at me expectantly. Today we are going to learn to write ‘o’ …and an explicit demonstration followed. The children practised forming the letter ‘o’, saying the letter name ‘o’ and the sound <o>. They gave words that started with <o>. I jotted the words on the board as they said them, excitedly celebrating each child’s effort: *Olivia, on, off, orange, olives, octopus.* Then Gemma burst out:

G: *Olivia’s got 10 in her name*
O: *That’s not 10. It’s O l (naming the letters). The l and the O are back to front.*
Pr: *Ten’s a number.*
D: *O is a letter and l is a letter – not numbers.*
T: *You people are very observant! Let’s look again at number 10 and the letters in Olivia.*

Olivia’s mother later told me this story: *Olivia had gone home and excitedly shared that she had “done ‘o’ at school today and we did her name.” Her mother had replied, “No, Olivia. You couldn’t possibly have done that. Olivia doesn’t start with an ‘A’ and you’d start with ‘a’ in your writing.”*

I reflected later: Is that a generation gap in learning to read and write?

5 . 9 . 2 Literacy episode: Krystal’s handwriting practise

Krystal did not ‘do school’ (Comber, 2000) very well. For the first few weeks she participated in group activities from the edges and rarely participated in child-initiated literacy episodes with the class. I did not know what Krystal was learning from group activities. Krystal liked to draw on small chalkboards but seemed to ‘tune out’ in revising and introducing letters. She stayed with the group, occasionally contributed and usually kept drawing – but rarely participated in writing letters despite scaffolding and teacher aide help. Soon, I saw letters in Krystal’s journal. She drew small squares like the chalkboard squares then wrote ‘m’ like so:

m	m
m	m

Krystal also practised letters at activity time. The letters were often well formed and sometimes pictures represented the sounds – as in a can of milk, for ‘m’ (Figure 5.8).

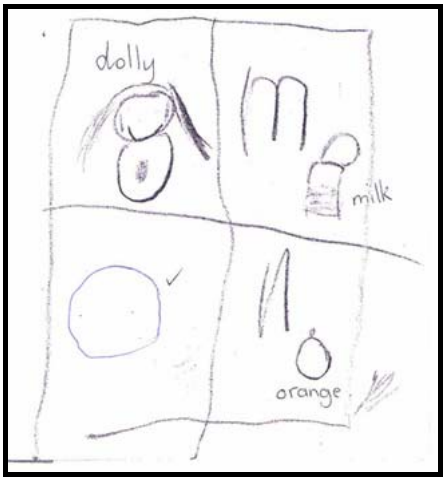


Figure 5.8 Krystal practises letters

Krystal responded well in one-on-one interactions with me and I gradually established data that demonstrated her literacies and learning. She loved to draw and create and usually had me scribe sentences about her creations. She often asked to share her work with the class. By the end of third term Krystal used and understood numerous letters and sounds. She wrote short sentences, notes and messages and spoke at length about her drawings. She read emergent reading books and keenly read to visitors.

5 . 10 Learning context: Making connections and incorporating new information

In making sense of their immediate worlds the children made connections to prior knowledge and past experiences as they incorporated new information and

understandings. If children introduced something of interest to the class I encouraged others to contribute to the group's learning (5.10.1).

5 . 10 . 1 Literacy episode: Holly's caterpillar

Monday, February 17. After lunch the children rested on the floor to cool down and calm down. Holly came in with a small caterpillar curled up in her hand. She found it on a tree. The class moved into a circle on the floor and Holly went around and showed everyone. She put the caterpillar in a jar. Holly and Emily went back to the tree where the caterpillar came from to get some leaves for the caterpillar to snack on.

Madison said, *"Caterpillar starts with 'c'."*
Whilst nodding to Madison, I reached for the 'c' cards from the alphabet box and held up *c - crab* on one card, *c – car* on another and *Caterpillars coughing, c, c, c* on another. We chanted the <c> rhyme several times.
Someone said, *"Clare,"* so we sang, "*Clare is coughing, c, c, c*" (saying <c> sound).

The children thought up <c> words and actions that could be attributed to Clare and I listed them on the board. Clare is:

coughing
crawling
crying
coming
calling

Looking around the room the children found more 'c' words that were added to the list.
Peter found 'count' on Maisie's number chart: '*Clare is counting, c, c, c.'*
Prue found 'Cooking equipment' on a cupboard by the stove: '*Clare is cooking, c, c, c.'*
Joanne saw the computer: '*Clare is on the computer, c, c, c.*'
One child said, "*Clare has a caterpillar,"* but another child commented that the language patterns had changed.
Emily saw 'calendar' and laughingly said, "No. Clare is calendering doesn't make sense!"

5 . 10 . 1 . 1 Connections, follow-ups and revisions

That Monday night my reflective journal read: *It was fun, infectious and exciting. Re-read charts. Caterpillar in jar with leaves. V-H Caterpillar (book). Lots of active participation with c words.* Much later I constructed a flow chart to show the variety and approximate sequence of connections and activities as the events unfolded.

On Tuesday I typed the rhymes: Clare is coughing c, c, c; Clare is crawling c, c, c; Clare is counting c, c, c, etc.

On Wednesday the children illustrated the rhymes with brightly coloured textas and we made a class book called *Clare's C Book* (Figure 4.10). On re-reading the book, we stressed the hard <c> sound and talked about the name of the letter 'c'.

I then read '*Chicka Chicka, Boom Boom'* (Martin & Archambault, 1989) an alphabet book about 'a coconut tree' and children joined in the repetitive parts as they picked up the rhyme. Suddenly the search was on for 'c' words and children spread out in the room. They targeted alphabet books but also found other 'c' pictures, words and objects to share and display on tables.

Then to chalkboards. After we revised 'o' and 'a' I introduced 'c'. Gemma noticed that they started in the same place and went in the same direction. I invited her to come to the board to show everyone because peer teaching is usually effective. The children wrote 'c' and drew 'c' pictures before sharing them with a partner.

On Thursday the children brainstormed ‘c’ words on the board before they traced/wrote ‘c’ and drew pictures of ‘c’ things in their own Alphabet Books. Some children copied the ‘c’ words and labelled pictures. That afternoon the children took their Alphabet Books (see Figure 4.26) home to add more ‘c’ pictures – a hugely successful and effective literacy practice because parents and children worked together on a common task that helped literacy learning.

On Friday morning the Morning Message read:

No cooking today. Instead we will cut, colour, collage, construct and create.

As the children came into the classroom they excitedly showed me their ‘c’ pictures. I suggested that Alphabet Books - opened at ‘c’ pages - be left on tables and immediately children shared their vast array of ‘c’ pictures and words with classmates. Fantastic!

Later, I re-read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1970) and children drew caterpillars. We displayed them alongside a caterpillar-butterfly life-cycle chart near the caterpillar. It was also beside the life-cycle charts of tadpoles-to-frogs near the fish tank of tadpoles. The ‘c’ connections connected and continued.

5 . 10 . 1 . 2 Olivia’s letter

Although our caterpillar episode began on February 17th, children’s connections continued to occur. On March 5th Olivia brought me a letter that read:

Dear Mrs Sswan I found T wo another
She folded the paper over and wrote again:
Dear Mrss 3 Swan I found another t word
twisties (on the back page with a picture).

I asked Olivia if she would share it with the class and she agreed. As I read the letter to the children, Olivia added, "And there's a 'c' word – crunch. Twisties go crunch." Later we added 'twisties' to *Our T t Book* and 'crunch' to *Clare's C c Book*.

In this chapter I have described child-initiated literacy episodes as they occurred in various learning contexts and scheduled literacy practices of everyday classroom life. I have included connections, follow-ups and revisions to illustrate the on-going nature of the children's learning in the social milieu of the classroom.

In Chapter Six I analyse the data to better understand the child-initiated literacy episodes as sites of significant learning in my Year One classroom. I examine the episodes in terms of teaching and learning, early childhood pedagogy, children building their literate identities and possible classroom conditions that enabled the child-initiated literacy episodes to occur. Since I focus on the child-initiated literacy episodes, other features of the literacy-learning context – physical, social, temporal environments and multiliteracies - remain under explored.

Chapter Six

Analysis of Data

> If the grandmamma said in the evening, "Now, Heidi, read something to us," then the child was perfectly happy. It was now quite easy for her to read, and when she read aloud she understood better; and then Mrs Sesemann could explain so much, and added so much that was new.
>
> (Spyri, *Heidi,* undated, p. 123-124).

6 . 0 Introduction

On re-reading the detailed data presented in Chapter Five I was intrigued by the number of times throughout the days that children initiated literacy learning episodes. Such episodes arose from different children (5.2.1), at different times (5.10.1) and from different 'triggers' (5.3.1) but resulted in teachable moments of responsive-interactive learning (5.4.1). I revised my focus and concentrated on child-initiated literacy episodes because of the dynamic and powerful learning during and after the episodes with children going on to demonstrate skills and understandings in later interactions and artefacts.

Although the child-initiated literacy episode was the dominant pattern that emerged from the data, the database was much wider and richer than this. There were examples of children learning through and with technologies (4.3.5) and multiliteracies (Kalantzis, Cope and Fehring, 2002; Healey, 2004) but in writing up this study I did not concentrate on them. There were elements of the classroom literacy learning context (Figure 3.1) including physical (4.3), social (4.6) and temporal (4.7) environments, that were vital in setting the scene for the child-initiated literacy episodes to occur. However, I did not focus on them because they were detailed in Chapter Four and they were in the background of the actual child-initiated

literacy episodes. Other elements of the literacy learning context were literacy practices (4.7.2) and the teacher. The literacy practices and the schedule of practices were detailed in Chapter Four and formed the framework for discussing the child-initiated literacy episodes in Chapter Five, so I did not emphasise them in the analysis. However, the role of the teacher was considered. In the analysis I explored child-initiated literacy episodes in terms of teaching and learning, early childhood pedagogy, building children's literate identities and possible classroom conditions that enabled such literacy and learning episodes to occur.

In this chapter I examine child-initiated literacy episodes to identify what they were and when they arose. Next, I look at the literacy episodes from an early childhood pedagogical perspective as construction of learning, co-construction of knowledge and scaffolding in social and cultural learning. I explore the literacy episodes in terms of child-centred learning as in doing a thing for him/herself (from Greek *authentes*), children instigating learning and making connections. I consider children's literacy in terms of 'literate identities' rather than 'development' because of the nature of literacy and learning. I also consider the role of the teacher and possible classroom conditions that allow and/or enable child-initiated literacy episodes to occur.

6 . 1 What were child-initiated literacy episodes?

Child-initiated literacy episodes were teachable moments that arose from a child's observation and ensuing comment, query or question. My reply to the child's remark created a responsive-interaction that extended thinking and learning. The interaction built up as other children contributed their understandings which created meaningful exchanges and relevant learning for the participants.

As part of the interaction there may have been incidental learning for some children and/or explicit teaching for others. The literacy episode became a 'dialogue about matters that are of interest and concern to the participants' (Wells, 1999, p. xi).

