Literacy: Multiple Perspectives and Practices

Autumn 2009 Vol. 3 No. 1

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Statement of Purpose

LEARNing Landscapes™ is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the autumn and spring of each year, it attempts to make links between theory and practice and is built upon the principles of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and attention to multiple perspectives and voices. The material in each publication attempts to share and showcase leading educational ideas, research and practices in Quebec, and beyond, by welcoming articles, interviews, visual representations, arts-informed work and multimedia texts to inspire teachers, administrators, and other educators to reflect upon and develop innovative possibilities within their own practices.

Review Board

Editorial

> In order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy, when literacy means … a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. (Eisner, 1997, p. 353)

In September 1994, at a landmark meeting, a group of ten eminent scholars[1] from different corners of the world, gathered in New London, New Hampshire to discuss the future of literacy teaching and learning. Their plan was to use their diverse areas of expertise in language education to interrogate and flesh out some future directions for literacy. They were concerned about the repercussions that would follow the burgeoning standards movement, the need to respond more quickly to the "increasing multiplicity of and integration of significant modes of meaning" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5) and the need for more critical pedagogies to respond specifically, innovatively, and sensitively to the literacy needs of diverse literacy learners in a fast-changing, globalized world. The term "multiliteracies" emerged in their discussions. They latched onto this word because it reflects the changing nature of literacy. It embraces the "necessity for an open-ended and flexible functional grammar which assists language learners to describe language differences (cultural, subcultural, regional/national, technical, context-specific, and so on) and the multimodal channels of meaning now so important to communication" (p. 6).

They were not alone at this time in their search for new ways of thinking about literacy teaching and learning. These same issues were being grappled with in other domains with slightly different emphases, for example, by critical theorists (Giroux, 1988), and by artist educators (Eisner, 1991), which resulted in a growing interest in media studies and arts-based pedagogy and research, and fruitful exchanges across disciplines. It is imperative that these discussions continue.

In this fifth issue of LEARNing Landscapes, and in a time when educators continue to explore the exciting possibilities that "multiliteracies" offer and respond to the increasing responsibilities that are part of our digital, multicultural, and globalized world, we are pleased to feature salient commentaries from John Willinsky, Susan Church, Vivian Paley, and Anne Haas Dyson. These eminent educators all have made substantial contributions to language education over many years. An added highlight is an interview with Sonora Lemieux, Shannon Prevost O'Dowd, and Benoît Mallette who are grade-six students from Courtland Park International School in Saint-Bruno, Quebec. These interesting and varying commentaries provide a reflective and engaging backdrop for the articles that follow.

Willinsky suggests that missing from the literacy landscape, and more important and nuanced than ever, is a focus on the intellectual properties of literacy. He argues that students are involved in the creation of intellectual property from a very young age, yet know little about how it works in and outside of educational settings, or how it is valued and economically driven. It is only when students have the opportunities to experience and reflect on the intellectual properties of literacy that they will truly understand why literacy matters.

Church reminisces about the pendulum swing in literacy education of which she has been a part over the past thirty years. She chronicles her journey from basal reading programs, through the excitement of the whole language era, to the tightening reforms of the 1990s with the resurgence of standardized tests and predetermined literacy programs. She garners some hope from the reflective and critical stance that has emerged with the "new literacies" movement and argues for more dialogue to avoid rigid, oppositional stances that characterize the search for one, right answer and yet another pendulum swing.

Paley travels the terrain of kindergarten, marveling in retrospect how all the things she, her colleagues, and young students were doing over many years were rarely articulated as literacy. She describes how she studiously avoided the "three R's" of first grade and instead concentrated on what she calls the "three F's" of emergent literacy, that of fantasy, friendship, and fairness. She illustrates these dimensions with lively anecdotes of engaged, playful, and thriving learners. In a final, poignant story she juxtaposes the muting effect of narrow instruction with the unleashing effect on literacy development that occurs in play.

Haas Dyson, in a warm interview, provides her commentary on the relationship among language, culture and the positive impact of play. She discusses passionately

how emerging literacies can be cultivated by adults in the real and everyday worlds of children by helping them make meaning of their environmental contexts in multimodal ways both in and out of school. She advocates strongly for contextual and cultural sensitivity in literacy teaching and learning to counter the existing inequities among students and the deficit notions about literacy development.

Lemieux, Prevost O'Dowd, and Mallette speak candidly and confidently about their interpretations of what literacy means to them, and provide interesting insights about what they consider to be optimal learning experiences. Their commentaries suggest how much can be learned from students themselves even at young ages.

It seemed a very appropriate way to transition from the commentaries to the articles by beginning with a series of poems by Georgia Heard, a well-known poet/educator who continues to inspire educators world-wide with insights from her work. This poetry cluster combined with reflective comments, which she entitles "Weaving Tales and Leaving Trails," speaks to rigidities often inherent in schooled literacy, and the connection between literacy development and nature. Her final poem describes a poignant moment of collective literacy learning.

Côté, Kingsley, Reilly, McPhail, Friesen, Dias and Shore, Birlean, Walker, Ritchie, Aulls, and LaBanca all focus on various forms and ways of literacy learning in classrooms. Côté, an author and illustrator of children's books, spends much of her time in classrooms encouraging early literacy and creativity through books and related experiences. She shows with examples the important links between drawing and reading and how making sense of words and images is very much about the connection between what is on the page and the experiences the reader brings to the act. Kingsley, a recent graduate of McGill University who is teaching at Lower Canada College in Montreal, offers a creative and effective approach she has developed in early reading instruction that helps children to understand the reading process and to develop metacognitive skills to help them talk about their reading and learning. Reilly, who is currently the Director of Professional Learning in the Morris School District in New Jersey, shows how ten-year olds conversing with each other about what they think they are learning while engaged in a layered activity of finger painting, move from mimetic to expressive and iconic forms of representation. These visual products are then used as a basis to compose poetry about how they learn. She suggests that transmediation, or the process of making meaning from a variety of symbol systems, develops different cognitive skills, and ultimately enhances the work that is produced. McPhail, an early childhood teacher at Shady Hill School in Cambridge,

Massachusetts, discusses the importance of close observation and reflection in practitioner inquiry. He describes how over a year he closely observed and documented his students' activities and his reflections about them. He realized that when he allowed David, the class "bad boy," to pursue his personal interests in writing, this youngster was able to move away from his bad-boy image and to begin to express himself in genres with which he was comfortable. This in turn engendered friendships with his peers and helped David abandon his isolating, bad-boy stance. Friesen, a Ph.D. student in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta, builds on the work that has shown that the introduction of therapy dogs into personal or classroom contexts changes the nature of the atmosphere, and in the case of her particular classroom, helped to motivate, engage, and promote risk taking in literacy learning. The next article, by Dias, an Emeritus Professor of Education at McGill University, describes his passion to make poetry matter. He discusses his research with grade-eleven and subsequently grade-six students and shows how they moved from uncertainty about and dislike of poetry, and a dependency on the teacher to be a mediator between the reader and the text, to become engaged, confident consumers of poetry. Shore, a Professor of Educational Psychology at McGill University; Birlean, a Ph.D. student in Educational Psychology at McGill University; Walker, an M.A. student in School/Applied Child Psychology, at McGill University; Ritchie a Consulting Scientist at the I.W. Killam Children's and Women's Health Centre in Halifax; Aulls, a Professor of Educational Psychology at McGill University; and LaBanca, an instructor at Western Connecticut State University, collaboratively make a case for including inquiry literacy as one of the important multiliteracies in curricula. They express the need for students to be exposed to inquiry early on in schooling so that they can develop an increasing metacognitive ability that will allow them not only to carry out, but also to name and understand the inquiry concepts and processes in which they are involved.

Anderson, Kettner and Maguire all speak to the kinds of re-positionings that have by necessity taken place in first language and second language education with the expanding notions of literacy. Anderson, who is the Coordinator of Curriculum for the teaching of English Language Arts at the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports, argues persuasively for the need to include non-traditional texts in the learning repertoires of students throughout schooling. It is only by acquiring the necessary knowledge to critically appraise and interpret the multiple forms of representations students encounter daily that they will be able to participate fully in both their personal and public lives. Kettner, a Literacy Consultant for the English Montreal School Board, briefly and cogently traces the age-old, polarized literacy debate that pits those with broader, "multiliteracy leanings" against those who focus

on the centrality of reading taught through explicit instruction. He suggests that these dichotomous, paradigm "wars" should be put aside, but cautions that the compromise suggested in "balanced literacy" approaches can be overly simplistic, neglecting the complexities and attention to diversity necessary for literacy development. He advocates for asking different questions and exploring possible answers in collaborative research between academics and teachers in classrooms. Maguire, who is a Professor of Education at McGill University, examines the evolving literacy landscape over the last forty years, and with excellent examples, the re-positionings she has experienced through "children's disruptions," or those moments when a child involved in a literacy event has inadvertently unsettled her thinking. Her work has shown that despite the strides that have been made in multiliteracy research, there has been little emphasis on "heritage literacy" and the faces of literacies in non-dominant language groups, suggesting that some forms of literacy still count more than others.

Last, but certainly not least, Sandra Jack-Malik and Miao Sun, Patricia Leavy, Shelley Tracey, and Joe Norris all focus on literacy teaching and learning in adult contexts. Jack-Malik and Miao Sun are both Ph.D. students in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. They use narrative inquiry to examine their personal stories that unfolded as they participated, the former as teacher and the latter as student, in an informally created English Second Language (ESL) learning group. They describe how they began to question their respective beliefs during this experience, and how their identities shifted as a result. Their work provides important insights on how international ESL students might be better served in academic communities. Leavy, an Associate Professor of Sociology at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, makes a case for using art-based approaches in teaching an undergraduate media literacy course. She shows with interesting examples how the evocative, emotional and embodied nature of the arts can be used to span differences, unsettle hegemonic beliefs, create critical consciousness and enhance the overall learning. Tracey, the Coordinator of a teacher education program for adult literacy practitioners in the School of Education at Queen's University, Belfast, also argues for the use of arts-based approaches to enhance conceptualizations of literacy. In her study, she used a range of arts-based activities, such as images, poetry, storytelling, and collage-making for exploring different ways to make meaning and understand literacy practices. Her positive results suggest that more arts-based approaches should be incorporated into teacher education curricula, but also that more work is needed to develop relevant criteria for evaluating these types of processes and products. Finally, Norris, a Professor of Humanities at Brock University, brings the discussion back to the informal occasions of literacy learning that Heard began with in the opening article of this

issue. He describes in a candid narrative how he and his brother found themselves engaged in their own literacy learning while they tried to help their adolescent nephew/son with his reading. This article gives credence to the idea that our literacies, even the more traditional ones such as reading, are forever evolving and developing throughout our lives.

L.B.K.

Notes

1. Courtney Cazden, Norman Fairclough, James Gee, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress, Allan Luke, Carmen Luke, Sarah Michaels, Martin Nakata, and Joseph Lo Bianco.