In addition, such literacy episodes seemed to reflect Vygotsky's formulations within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where as Moll (1990, p. 140) explained, 'the child is not a mere passive recipient of the adult's teachings, nor is the adult simply a model of expert, successful behaviour' but 'the adult-child dyad engages in joint problem-solving activity, where both share knowledge and responsibility for the task.' In child-initiated literacy episodes I considered the children as 'teachers' too because they added information and knowledge to the interaction.

In analysing the child-initiated literacy episodes in my classroom I observed and identified the following steps as common recurring patterns:

Scheduled literacy practice

Child-initiated interruption or interjection

Teacher's response

Ensuing interactions from child-initiator, teacher and other children

Classmates joined the interaction and helped extend understandings and learnings of participants and listeners

Charts and/or artefacts demonstrated learning/understanding

Later, further demonstrations of understandings appeared in children's interactions, independent work and literacy practices.

Child-initiated literacy episodes often looked like this:

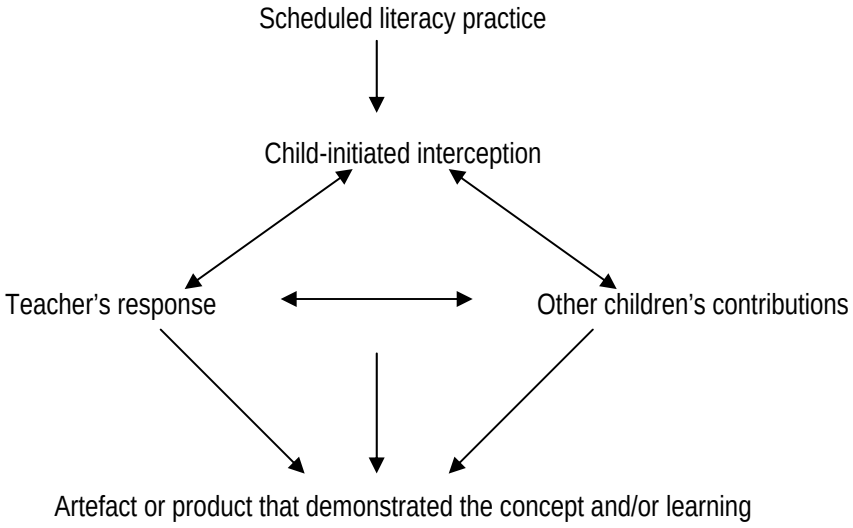


Figure 6.1 Common format of child-initiated literacy episodes

6 . 2 When did child-initiated literacy episodes occur?

In the classroom, child-initiated literacy episodes occurred at any time throughout the day. They occurred when a child saw and/or thought something and made a remark about it to me/us. An individual's comment to the group on something of interest often triggered a literacy episode. Such events occurred surprisingly, unexpectedly, randomly and sporadically during scheduled literacy practices (4.7.2).

Child-initiated literacy episodes occurred anytime. They occurred during calendar, shared reading, modelled writing, show and tell, sharing time, handwriting/phonics time and storytime (Figure 4.17). They occurred during mornings, transitions, after lunch and before going home.

6 . 3 Child-initiated literacy episodes and early childhood learning

In my classroom child-initiated literacy episodes were by nature, social and interactive. It was a given that the children talked (4.6.1), interacted and communicated as they lived and learned in the course of daily classroom life. Comber and Barnett (2003, p. 10) maintained that, 'interaction and communication with others is fundamental to learning.' My Year Ones brought family learnings and literacies to school and used them in the context of everyday social and literacy practices (2.6, McNaughton, 2002; Barrett-Pugh, 2000). The children talked, interacted, drew, wrote, read and communicated about their lives, interests and immediate worlds as they actively participated in everyday life in the classroom. It seemed to me that dynamic learning occurred in child-initiated literacy episodes because children constructed their own learning, co-constructed knowledge with expert 'others' and gained understanding with the help of peer and teacher scaffolding.

6 . 3 . 1 Construction of learning

In this study child-initiated literacy episodes showed that children actively constructed their own learning as they made sense of the world around them. The children's comments revealed their understandings at the time. For example, Gemma attempted to make sense of innumerable print symbols around her (5.3.1) when she said that 'is' (the word in a sentence) was 1s (the title for the Year One class). Similarly, she was making sense of numbers, letters and print symbols when she commented that 'Olivia has a 10 in her name' (5.9.1). Zac made sense of sounds and letters with his comment, "That's all Ws" when he heard 'our wonderful ones work' mid-sentence (5.2.1).

Madison's statement, "The 'w' and 'o' sound the same and 'c' and 'k' are the same," revealed an understanding of letter-sound relationships (5.2.1). In making sense of alphabetic sounds, letters and print symbols in her immediate environment, Madison displayed unique 'ways of knowing' (Harste, 2000). However, her stunningly, insightful statement, "The word cat is little but cats are big and kitten is a big word and they are little and only babies," displayed her world knowledge in her own inimitable way. Interestingly, the comment came *after* others had participated in the interaction as seen below:

> M: '*The 'w' and 'o' sound the same and 'c' and 'k' are the same.'*
> I wrote c and k on the board – and stressed the <c> sound.
> Brittany said that cat starts with <c> and that kitten starts with <k>.
> I wrote the words – cat, kitten.
> Madison said, *"The word cat is little but cats are big and kitten is a big word and they are little and only babies."*

Madison's second comment is an instance of the co-construction of knowledge in our classroom which I now address more fully.

6 . 3 . 2 Co-construction of knowledge

Child-initiated literacy episodes in the classroom demonstrated co-construction of knowledge as the children and I brought information and understanding to the interactions. Children learned from knowledgeable 'others' as literacy episodes unfolded. I often scribed as children spoke about topics of interest and aspects of literacy thus enabling visual learning along with auditory learning. It was clear that the children and I shared the role of 'knowledgeable others' as we negotiated understandings. Hammond & Gibbons (2001, p. 12) explained that, '…knowledge is collaboratively constructed rather than simply passed on, or handed from teacher to

learner. That is, knowledge is constructed in and through joint participation in activities where all participants are actively involved in negotiating meaning' as in *Wow or www* (5.2.1), *Greg's birthday* (5.5.1) and *We have visitors* (5.5.2).

Co-construction of knowledge differs from transmission teaching as Newman (1991, p. 275) explained, 'In a transmission situation students are given information, factual or strategic, whether they can use it or not, whether it makes sense to individual learners at that particular time or not.' In contrast, child-initiated literacy episodes arose from child interest and/or need to know – from a comment or query that was relevant to the child's learning at the time. For example, Lucas's question, "What's wept?" in *Little Tommy Tadpole* (5.8.2) was of immediate interest and need to him. Upon hearing Olivia's reply, "Crying" Lucas and others understood the meaning of the line in the poem. This may have been incidental learning (McNaughton, 2002) for Lucas and others, but it was also powerful learning because it was relevant and meaningful at the time.

Likewise, Emily's comment, "The apostrophe (') is because it's Greg's birthday" (5.4.1) was relevant to the writing as we constructed class news (4.8.3). By way of meaningful dialogue, Emily and I contributed and reinforced pertinent information in the context of meaningful writing just as Gordon Wells (1999, p. xi) suggested,

> …education should be conducted as a dialogue about matters that are of interest and concern to the participants. This is how children learn about the world as they simultaneously learn to talk before they go to school …Surely we should enable children to build on that firm foundation by encouraging their desire to understand and their willingness to observe and experiment, and to read, write and talk with others about what interests them.

The child-initiated literacy episodes from this class encouraged meaningful dialogue because the episodes arose from children's observations, interests and ensuing comments, queries and questions. However my role as the teacher was vital in responding, supporting and extending the interactions through meaningful dialogue. This supporting role is often called scaffolding.

6 . 3 . 3 Scaffolding

As discussed in Chapter Two, scaffolding (2.14; Hammond and Gibbons, 2001) refers to help and support given to a learner by an expert or knowledgeable other, to enable the learner to go further than s/he could go on his/her own. Parents scaffold children. Teachers scaffold children. Other people scaffold children too, including siblings, friends, grandparents and coaches. In the classroom, scaffolding occurred in child-initiated literacy episodes because in responsive interactions with knowledgeable others, the children understood more than they would have understood on their own, for example, Sally (5.1.1), Dane (5.1.2) and Gemma (5.3.1).

Just as building site scaffolding provides temporary support for construction or reconstruction of a building, classroom and teacher scaffolding provides temporary support for increasing understanding and improving competencies of the children. In the process, children gain confidence in their own abilities and skills and become more independent. Additionally, because children have different proficiencies, they help and support each other as 'expert and knowledgeable' others. During this research, Lachlan was the computer whiz and Madison was an 'expert' speller. Greg and Lucas were Pokemon experts. Trent and Brock were Yugioh experts. Kate and Olivia knew about fairies. Trent, Dane and Zac read almost anything. Joanne, Dane, Brock and Krystal drew almost anything. Jade was knowledgeable about her various

pets. Peter and Brittany were resident runners. Prue and Emily were meticulous artists and neat writers. Madison and Kate were creative writers. Holly and Bonnie were creative dramatists. Sally 'read' situations and 'summed up' clearly and concisely. Bonnie, Emily, Holly and Kurt brought us items from nature. As Makin (2002, p. 79) argued, 'Peer relationships and the ways in which children can scaffold each other's learning are considered as central aspects of ways in which children learn.'

Scaffolding is important because the support is appropriate support and suits the learner at the time. Scaffolding varies to fit the child's level of capability and his/her need at the time. Certainly in this research, child-initiated literacy episodes fitted the child's capability because the child initiated the interaction. Just as teachable moments responded to learners' immediate needs, scaffolding also responded to learners' needs. Newman (1991, p. 275) explained that in teachable moments, '…information is volunteered in response to what students are actually doing; questions are asked or suggestions are made to those particular individuals for whom they are likely to prove immediately helpful.' The same applies to scaffolding. In both, it is not necessarily a matter of 'telling' the answer but supporting the learner to *think* about the problem or situation and come up with possible solutions. In discussing scaffolding Hammond and Gibbons (2002, p. 5) added, "But it is also assistance that is designed to help learners to work with increasing independence – to know not only *what* to think and do, but *how* to think and do, so that new skills and understandings can be applied in new contexts' (italics in original). This reminded me of Madison's suggestion to make a lunch song from the rhyme in *The King's Pudding* (Cowley, 1987) with Olivia changing the words to create *Our Lunch Song* (5.3.3). This was an example of children interacting and co-constructing knowledge together.

6 .4 What did child-initiated literacy episodes mean for the children's learning?

Child-initiated literacy episodes in this classroom created immediate, specific, explicit and child-centred learning opportunities. A literacy episode increased literacy learning from the child's perspective as the child-initiator voiced his/her understandings and simultaneously brought attention to a way of looking at an aspect of literacy. The episodes also created opportunities for shared learning as classmates listened, participated and/or interacted in the literacy episode. Children instigated literacy lessons as they brought up points of immediate interest that were then questioned and discussed as class interactions. Such literacy lessons may not have been the focus of the session from my immediate literacy plans. Child-initiated literacy episodes were revision for some children and explicit teaching for others – depending on children's levels of understanding at the time.