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B. Ed., M. Ed., McGill University; Ed.D., Harvard University), a former elementary school teacher, is a Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education at McGill where she is Director of the Centre for Educational Leadership and the McGill Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership Programs. She has served as Director of Undergraduate Education Programs, Director of Graduate Studies and Research in Educational Studies, Associate Dean in Education, and Associate Dean and Dean of Students, and on numerous committees inside the University and in the educational milieu. Just recently she was appointed to the Board of Directors of St. George's Schools. Winner of the 1997 YWCA Women of Distinction award (Education) and 2008 Canada Post award (Educator), she teaches courses on language arts, qualitative research, and teacher education. She has a particular interest in feminist/equity and social justice issues, and the role of arts-informed analysis and representation in qualitative inquiry. Her current research and development activities include the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Efficacy Study, as well as projects with Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, England and Indonesia, and teachers and school leaders in Quebec. The focus of this work is on literacy learning, student engagement, leadership, professional development, and qualitative methodologies and she has published and presented extensively in these areas.

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Commentary:
The Intellectual Properties of Literacy

John Willinsky, Stanford University

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the case for considering literacy and learning as possessing a distinct set of intellectual properties that set apart literacy in the context of learning from other sorts of intellectual property that we commonly associate with commercial endeavors. It argues for the value of thinking about intellectual properties as a means of preparing the young both for economic life in the age of information, and for appreciating the importance of protecting the state of learning as a special sphere of intellectual activity and thus intellectual property. The example is given of how students' own contribution of intellectual properties, as a result of their learning, can add something of value to their communities.

If I had to identify a single thread that has long connected aspects of my teaching, writing, and literacy outside of school, it would have to do with how words are made public and leave their mark on the world. For example, I find myself drawn to and fascinated by how words sit on a piece of paper or the page of a book, how they mark walls and form signs. I am a fan of graphic design and curious about typography. Given the work of a great photographer like Walker Evans, I am drawn above all to his pictures of store signs from the 1930s, often hand-painted and overwhelming the storefronts.[1] The words just seem so clear and present in their meaning and intent, in how they have been formed and set out for all to see; the sign-filled photographs seem so much more direct and comprehensible than Evans' more famous photographs of poor sharecroppers in the brilliantly evocative *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Agee & Evans, 1960), that he did with James Agee.[2]

More generally, I hold with how words travel far and wide through acts of publishing. And given the sheer scale and scope of book publishing, I fall back, as many a reader gratefully does, on book reviews as a way of almost keeping pace with themes and authors of interest to me. Here, then, is the center of literate culture for me. No days without book reviews, I say, and little writing without review and reference to others' works, as you have already seen, having read this far.

This fascination with what is made public out of otherwise seemingly private words has led me in the past to teach children the history of publishing from oral poetry through illuminated manuscripts down to dot-matrix books (Willinsky, 1985). It has had me, more recently, helping others create software that thousands of scholarly journals now use to move a journal from Nairobi that reached a hundred readers in print to now reach many times that online (Willinsky, 2005). But then, away from the screen, I am still fascinated by the endlessly inventive print forms that *McSweeney's* magazine takes, different with each issue, from artbook to junk mail, while my little house continues to pile up with a book-by-book record of a life of reading.[3]

Yet this commentary on literacy is not the place to set out a few of my favorite things. It is an opportunity to set something right, to introduce what has been missing from my work and teaching on literacy. It seems to me now that I have largely overlooked one of the central ideas underwriting literate activity, the very thing, in fact, that makes reading and writing more than a school-child's exercise and fully a part of the world of getting and spending.

What I want to consider here is the largely absent place of *intellectual property* in my learning landscape, at least until recently, and what this idea has to offer in learning about literacy. We teach about reading and writing without letting the young in on how literacy makes its mark by virtue of this concept. This sense of writing as creating property gives words their legal and economic claim on the world. Intellectual property rights govern the making public of language in this way. IP rights, as they are known, typically take the form of copyright in the case of writing. And such rights not only concern who can sell and profit from a work, but also who can be identified with the work, and have a say in how that work is distributed and shared, whether for money or on some other basis.

Still you may want to politely interject, "What does this have to do with teaching children to read and write, to having them care for the word?" That this is not immediately clear is, well, exactly my point. For certainly, it had never occurred to

me either that the copyright notice, tucked away in small print behind the title page, was connected to the teaching of literacy. Now it seems perfectly clear to me that if you care about literacy, you are already drawing some inspiration, however unconsciously, from how words have this status as property, and how this literate realm then forms the ground beneath one's feet, providing a place to stand and call one's own.

While there is not room here to properly consider how words took on this legal status as property, it was part of a long historical process involving queens and kings, courts and pirates, bankrupt authors and wealthy publishers (as well as vice versa). Perhaps the one historical moment to be noted is that intellectual property is generally considered to have been launched in English law with the Statute of Anne, 1710, otherwise known as *An Act for the Encouragement of Learning*.[4] If intellectual property had its start to encourage learning, then surely it is a good match for any act of teaching.

Yet I have to admit that I only began to think about how dependent literacy is on the concept of intellectual property after trying to increase the public availability of a specific body of such property. It was not students' poetry or one of their stories this time. The work I wanted to make *more* accessible was none other than the scholarship and research that was being done by my colleagues around the world in the service of, I think it fair to say, the public good and people everywhere.

The concept of intellectual property was, of course, critical to why this public good could not be more widely shared. Where I ran into trouble was in trying to say to the world, in effect, "Here, I want to share with you, whether you are teachers, parents or librarians, what I discovered in my research into what children are learning about reading." And what I learned to say, as a result of intellectual property law was, "Oh, wait, I cannot share this work with you because I have transferred all of my intellectual property rights to publishers who have, well within their rights, forbidden me to publicly share this work."

I will not take the time here to go into this important educational issue of access to knowledge, except to say that the academic community is slowly making progress in opening research and scholarship to public view (Willinsky, 2006). In the process, I have been struck by how learning inspires the creation of a special sort of intellectual property. This does not mean that I simply want to sell student work to the public as a profit-sharing incentive for learning, despite Samuel Johnson's (n.d.) counsel that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." It means rethinking how we value learning in schools, because this concept of intellectual

property speaks to how we value things. I can see that this is a tricky idea to express clearly. To put it another way, when the act of learning leads to the production of the intellectual property, which is not always the case as I will explain below, the value of that property is closely tied to the learning it encourages in others, that is, in what I can learn from the fruits of your learning.

Now I am referring to *learning* here in a double sense. I see it involving "the whining schoolboy, with his satchel / And shining morning face, creeping like snail / Unwillingly to school," as Shakespeare (1599-1600 / 1977) had it, and I see it involving the learned scholar—if not possessing "the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation," to return to Jaques in *As You Like It*. After all, the learning of both student and scholar is closely connected in an economic sense, as their learning is often publicly sponsored by the state.

This act of sponsorship means, to my way of thinking, that the resulting work, whether an assignment or research paper, constitutes a different order of intellectual property than, say, John Updike's (2009) posthumously published volume of poems. Let me say a little more about that. After a lifetime of reading and teaching Updike, his final poems gave me as serious pause as anything I have read. My and many others' appreciation of his writing permitted him to live and thrive by his particular mastery of this craft in poetry, novel, short story and review. Updike's work also reflects a good deal of learning, and I would use his clever poems about scientific phenomenon, for example, in my classes. But Updike's example is not the only way that intellectual property works. We might say that literacy has other intellectual properties.

For example, my writing on Updike here represents intellectual property of a different order. It is sponsored by my employer, which as a tax-exempt institution, reflects something of a publicly sponsored gift (albeit of far lesser quality than Updike's least scribble). It is a gift of public patronage which the academic community tries its best to exercise responsibly (through peer-review for example, if not in this invited case, in many others). So learning itself is not the key issue but how that learning is sponsored, whether directly through the sale of the resulting work or through the support of an educational institution. Remove the direct dependency on the sale of the work from our thinking about intellectual property, and you are left with a sense of its public contribution as the full measure of its value. To return to the children in the classroom, they, too, are part of a patronized educational setting, and thus they, too, can engage in creating intellectual property in which *the value of that property is established (and experienced) in its contribution to the learning of others*.

You may recall the great writing teachers Jane Hansen and Donald Graves in the 1980s, describing the value of having an "author chair" in the classroom, where a child would sit and talk to the class about his or her work, as an author (Hansen, 1985). It was just the sort of make-believe, with serious intent, that is always rewarding to play out with the young. The children in those classes inspired by Jane and Donald wrote magnificently, draft after draft, and were rightly proud of the resulting work which they shared through their books.

What did not cross my mind, in the inspiration that I drew from their work, was that, in a very real and legal sense, we did not need magic chairs to draw the connection between child and writer. As a point of law, the students working on their hand-written books already had a claim on being authors in possession of the very same intellectual property rights by which adult authors live or have to pursue day jobs.[5] The students were only missing one thing. They had no sense of those rights, even as they were able to discover the *value* of such properties, as reflected, for example, in the beaming faces of their grandparents as they read these books.

What we have today, even with the eclipsing of the writing process movement in the face of high-stakes testing, is the following situation with regard to the child and intellectual property: (1) The child creates intellectual property in school on occasion. (2) The child learns little if anything about intellectual property in school. (3) The child trades and traffics in intellectual property outside of school, by sharing games, music, and much more, with still only a rough understanding of what is being hacked, ripped, and burned. (4) And finally the child lives in, and will come to work in, a world in which intellectual property fuels knowledge-based economies, and is as critical to global competitiveness among nations as it is to the struggling songwriter with a MySpace site.

My claim is that we would do well, as educators, to have the students both experience and learn about how intellectual property works both within and outside of educational settings. They need to see how literacy is part of the circulation of learning that they are already part of within educational settings, as well as part of the economy into which they are going to graduate.

Now the lines are not neatly or finely drawn between which intellectual properties are going to be freely shared and which are charging an admission price. Yet there is a growing public sphere of freely shared learning materials to which one can point. These materials are taking advantage of the Internet to distribute intellectual properties of creative and educational value, whether one looks at the Creative

Commons movement, the Open Access movement, Open Educational Resources, or *Wikipedia*.[6] These burgeoning developments provide a quick course in how inspired people have become in directing their literacy toward sharing what they have created and have learned. They involve a deliberate rethinking of intellectual property that is focused on the learning value rather than the price markup.

What children will learn—as they work out ideas on paper, tell a story, gather and analyze some information about their community, construct a review, or otherwise put something together that proves of value to others—is that the value of the resulting intellectual properties depends (once you move beyond your grandparents) on the quality and care, as well as the imagination and flare, that they bring to such work. They will learn to ask themselves, "Who would value such work and how-can I increase that value?"

When I recapitulated the history of publishing with those elementary school students, we took our oral poetry, our illuminated manuscripts, our posted broadsides out into hallways of the school as an act of "publishing" the work. While we might have taught the rest of the school more about how these works fit into the history of publishing, we did learn about what it meant to make work public, and how to stop groups of students in a hallway with a poem writ large and posted in an unexpected spot.

For children to discover their ability to create intellectual property of this sort, as a result of their learning, would go a long way in tempering the lessons that they are otherwise learning when they are asked to demonstrate their literacy by bubble-filling multiple-choice tests. The work that goes into the test has little value to others or themselves, outside of the score they achieve, just as the reading "passages," are otherwise removed from the world of what people read. The tests may indicate a certain capacity and readiness, but my argument is, of course, that students are also in a position to give an account of their literacy that is directly reflected in the production of intellectual properties that can stand as a public good.

In terms of that accountability, consider how the schoolhouse may well represent the most intense and concentrated center of learning in a given community. To take but one example of how that capacity can be put to good use, Bill Munn and Rob Lucas, teacher and former student, have worked with high school history students in assembling a Wiki recording of the history of their town Marion, Indiana.[7] The students have honed their literacy skills in capturing and representing aspects of the town's history, whether with an entry on James Dean and the "curse of the car," as one

student put it, or in conducting an interview with Jim Perkins, who told the student about the unsuccessful efforts in the 1950s to integrate the town's public pool, as part of a long-standing civil rights struggle.