6 . 4 . 1 Child-initiated literacy episodes as child-centred learning

Child-initiated literacy episodes in my classroom represented child-centred learning because the child initiated the learning and ensuing interaction. That is, s/he expressed curiosity about something of interest and since particular learning was centred on that child at the time, his/her learning was personal, 'just-in-time', meaningful and relevant. For example, Gemma learned the difference between 'is' and '1s' (5.3.1) with dialogue and ensuing artefacts demonstrated her learning and understanding.

Child-centred literacy learning that came from individual children was meaningful and relevant literacy learning. The children produced and used literacies in the course of everyday life as they wrote notes, messages and phone numbers for friends. They made cards and pictures for families, friends and me (4.8.9). Some children made

labels, notices and reminders for the classroom (4.4). Others drew pictures and added rhymes and stories to display on classroom walls and refrigerator doors (5.3.3.1). Children added texts to digital photos in class books (4.8.3 and Figure 4.21) and the class website (4.3.5) to elaborate on classroom events and happenings. Developing literacies and multiliteracies (2.8; Barton and Hamilton, 2001; Kalantzis, Cope and Fehring, 2002; Healy, 2004) were integral to the children's bodies and beings as literacies and practices went with them between home and school. It was embodied literacy as children lived literacies and practices in school and out - socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively.

6 . 4 . 2 Child-initiated literacy episodes as shared learning

In a child-initiated literacy episode there was direct, indirect and peripheral learning *from* classmates and *for* classmates depending upon the individual's active participation or passive presence in the interaction. Comber and Nichols (2004, p. 57) maintained, 'Pedagogy involves ongoing negotiations of relationships, where teachers and students accomplish understandings through feedback, reworking and feedback.' In my experiences with child-initiated literacy episodes, most episodes originated from one child, but other children responded, interacted and became involved as they made their own connections to the comments and/or artefacts as in *Tuck us in…* (5.3.2), *Rare Yugioh cards* (5.5.1) and *Jade's broken arm* (5.5.3).

6 . 4 . 3 Child-initiated literacy episodes as instigating literacy lessons

Child-initiated literacy episodes in my classroom often meant that particular literacy lessons originated from the children rather than me as in the carat in *Sally's carat* (5.1.1), apostrophes for ownership in *Greg's birthday* (5.4.1and 5.4.1.1), compiling

'v' words in *We have visitors* (5.4.2 and 5.4.2.1), sequencing events and using apostrophes for ownership and contractions in *Kate's writing* (5.7.2). Although I made decisions about which literacy practices to schedule at certain times of the day (4.7.2), the practices were open-ended (4.7.4) and enabled student input and ownership. This contrasted with classrooms where teachers taught reading as a prescribed hierarchy of skills, where materials were presented in isolation and in a linear and ordered sequence (Hill, 1997; Beecher and Arthur, 2001).

The child-initiated literacy episodes in the classroom demonstrated to me that literacy learning was not linear and hierarchical. Instead, children's literacy learning was all over the place because children's literacies depended upon family, social and cultural literacies and learning that accompanied children to school as emergent literacies (2.1.13; Teale and Sulzby, 1986; McNaughton, 1995) and prior knowledge. In addition, children gained a variety of literacies and practices as they participated in school routines, tasks and activities (4.7.6). Otherwise, how can we explain the huge variations in what beginning Year One children can do?

> For example, on the third day of school (5.6.1) Dane wrote and read:
>
> BrboicanfLi.icnFliovhils. ahEcan.et ecA fliov.clALs. hETcn fliov.LoLs
> *The bird can fly. Can fly over hills. And he can eat. And fly over clouds. And fly over the world*.

Dane's writing provided information and read like a 'story'. It made sense. It elaborated on his picture, which told a story in itself. The writing went from left to right and he used his knowledge of letters and sounds to spell words. He used full stops – but not necessarily in the correct places. As Clay (1998, p. 133) explained, 'New entrants to school apply any prior learning about print they have to some of

what they produce…' And Dane certainly produced in this piece. In contrast, on the same day I slowly and deliberately showed another child how to write his name. These two children instigated very different literacy-lessons within the classroom.

6 . 4 . 4 Child-initiated literacy episodes as explicit teaching and/or revision

Child-initiated literacy episodes in my classroom endorsed active instruction, explicit teaching and revision of learning, depending on the participants' understanding at the time. I often scribed on the whiteboard (4.3.1) to reinforce a point being made by a child in an interaction as in stressing the formation and sound of 'o' in *O, Olivia and 10* (5.9.1). Some children already knew the sound-symbol relationship of 'o' and <o> but most did not write 'o' from right to left as is necessary in cursive handwriting.

I scribed and stressed addition patterns in *Three more days till the party* (5.2.3) and although only a handful of children grasped the concept at the time, it was important to extend them with the meaningful interaction. As the Productive Pedagogies manual (Education Queensland, 2002, p. 1) stated, 'In helping students become producers of knowledge, the teacher's main instructional task is to create activities or environments that allow them opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking.' In this case, I created the environment because calendar time was a scheduled literacy practice (4.7.2), but I did *not* create the activity. The episode arose from Zac's understanding that seventy came after sixty-nine and Gemma's (incorrect) comment, "Three more days till the party" (5.2.3). The significance of the child-initiated learning episode was that the interaction demonstrated Zac's and Trent's understanding of mathematical patterns to 100 - yet if I was deciding 'what to teach' as a Year One teacher, it is doubtful that I would 'teach' those patterns to 100 because the mathematical curriculum suggests Year Ones add to 20.

Sharing time after journals (4.8.6) frequently provided opportunities for revision and/or explicit teaching because I elaborated on a literacy aspect demonstrated by a child. For example, when Kate shared her journal piece about birthdays and parties (5.7.2) we examined the sequence of days/events and briefly revisited the use of 'ph' as <f> from Kate's use of 'ph' in arphta (after), willph (with) and bphoa (before). I then scribed and reinforced the apostrophe for ownership referring to Kate's use of the symbol in Clare's birthday and party, Brock's birthday and party and Olivia's mum. However, Kate also used an apostrophe for a contraction in 'It's…' so explicit teaching ensued (It is = It's; I am = I'm) to further understanding of the varied uses of apostrophes in writing. I was aware that this was explicit teaching for some children yet revision for others because of different abilities, knowledge and immediate understandings of twenty-five young learners. As Harwayne (2001, p. 182) noted, 'Share meetings, the whole-class gatherings that often end the writing workshop, are prime time to teach all the children, not just the child who is sharing. Teachers should not hesitate to highlight breakthroughs, make suggestions, and even help students begin to carry those suggestions out publicly.' Kate's writing demonstrated that Year One children (aged six) were capable of understanding and correctly using apostrophes in meaningful writing. In addition, it was Kate's writing that instigated the explicit teaching and/or revision of 'apostrophes as contractions' – not my lesson plans. This differed from classroom situations where teachers made all the decisions.

6 . 4 . 5 Child-initiated literacy episodes as children making connections

During this research, child-initiated literacy episodes often arose from children's connections to familiar understandings such as Ws in 'wonderful ones work' (5.3.1), 'tuck' from *Sing a Song* (5.4.2), an apostrophe in *Greg's birthday* (5.5.1), 'v' in *We*

have visitors (5.5.2 and 5.5.2.1) and Clare's name that looked like Cleo (5.8.1). When the children were exposed to new books, concepts and ideas they made sense of the new by connecting to the known. Significantly, in child-initiated literacy episodes children made their own connections and volunteered those connections (as their understandings) to the group. For example, when Holly showed the caterpillar (5.10.1), Madison made an immediate connection saying, "Caterpillar starts with 'c'." After several children and I specified other 'c' words, one child mentioned Clare.

An important point here is that I did not set out to make the connections. Madison made the connection and initiated the extended literacy episode. I responded and other children contributed. I encouraged connections by showing the alphabet cards of 'c' and that action triggered further awareness, specific contributions and learning to the literacy episode. Certainly I 'ran with it' and redirected the session to restate the card from 'Caterpillars coughing, c c c' to 'Clare is coughing, c c c' but the children made connections and continued the flow of the session. In McNaughton's (2002, p. 86) words, what began as 'an "explicit/text-free" teaching act', rapidly became 'an "explicit/text-connected" teaching act' as we moved from the caterpillar to the sound <c> to 'c' words on the board, creating 'c' rhymes, then the children writing the letter 'c', and <c> words and pictures in their alphabet books.

Children making the connections in these child-initiated literacy episodes were different from the times when I set out to make connections *for* the class. For example, I often used our school sports day to demonstrate writing a recount. I used the familiar (sports day) to introduce the new (a recount). As McNaughton (2002, p. 27) explained, 'From the point of view of the learner, making connections can be understood as a kind of transfer. Effective connections for the learner happen when

the activities in an (often unfamiliar) instructional programme incorporate features of some familiar expertise that up until then have been situated in out-of-school activities.' That is, the teacher made the decision to construct a connection for the children to facilitate their understanding. In contrast, these child-initiated literacy episodes meant that the children made the connections and began the interactions. Such connections invariably surprised me.

As I reflected on the child-initiated literacy episode of Holly's Caterpillar (5.10.1) and the connections, follow-ups and revisions (5.10.1.1) it was interesting to note how the episodes included examples of past teaching and learning approaches. For example, language experience (2.1.6; Walshe, 1977) was evident as we talked and wrote about an object and common activity in the class. We incorporated features of an integrated day (2.1.8; Rathbone, 1971) because the activities, teaching and learning stemmed from a child's interest and contribution with subject areas cutting across curriculum lines as activities revolved around the caterpillar (talk, reading, writing, phonics, handwriting, science, the environment, read alouds, examining charts with visual/print texts, checking Internet sites and observing growth and change in life). There were several phonics (2.1.3) sessions as children looked at the letter 'c', heard the sound <c>, wrote 'c', searched for words that started with <c> and completed the 'c' pages in their Alphabet Books. We stressed key words (2.1.10; Ashton Warner, 1963) like *caterpillar* and *Clare* as children composed new sentences and rhymes (Clare is counting, c c c). Since this literacy episode began on Monday, February 17, in the fourth week in Year One, emergent literacy (2.1.11; Teale and Sulzby, 1986) was obvious as children shared their prior knowledge and understandings from families, homes, communities and pre-schools. We incorporated features of whole language (2.1.12; Smith, 1981; Goodman, 1986; Cambourne, 1988) as we worked

with an ‘authentic’ topic of a ‘real’ caterpillar from the students’ immediate world, environment and interest. We worked from the ‘whole’ language associated with the caterpillar and incorporated reading, writing and phonics in the context of the immediate topic. Students ‘innovated on text’ as they created new rhymes about Clare from the model of ‘Caterpillars coughing, c c c’. There was considerable explicit teaching as I showed (and we discussed) charts, diagrams, information books and Internet websites of caterpillar-to-butterfly life cycles. I also demonstrated the formation and sound of ‘c’ and children found many ‘c’ words and pictures as they practised using, drawing, writing and reading about ‘c’.

Looking at the same child-initiated literacy episodes (5.10.1 and 5.10.1.1) in contemporary terms I realised they included repertoires of practice (2.9.1; Government of Queensland, 2000; Comber and Barnett, 2003) such as talking and sharing information, writing about a topic of interest, reading caterpillar books aloud, discussing charts of butterfly life-cycles, explicit teaching of handwriting and phonics, composing rhymes, sharing reading and independently reading. The episodes featured some of the ‘four roles’ model of literacy (2.9.2; Freebody and Luke, 1990, 2003) with extensive decoding and encoding of ‘c’ words as we created, read, revised and ‘played’ with words and sentences. Children were text participants and text users as we composed rhymes and sentences, made a class book, introduced *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin and Archimbault, 1989), re-read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1974) and examined charts of caterpillars to butterflies. Children experienced a variety of literacies and multiliteracies (2.8; Barton and Hamilton, 2001; Kalantzis, Cope and Fehring, 2002) as they spoke, listened, read, wrote, drew, found pictures and interacted with people, screens and websites about caterpillars, Clare and ‘c’.

6 . 4 . 6 Child-initiated literacy episodes and children's literate identities

In this study I use the term 'literate identity' rather than 'literacy development' (to describe a child's literacies, skills and abilities) because I see 'literate identity' as a big picture of various literacies and skills a child uses, performs (does) and participates in as s/he communicates and goes about everyday life in his/her immediate world. In contrast, 'literacy development' creates an image to me, of sequential steps that one attains on the road to literacy – as if literacy is an end product. Nichols (2004, p. 90) maintained, 'Challengers argue that a notion of 'development' as linear progression is at odds with more complex accounts of learning and works against the interests of learners…' It is my belief that building literacies and being literate is not a linear progression of skills and accomplishments but a multitude of social practices (2.2; Luke, 1994; Lankshear and Knobel, 2003b) involving multiliteracies, in activities and interactions one carries out in everyday life

In simultaneously living and building literate identities, aspects of literacy are relevant for different social practices for different people at different times (2.3, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000), depending on lived experiences in families, homes and communities. For example, some children see parents in meaningful and purposeful reading by checking a TV guide to select programs to view but others see parents using the remote control to switch channels. Likewise, some children see parents 'remember' food items to buy at the store whilst others see parents consult written shopping lists or hand held PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant). Some parents and children send email cards for celebrations and some parents and children send actual cards in the post. Some children rarely see print and rarely use texts at all. Literacies, practices, skills and abilities vary within families, homes and communities (2.9.3;

Gee, 1990; Luke, 1994; Barrett-Pugh, 2000). Since children build their literate identities from lived experiences in families, homes and communities (2.6) children come to school with a variety of literacies, interests, skills and abilities (Hill et al, 1998; Thompson, 2000; Reid, Edwards and Power, 2004).

As my Year Ones drew and wrote in journals on the first day of school I was aware of the wide array of literate identities that entered my classroom. For example, in this class of twenty-five Year Ones, all the children knew some letters and sounds and one boy read simple stories and books. All the children recognised their names and most wrote their names in some way. Some children read images and icons on Gameboys and computers and most read environmental print of McDonalds, Hungry Jacks and Children Crossing. Some children wrote words in capital letters and some wrote in lower case letters and numbers. A few children wrote emails on real computers and several children spelled words on toy computers. Many children interacted with the Internet and CDs and some interacted with tapes and books. Some children learned to love stories from close, personal read-alouds and some learned to tell stories as anecdotes of life. Some children drew colourful, detailed pictures of families' events and some sketched scenes of sparse stick figures. Several children struggled to write with pencil and paper yet interacted quickly and accurately with arrows on computer games. Literacies varied widely. Skills, abilities and interests varied widely. The children's literate identities were already apparent and my role was to continue building their literate identities whilst increasing, expanding and extending their literacies and competencies.

Each child came to school with a ‘virtual schoolbag’ (Thompson, 2002, p. 1) of family and community literacies and learning. They brought what they considered as literacies, into the classroom. However, it was clear that ‘what counted as literacy’ varied with families and children and the literate identities of the children varied widely. In my classroom, Olivia demonstrated her enjoyment of and familiarity with traditional rhymes and stories by her contributions to such class discussions (5.3.3). Greg demonstrated his oral language (5.4.1) and wide vocabulary but also demonstrated his reluctance to physically write. Madison demonstrated her interest in stories (5.8.1) and language by sharing stories, ‘playing’ with words (5.2.1) and rhymes (5.3.3) and delighting in her role of classroom ‘expert’ speller. Lachlan demonstrated his preference for computers and co-operatively shared his varied skills with classmates. Kurt demonstrated his at-the-time writing skills when he wrote about family holidays and then shared it with the class (5.7.3). Joanne’s writing demonstrated her willingness to take risks (5.6.3) as she experimented with letters/sounds to spell new words as in *fon* (phone); *Ilike my family cat fb* (Phoebe*) and We wawdo sdra* (We watched Cinderella) and to label her diagrams (Figure 5.6). Gemma demonstrated her unbounded confidence in trying and experimenting with literacies (5.3.1 and 5.9.1) as she drew, labelled, wrote, volunteered information, told others how to spell, chuckled over funny books, persevered with reading, composed rhymes, created and sang songs and ditties. Krystal demonstrated that she learned on her own terms as she reluctantly participated at group times (formations and sounds of letters on chalkboards) but skilfully practised the same task in activity time on chalkboards, whiteboards and papers (5.9.2 and Figure 5.8).

The children came into school with individual literate identities and they continued to build these identities as they practised literacies and increased competencies by actively participating in everyday literacy practices (4.8). Child-initiated literacy episodes enabled children to further build literate identities because individuals expressed particular understandings that led to interactive literacy episodes. Children demonstrated significant understandings and learnings during literacy episodes and in later interactions, connections and follow-ups. For example, Madison's comment about 'c' and 'k' in *www or wow?* (5.2.1), Gemma's comment about 1s in *1 s and 'is'* (5.3.1), Lachlan's comment, "…tuck was like our tuckshop" in *Tuck us in* (5.3.2), Greg suggesting a sentence about his birthday (5.4.1) and Sally's, Greg's and Emily's understandings of past tense in *Greg's birthday* (5.4.1.1).

6 . 4 . 7 Child-initiated literacy episodes as dynamic learning in 'doing for oneself'

In my classroom, learning occurred from the children's efforts in constructing their own learning and co-constructing knowledge with interested others. Significantly, the children did things for themselves whenever and wherever possible (4.8.5; 4.8.7; 4.8.9). I considered these actions as 'genuine' and/or 'authentic' learning because the children did things themselves and learned from their efforts. The Oxford Dictionary defines authentic as: 'reliable, trustworthy; of undisputed origin, genuine; Gk authentikos f *authentes* – one who does a thing himself '- and of course, herself.

Children learned as they did things for themselves and learning was integral to their actions. This was dynamic learning in the classroom. For example, children thought, talked, wrote and represented ideas in journals. Brock demonstrated considerable literacy learning in his writing (5.6.4). His sentences made sense and 'told a story'. He

spelled frequently used words correctly (in, my, is, it, he). He heard initial consonants in other words but seemed reluctant to persevere and work out the spelling. Instead, he solved the problem by using dashes for unknown letters – yet still getting the message down. He publicly acknowledged that he did not know how to spell some words, but that did not stop him from writing about people, things and events in his life. Neuman and Roskos (2003, p. 1) explained, 'Children use the resources and constraints of the social and physical environment, as well as their relevant knowledge and skills, to analyse and construct their understandings of print and their world.' Gradually, Brock built up a bank of frequently used words and before long, he wrote many words in Standard English. Interestingly, this was the first time I had seen this demonstration of 'spelling by dashes' in two decades of Prep and Year Ones' writing.

Another example of children doing things themselves occurred when they chose the books they wished to read (4.8.7). Children made decisions about their interests and capabilities in reading but I monitored the progress of the children to ensure growth.

Children created personal artefacts and solved problems as they interacted with screens and materials in the classroom (4.8.9). Certainly, peers and I helped, scaffolded, collaborated and co-constructed knowledge but children were thinking, creating, writing and applying their own ideas and efforts. This was dynamic learning because children learned from their own efforts in conjunction with interested participants. They constructed and co-constructed their own learning as they constantly did things for themselves. I saw this every day in the classroom as the children demonstrated literacies, multiliteracies and understandings.

Although I provided 'appropriate materials' in the classroom for the children to investigate, explore and discover, I also encouraged children to bring their own materials, objects and items of interest for sharing, discussing and exploring (4.8.4.3).

I scaffolded and extended children in general directions of 'going forward' in literacies and competencies, but I accepted the challenge and excitement when children did things for themselves and unexpectedly came up with something different in terms of 'multiple ways of knowing' (Harste, 2000), new literacies (Luke, 1998; Luke & Carrington, 2002) multiliteracies (Healy, 2004) and learning. Hill (2002, p. 273) argued, '…scaffolding learning and working in the ZPD implies that the teacher has an idea of an overall plan of where the learner is proceeding. In many cases, children have different knowledge and more experiences with computers than do their teachers. It is for this reason that we need new ways to explore how novelty and leaps forward in visual and verbal learning occur.' For example, children brought toy computers and showed classmates how the toys worked. On classroom computers children constantly co-operated and shared with others as they navigated their way through and around various websites such as www.lego.com and www.abc.com.au

My classroom environment encouraged and allowed students to lead the way in opening up literacies and learning (*Three more days…* 5.2.3; *1s and 'is'*, 5.3.1; *Tuck us in…* 5.3.2). Students broadened horizons when they come up with refreshing explanations (*Madison's cat and kitten,* 5.2.1), inspiring innovations (*Lunch Song,* 5.3.3 and *Past tense,* 5.4.1.1) and meaningful connections to learning and literacies (*Visitors*, 5.4.2 and *'v' charts*, 5.4.2.1). We usually celebrated original, creative and unusual ways of seeing, representing and knowing as in *Dane's writing,* (5.6.1), *Brock's drawing/writing* (5.6.4) *Olivia's 3 Loves* (5.7.1 and Figure 5.2), *Kate's*

writing (5.7.2) and *Jade's broken arm* (5.5.3). We also co-operated and collaborated in sharing emails, Internet games, websites and computer creations (4.3.5).

6 . 4 . 8 Child-initiated literacy episodes meant 'coming from the children'

As the children worked within the framework of scheduled literacy practices (4.7.2 and Figure 4.17), they initiated literacy episodes that altered and/or re-directed literacy lessons as demonstrated in the data of Chapter Five. Children instigated twists and turns to topics as well as suggesting new topics of interest that redirected and/or created classroom curriculum. For example, Lachlan brought his science experiment (5.5.4) to school and the children's enthusiasm was high. We 'ran with it' and waves of interest in simple, do-able science experiments permeated the classroom and curriculum in third term. Children tried, read, carried out, displayed and recorded experiments and added writing and digital photos about the experiments to our web page (4.3.5 and Figure 4.6). We also created a new class Big Book entitled *Interesting Observations and Experiments by 1s.*

Although I established the classroom environment and scheduled the routines and practices, the open-ended tasks and activities enabled the children to add ownership through ideas, interpretations, efforts and products as we co-constructed literacy curriculum and classroom curriculum together. It reminded me that 'as literacy educators, we can pursue these links between literacy and social formation… through a broader understanding of literacy not just as "social practice", but literacy as curriculum practice' (Luke and Carrington, 2002, p. 2). The children generated literacy curriculum and classroom curriculum by contributing their experiences, knowledge, interests, objects and artefacts.