The growing historical Web site which students and teacher have created provides shining examples of how learning and labor can go into creating properties of lasting value to that community and the world at large (especially given the reach of James Dean). It forms a way for students and teachers to consider the different ways in which intellectual property operates, ensuring a recognition of and respect for their work that teaches them about the public value of learning. Such examples also enable students to explore how decisions are made about whether to commercialize such properties, and help the students to see how this concept of intellectual property is what gives ideas their standing in the world.

I realize that the value of literacy and what it makes of the world is complicated enough, and introducing this concept of intellectual property may only seem to further confuse matters. Yet for me, the complexities and controversies that surround intellectual property can demonstrate to students the import of this form of property to our lives. At the very least, I think it is worth introducing this idea of intellectual property into the conversation with students, when it comes to talking about the value of their and others' work, as it is freely shared or sold, as authorship is claimed, as we acknowledge or seek permission to use the work of others. Intellectual property is what grounds literacy, legally investing it with a value that I think students can begin to experience long before they have written their last literacy test. The complexities associated with this property idea also suggest why it needs to come up repeatedly over the course of the student's career. Only then, with experience and reflection, will the intellectual properties of literacy—as a right, a value, and an opportunity—contribute to their sense of how reading and writing matter.

Notes

1. For example, see Walker Evans' 1930s photograph of New Orleans, http://tinyurl.com/oo7sv6.

2. For an example of Evans' work in the book, see http://www.brusselstribunal.org/Meyer/Crisis_bestanden/image029.jpg.

3. To learn more about *McSweeney's*, a quarterly magazine, see http://www.mcsweeneys.net/

4. For more information, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute_of_Anne

5. When I turned to Amazon to have a look at Donald Graves' books, there was a Special Offers and Product Promotions on the same page as his book which read, "Want to make your book available for sale on Amazon.com and other channels? Self-publish and sell your book on-demand through BookSurge, a member of the Amazon group of companies." Here was the intellectual property aspect of the amateur writer recognized and capitalized upon.

6. See Creative Commons http://creativecommons.org/; Open Access (Willinsky, 2006); and Open Educational Resources http://www.oercommons.org/.

7. See Wiki Marion: http://wikimarion.org/.

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John Willinsky is Khosla Family Professor of Education at Stanford University and director of the Public Knowledge Project at Stanford, University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University. Much of his work, including his book, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship* (MIT Press, 2006), winner of two outstanding book awards, as well as PKP's award-winning open source software for journals and conferences, is free to download through the project's Web site (http://pkp.sfu.ca).

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Commentary:

Thoughts on Three Decades in Literacy Education: Why Don't We Ever Learn?

Susan Church, Mount Saint Vincent University

ABSTRACT

Literacy teaching and learning and education more generally seem destined to be buffeted by periodic pendulum swings between more and less regulation of curriculum, assessment and teachers' work. Reflecting from a position of seniority, I speculate in this commentary on how the trajectory of progressive and generative theories and practices in literacy education might have been altered if such swings had not been so pervasive over the past several decades. Drawing on insights that have guided my own thirty-plus years of work to advance critically reflective and progressive literacy education, I suggest that greater attention to some wise words from past decades might help today's educators to resist the never-ending pull of the pendulum.

One of the pleasures of retiring from full-time employment is having the opportunity to teach again after devoting the last two decades of my career to a variety of district-level leadership positions. As a part-time university faculty member, I interact both with teachers and with people aspiring to be teachers. Inevitably, we share stories about our lives and work. When I describe experiences from the 1970s and 1980s, I know that my students view that era as I do the Depression or World War II, as history. I try very hard not to come across like some of the seasoned teachers I remember from early in my career—the ones for whom nothing was new; they had seen it all. Yet, when I encounter young teachers who are struggling to move from teacher-centred classrooms to ones in which children are active participants in reading/writing workshops, I realize that I have been around long

enough now to have experienced a few swings of that proverbial pendulum—the one that takes us back and forth between greater and lesser external regulation of schooling every fifteen or twenty years.

I was quite a young teacher in 1979 when I joined a group of innovative educators who were replacing their basal readers with children's literature and learning to teach writing as process. Over time, efforts to construct collaborative and holistic approaches to literacy education acquired the label, "whole language." This was not the first time that progressive ideas had caught the attention of researchers and educators—John Dewey's (1938) experiential learning of the 1930s comes to mind. Open and generative forms of pedagogy have a history of waxing and then waning as changing political contexts eventually bring more restrictive practices into dominance. In the case of whole language, the critiques of the perceived lack of attention to language skills such as phonics, spelling and usage ignited heated language wars over whether "meaning first" or "code first" pedagogies should prevail.

I was among those who expressed concerns that the rapid implementation of whole language curricula left many teachers with superficial understandings and many misconceptions about how to support children's growth as language users (Church, 1992, 1994, 1996; Newman & Church, 1990). What was needed, I argued, was greater attention to the learning needs of teachers, in particular expanding knowledge of the beliefs underlying new practices. Instead, the rhetoric of literacy crisis grew and there were reactive moves: greater specificity in curricular expectations; the re-introduction of commercially published literacy programs; scripted teachers' manuals; and increased reliance on external assessments to determine the success of students, teachers and schools. I am aware that there was significant variation across constituencies in regard to how far the pendulum swung in either direction. For example, in Canada the proliferation of standardized tests has been much less extreme than in the United States, and most provincial curriculum frameworks provide more room to maneuver than is possible in many other contexts. Yet, it is evident that the standardization of curriculum and the imposition of external accountability frameworks became the dominant trend in public education in the 1990s.

There are signs that a swing back is occurring. Recently I came across the following headline, from an article in the *Guardian* newspaper in the UK (Westland, 2009): "'We want the wow factor.' It is possible for schools to shake off the constraints of the curriculum and be creative." The article went on to describe how teachers in a school in southwest London are working with themes, creating integrated curriculum around large inquiry questions, and to explain how the national primary curriculum is being

revamped to "allow more flexibility and encourage cross-curricular teaching." Wow, indeed, I thought when I read about the teachers' commitment and the children's excitement over this new-to-them way of teaching and learning. The article could just as well have been written about classrooms in Nova Scotia in the early 1980s.

In some respects, the *Guardian* article felt like a breath of fresh air as it reconstituted the discourses of the promising early days of whole language: thematic teaching, creativity, flexibility, teacher empowerment, learning by doing, child-friendliness, and student engagement. The practices described in the article provide a hopeful counter-narrative to today's continuing obsession with controlling every aspect of teachers' work and students' learning through externally mandated directives, policies, and tests. I am sure that the critics from the other side are already formulating their arguments for why this move toward greater creativity will undermine the progress that has been made in systematizing curriculum and instruction over the past two decades. No doubt the polarizing debate will continue.

Notwithstanding the positive possibilities represented by the news article, I am troubled that a new generation of teachers seems to be going over the same ground that we traversed two decades ago. Certainly, exploring themes such as castles, aliens, space, and water, as they are in the school in south-west London, is a whole lot better than doing worksheets. Similarly, I am encouraged when teachers in my graduate courses want to move away from writing prompts and whole class texts to enact practices such as reading/writing workshops that I implemented as a teacher in the 1980s. Yet, I also experience a pervasive sense of déjà vu that is disturbing, rather than nostalgic.

When I work with teachers who appear to be taking the same tentative steps I took years ago, I have no choice but to extend their learning from where they are, rather than from where I would like them to be. I find myself negotiating the complexities of both responding to their concerns about how best to engage their students more actively through such practices as reading/writing workshops and extending their awareness of social-constructivist, critical theories of literacy teaching. These current conceptions of literacy problematize the practices of the 1980s as insufficiently reflective of difference and of the multiple ways in which people use language to exercise power across diverse social contexts. Further, toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century, how can I fail to focus on the transformative impact of new literacies? I wonder how our conversations about the complexities of responding to today's generation of literacy learners might be enriched and deepened if I did not have to counter the effects of the reforms of the 1990s.

As shifting political tides brought pendulum swings within the institutional context in which I worked as a teacher and administrator, I was fortunate to have ongoing access to and engagement with the academic community throughout my career in public education. Those connections supported a gradual and continual evolution of my theoretical and practical understandings of literacy education. In contrast to the experiences of most teachers in the school system—where change typically occurs through settling on a new right answer, often directly contradictory to the previous right answer—in an academic context there were opportunities for open and dynamic consideration of multiple perspectives and a broad range of research. Universities, to the extent that they depend upon governments for funding, are also impacted by changing political contexts. Nonetheless, a full spectrum of theoretical perspectives continues to be represented within academia. Indeed, the contention among those diverse views constitutes the life blood of scholarly journals and conferences.

Over the years as a district level administrator—curriculum supervisor, assistant superintendent, areas superintendent—I was from time to time responsible for implementing a new mandate that represented a pendulum swing. Many teachers probably viewed me as one of the unspecified "they" who periodically drive the school system into a 180-degree turn. Toward the end of my career in public education I completed doctoral research (Church, 2003) in which I constructed a critical analysis of educational leadership and reform, documenting my efforts to negotiate the tensions between institutional role expectations and my beliefs. As I interact with my undergraduate and graduate students, I certainly draw upon the insights that I gained through that investigation. I also, however, reach further into the past to bring to their attention some powerful words that I have carried with me through all of my experiences as a teacher, learner and leader. Three eloquent writers provided similar counsel on how to move beyond the pendulum swings that seem to keep public education in thrall, countering the belief in right answers that underlies these periodic shifts.

More than thirty years ago, in the context of offering insights about the learning and teaching of writing, Peter Elbow (1973) observed, "You're always right and you're always wrong" (p. 106). He advised writers to be aware that, although they may be in charge of their writing, they need to be open to readers' interpretations and feedback and "shed their blinders." I have extrapolated this advice to apply more generally to teaching, educational change and life: a lot of learning can occur if we set aside our truths, our right answers, and, as Elbow suggests, remain simultaneously sure of ourselves and humble.

Along the same lines, Donald Graves (1984), one of the fathers of the writing process movement of the 1970s and 80s, reflected on its trajectory and warned that "the enemy is orthodoxy." These orthodoxies, he argued, were "substitutes for thinking" (p. 185). He went on to list aspects of teaching writing that were becoming inviolate right answers, for example, all pieces should be revised and published, children should always choose their own topics or language conventions are unimportant. At the conclusion, Graves noted, "Orthodoxies make us tell *old stories* about children at the expense of the new stories that children are telling us today" (p. 193). In my experience, orthodoxies also lead to backlashes because teachers are implementing practices by rote rather than through thinking that leads to deeper understandings. Backlashes, in turn, result in institutional pendulum swings, as systems react and retrench.

Finally, Margaret Meek Spencer, cited by Dillon (1984), urged educators to ask "what if it's otherwise?" (p. 680). Disturbed by the ideologically pure camps represented in articles submitted to him when he was the editor of *Language Arts*, Dillon used Spencer's question to draw attention to the lack of critical questioning in the debates of that era—debates that subsequently evolved into the full-fledged "language wars" that continue today. Asking "what if it's otherwise?" is a means of sustaining inquiry and learning. If public educators stop searching for right answers and, instead, engage in ongoing critical reflection about theories and practices, we are better prepared to withstand the pressures to comply with politically driven pendulum swings. Such reflection fosters contexts in which individuals and groups with diverse perspectives are open to learning from each other, engage in thoughtful dialogue and refrain from adopting rigid, oppositional stances. As a result, there is less room for backlash since teachers are co-creators of changes in theories and practices rather than recipients of externally generated right answers.