Importantly, both boys and girls initiated and contributed to literacy curriculum. Alloway and Gilbert (2002, p. 263) maintained that, '…boys are more likely to participate and achieve in literacy learning if they don't see participation and achievement in such learning as being in conflict with desirable constructions of masculinity; if they can see instead, how such learning is relevant and useful in understanding their lives, in making their lives richer and fuller, and in offering them new and different ways of shaping their lives.' For example, show and tell and journals allowed students to talk, draw, write and represent thoughts and ideas in their own ways as Brock did with drawing/writing (5.6.4 and 5.6.4.1) and Trent did with *Rare Yugioh Cards* (5.5.1). In examining Trent's journal over time it was obvious he improved his writing skills and competencies as he wrote mainly about friends and popular culture (5.5.1.1). Children built writing skills and handwriting skills as they composed texts of personal interest as seen in Joanne's x-ray piece (5.6.3) and Peter's Rugby piece (5.5.2). Children improved reading as they read and re-read to clarify information and share texts with classmates as Kurt did in his writing of Nemo and snow (5.7.3) and Kate did in her birthdays/parties writing (5.7.2). In addition, by constantly using the computers, children became aware of 'linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural' design features (Healy, 2004, p. 20) that were integral to multimodal texts on software and websites.

Children drew/wrote about their personal social experiences, cultural events, toys and items of interest. The lives and artefacts of the children (4.8.4.3) formed the basis of their writing - and simultaneously, talking, reading, phonics, writing conventions and handwriting. For some boys (like Greg) the freedom to choose topics, genres, texts and methods of representation meant they wrote something, rather than nothing.

6 . 4 . 9 Child-initiated literacy episodes meant respecting ownership of work

The 1980s child-centred approaches of Whole language (Goodman, 1986; Cambourne, 1988) and Process Writing (Graves, 1983) influenced me in trusting children to learn intrinsically and to take some responsibility and ownership for their learning. David, Rabin, Ure, Goouch, Jago and Barriere (2000, p. 20) pointed out that,

> …constructions of childhood in the 1960s and 1970s began to view children as people with rights. Within school, child-centred methods of teaching asserted the need to begin with the child and the knowledge s/he brought into the classroom. The work of Frank Smith (1978), Donald Graves, (1983) and others reflected this in their suggestions about the way children should be asked to write.

This struck a chord with me because in my classrooms, I saw young learners unleash originality and creativity as they worked from vantage points of their own interests and ideas (Swan, 1988, Swan, 1995). I noticed how children were 'engaged' (Smith, 1981) and persevered with activities and products when they made choices within tasks. However, it was not a matter of settling for the 'child's work' despite the quality. Rather, there were demonstrations, models and samples of 'quality' and constant encouragement to grow and extend students' skills and competencies.

For example, on April 10, Joanne's quality journal entry (5.6.3) surprised me. She talked to the class about having an x-ray and showed us the actual x-ray from the hospital. Then Joanne eagerly went to her journal and I didn't see the writing and drawing until she had finished (see Figure 5.6). The clarity of the message and the diagrams surprised me. The writing was direct, concise and informative. The drawings were precise and labelled to add information. There were spaces between the words and writing was on the lines. Joanne had complete ownership of the work and showed how she made meaning through writing and drawing. She demonstrated

writing for meaning using well structured sentences and some correct spellings. In addition, she clearly labelled diagrams to add information. It was exciting to see her demonstrate mastery with an early recount - but remembering the words of the young character Kate, (Little, 1986, p. 73) I did not write *Excellent* on it. Instead Joanne shared her journal entry with the class and as I remember, several children voluntarily commented, 'That looks good, Joanne', 'You're a good writer' and Trent noted she had labelled her pictures. Joanne had ownership over her choice of topic and the way to present her topic. Not surprisingly, her topic was relevant and meaningful - a sliver of her life experiences.

Similarly, Kurt's writing and drawing (5.7.3) about seeing the movie *Finding Nemo* and his upcoming trip around Australia demonstrated a giant leap in creating messages, writing sentences and presenting information. His was a wonderful example of student ownership, engagement and perseverance with parent scaffolding.

6 . 5 Was it learning for all in the child-initiated literacy episodes?

Whole class child-initiated literacy episodes could not be relevant and meaningful to every child every time because of children's varied abilities, prior knowledge and present understandings at any point in time. However, children made connections in their own ways and seemed to learn from interactions. Often, children who did not verbally contribute in the large group interaction came to me later to add something relevant. For example, Olivia added her understandings of 't' and 'c' (5.10.1.2) in sharing her letter and Holly added 'tuck your shirt in' to our list of different meanings of 'tuck' (5.3.2.1). Significantly, all the children had space to talk and initiate

conversations but not all the children took the risk of contributing in large groups. Some preferred the quiet 'safety' of small groups and personal interactions with me.

Interestingly, the 'tuck' interaction reminded me of the importance of context in understanding print because communications and individual words only relate to actions, interactions and the specific context in which they are uttered. Gee (2003, p. 1) maintained, '…human language has two primary functions… to scaffold the performance of action in the world, including social activities and interactions; to scaffold human affiliation in cultures and social groups and institutions through creating and enticing others to take certain perspectives on experience.' Thus, language is connected to the social context and it is only in a social context that the word has meaning. What that word means in one context may be different from the word in another context – as the children realised in *'Tuck, tuck, tuck us in…'* (5.3.2).

It is important to note that I did not *know* what information all the children were connecting to or 'taking in' at any moment. In child-initiated literacy episodes some children demonstrated their understanding as they contributed to the interaction. But for those who watched and (maybe) listened, their understanding of the literacy aspect was not obvious at the time.

Children who did not contribute to the interaction sometimes later demonstrated their understanding of the concept as in *1s and 'is'* (5.3.1) when many children shared the word 'is' as they found it in books and print. Likewise, Trent and Sally demonstrated understanding of leaving spaces between words in writing (5.6.2). Joanne demonstrated labelling diagrams to add information to text (5.6.3) and Gemma demonstrated understanding of rhyming words when she wrote *I know that cards*

rhymes with car (5.6.2.1). She also showed that *rims* could be read for rhymes and illustrated understanding about th on the end of numbers for ordinal number: she actually read 40th, but then said 41. Gemma showed her understanding of adding 'ing' to make 'coming' but she had not yet learned about dropping the 'e'. All of these features had occurred in scheduled classroom practices and children later displayed their knowledge and understandings in personal journal writing.

It was precisely because I did not *know* when children engaged with information, and with which information at any point in time, that I felt I must respond to the children personally and intellectually at every opportunity – much like the 'hit-and-run/never-let-a-chance-go-by demonstration' of Cambourne (2000, p. 513). Such personal and meaningful responses to the children's comments and queries lead to topics of interest being maintained in the classroom for significant learning such as *Sally's carat* (5.1.1 and 5.1.1.1), *Dane's labels* (5.1.2 and 5.1.2.1) and *Lucas's 'What's wept?'* (5.8.2). Smith (1999, p. 151) reiterated, '...considerations require teachers to interact with and be responsive to learners *personally*, as individuals…' (his italics). Newman (1991, p. 313) added, 'The thing about teaching is I can't control who engages with which lessons. I have to keep as many topics on the table as I can so people have an opportunity to connect with those issues that are important to them.' Child-initiated literacy episodes placed numerous topics 'on the table' because the topics and interests came from the children.

Many child-initiated literacy episodes in the class occurred with only one or two children and me as participants. Often, classmates did not even know an episode had occurred as in my dialogue with Trent about leaving spaces between words (5.6.2), Kate's initial sharing time (5.7.2) and Olivia's '3 Loves' in her writing (5.7.1).

Later, when I reflected on Olivia's sharing time I felt guilty because of my offhand manner - I was ready for lunch! It was as if her writing and drawing were not all that important and her sharing was just a matter of course. Yet, when I later thought about what I saw, heard and learned about Olivia and her literate identity I realised that as well as not showing respect for her efforts I almost missed many understandings. Olivia showed me that she could spell 'love' on her own, that she knew the number 3 (although it was back to front) and had one-to-one correspondence of 3 with her 3 III, LLL, ooo, vvv, etc. Olivia represented the letters correctly in 'bubble' writing. She represented 'love' with a drawing of a heart and she and a friend were inside the heart. She supported her writing with a drawing – or was she supporting drawing with writing? I cannot be sure but she connected the content of her writing with her drawings. On reflection, I realised there were several lessons here for me including not assuming anything about children's writing and always having them read and talk about it. I remembered that Olivia looked surprised that I couldn't see '3 loves' in her writing. I reminded myself that children practised their writing in many different ways and demonstrated understandings as they made choices in writing and drawing. Children deserved to have their writing taken seriously. Imagine if I had looked at Olivia's pages later without the benefit of her retell. Would I have thought she had drawn hearts (5.7.1 and Figure 5.7) as my initial reaction revealed?

Some child-initiated literacy episodes in the classroom occurred with several children and an interested participant (parent helper or teacher) when children were clustered on the floor or at tables. In writing times, peers at the same table often 'tuned in' to the interaction because having already conversed and interacted at the table, they knew what tablemates were writing about. Literacy episodes illustrated varied

literacies, interests, skills and competencies of the children and the episodes promoted immediate, relevant and meaningful responsive interactions that seemed to extend children's learning. Edwards-Groves (2003, p. 86) argued, 'What is necessary is engaging a pedagogy that enables all children to share in their learning as fully informed partners in a fair and equitable way. This allows them to have a greater sense of accomplishment and control of learning.' I would argue that child-initiated literacy episodes did this because children had ownership in initiating episodes and contributing to interactions. Children had ownership as they chose ways to display literacies and learnings in journals and activities. Sharing time often gave me the chance to view evidence of children's accomplishments, learning and understanding.

6 . 6 What other issues arose from child-initiated literacy episodes?

Although I considered child-initiated literacy episodes as overwhelmingly positive, worthwhile and productive in my classroom, there were issues that arose in terms of changed lesson plans, other teachers taking my class and concerns about *really* hearing children's voices. These become topics in the last part of this data analysis.

6 . 6 . 1 Child-initiated literacy episodes changed lessons

Some educators may be critical of child-initiated literacy episodes because of interruptions and re-directions of planned lessons. For example, in shared reading of *The King's Pudding* (5.3.3) the purpose of the lesson was to increase students' enjoyment of story, rhythmical language, rhyme and rhyming words. However, students commented about the words 'delicious' and 'knight' and discussed the illustrations. To me, it was better to capitalise on these immediate interests of the students and their probable learning, rather than pursuing my rhyming agenda at that

point. In re-reads there would be opportunities to reinforce my ‘lesson’ of rhyming words. As it happened, ‘rhyming’ came up shortly after because the rhyming elements were so strong. Explicit teaching occurred at that time as we saw, said and heard rhyming words. In addition, re-reading occurred at Madison’s suggestion of reading it before lunch and innovation on text occurred as Olivia revised the words to suit our class (5.3.3.1). Neither of those tasks featured in my ‘plan’ yet seemed to significantly add to class participation and enjoyment in the story and practise of literacies.