As I contemplate the current public education landscape from my position of seniority, I can see that the quest for right answers continues. Take your pick from among teacher merit pay, professional learning communities, balanced literacy and a plethora of other possibilities. Most of the teachers that I meet in my university classes feel overwhelmed by the number of external expectations raining in on them. I do my best to help them to reflect critically on their beliefs and practices and to adopt a similar stance in their day-to-day work. I also offer lessons from the past that seem to be relevant to today's life in schools. I realize, however, that their capacity to learn from these lessons is limited. When historians witness successive generations reproducing the same problems and solutions again and again, they must wonder as I do, "Why don't we ever learn?" So, I continue to invoke the words of my three

mentors from the past in hopes that they will empower today's generation of teachers to resist the never-ending swing of the pendulum by asking themselves and others, "What if it's otherwise?"

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Commentary:

On the Road to Literacy: Before the Three R's Come the Three F's

Vivian Paley

ABSTRACT

From the earliest age, children begin to practice their imaginary characters, their separate visions of strength and weakness, of love and loss. By the time they enter kindergarten they are ready to build complex social and literary worlds in which friendship, fantasy, and fairness—the Three F's—are inalienable rights, and every child tries to find a secure place in an intimate community. A preschool or kindergarten without a substantial playtime puts everyone at a disadvantage, for play is the primary reality for its members. Within the familiar process of inventing new characters and plots, children continue to develop the intuitive language that binds us together in a functioning social entity. This is the true early literacy.

In the interest of full disclosure, I admit that during my long tenure in the kindergarten and nursery school, my colleagues and I rarely spoke of literacy. Any mention of early literacy would have taken us by surprise. How awkward to label the events taking place among our crawling, climbing, running, shouting, and posturing little ones as "early literacy," though the meowing and woofing, the baby cries and spaceship explosions were definitely connected to dramas in which well-defined characters performed their roles with increasing flair and fluency.

We called it pretend play or make-believe, as in "make it I'm a kitty and you try to find me 'cause I'm lost and pretend you hear a noise." The language and lore of the young needed no justification; I marveled at the outpouring of unfettered imaginations and somehow understood that a social and literary society was being

developed. Furthermore, it usually took precedence over my own less inventive plans. More plainly stated, the children found their own scenarios more compelling than the teachers' curriculum; we took note and tried to find a common nurturing ground.

It was not the Three R's we in the kindergarten pursued; reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic were the unchallenged province and preference of the first-grade teachers. Our task could better be described as the Three F's: fantasy, friendship, and fairness. These were the first steps to school success and were not to be short-changed in order to hurry our youngest students into more sedentary and formalized occupations.

I regret now that we did not call the doll corner and block area our seats of early literacy, rounded out by Beatrix Potter and jars of paint, mounds of clay, and tinkly pianos to keep us singing and marching through our invented worlds. "This is early literacy we're doing!" should have been our cry. Then the lyrical structures built up during long sessions of imaginative play might have been protected from the tidal wave of formal lessons and technology threatening to level the creative landscape of early childhood.

How Beatrix Potter would have applauded the literary analysis in my doll corner one day:

> "Peter Rabbit is a robber, you know," says five-year-old William (all names are pseudonyms), as Theresa, age four, pours him a cup of tea. "I don't think I drink tea if I'm a robber."
>
> Theresa pushes the cup closer to William. "Yes, you could have it because it's chamillia-willia tea. That means it's for you because you're a William."
>
> "But robbers don't drink tea."
>
> "Peter is not a robber, no, he's not a robber."
>
> "He steals the lettuce — "
>
> "But Mr. McGregor is mean. And I'm your mother. So you can't be a robber if I'm waiting for you."

This has been a doll-corner conversation of great merit. The logic is clear: robbers do not have mothers who wait for them and give them tea. As to whether it is acceptable to steal from a mean person, the issue will arise again now that the idea has been introduced, stimulating new conversations.

"William thinks Peter Rabbit is a robber," I say at snack time. "So he doesn't think Peter should drink tea."

"He's not a robber," Theresa insists. "Because I'm the mother."
"And you gave him some tea."
"Camillia-willia tea."

Educators who wish to place good talk at the top of their literacy list are more than matched by the children's own desires. A child's need to explain ideas within the context of a story exerts a powerful incentive, driving the exploration of language and logic to new heights.

"But wait a minute, Theresa," Cassie says. "Peter didn't mind his mother so he might be a robber. They always run away like that."
"There could be a mean mother like Cinderella has," William says. "But Peter's mother is not mean."
"Cinderella's real mother isn't mean," Ella says. "Peter was hungry and he saw the lettuce."
"Okay, here's a good idea," Theresa concludes, and there is general agreement. "Let Peter ask Mr. McGregor can I please eat a small lettuce? Then, if he says no, Peter can hide and take some because Mr. McGregor can't eat so much by hisself."

The children in this class have become Peter's friends. They can easily imagine how this mischievous little rabbit feels but they are also curious about Mr. McGregor and his intentions. The adult may say, "If I were Peter, these would be my choices." But a child says, "I am Peter and my mother wants to give me tea. Do I drink the tea and still retain the image I prefer of a naughty Peter? Later when I put on my cape and become a super-rabbit, can I still have tea with my mother? But anyway, I might decide to be Baby Peter so that's okay."

Now, multiply these dramatic ruminations by those of twenty other children in the classroom and we begin to understand how learning is approached on the children's own turf. I grow, the child seems to say, when I pretend to be someone else, in another place, at another time; I grow further when my classmates and I build scenes and explain our characters' motivations day by day. As we learn to listen to one another's ideas and follow them through in our fictionalized worlds, we construct the model of a literate and democratic school society and prepare to climb the educational ladder together.

We in the early childhood community may legitimately consider ourselves still in the process of developing a sensible curriculum. After all, the introduction of

formal lessons to young children has a very short history and the results are often uncertain and troubling. Like Mr. McGregor, we plant our produce in neat rows and do not want Peter to mess about and impose too many different perspectives in the uses of lettuce and cabbage. Yet, who owns the subject, Mr. McGregor or Peter? Or, perhaps I should ask: What is the subject?

During a recent visit to a preschool, I had the opportunity to view these seemingly conflicting approaches to learning and even to the nature of the subject matter itself. However, due to the flexibility of the children and their teachers, common ground was always in sight.

I enter the room while a mathematics lesson is in progress: a group of 18 fours and fives are to figure out, using little blocks on individual trays, how many ways there are to make the number 5. Derek has lined up his blocks as if they are train cars, pushing them along with a barely audible "choo-choo-choo." The teacher kneels beside him and asks, "Can you do a five, Derek?" When there is no response, she says, "Look, watch me. Put one block over here, then put one, two, three, four blocks over here, and look! How many? One, two three, four—and one more? One more is five! Good."

Derek has been silent throughout the dismantling of his train. The teacher studies his face for a moment, then writes "5" on a card and puts it on the tray. "Is this the number 5 train, Derek?" she asks. "Is it time to leave the station?" The boy rewards his teacher with a smile. She has come on board and enabled him to drive the engine again.

After mathematics comes free play. It is not as long a period as I would prefer, but there is time enough to pretend something, to continue an ongoing story, to establish an identity and connect to other players. Derek sits across from me at a small table, takes a black crayon and begins to draw on a large piece of newsprint.

"Your black crayon is going everywhere," I comment.

He looks up in surprise, then launches into a complete explanation. "Yeah, this is the hugest explosion. It could explode the whole world. Not really, I mean. It's for those guys over there I'm playing with. Ruby wants me to play with her but I promised them."

He points to Ruby in the doll corner. "Should I help her?" I ask. "She seems to be having trouble getting into those shoes."

"Naw, she's only just pretending," Derek informs me. "See, it gotta be hard 'cause she's Cinderella and those shoes they don't know could she be the real one or not."

"The real what?" I ask.

Derek examines my face as if he is trying to recall exactly what we have been saying. "The real princess. See, Ruby wears the slippers 'cause it's her turn and before that time Shelly was wearin' them and she was probably wishin' to have them now but it's anyway not her turn. And Ruby was cryin' 'cause it weren't fair. So Miss Connie has to have a good talk to see what's fair to do."

"Who did Ruby want you to be?"

"I could be the dad or Superman 'cause I got a cape. Teacher says keep it in my cubby. She'll tell me when. This explosion's okay 'cause it's paper. That's allowed for explosions but not too loud. We're waiting for the enemy. Then we have the explosion. So I gotta hurry."

How incredible, I thought. This small child is already a student of topics that preoccupy us all our lives: friendship, fantasy, and fairness. He knows and cares about the roles he and his classmates prefer and he welcomes a fair distribution of personas. Furthermore, he knows that in order to see the whole picture, a story must be acted to hold the parts together. There are many parallel stories in flux, including the teachers', and he must listen carefully, talk about the script, its characters and plot, if he is to figure out what comes next.

Still, what about the mathematics lesson? Will Derek be judged by his lack of responsiveness during the number 5 practice, and later, in a phonics drill from which he appears equally disconnected? I feel certain the teacher will figure out better ways to handle the formal curriculum, just as she has enabled Derek and his friends to have their explosions and superheroes and has helped the doll-corner players experience their own versions of Cinderella from cradle to dance. Miss Connie needs only to adapt what she knows about play to other curricula: "Once upon a time, a little engine sat alone on a track. It was lonely and sad…"

Derek, by the way, does get around to numerical values. "There's supposed to be two more sisters, you know," he returns to tell me. "Those steptoe sisters? See, there's really three sisters but only one is nice. Two is mean. Even the mother is mean. Three mean people. But nobody wants to play them. Anyway, Ruby likes to be Baby Cinderella 'cause then she has the nice mother. Ruby told that story to Miss Connie, you know, when she writes down our stories? And I was the dad." He pauses to remember the event in greater detail. "I was the hunter who is a dad. Because there was a wolf."

From the earliest age, children begin to practice their imaginary characters, their separate visions of pleasure and pain, of strength and weakness, of love and loss. By the time they enter kindergarten they are ready to build complex worlds in which friendship and fairness are inalienable rights, and every child has a secure place in an intimate community.

This has never been an easy task, but a preschool or kindergarten without a substantial play time puts everyone at a disadvantage, for play is the primary reality for its members. Play contains the only set of circumstances the children understand from beginning to end. "I can do this well," the children seem to say. "I can be this effectively. I understand what is happening to me and to the other children."

Within the familiar process of inventing new characters and plots, children continue to develop the intuitive language that binds us together. Here is where we have an opportunity to study each child's individual style and story, and to introduce all manner of new experiences into a functioning social community.

"What are you pretending? Who can I be?" the children ask one another. Kieran Egan (1989), in his *Teaching as Storytelling*, would have all schoolteachers ask the same questions: "What is the story here? What roles can we take?" Young children, without instruction, begin to imagine the answers to these questions long before they enter school.

Let us respect the primacy of children's fantasy play and study its rich development through the early school years and beyond. The lively curiosity and enthusiasm engendered in the process of creating stories will support our own educational goals in a manner that is recognizable to every child. Climb aboard, we announce to Derek and his friends. The number 5 train is leaving the station!