That is not to say that every lesson was altered by child-initiated literacy learning episodes. For example, in modelling a recount format after our school sports day, the lesson went as planned. I taught a recount structure in the context of joint construction of text. The children provided information and sentences because they connected to the experience of school sports day. We talked about using words like ‘next’ and ‘then’ to indicate sequence and the recount read:

> *We had our sports on Friday. First we had our races. Then we had the finals – Peter and Brittany won! Then we played games like high jump, long jump, skipping and potato races. Last of all, we went home.*

The sentences were added to *Our Big Book About Us* and added to individual *Newsbooks* for home reading. The children remembered sports day as they re-read the sentences and some referred to it later when composing recounts of other events.

6 . 6 . 2 Child-initiated literacy episodes and shared power

It seemed to me that because the children had space to talk, child-initiated literacy episodes could occur. Many of the children were comfortable and confident about

voicing ideas and ‘interrupting’ lessons. In the classroom, I was happy to share power with the children because I realised we learned from each other and the children were competent beings with literacies, skills and knowledge to impart. I was also happy to share power because we learned from each others’ strengths (5.5.1) and different ways of seeing, knowing and showing. Children volunteering and sharing information and ideas through child-initiated learning episodes worked in my classroom. However, sometimes these same children had difficulty with other teachers who did not appreciate children ‘calling out’ and volunteering information. Some children had difficulties when other teachers insisted on ’hands up’ to speak in group-discussions - and in some cases to speak at all.

If several children wanted to contribute and speak at once I often solved the problem with: ‘Turn to your neighbour and talk about…’ Sometimes problems arose when other teachers did not use this ‘short-cut’ and insisted that children sit on the floor for long periods of time as they waited for their turn to talk.

Although I encouraged children to construct and co-construct their learning in ways that made sense to them, I also encouraged children to appreciate and respect others’ viewpoints and emphasised there were ‘different ways of seeing’, ‘different ways of knowing’, and ‘different ways of showing’. Originality was usually celebrated in literacy episodes but occasionally children’s ideas and originality forced me to question my beliefs and practices more closely. For example, one child left our class to go interstate. Before she left we planned a small party and the students made ‘something’ (cards, pictures, letters, collage and texts) to wish her well. Two boys represented her departure as celebrating her death and drew gravestones, crosses and

R.I.P. because, ‘I’m glad she’s going,’ said one. What to do? I heard them out, but quickly and quietly censored them with their drawings being ‘inappropriate and unkind’. Fresh papers replaced the originals and their next drawings were about the child leaving on an aeroplane and being met by family at the next airport, with ‘Good Luck’ in speech bubbles. Although I spread the power base in the classroom giving children space to talk and demonstrate their ‘knowing’, the children and I also knew that I had the upper hand if necessary. Was this a fitting approach? Could it have been handled better? Would I do it differently another time? Why did I not allow this as a critical resource for the class? On reflection, these were questions I asked myself. I still ponder and have no certain answers.

6 . 7 Possible classroom conditions for child-initiated literacy episodes

Child-initiated literacy episodes as described in Chapter Five demonstrated significant learning as children verbalized thoughts and ideas. In the classroom, talk (4.6.1) was central to learning and was apparent in communicating, reading, writing and associated literacy practices and activities. Talk, actions and social interactions were almost constant as children participated in a variety of literacy practices scheduled (4.7.2), and sometimes scattered, throughout the day. The children and I were ‘knowledgeable others’ as we shared, taught, mentored and learned in the classroom.

In analysing child-initiated literacy episodes I searched the data and examined the classroom context (Chapter Four) to further understand conditions that enabled the episodes to occur. Classroom conditions that seemed to predominate included continuous invitations to actively participate and space to talk and interact (4.6). There was respect for child contributions and constant encouragement for children to

take risks (Cambourne, 1988). In addition, there were opportunities for children to develop and extend their own interests (4.8.4; 4.8.4.3; 4.8.5; 4.8.9). Together we recognised accomplishments and celebrated originality, creativity and 'ways of knowing'. In an atmosphere of co-operation (4.6.2.3) and collaboration children were encouraged to help and assist each other as they/we learned from each other (4.6.2). There was an explicit understanding that we were all teachers/learners. Children learned about language and expanded their literacies and literate identities by using meaningful language in purposeful, everyday social and literacy practices (4.8-4.8.9).

Other classroom conditions that appeared to enable child-initiated literacy episodes included demonstrations of everyday literacies (4.8.2; 4.8.3; 4.8.6) within the schedule of literacy practices (4.7.2) where children intercepted and volunteered information and understandings. My responses to the children's interceptions and ensuing contributions became child-initiated learning episodes, which were teachable moments and examples of co-construction of knowledge. Explicit teaching and/or revision occurred in the child-initiated literacy episodes and in sharing times. Additionally, within the structure of scheduled literacy practices, children constructed and co-constructed their learning through open-ended tasks and activities. As adult and teacher, I played a vital role in 'enabling' (Chambers, 1994, p. 12; 1992) children to create child-initiated literacy episodes.

In this chapter I have analysed the data of the classroom context and child-initiated literacy episodes in terms of child learning and classroom conditions that enabled such episodes to occur. In the final chapter I draw some further conclusions about the child-initiated literacy episodes as sites of significant learning in the classroom.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

> 'I is reading it hundreds of times,' the BFG said. 'And I is still reading it and teaching new words to myself and how to write them. It is the most scrumdiddlyumptious story.'
> Sophie took the book out of his hand. '*Nicholas Nickleby,*' she read aloud.
> 'By Dahl's Chickens,' the BFG said.
> 'By who?' Sophie said.
> (Dahl, *The BFG,* 1982. p. 112-113)

7 . 0 Introduction

This study set out to identify the elements and effects of the literacy-learning context in this particular Year One classroom and explore how those elements came together to develop and support the children's literacies.

Throughout the study I saw literacy connections constantly occurring in the overall learning context of the classroom but the outstanding feature was literacy learning that 'came from the children'. Time after time I saw child-initiated literacy episodes develop and demonstrate children's learning and understanding. Although the research data encompassed a much wider and richer set of contexts than this, I decided to concentrate on the child-initiated literacy episodes as the focus of the study because the children seemed to learn so much during and after the episodes, often going on to freely practise and demonstrate literacies and understandings in later interactions and artefacts. The children repeatedly displayed confidence and competence in using meaningful literacies as part of their everyday lives.

In concentrating on the child-initiated literacy episodes however, I realised that other aspects, such as the children's use and understanding of multiliteracies, were under explored. Additionally, in concentrating on the processes of child-initiated literacy episodes, some elements of the classroom context, such as the physical, spatial, social and temporal aspects that enabled the episodes to occur, were also under explored. Instead, I viewed the child-initiated literacy episodes through a lens of children as dynamic and powerful learners as they instigated meaningful learning, made personal connections to literacies and demonstrated multiple ways of knowing and using literacies. I saw that the children constantly displayed confidence, competence and varied skills as literacy learners and literacy users in developing and extending their embodied literate identities.

Recognising that dynamic and powerful learning occurred in the child-initiated literacy episodes, I then examined the role of the teacher in establishing possible classroom conditions that *enabled* those literacy episodes to occur. At this time, the 'enabling' teacher emerged as a vital ingredient of the classroom context that allowed and encouraged the child-initiated literacy episodes to occur – which in turn revealed the powerful and dynamic learning of the young children. In this conclusion I have used the notions of children as dynamic and powerful learners, the 'enabling' teacher and teaching as learning to draw together the information about the classroom literacy-learning context in Chapter Four, the research data in Chapter Five and analysis in Chapter Six.

7 . 1 Children as dynamic and powerful learners

In child-initiated literacy episodes the data revealed that children were dynamic and powerful learners as they integrated personal learning into scheduled literacy practices. They took risks as they actively constructed learning and offered personal understandings and knowledge to classroom interactions. The children increased their skills and improved their competencies as they contributed, co-operated and collaborated in meaningful literacy tasks and activities. Child-initiated literacy episodes demonstrated dynamic and 'genuine' learning on the part of participating children as they freely contributed information and demonstrated current understandings and literacies.

7 . 1 . 1 Child-initiated literacy episodes as powerful, meaningful learning

In the study I found that child-initiated literacy episodes arose from scheduled literacy practices in my Year One classroom. As the children actively participated in the open-ended scheduled literacy practices they grappled with learning, volunteered information and interjected with thoughts and ideas. My responses to their remarks and the ensuing collaborative, interactive dialogue usually extended understandings. Comments throughout the literacy episodes were immediate, meaningful and relevant as children verbalised and displayed knowledge and understandings. As the data revealed, children often went on to personally and powerfully demonstrate those meaningful understandings in later interactions and artefacts.

The child-initiated literacy episodes were child-centred as children instigated meaningful learning. The children actively constructed learning and co-constructed relevant knowledge with interested others as they shared personal understandings and

represented information in their own ways. Then, as knowledgeable peers and I responded to remarks and representations further dynamic interactions and scaffolding developed and extended learning.

Child-initiated literacy episodes were meaningful as they built on children's literate identities (knowledge, understandings and abilities) that they brought to school (from families, homes and communities) because such episodes enabled children to demonstrate personal and relevant literacies as they initiated and/or participated in the interactive literacy episodes. During the dynamic interactions, explicit teaching may have introduced new learning to some children whilst being revision for others – depending on the children's understandings and literate identities at the time.

The child-initiated literacy episodes provided meaningful learning because each episode came from a child and spread to other children as interested participants. That learning was often revealed as 'authentic' learning (thus meaningful learning) as each child 'did a thing for him/herself' in various classroom practices and activities.

7 . 1 . 2 Child-initiated literacy episodes with learners making connections

The study revealed that children made personal connections to literacies and practices as they made sense of classroom tasks and activities in their own ways. Whilst child-initiated literacy episodes in the data demonstrated that children *made* connections to information in their own ways, the episodes also enabled and encouraged children *to make* connections in their own ways – but, of course, I did not know how, when or what the children would connect to at any given time. Thus, since children made connections in varied and often surprising ways, there was always a seemingly

endless array of topics ‘on the table’ in the classroom curriculum as children called on the known, familiar and prior knowledge to grasp and absorb new information in ways that made sense to them. Although I related literacy practices to familiar topics to introduce new concepts and ease the way for new understandings, children’s learning seemed more powerful and effective when children made significant, personal connections themselves and constructed their own learning from situations.

Additionally, child-initiated literacy episodes meant that children often learned from peers rather than from me because in the episodes classmates also came up with ideas, suggestions and knowledge that added to understandings. This dynamic, shared learning acknowledged everyone as ‘teachers’ and demonstrated that children’s contributions were valued.

7 . 1 . 3 Child-initiated literacy episodes and learning as ‘different ways of knowing’

In the study, child-initiated literacy episodes demonstrated children’s ‘multiple ways of knowing’ (Harste, 2000) as they verbalised and represented understandings in original, creative and unique ways. Children injected new life into classroom plans and programs as they offered different ways of seeing, different ways of knowing and different ways of showing whilst constructing learning, co-constructing knowledge and displaying competencies in literacies and multiliteracies.