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Vivian Gussin Paley writes and teaches about the world of young children. She examines their stories and play, their logic and their thinking, searching for meaning in the social and moral landscapes of classroom life.

A kindergarten teacher for 37 years, Mrs. Paley brings her storytelling/story acting and discussion techniques to children, teachers, and parents throughout the world.

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Commentary:
Early Literacy Development and Implications for Practice

Anne Haas Dyson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

In this interview with Anne Haas Dyson she discusses literacy, examining the connection between language, culture, and the positive impact of play. Anne speaks about the importance of incorporating literacy into the everyday life of children, and encouraging creativity and peer collaboration in the home as well as in classrooms. She stresses that children's literacy skills must be assessed within context, taking into consideration the child's perspective and the resources available. She emphasizes the individuality of every child's learning experience and the right for children to progress at their own speed.

How would you define literacy for 2009?

I always define literacy as some kind of deliberate use of the symbol system to participate in some kind of sociocultural practice. When you watch little kids, the writing is usually all wound up with the talking and, if it's allowed in the classroom, the drawing and the playing. So I have a pretty broad definition anyway. But I think the ways in which these other symbol systems are now figuring… I mean when I started, in the late seventies trying to find disciplined ways of observing kids, I'd see this multi-modality, but I had the idea that eventually the kids would learn to accomplish in written language what they were accomplishing in other symbol systems. With that understanding, of course, meanings are not directly transferable. They would, for example, do less drawing and more writing.

So everything is much more multi-modal, and the emphasis I think now is on flexibility. But at the same time I don't think that we need to act like this is some dramatic new thing. Because when you watch little kids you see all these capacities. They are quite multi-modal, they're quite flexible. So I think we have to consider what the curricular path should be to outcomes.

You have spoken about the baby genius edutainment complex, and the Einstein-in-the-Crib notion. Say a little bit about these expressions.

Well I think that was from a fellow interested in these ways of exploiting infancy by having these tapes for little bitty children as though this would do something for them. The idea that playing a tape is going to do something for a little bitty child is just nonsense. It's just silliness, and it shows something about some kind of gullibility of the populace. Because children, as we know, learn through interaction, with other people and with their environment. In the district I've been in lately, there is no playtime, even in the kindergartens; there's just none, there is absolutely none. It's not mentioned in the curriculum, there's no allotment made for play at all. Of course, the children still play, but it's undercover, it's on the side, it's being naughty. But in general the increasing devaluing of the agency of children, of the importance of play, and even of the centrality of interactions to learning, is rather disheartening, not to mention just silly. It just struck me as silly, and if it weren't so pervasive it would be funny, but instead it's rather sad.

So then, what advice would you give to parents about early literacy learning?

Well, I would say that literacy is going to be a part of language-filled activities, and that probably any time in the daily life when literacy figures into for them, it could figure into their child. I just saw a nice example yesterday. I went to a shopping centre and there was this dad who was walking with this little kid. And as they were walking from the parking lot they were looking at all the signs in the stores and the dad was saying, "Now, we're going to go to Staples. Where do you think it says Staples?" And the kid was so engaged and having such a good time, and I thought, well now there's just a little mundane thing, but through interaction it's been opened up to include the child. And it's a moment of closeness between them, the dad and the child, and they're happy together, and it's showing literacy as part of everyday life.

Now, the classic thing everybody refers to is reading to children, and I think that is a wonderful activity. It's close, you get the particular kind of language that may be in the book, and an opportunity for interaction, but that's not the only way it needs

to happen. So, I think about reading the newspaper, or checking the weather, making a grocery list. Any of the daily activities can become occasions for child participation in the doings of the family.

And then, more broadly, since school literacy often entails this extended use of language, storytelling is important. Not just reading stories, but telling stories of any kind, of whatever kind of storytelling goes on in the family, and involving the child in the storytelling. So there is this extended use of language. I would say that was important.

So what should early literacy teaching and learning look like in classrooms?

If I stick to written language itself, I would think not in terms of just one kind of central activity, but I think that there can be multiple ways in which written language can be woven into the texture of the day. I think that there can be times when kids get together, like in the morning, when kids tell the important things that are happening, and the teacher takes dictation. That can happen in lots of different ways. The kids can jointly write their remembrances of yesterday and their anticipations for today, or one child can tell something important that happened, and gradually they all take their turn, and there is this collective writing of personal and classroom history. So I think that that's a good activity. I think that things like having access to materials so that we could take orders in our restaurants and we could build signs for our roads, and we could make labels for our apartment buildings, so that literacy is brought into constructive and dramatic play that I hope would be going on in an early childhood classroom. Then I think writing and reading work together. I like a daily time when the kids can have their journals or their writing books in which they draw and write, but I'm not big on mandating what that should be. That can be an open-ended time. We can write together in particular kinds of genres when we do activities throughout the day. And we can take our cue from the child. There is plenty of space for lots of teacher actions. We can take dictation sometimes, old language experience stories, we can have children write themselves and they can draw and tell us what they're doing, we can help them label it depending on what the children know, and how we can build on what they know.

How do you help pre-service or graduate students who are teachers understand and develop the competencies needed for teaching literacy in these more ideal types of early literacy classrooms?

I work on having them understand what it is they're trying to teach, first of all. If you think that what you're teaching is just the ABC's and the sounds of the letters and the rest of the listed skills, then your way of looking at children is going to be different than if you think that what you are doing is trying to have the kids participate in varied kinds of literacy practices in which they will organize their skills, and, through interaction with other people, and the material resources available, in the activity, they will participate more skilfully over time. It matters how they think about it. So we have to work on what's behind the eyeballs, and being able to look positively at the resources of children. So, if teachers are not questioning the judgments that they're making about kids based on what comes out of their mouths, if they are thinking "deficit-y" instead of this is what, in my case, this is what America sounds like, it's going to be a problem. And related to that, is being able to look positively at the resources of children. Because childhood is all wound up now with popular culture, and the kids are coming with the TV and the music and the films and many children are coming with the video games and computer experiences.

So then, what should literacy assessment look like and why?

Well, first we have to figure out what it is that we want the kids to be able to do. So we have some ideas of the kinds of practices or events in which we want to see kids participate. But in general we know that you can't look at one kind of practice, one kind of event, and make any statement about the repertoire of children, right? So, again, I think we have to think about those components of any kind of language or literacy activity, "Who are they?" Who are they using language with and who are they using language for? So what access to help is there? That's a sort of Vygotskian idea. It's just not what you can do when you're sitting there all by yourself, but when you're engaging with other people. What's the range of purposes for which a child is comfortable or gaining access to using written language? Maybe they won't read this kind of book but they'll read that kind of book. Maybe if you ask them to do such-and-such you'll get nothing but if they're writing the letter to somebody you'll get something. What's the channel of communication? What language do they have to use? How welcoming is the school of the language of the child? Is there any access, can they accompany their written language with any other symbolic medium? I think you can't really assess the language and literacy of a child without at the same time assessing the nature of the activity through which you're going to make judgments about the child. So you always see the child in context. And you vary that kind of context so that you can get a sense of the repertoire of children. So certainly when I look at kids, I, in writing in particular, I certainly care about the basic things like what they know about the symbol system and how it works. But I also know that how they're

going to use that symbol system is going to vary depending on the nature of the activity. If they're all by themselves, they might put down anything, but if they are sitting with other kids, who are trying to figure out how to spell such and such…

But I guess the basic idea is if you want to know what a kid knows, you'll never look just in one way, you can't separate the child from the context. So you'll have to vary the context in order to get a full picture of the possibilities of the child.

In the best of all worlds, describe a future scenario for early literacy.

In the best of all worlds there would be a sense of time as being experienced differently by children. That they would have time to learn. So I would like to see these year-by-year, mandated, rather dated standards go. I think we have to have common visions of what we want for our children, but we have to give them time. We have to give them time to figure out the way that written language figures into their life. They have to have time to learn. They simply have to have time, and that is going to vary child by child by child. So, in an ideal world, the kids would have time and they would have space, so there would be diversity of activities and they would have some choice. I would like to see time and space being negotiable for kids, for young kids. And I see the other thing I said was that I would like to see the kids having some agency, some choice and a rich variety of possible activities in which to participate and I would like them to have observant teachers who knew how to pay attention to what the kids were doing and to take advantage of teachable moments and help them along the way. I would like to see a new respect for child culture and childhood so that time to learn in childish ways would be okay for children. They could have playful approaches to literacy, and they could have collective approaches.

Do you have any last comments that you would like to make?

Let's see. I think sometimes, it's a little discouraging. I think right now, sometimes I feel really, really hopeful and excited, and sometimes I feel really discouraged. And I think I'm in kind of a discouraged moment. I think the discouraged moment happens for two reasons. One thing I think people were working on long, long ago, like in the late sixties when I was being trained as a teacher, people were really into the diversities of Englishes, and in the seventies, everyone was taking courses on linguistic diversity. But now, I have students in the doctoral program who don't know anything at all about language, that languages are, by definition, articulated in variance. And that children, when they open their mouths, have echoes of their sociocultural histories and identities, and this should be treated with care.

Anne Haas Dyson is a former teacher of young children and, currently, a professor of education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Previously she was on the faculty of the University of Georgia, Michigan State University, and the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a recipient of the campus Distinguished Teaching Award. She studies the childhood cultures and literacy learning of young schoolchildren. Among her publications are *Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School*, which was awarded the National Council of Teachers of English David Russell Award for Distinguished Research, *Writing Superheroes*, and *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures*. She recently co-authored two books with Celia Genishi, *On the Case*, on interpretive case study methods, and *Children, Language, and Literacy: Diverse Learners in Diverse Times*.

Commentary:
Elementary Students Discuss Literacy

Sonora Lemieux, Benoît Mallette & Shannon Prevost O'Dowd,
Courtland Park International School

ABSTRACT

In this interview, three grade six students discuss their perspectives on literacy. Sonora, Shannon, and Benoît explore the role of peer collaboration, fun, and the various ways that they learn and share their learning with others. The students express their enjoyment of reading and emphasize the value of challenging oneself and persevering when a book or a project becomes difficult. They explain the advantages of pneumonic devices and other "tricks" for learning items such as multiplication tables, and elaborate with anecdotes involving fellow students as well as adults. Common to all of the students' experiences are the benefits of multi-modal teaching and learning, and the advantages of incorporating art with auditory and visual information in literacy activities. These students also discuss the Internet as an important resource, citing its use for classroom inquiry as well as educational games. They recognize the importance of literacy for future success. Their advice to others is to work hard in school.

1. What does the word "literacy" mean to you? (0:47)
2. Can you talk about the different ways you use to understand things? (2:00)
3. What is your favourite way to learn? (0:14)
4. Can you talk about the different ways you use to share what you know with other people? (2:53)
5. How did each of you become a writer? How did each of you learn how to read? (2:14)
6. What do you think teachers need to emphasize to help students understand things? (1:11)
7. How should teachers help students to share their learning and their ideas with others? (1:58)

8. How do students help each other in literacy learning? (1:27)
9. What is the favourite project that you have ever done in school? (5:44)
10. How do you think you learn best? (0:56)
11. When you grow up and go out in the world how do you think what you are learning in school is going to help you? (1:18)
12. If you had a piece of advice to give to a younger one coming in to school, what advice would you give? (1:21)

Sonora Lemieux is an eleven-year-old student at Courtland Park International School. She takes horseback riding lessons and funky hip-hop dance courses. She loves to laugh and hang out with her friends. Her favourite subjects are English and French because she will be able to communicate in both languages easily. She wants to be an actress in the future because she loves to have fun!