In demonstrating ‘different ways of knowing’ children had ownership of their views and representations of learning and understanding. Since child-initiated literacy episodes enabled children to demonstrate powerful and personal learning, classmates

became familiar with acknowledging and respecting different views and I was constantly amazed by the many 'different ways of seeing'.

In a nutshell, the children were dynamic and powerful manufacturers of their own literacies and learning as they contributed to the growth, development and diverse literacies and learning of the class. The children learned with and from each other as they co-operated and collaborated in building knowledge, skills and competencies. At the same time they helped create an exciting learning atmosphere in the classroom. Living and learning flourished both in and out of school as embodied literacies were integral to the children's lives.

Finally, I saw the children as dynamic and powerful learners, active participants, co-creators of knowledge and builders of personal understandings in the exciting milieu of classroom life with their work and play as vibrant demonstrations of their interests, skills and understandings.

7 . 2 The enabling teacher [1]

Once I realised the dominance of child-initiated literacy episodes in the data I tried to understand more clearly my role as teacher in creating a classroom context that enabled such episodes to appear. After considering and analysing large amounts of data it seemed that several of my assumptions about learning led to a range of key understandings and classroom conditions that enabled and encouraged child-initiated literacy episodes to occur. These assumptions appeared to stem from my deeply rooted beliefs about how young children learned.

[1] See Chambers, 'enabling adult', 1992, 1994.

Although my ‘classroom conditions’ are different, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Cambourne (1988, p. 33) for his classroom conditions and the ‘Model of learning as it applies to literacy learning’, as well as inspirational articles over the years. In addition I acknowledge information and inspiration from McNaughton (1995, p. 3) for his ‘Socialisation model of emergent literacy’ and detailed work on actions and interactions in the classroom.

7 . 2 . 1 My assumptions about learning

These assumptions included that children learned from their interests, children’s learning was integrally related to their actions and interactions in their everyday lives and immediate worlds, children did things for themselves, children constructed and co-constructed learning in interactive dialogues with competent, interested others, and we all learned in different ways and demonstrated multiple ways of knowing. From these assumptions about learning I extrapolated several key understandings or core principles that underpinned the learning context of my classroom.

7 . 2 . 2 Key understandings that underpinned the learning context of my classroom

The following key understandings formed the basis of the context of learning in my classroom. These principles were integrally related to my assumptions about how young children learned and in turn, paved the way for specific organisational features that were used in setting up the classroom.

7 . 2 . 2 . 1 Expectations that children will learn

An over-riding understanding was an assumption that all my students were learners. I *expected* them all to learn as if ‘Everywhere you look there is a gem’ (Quinn, 1995).

7. 2 . 2 .2 Acknowledgement that children are competent learners

As the children came into school I recognised them as competent learners with individual literate identities that were already forming from active participation in families, homes and communities. In the classroom I continued to build on those literate identities by providing opportunities for the children to demonstrate literacies and learning in open-ended class activities and scheduled literacy practices.

7 . 2 . 2 . 3 Responsibility to broaden horizons

I offered opportunities to broaden the children's horizons and increase their literacies, skills and understandings by introducing them to varied literacies, everyday literacy practices and real-world possibilities. To my mind, the classroom offered opportunities for children to grow and expand from immediate and local worlds to wider communities and global worlds. Like ripples on a pond the children's literacies and learning spread out from their personal centres and 'went somewhere'.

7 . 2 . 2 . 4 Requirement that children do things for themselves

A significant understanding was that I expected children to engage in their *own* work (Greek *authentes* – doing a thing for him/herself) as they solved everyday problems, represented ideas and demonstrated understandings in using everyday literacies. Children were encouraged to take risks in the course of doing and learning things for themselves in an environment of encouragement, co-operation and collaboration.

7 . 2 . 2 . 5 Feedback was constant, positive and challenging

As children interacted with me it seemed that my feedback helped them extend understandings and experience success. Most of the feedback was immediate and

overwhelmingly positive. I encouraged children but at the same time, invited and challenged them to work things out for themselves. It was rarely teaching by telling. As I provided feedback and monitored the children's progress we constantly celebrated large and small successes either privately and/or publicly.

7 . 2 . 2 . 6 Flexibility was necessary and built-in

Flexibility in classroom routines, practices and curriculum encouraged child-initiated literacy episodes as children made personal connections and interjected with their ideas and suggestions. In responding to their interjections the direction and flow of the lessons, literacies and skills changed and moved to specific child interests and concerns – that may or may not have been the original focus of the lesson. Similarly, curriculum topics ebbed and flowed around children's interests as well as planned curriculum. Daily literacy learning moved back and forth and over and around the children's interests as child-initiated literacy episodes arose, developed and grew.

7 . 3 Possible classroom conditions that enabled child-initiated literacy episodes

In examining the data and the classroom context I noticed several classroom conditions that may have enabled the children to initiate and extend personal learning. I reviewed my assumptions about learning and key understandings of the classroom contexts and further extrapolated possible classroom conditions that enabled and encouraged child-initiated literacy episodes to occur. I also re-examined the physical, social and temporal elements of the classroom context to understand how they helped child-initiated literacy episodes to occur.

7 . 3 . 1 Space to talk

In the classroom the children had space to talk. They talked to friends, classmates, small groups, large groups, the whole class and to me. In whole group sessions children did not hesitate to volunteer information if they thought of something that related to the activity at the time. Since I did not insist on ‘hands up’ to talk, the children were confident and comfortable to spontaneously comment and contribute thoughts, ideas and/or observations.

7 . 3 . 2 Incorporating real-lives and real-worlds

Another important classroom condition was the emphasis on the real-lives and the real-worlds of the children. The data revealed that I constantly incorporated children’s lives, immediate worlds, global worlds and everyday life into the classroom. In addition, children brought their lives and worlds into classroom practices and activities through personal, meaningful and significant life experiences. Similarly, since literacies are social practices in everyday life, the study showed that children engaged with day-to-day literacies, multiliteracies and real world literacies when these were incorporated into class activities and learning. Child initiated literacy episodes were examples of dynamic learning that engaged children in understanding literacies, increasing skills and improving competencies as they used everyday literacies in everyday social practices both in and out of the classroom.

7 . 3 . 3 Technology as part of everyday life

The data demonstrated that child-initiated literacy episodes encouraged personal, meaningful and worthwhile learning when technologies, children’s lives and their immediate worlds were incorporated into classroom practices because these topics

were of high interest to the students. Technologies were an integral part of daily life in the children's homes and communities. Technologies were automatically a part of classroom life too as the children interacted with computers, emails, Internet, videos, CDs, digital games, digital cameras and tape-recorders.

7 . 3 . 4 Multiliteracies as part of everyday life

Just as technologies were a part of everyday life, multiliteracies and multimodal texts were also a part of everyday classroom life. The children worked with images, icons, visual texts, sounds, digital designs and games both in and out of school and there was high interest in using multiliteracies in daily life.

7 . 3 . 5 Open-ended tasks and activities

Child-initiated literacy episodes sometimes arose from children's work in open-ended tasks where interest and ownership were integral to learning. Open-ended activities enabled children to pursue interests, demonstrate understanding and represent knowledge in varied ways including talk, interactions and multi-modal literacies.

7 . 3 . 6 Physical organisation of the classroom

The physical layout of the classroom (4.3 and Figure 4.4) featured large and small spaces that encouraged social interaction and communication as children worked and played. The tables were arranged in small groups of four or six. This enabled the children to face each other as they worked which also encouraged social interaction and communication. Working on the floor in a circle formation encouraged conversations, enabled participants to look at the person speaking and allowed anyone in the circle to ask questions or to take the lead in discussions.

7 . 3 . 7 Social organisation of the classroom

Emphasising classroom goals (4.6.2) of respect, responsibility and co-operation from day one was an on-going theme and led to a usually harmonious and helpful classroom atmosphere. Children generally learned to show respect for others by acknowledging similarities of people whilst at the same time recognising that all people were different. By and large the children practised co-operation and made connections between showing respect and taking responsibility as they learned to share, take turns, help others and get along together.

7 . 3 . 8 Temporal organisation of the classroom

The scheduled literacy practices set the scene for many of the child-initiated literacy episodes in the classroom. These open-ended practices enabled the children to make personal connections to class activities, to pursue their own interests, to take ownership of their work and to demonstrate literacies and learning in different ways.

7 . 4 Teaching as learning

I gathered this research data in my classroom throughout 2003 and as the children learned, I also learned. Reading, writing and computer explorations expanded my horizons about current views of literacies, multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) and learning. I was aware of literacy as social practice but readings and writings clarified understandings and in many cases I attached theories to my classroom practices. I began to understand literacies and multiliteracies as part of everyday life and although I incorporated children's lives and 'real-world' events automatically into class work, the literature that I canvassed reassured me that my practices were grounded in current theory.

In 2004 I relished the opportunity to write up the study free from full-time teaching. Finally, I had time and space to be a researcher/writer. During that year, enormous learning occurred. My views of literacy as social practice and literacy as situated and specific in everyday life crystallised. I saw more clearly than ever that language, actions, interactions and identities were integrally related to situations and contexts. The research process became a 'productive' pedagogy of teaching and learning.

The term repertoires of practice (Comber and Barnett, 2003) became meaningful and I increased my understanding of 'the four roles model' of literacy (Freebody and Luke, 1990; 2003). Whilst gathering data I sometimes posted daily classroom activities and events on a grid of the 'four roles' model to more fully understand them as representative of effective learning. These exercises often resulted in frustration because there was so much overlap in the roles that I wondered at the need to separate them – except to reassure myself that in my classroom children were operating in all four roles as they lived and learned everyday literacies. It seemed to me that by dealing with scheduled literacy practices, children's lives and real-world concerns in the context of our everyday classroom life, we *were* effective literacy users. This particular classroom context meant that with literacies coming from children's worlds and interests, together with my responses and extensions of everyday topics, we were operating in and beyond the 'four roles' as effective language and literacy users in everyday worlds. With technologies as part of everyday classroom life we went outside of talk, text and pictures to include audio, icons, images, graphics and designs in multimodal interactions, skills and competencies.

My previously held views that since popular culture, multiliteracies and technologies were integral to everyday life, they must therefore be part of everyday school life too, were reinforced by noting the dominance of these interests as children's topics of talk, texts and interactions. Children became 'teachers' as several children and I learned about Junkbot, Mitzi, Pokemon, Yu-gi-oh and Bratz Dolls. Parents, children and I co-operated, shared and learned on computers. Together we increased and improved our skills, gathered and critiqued information, navigated sites and investigated the Internet. Children co-operated and learned from each other on computers and CDs. With the help of a colleague I simultaneously learned about web pages and created a class web page. I then showed the children how to add information and interact on the site. The children learned to compose and send emails often including digital photos as they emailed from home and school. Together we used literacies as social practices in everyday life – rather than practising skills to later use in life.

The study strengthened my view that children came into school with skills, abilities and interests and I took it as my responsibility to build on what they already knew. Children came into school with literate identities and their own ways of learning. My goals of building and using children's languages, literacies and learning that they bring to school will be stronger than ever when I return to the classroom next year.