Benoît Mallette is a real sports enthusiast and enjoys hockey, soccer and football. Each night when he has time, he reads for 20 minutes in French and English. In French he likes to read books from the *Les Intouchables* publishing house, such as Pakkal, Darhan and Leonis. In English he prefers hockey books as well as works from young reader authors like Jerry Spinelli.

Shannon Prevost O'Dowd is passionate about ringette and soccer. In fact, she is going in a soccer program in high school at Heritage Regional High School. She will be graduating from Courtland Park International School this year. She loves reading and math. Most of all, she likes playing with her friends. She won the ringette provincial championship in Sept-Îles, with her father as her coach.

Weaving Tales and Leaving Trails

Georgia Heard

ABSTRACT

I have been thinking about the over-arching theme of the poems and I think that they are all about literacy in some form or another. "Straight Line" is about young children who are just entering into the world of words, and are taught in schools to be silent; "Stars" is about how we weave tales and songs from the night sky—and the world around us—to help us make meaning; and "The Paper Trail" is how ordinary words—in our everyday lives leave trails—even after we are gone.

I wrote this poem after watching my son's class return from recess one day. During this time when I visited primary-grade classrooms as a writing consultant it seemed that the environment had changed for young children. Schools were demanding straight lines in behavior and thought and as a result of No Child Left Behind and testing. This poem was symbolic of these strict environments.

Straight Line

All the kindergarteners
walk to recess and back
in a perfectly straight line
no words between them.
They must stifle their small voices,
their laughter, they must
stop the little skip in their walk,
they must not dance or hop
or run or exclaim.

They must line up
at the water fountain
straight, and in perfect form,
like the brick wall behind them.
One of their own given the job
of informer — guard of quiet,
soldier of stillness.
If they talk
or make a sound
they will lose their stars.
Little soldiers marching to and from
pretend
their hair sweaty
from escaping dinosaurs
their hearts full of loving the world
and all they want to do
is shout it out
at the top of their lungs.
When they walk back to class
they must quietly
fold their pretends into pockets,
must dam the river of words,
ones they're just learning,
new words that hold the power
to light the skies, and if they don't
a star is taken away.
One star
by one star
until night grows dark and heavy
while they learn to think carefully
before skipping,
before making a wish.

"Straight Line" first appeared in *A Place for Wonder: Reading and Writing Nonfiction in the Primary Grades* (Stenhouse, 2009) by Georgia Heard and Jen McDonough. Reprinted with permission of the author.

When I was about fourteen I would walk up to my grandfather's house and read to him from astronomy books. He had lost his eyesight and we would sit on the porch and I would read and he would fall asleep… I kept reading. He had a telescope on the porch, so every clear night I would look through it and I fell in love with the stars.

Stars

Connect the dots. Make sky stories:
Taurus the Bull; Aries the Ram;
Leo the Lion; the Big Dipper—
Tales stitched onto an endless night.

Find a star. Sing sky songs:
Twinkle, twinkle little star…
When you wish upon a star…
Melodies sung in a hushed night.

Originally published in *Sky Magic*, ed. Lee Bennett Hopkins, 2009.

This is a "found poem" that I gathered from snippets of newspaper articles after 9-11. I was living in New York City at the time and after 9-11 there was a snowstorm of paper floating all over the city and I thought of these paper snippets as the trails of people's unfinished lives.

The Paper Trail

They fluttered from the sky like a sweet and peaceful snowstorm:
sheets and scraps—a crumpled page of cleaning instructions
with a reminder to damp-wipe smudges and smears;
a woman's cell phone bill;
a hand-written note on paper decorated with kitchen herbs read:
"…it would be nice to have another pot-luck dinner for parents";
a blank check numbered 3746 neatly torn from a check-book.

Bits of paper floated into the open classroom windows,
drifted into a second floor apartment window on Liberty Street.
At St. Paul's Cathedral, in Lower Manhattan,
three inches blanketed the old graves.

Originally published in *A Kick in the Head*, ed. Paul Janeczko, 2005.

Georgia Heard received her M.F.A. in poetry from Columbia University. She is a founding member of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project in New York City. Currently, she visits schools and speaks at conferences in the United States, Canada and around the world inspiring students and educators with her workshops and speeches. She is the author of numerous professional books on writing including *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School,* which was cited by Instructor Magazine as "One of the Twelve Books Every Teacher Should Read." She is also the author of several books for children including her most recent *Falling Down the Page: A Book of List Poems* (Roaring Brook Press).

Early Childhood Literacy and the Sense of Play

Geneviève Côté

ABSTRACT

The author relates some of her experiences as a children's book author/illustrator visiting schools, observing that in early childhood, creativity and sense of play are essential tools for teaching and learning. Believing that images and words play an equally important role in the learning process, she also includes a visual statement that early childhood literacy is empowering ...

> *"You see, I don't believe that libraries should be drab places where people sit in silence, and that's been the main reason for our policy of employing wild animals as librarians."*
> —Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969)

Once upon a time, on Halloween morning, a scary-looking monster (who was, unexpectedly, gentle and sweet) carved up a pumpkin in which a mouse had built her home. Unfortunately, that mouse was really an evil witch.

Thus started the story a dozen kindergarteners came up with and that I, the visiting author/illustrator, sketched on the board step by step in their wake. I was leading a favorite library activity of mine, once again observing how children who do not yet have reading or writing skills will easily turn into authors. They were delighted with the story they were making up, and I thought this might well boost their overall outlook on books—which was in fact the reason I was there. I was also truly curious to hear how that story would unfold. The gentle scary-looking monster was in trouble, and the children appeared momentarily stuck.

After a first tentative suggestion to Call Mommy For Help, they eventually adopted a seemingly better—albeit simple—solution. Thus the Monster apologized for disturbing the Witch-mouse, who in turn, unused to such good manners, rewarded the Monster by granting him one special wish. Through story-making, these four-year-olds had come up with a creative solution that might well fit real-life problems in the schoolyard.

As a children's book author/illustrator, I get to meet children in primary schools, kindergartens and libraries. I have become increasingly interested in early childhood and emergent literacy—specifically in how literacy can empower children and foster their creativity. Similarly, from what I have witnessed around classrooms, it also appears especially effective to appeal to the students' creativity and sense of play while teaching.

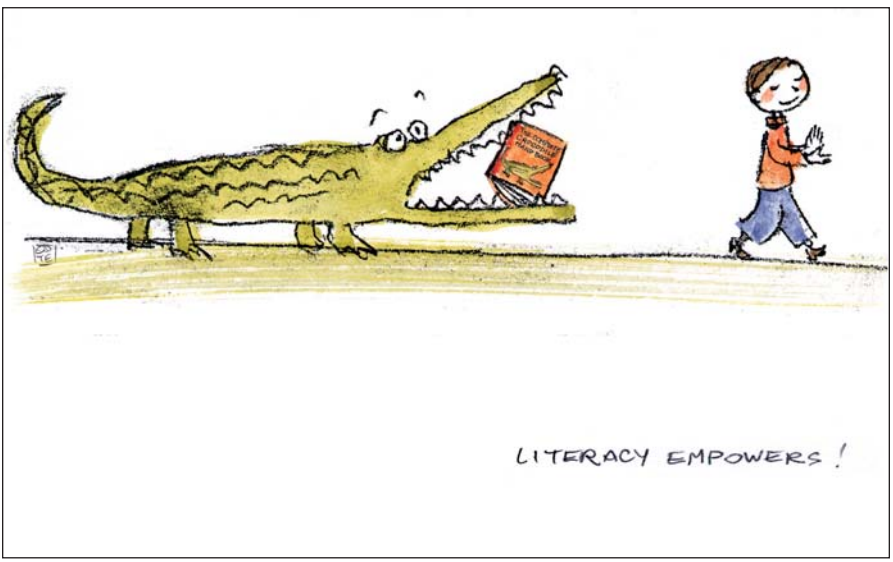

Fig. 1: The complete crocodile hand book

Children can certainly experience and benefit from the joy of reading long before they have reading skills. They enjoy being read to, repeating a rhyme, enacting a character from a favourite story, looking at pictures or making images of their own.

Kindergarteners also often love taking part in book activities that involve physical exercise. (I recall once coming upon a roomful of them, lying on their back

and pedaling enthusiastically on imaginary bicycles alongside their favorite book character during storytelling time. Quite a sight!) In my opinion, if they are introduced early in any such way to books or stories they are likely to enjoy, they stand a better chance to be interested in reading altogether.

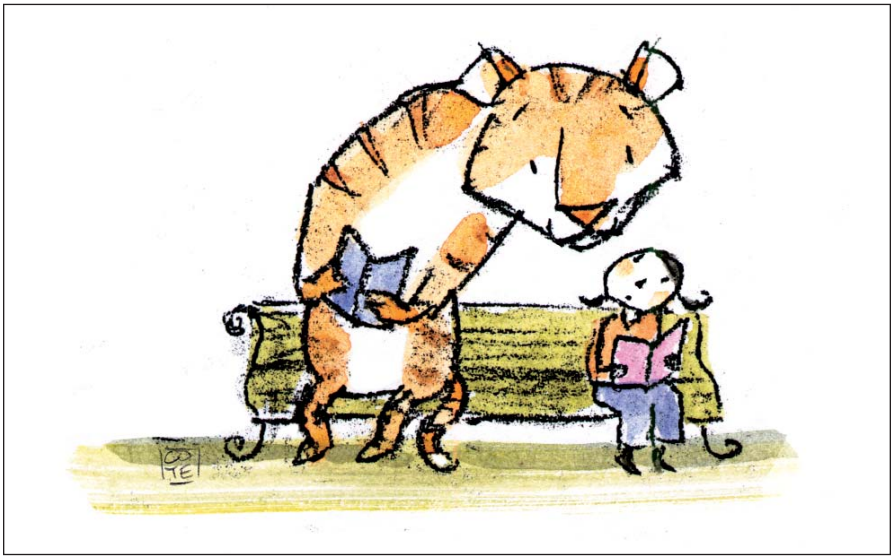

Fig. 2: Reading time with tiger

Being an author and illustrator, I believe that images and words play an equally important role in the learning process during early years. Children draw before they can write, and as they later learn to trace letters, they often like to work those, undifferentiated, into their drawings. Both words and images are after all effective languages for translating the world—the inside world, exposed for others or sublimated for one's own benefit, as well as the outside world, tamed and scaled down to sizable bites.

This is why, when leading library activities, I often ask every student to draw at least one scene from the story created collectively. These drawings are always incredibly varied, and illustrate quite effectively how reading is very much about making sense of words and images on one's own.

Similarly, in my practice as an author, I trust and expect a reader to be allowed to co-create, in some measure, the story as he or she reads it. So while I fret

over language levels and sentence pacing to match my readers' skill levels, or create illustrations, I also do my best to leave room for the reader's input.

Fig. 3: Carried away by the magic of words

My kindergarteners' Halloween story had a happy ending, of course, and the monster was granted one special wish. My special wish now is that throughout their learning years, these children's creativity and sense of play will be nurtured as well, and that they will always know how to meet witches and monsters head on.

Notes

For anyone interested in children literacy, I suggest the Web site of the *Association pour la Création Littéraire chez les Jeunes*: www.projetjeunesse.com. This nonprofit organization promotes intercultural collaboration between students from French-speaking countries all over the world (Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Canada, and several others). Through *Projet-Jeunesse*, a participating classroom, in Mali, for instance, might create and write an original tale to be illustrated by another classroom in Quebec or vice versa. Texts and images are then published and distributed with the help of teachers and volunteers throughout the communities and on the Web site.

While these stories vary greatly, they are often thought provoking, sometimes poignant. Children share stories of love and friendship, as well as of bullying or exclusion, poverty, or AIDS, for those who live in countries where it is endemic, and where such stories can become helpful tools for healthcare and social change.

References

Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969). Series 1, Episode 10 (originally aired December 21, 1969). Retrieved November 4, 2009, from http://www.carl-abrc.ca/publications/elert/2007/elert212-e.html (see heading: Monty Python's gorilla librarian skit).

Geneviève Côté graduated from Concordia University in 1987 and shortly after started working as a freelance illustrator for publications in Canada and the United States such as the *New York Times* and l'*Actualité*. Eventually, her interest in children's literature took over, and she illustrated several books, earning a few awards, including the Governor General's Award in 2007. In addition, Geneviève writes picture books of her own, and her latest, *Me and You*, was published in 2009. She is frequently invited to meet young students in schools and libraries.

LINK TO:
http://www.genevievecoteillustration.com/

Making the Invisible Process Visible: A Kinesthetic Approach to Explicit Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction in Early Primary Grades

Sarah Kingsley, Lower Canada College

ABSTRACT

Reading instruction in early primary grades tends to focus on segmenting words into sounds and there is little emphasis on explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies. Through a kinesthetic approach, I attempted to make the invisible process of applying reading comprehension strategies visible. Students used a remote, similar to that of a TV, to play and pause their reading process. This enabled them to effectively use meaning-making strategies which took shape through signaling. Students would physically motion to themselves various signs which indicated the four reading comprehension strategies modeled in my think alouds (visualization, questioning, making predictions and making connections). The outcome was a highly motivated group of grade one students who could apply reading comprehension strategies and engage in discourse that reflected a higher level of understanding.

Introduction

Reading is the foundation for a successful education and the means to academic growth. As educators, we have the responsibility to instruct our students how to read and how to derive meaning from the written word. In the early primary grades, instruction emphasizes the development of phonemic awareness, word recognition, and reading fluency (Block, Parris, & Cinnamon, 2008). Although these components are required to initiate reading processes, they are only one facet of a complex network of strategies that work in conjunction with one

another to foster reading comprehension (Diehl, 2005). Block et al. (2008) attest that contemporary research suggests, "…comprehension instruction should become an essential feature in primary-grade literacy programs" (p. 460). Specifically in early childhood education, we are limiting our students' ability to read by focusing entirely on phonological processes and neglecting to teach meaning-making strategies. It is imperative as educators that we re-evaluate our teaching methods to ensure we are providing explicit instruction on reading comprehension strategies at the early primary grades. Through a kinesthetic approach, young students can grasp the abstract notion of reading comprehension strategies. By engaging their bodies in the process, making predictions, visualizing and questioning become tangible concepts that inevitably improve a child's interaction and understanding of a text.

My Motivation

I began my teaching career only a year ago and was both excited and overwhelmed with my role as a grade one Language Arts teacher. I knew the importance of reading instruction and made sure it was at the forefront of my curriculum. However, like so many early primary educators, I focused on teaching students how to segment words into phonemes in order to decode effectively. As novice readers, I did not think my students had the ability to go beyond the phonological level to think and interact with a text. My students inherited this misconception of reading and began to value and direct all of their attention towards decoding. Their understanding of what constituted "reading" was limited to reading words and not making meaning. Reading comprehension was an entirely different facet from reading. In fact, reading and understanding were established as two separate entities. The shift in my perspective occurred this year as our school began a professional development initiative to encourage interdisciplinary discourse and reflective practice. I was partnered with the head of our resource department, Judy Shenker, who revolutionized my conception of reading and reading instruction. It was Judy that challenged my definition of reading by introducing me to Dolores Durkin who spearheaded the notion of reading comprehension strategy instruction with her findings from the late 1970s. Durkin observed that less than one percent of teaching time was used for explicit reading comprehension instruction (Durkin, 1979). Moreover, she discovered that teachers spent most of their teaching time assessing comprehension through questioning, but rarely taught students strategies they could apply to monitor their understanding and attain the answers to such questions. These findings brought my attention to my own reading instruction. I, in fact, was following this very trend by

asking students questions on their reading to determine their level of comprehension without ever providing explicit instruction on how to monitor their understanding of the text.

Reforming My Definition and Understanding of Reading

Before I could reform my instructional methods, I had to first redefine reading and the reading process. Previously, I had understood reading and reading comprehension as two distinct practices. As stated by Pinnell (2003), "People often speak of *reading* and *comprehending* as two different (although connected) processes (p. 16)." In my own teaching, I would instruct students the fundamental process of breaking words apart into their individual sounds. I would explore word families and poetry to help my students discover the rhythm of language through repetitive reading. I would assess oral reading using running records and leveled books. Reading comprehension was evaluated as I questioned students during collective and individual reading. It was the textbook formula that is so often seen in an early primary setting. However, Pinnell helped me redefine "reading" by simply stating that "reading *is* comprehending" (p. 16). Once reading came to imply comprehension, my instruction and perspective shifted. I continued to teach the basic principles of decoding words, but began to incorporate reading comprehension strategy instruction. Because reading comprehension strategies are both complex and abstract in nature, they require explicit and effective instruction. Reading comprehension strategies demand a deliberate thought process and involve visualizing, predicting, questioning and making connections (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009).

Strategies and Metacognition

Once I had established that I was going to move my reading instruction beyond the phonemic level, I chose a select group of strategies I was going to use. I focused on a set of monitoring signals that Judy had described as being effective in her own teaching: visualizing, re-reading for understanding, thinking about the character and story, questioning, and making text-to-self and text-to-text connections. I wanted the students to not only understand the strategies, but also know how and when to use them. Readers need to self-monitor their process to effectively

apply reading comprehension strategies. Gentilucci and McKeown (2007) reiterate that, "Reading is a covert process actively controlled by readers to create meaning from text, and the practice of readers 'thinking about their thinking' while engaged in the reading process is known as *metacognition*." I came to understand the importance of students developing their metacognition, thinking about their thinking, in order to effectively regulate their reading comprehension independently. I also internalized the value of developing metacognitive awareness in readers as I thought of my personal experience. In my youth, I would read an assigned text and drift off to thinking about clothes, boys, food, etcetera. Within seconds, my thoughts were elsewhere and yet I continued to read. I understood all of the words and their meaning, but I was not thinking about the text. I did not have metacognition and therefore lacked the tools needed to signal that my reading comprehension had shut down. Holly Diehl (2005) defines reading as a "highly metacognitive activity where the reader not only thinks about the material being read, but also monitors that thinking" (p. 58). I wanted to help my students make meaning of the text and also develop their metacognition. Yet the idea of metacognition, and monitoring and applying reading comprehension strategies, is a complex process. How could I teach such abstract concepts to my grade one students? Where would I begin?

Process

Although I was somewhat anxious my students were too young to understand such convoluted ideas, I proceeded to introduce comprehension monitoring strategies. I worried that my weaker readers, who were not yet fluently decoding, would not be ready for strategy instruction and would feel overwhelmed and unsuccessful. In an attempt to make these abstract concepts tangible, I decided that my students needed some sort of a manipulative. Judy told me about Lori Jamison Rog's analogy that reading is like using a remote control. Lori Jamison Rog is an experienced educator who served on the International Reading Association Board of Directors from 1999-2002 and is currently an educational consultant. She has published a number of articles as well as books including *Marvelous Minilessons for Teaching Beginning Writing, K-3* (2007) and *Early Literacy Instruction in Kindergarten* (2001). Based on her idea, I decided to create remote controls for each student with the key buttons (play, stop, pause, rewind and fast-forward). Students were given a token which they would place on the function that they were on. The initial purpose of the remote controls was to teach re-reading when the child misunderstood or misread a word or an idea. If the student's token was on play, they were reading and

actively engaged in the story. If they moved the token to pause, the student was having trouble understanding a word or an idea. When they moved to rewind, they were re-reading to try to make meaning or double-check what they have already read. If the token was placed on fast-forward, it meant they were skipping that word or idea to move on and try to make sense of it within the full context of the sentence. This initial introduction and use of the remote controls was very successful. I began by modeling the process throughout several lessons. Then students would give me directives as I encountered difficulty reading a word or an idea. Finally, students used the remotes autonomously and understood how and when to manipulate their token. I would circulate throughout the classroom as they engaged in independent reading. They enjoyed modeling their ability to move from play to pause to rewind. The process was a primary step in making my students more aware of their level of comprehension.

Once I felt my students were ready to use the remote control as a multi-purposed tool, I began modeling explicit reading comprehension strategies through think alouds. I turned to Dr. Roger Farr's (2008) model of *Think Alongs* and gradual responsibility release available on his Web site to initiate this process. Dr. Farr is renowned in the field of education for his many contributions to reading instruction and assessment. He was previously president of the International Reading Association and is currently Director of the Center for Innovation and Assessment at Indiana University. He, along with several colleagues, developed a program that used, "writing as an indicator of how well the reading was understood" and authentically measured their level of success (Farr et al., 1990). On his Web site, Dr. Farr (2008) outlines a seven-day Think Along process that progressively transfers the interactive thought process of good readers from the teacher to the students.

Following Dr. Farr's suggestion, before reading my first *Think Along*, I identified my intention to have the students observe the strategies I used to help me understand the text. As a class, they were asked to write a list after the story. In this initial step, I wanted my students to see that I could use the remote control for comprehension strategies other than re-reading. I read the story, often moving my token to pause to share a thought. I made connections to other stories and my own life, I modeled visualization, I asked questions and I re-read words and sentences I did not understand. Students were able to tell me the strategies I used and as I wrote them down on the chart, I established our common vocabulary. Once we had compiled our list, I repeated the activity over several days and students determined which strategies I used from the list. They very quickly became familiar with the strategies and what they entailed. Dr. Farr suggests that in the next step, one student prepares a

Think Along and presents it to the class. I decided that, in order to incorporate more students, I would ask a few to raise their hands and share a thought when I pressed pause. This was an effective way to engage more students in thinking aloud.

When all the students had a strong understanding of the strategies, I proceeded by having them use their individual remotes during independent reading. At first, I circulated to hear their predictions, questions, and connections. They would place their token on pause, raise their hand and then communicate their strategy with me. However, I soon realized that most students would wait to share their thoughts before continuing to read. Because the process was disjointed, their reading inherited this form. I wanted to find a way for my students to signal to me when they made a connection or thought of a question. Dr. Farr (2008) suggests the use of coloured hats to symbolize visualization, making predictions and connections. I think this could be an effective strategy; however I wanted to follow the Comprehension Process Motion Strategy (CPM) model. The CPM model has students use a variety of signals to indicate when they are making predictions, inferring and clarifying (Block et al., 2008). "CPM lessons are designed so that children can internalize comprehension processes, not through repetition or drills but through dual-coded learning inputs so they can develop a true metacognitive understanding of the processes that their brains initiate to obtain meaning" (Block et al., 2008, p. 461). Based on the CPM, I came up with alternate signals that my students could use to indicate to me when they had a question, made a prediction or made a connection. If the students thought of a question, they simply tapped their index finger on their head (to suggest they were thinking). If they made a connection, they would point their thumb at themselves. If they made a prediction, they would flash their hand from a fist position to opening their five fingers up. These were very simple movements but allowed the students to motion to me when they had used a strategy. It also facilitated their reading as they could signal to me and then continue reading. In turn, I could acknowledge their success without having to be in several places at once.