I learned that the study reflected and strengthened the essentially Vygotskian view that students needed to do their own work in conjunction with interested others. The students in this study created and learned within structures of open-ended practices that engaged them in worthwhile outcomes of twenty first century living and learning.

Finally, the study demonstrated the long, hard and challenging task of writing up research to make sense of mountains of data. Time away from full-time teaching was essential for sorting, sifting, incubating, understanding and organising the data in meaningful ways. My learning was considerable as I tackled and eventually found my way into advanced academic genres.

7 . 5 Contributions to the fields of literacy learning and teacher-research

I hope this research will add to existing literature in several ways. First, it may add to current literature about the nature of literacy learning in the early years because it is a study of young children building literacies in a Year One classroom. Second, it may add to the literature about early childhood teaching and learning because the study is from the perspective of an everyday, practising Year One teacher. There are implications for teachers because the study recognises the importance of children actively participating in their own learning and teachers may be encouraged to examine the teaching and learning practices in their classrooms. Third, it may add to the literature about teacher-research and encourage other teachers to carry out such research to better understand classroom practices and student learning.

7 . 5 . 1 Literacy learning and implications for teachers

The study may encourage early childhood teachers to see literacy as social practice in everyday life and acknowledge that young children arrive at school as competent learners with individual literate identities. The study may also persuade teachers to respect the lives, languages, literacies and learning that children bring to school and encourage them to build from there.

Teachers may realise the significance of listening to children to find out what they *can* do and what they *do* know. Teachers may give students space to talk, to contribute and to display understandings in their own ways because by encouraging active participation children can effectively co-operate, collaborate and demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

Teachers may see benefits of incorporating immediate, local and global worlds and technologies into class learning as students engage in meaningful, worthwhile and challenging investigations.

Teachers may be encouraged to lessen 'control', share the power base and allow children to demonstrate dynamic learning in their own ways by open-ended tasks and activities. Teachers may see engagement and effective learning as children make choices and extend personal understandings.

The study may persuade teachers to reflect on their practice, consider reconceptualised views of literacies in sociocultural contexts and to question the 'taken for granted' tasks and activities that may be presently offered in their classrooms.

Finally, I hope this contribution to the field of literacy teaching and learning means that children experience open-ended tasks to construct their own learning, co-construct knowledge with interested participants, have a say in what and how to study, use a variety of everyday literacies and technologies to communicate and enjoy living and learning in schools with local and global interests as guides and signposts.

Then, classroom activities could be built on real-life and real-world issues that have meaning and relevance to students. At the same time teachers could challenge students to extend understanding and learning by pursuing interests and concerns with their own thoughts and ideas, thus recognising differences and pursuing intellectual quality just as the Productive Pedagogies recommends (Education Queensland, 2002).

7 . 5 . 2 Teacher-research

This study could add to the literature on teacher-research because it was carried out by a practicing Year One classroom teacher. It was an exciting and worthwhile experience that helped me understand more fully my classroom practices and classroom context in terms of literacy learning for young children. Gathering the data was not a problem because I already kept reflective journals and collected children's work samples as evidence of growth. Writing up daily happenings and critical incidents was a part of my daily reflections about the children and the classroom. There were aspects of gathering the data that took extra organisation and discipline but these tasks were do-able each day. Professional books broadened my horizons and Internet searches opened up vast canyons of information and knowledge. Professional reading was often exhilarating and my theoretical understandings of teaching, learning and sociocultural literacies grew.

However, although the research experience was overwhelmingly positive, there were times when I questioned the feasibility of teacher-research. The reality of classroom life is that one is very busy with class and school commitments - and mental and physical tiredness can hinder progress of the teacher-research.

Throughout the school weeks I had difficulty switching from school/classroom mode to research/university mode. I soon realised that research/university reading and writing occurred at weekends and in holidays and it often seemed impossible to become 'immersed' in academic thinking. As a teacher-researcher I struggled with lack of time and space to freely think, incubate and mull over thoughts and ideas.

Additionally, as a full-time classroom teacher, finding the time to write up the research was a problem. In fact, the thesis writing only eventuated when I was granted leave for a year. At that time I grappled with the genre of academic writing which was markedly different from school and classroom writing and it was the support and scaffolding from my university supervisors and family that pulled me through. Later, I may find that my reflective writings on the teacher-research process will make interesting reading.

7 . 6 Limitations and future studies

Some educators and researchers could see this study as limited because the children participating in the research were largely from white, middle class, English-speaking literate backgrounds (3.7), most of whom 'did school' (Comber, 2000), very well. Future studies could thus investigate if similar literacy-learning contexts create child-initiated literacy episodes with children from a wider range of linguistic, cultural and geographic backgrounds. My sense is that these literacy learning contexts could be effective with a variety of children because an original tenet is that the teacher acknowledges the literate identities that children bring to school and proceeds to build from there. Since talk and space to talk are over-arching conditions of classroom

learning, children have opportunities to increase and improve oral language. Children however, from English as a Second Language backgrounds might require additional and/or different language opportunities.

It would be interesting to carry out a similar study in an early childhood classroom where a teacher aide is present for much of the time because individuals and/or small groups of children could develop and extend initiated interests with an aide. This could enable the teacher then, to further scaffold and extend other children and their initiations. In addition, a teacher aide could play a major role in assisting children in developing technology skills because some young children need explicit help in developing computer skills – and it can't always come from the teacher and/or competent classmates when needed. Could a classroom with considerable aide time increase the literacy competencies of more children? Future studies may also bring out other ways of creating effective learning contexts for *all* young children.

7.7 Conclusion

Child-initiated literacy episodes demonstrated children's dynamic learning, knowledge and understanding and seemed to reveal 'genuine' learning on the part of participating students. Child-initiated literacy episodes *enabled* children to construct learning, co-construct knowledge and demonstrate learning and understandings. Open-ended tasks within scheduled literacy practices invited children to actively participate and display competencies and understandings. Child-initiated literacy episodes illustrated to me that most children were happy to 'try', to do things for themselves, and to learn in their own ways once they realised that they were encouraged to make their own decisions. Finally, children were keen to create and

learn as they worked on topics that *mattered* to them, much as I felt about this study and thesis that *mattered* to me.

Throughout the study I was frequently surprised at students' demonstrations of thinking and learning. Now, with near completion of this writing, I am almost overwhelmed at my new learning and understandings that will carry me into next year with a new group of Year One students. With these students, my learning journey will continue, but for the moment I will take time for a brief respite, in the manner of A. A. Milne, (1926, p. 131-132):

> You can imagine Piglet's joy when at last the ship came in sight of him. In after-years he liked to think that he had been in Very Great Danger during the Terrible Flood, but the only danger he had really been in was the last half hour of his imprisonment, when Owl, who had just flown up, sat on a branch of his tree to comfort him, and told him a very long story about an aunt who had once laid a seagull's egg by mistake, and the story went on and on, rather like this sentence, until Piglet who was listening out of his window without much hope, went to sleep quietly and naturally, slipping slowly out of the window towards the water until he was only hanging on by his toes, at which moment, luckily, a sudden loud squawk from Owl, which was really part of the story, being what his aunt said, woke the Piglet up and just gave him time to jerk himself back into safety and say, "How interesting, and did she?" when – well you can imagine his joy when at last he saw the good ship, *Brain of Pooh (Captain*, C. Robin; *1st Mate,* P. Bear) coming over to rescue him…
>
> And as that is really the end of the story, and I am very tired after that last sentence, I think I shall stop there.

Appendix A

Information for Parents

Teacher-researcher: Coral Swan (Year 1 teacher and Doctoral student, School of Education, JCU, Cairns)

University Supervisors: Dr. Mary Klein (JCU), Dr. Merle Iles (U of Melbourne)

Classroom research

Classroom connections: learning and literacy in a year one classroom

Aim

The purpose of this research is to explore my classroom in terms of literacy practices and to investigate how the students develop their literacy in a Year One context.

Methodology

This teacher-research is informed by qualitative research methodology, specifically narrative inquiry.

The first step will be to gather data and make field notes in the classroom from February until June 2003, using qualitative data techniques including:

- observations
- journal notes
- a reflective journal
- samples of student work
- audio-taping of some class and group interactions and
- 'think-alouds' where students talk about their language and learning

The study will describe experiences in the classroom that include personal, social, temporal and spatial contexts. Field notes will describe actions, interactions and critical events in the everyday lives of the students and teacher.

Participants

Participants in the study are the students in my year one classroom at xxx State School.

I have twenty-four students in the class. The students are required to participate in the everyday world of the year one classroom. There is nothing out of the ordinary required of them because I am looking at the literacy practices in use in the classroom and documenting the way these students develop their literacy in this classroom.

Ethics

There are ethical issues involved. The participants are young children. I am aware of the professional responsibility towards the students and the children's needs are paramount. In order to allow parents to voice concerns the school Principal will handle parent permission matters and documentation.

Permission

Permission for the research has been obtained from the School Principal, Education Queensland and JCU Ethics Committee (No.H1412). Parents' permission will be obtained as soon as practicable after informing parents of the proposed research at the Parent Information night, 4 February 2003. Since the researcher and the teacher are the same person, the school Principal will manage parent permission and documentation.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be preserved. I will use pseudonyms for all participating students when drafting and completing my thesis. Likewise, samples of work will have real names removed and pseudonyms used for identification.

The parties involved are assured of rigorous confidentiality and integrity in gathering and reporting data and writing up the narrative inquiry. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to themselves and/or their children.

Proposed Timeline

1. Permission from the School Principal, Education Queensland and JCU has been granted (No. H1412).
2. Permission from parents of participants will be obtained as soon as practicable after Parent Information night, February 4th 2003. The school Principal will handle the parents' and participants' documentation.
3. Making observations, recording field notes and gathering data from February until June 2003.
4. Analysing data and making sense of field notes during research and from October 2003.
5. Writing narrative inquiry January to December 2004 and 2005
6. Proposed date for completion, March 2006.

Classroom teacher, Coral Swan

Principal

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

SCHOOL:	XXYY State School
PROJECT:	Classroom research – 'Classroom Connections: learning and literacy in a year one classroom'
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR:	Coral Swan, D. Ed. student, School of Education, JCU, Cairns
CONTACT DETAIL:	Coral Swan, XXYY State School, Qld. Supervisors: Dr. Mary Klein, Deputy Head, School of Education, JCU Dr. Merle Iles, University of Melbourne

DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this research is to explore my classroom in terms of literacy practice and to investigate how the students develop their literacy in this year one context.

.

CONSENT

The aims of this study have been clearly explained to me (as parent) and I understand what is wanted of my child in the class. I know that my child taking part in this study is voluntary and I am aware that I can withdraw my child from taking part in it at any time. I am also aware that I may refuse to answer any questions.

I understand that any information I give, or my child gives, will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify my child or me with this study without my approval.

Name: *(printed)*	
Signature:	**Date:**

WITNESSED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OBTAINING CONSENT FOR RESEARCHER

Name: zzz (Principal) for Researcher (Coral Swan)	
Signature: *(School Principal)*	**Date:**

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