The kinesthetic involvement of students was the most successful facet of this process. It provided the children with a venue to communicate their level of engagement and understanding to themselves and each other. As I read to the whole class, students would signal when they would generate a question, prediction, visualization, or establish a connection. I would pause and give individuals the opportunity to share their questions and connections. Interestingly enough, the dialogue would trigger realizations in other students and they too would begin motioning a reading strategy. Occasionally I would open up the forum for discussion and most often the conversation would be directed and sustained by my students. On an independent

level, my readers would maintain their focus on the text as they discreetly signaled which reading comprehension strategy they employed. I would circulate and observe their application of reading strategies by listening to their explanation of the signal.

Findings

This has been an explorative process that continued to evolve with my work for this article. Being a novice teacher I was somewhat hesitant to teach my students such abstract concepts involved with reading comprehension. Once I overcame my own fear and began with the Remote Controls, I realized that the students easily understood their purpose. I only decided to integrate the actions when I discovered the article based on the CPM model. Had I not been researching for this article, my Remote Control Reading would have stopped short, simply teaching students how to re-read. This only re-affirms the need for continuous professional development and research in our field.

There were several factors that hindered the potential of this project. First of all, the idea only evolved from a conversation that I had after the December break. I began the process later in the year and had very little time to develop it. Did my students gain an understanding of reading comprehension strategies? Will these strategies stay with them going into grade two? How will I integrate formal assessment into the process? I am not sure of the answers. It is still very new for the students; therefore, I will only see the long-term benefits or shortcomings of this initiative once the students have had more time to explore this process.

It did, however, give my students a bank of strategies and the vocabulary to discuss reading comprehension. For instance, my students were able to define and describe visualization, making connections and predictions and questioning. One boy signaled the visualizing sign to me as he was reading and said, "Here it always says I'll be there in a minute and don't touch anything and don't move. And I could just visualize Annie sitting there, not moving, not touching anything, just waiting there for Nate the Great to come." Reading comprehension strategies are now wholly integrated into our everyday reading, be it at a whole-class or independent level. My students now use language that I never thought seven-year olds could apply and understand. Another student described how he was thinking about the character, "If like you want to ask the character a question, like if he was actually real and you wanted to ask him 'Why are you looking at that boat?'" They continue to surpass my

expectations as readers and students who are aware of their own thinking. While reading as a class, we engage in discussions that the students initiate and that stem from their ability to make connections, predictions and ask questions. Furthermore, these comprehension strategies extend into their reading responses. They have developed a skill set that they can use in reading, writing and discussions.

Conclusion

In so many early elementary language arts settings, reading instruction is simply taught through phonics and decoding. Little attention is put toward teaching reading comprehension strategies as educators assume it will develop naturally or may in fact be too complex for a young child. However, reading is about deriving meaning from a text and that requires explicit instruction. Students need to be taught how and when to re-read because their comprehension mechanisms have shut down. They need to be instructed on how to interact with a text so that they are engaging in active, meaningful reading. We cannot presume that they will know how to do this and we cannot wait until there are mature readers to introduce these concepts. Students need to develop these strategies as they begin reading so that they do them automatically and acquire an understanding that reading is comprehension. Through my personal attempt to adopt an effective instructional means, I discovered the importance and necessity of making these strategies kinesthetic. The Remote Control Reading and signals made it an interactive process that was tangible and not so abstract. My students not only enjoyed this process, but also grew more excited about reading. The most enriching part of this experience was watching them develop an entirely new perspective on reading. Just as I had shifted my instructional framework, they too followed suit and together we developed a more authentic reading environment that naturally promoted lively discussion and continuous personal interaction. Truly, what more could a grade one teacher ask for?

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Saying What You See in the Dark: Engaging Children Through Art

Mary Ann Reilly, Morris School District

ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the process of transmediation by examining selected art conversations—nonverbal communication made through painting—and poetry that urban fifth graders composed in response to a query about how they learn. Specifically, I examine three students' works, noting how the use of multiple symbol systems helped each to compose strong visual and written texts. In studying the work the students composed, I conclude that visual art and poetry make fine partners in intellectual endeavors aimed at educating the imagination.

It is late evening as I sit at my desk, reading students' poems—the sun long gone from the sky and the college where I work grown quiet. I have been so engrossed in reading students' work that when I read Ariana's (all names are pseudonyms) poem for the first time, I feel jolted, jazzed. Her poem stops me from moving forward to read the others, and I reread her poem that expresses how she learns and thinks. Ariana has titled the poem, "Swirls" (see Figure 1).

Swirls of ideas
Whirl like colors of light.
Ideas float like streams
And I row in the boat
Using an oar
To get to the shore.

Learning is the key.
I flutter
Like a butterfly
In the breeze
Above the water.

My thoughts flow.

Fig. 1: Ariana's poem and a photograph of Ariana's art conversation

Ariana composed "Swirls" after she had engaged in an art conversation (Reilly, 2008; Reilly & Cohen, 2008; Reilly & Gangi, in press), a nonverbal discussion two or more people have using paint as a medium. During an art conversation, pairs "discuss" a particular topic or experience by remaining quiet while they finger paint. Seated opposite one another, with a sheet of glossy white paper (12" x 18") and some paint between them, "the partners engage in a 15- to 20-minute conversation letting the movement, selection of color, use of line, employment of form, and the inclusion of images and icons speak" (Reilly, 2008, p. 101). Ariana's art conversation occurred in response to a question I had posed to her and her classmates about how they had learned while engaged earlier in the year in a storytelling workshop and science inquiry lesson.

Professional Development School: Benjamin Franklin Elementary School

Benjamin Franklin Elementary School (pseudonym), an urban public school in New York serving 645 students who range from 5- to 12-years-old, partners as a Professional Development School (PDS) with a private college in New York. As a PDS, faculty from Benjamin Franklin School works closely with college faculty through a variety of methods. For example, many undergraduate and graduate methods courses are taught at Benjamin Franklin, placing pre-service teachers in elementary classrooms. In these situations the college professor and the classroom teacher collaborate by co-planning instruction, modeling teaching and providing pre-service teachers with scaffolded opportunities to teach. In addition to these field-based

courses and more traditional student teaching practice, special projects also are developed between faculty at each institution, such as the work described in this article.

The genesis of the project described here began when the education Dean invited three faculty members from the college and the principal of the K-5 public school (Wepner, Bettica, Gangi, Reilly, & Klemm, 2008) to work collaboratively. This partnership, funded by an external grant, addressed a need identified by the elementary school's PDS Leadership Team who "determined that the teachers needed to expand the curriculum beyond basic skills instruction while helping their students, especially Hispanic students, to demonstrate the necessary skills and strategies for succeeding with informal and formal assessments" (Wepner et al., p. 28). The education Dean forwarded a proposal that focused on engaging fifth graders through cross-curricular learning to the PDS committee, who approved the project. In this article I focus attention on one aspect of the project, namely the generation of art and poetry by fifth grade students.

During a four-month period in early 2007, all 100 fifth-grade students from Benjamin Franklin participated in three engagements designed by college faculty. Beginning in February, fifth graders learned how to choose and tell stories through a storytelling workshop taught by literacy professor Jane Gangi and her undergraduate education students. During this time the fifth graders selected stories to tell, often choosing ones that came from their culture, participated in two storytelling workshops, practiced telling their stories to one another, and then performed these stories for classmates as well as for students and teachers in other grades.

This experience was followed by a study of forensics in March of 2007. Modeled after the Parker Brothers' board game, CLUE™, the biology professor Annemarie Bettica and several undergraduate students guided fifth graders to solve a fictitious murder using science. During this engagement, students working in teams collected and analyzed fingerprint, blood, and fiber clues. They recorded and discussed their findings in order to determine the murderer. The use of forensics as a problem-solving tool was emphasized. I concluded this three-part experience in April and May of 2007 by engaging students in an art and poetry workshop that asked students to explore *how* they had learned to tell a story and the processes they used to determine the murderer.

Engaging in Art Conversations

When students completed their work as storytellers, I asked them (through my request to their classroom teachers) to write about what and how they had learned during Professor Gangi's workshop. After reading students' responses, I synthesized their thinking and created four posters that re-presented their ideas as word collages (see Figure 2). These color posters contained quotations I had extracted from students' written work. I prepared these posters in order to better prompt students' memories. When groups of students—usually about 22–25 per group—arrived in the school's art room at the start of our 2-hour workshop, they found copies of each poster at their tables. I invited students to read and discuss each poster and then I charted their responses to the questions: *How did you learn? How do you think?*

Fig. 2: How We Learned poster

Next, I showed the fifth graders a brief film I had made using photographs Professor Bettica had taken of the students while involved in the science lesson. I made the film using Animoto (http://www.animoto.com), a Web application that automatically produces a film by analyzing the selected photographs and music. The process is quick and the end product is professionally rendered. In less than a half-hour, a film can be produced.

While students watched the film, I prompted their viewing by asking them to notice their learning. "*Pay attention to the ways you think and learn, not just what you learned*," I said, emphasizing the process. I interrupted their viewing several times to ask students to name how they saw themselves and their peers learning and added this information to the chart.

After viewing the film and discussing how they learned in each engagement, students "conversed" about how they learn and think through art conversations (see Figure 3 for a description of materials and processes). While students were engaged in these conversations I photographed them at work, and then photographed each completed art conversation. A genesis of one conversation is shown in Figure 4.

MATERIALS

Finger paint: Primary colors as well as black and white
Glossy finger paint paper (12" x 18")
Paint trays
Music

PROCESS

1. After an engagement, students use art conversations to "discuss" what they have either experienced or learned. I have used art conversations after students had viewed a film, engaged in drama, viewed art, read fiction and nonfiction.
2. At each station is a paint tray, usually filled with six different colors and a sheet of glossy fingerpaint paper.
3. Students are seated opposite one another.
4. Working as partners, students use the paint to show how they feel and think. During the painting time, students are silent. I usually play music while students paint.
5. I encourage students to use the whole sheet of paper, not only what they perceive as "their" side.
6. Although students may begin painting while seated, they almost always ended up standing as the work progresses.
7. Generally art conversations take place for about 15 to 20 minutes.
8. It is important to photograph the conversation while it is wet. When fingerpaint dries, it loses much of its color.

Fig. 3: Materials and processes for art conversations

Fig. 4: A genesis of an art conversation

As can be seen in Figure 4, art conversations often reflect multiple modes of representation: mimetic, expressive, and iconic. At first, many students rely on mimetic modes to communicate ideas to their partner. Mimetic forms look like their intended object; for example, a yellow circle is used to represent the sun. However, as students continue conversing, layers of paint are added, obscuring these mimetic images, leaving the painting looking more expressive. Here line, color, texture, value, and movement become dominant and are used by viewers to ascribe meaning. As students continue to paint, they will sometimes conclude their conversations by deliberately embedding conventional signs into the composition. At the end of the conversation it is not unusual to have all three modes represented in the painting. Eisner (2002) explains that representation "[s]tabilizes ideas and images, makes the editing process possible, provides for the means for sharing meaning, and creates the occasion for discovery" (p. 239).

Modeling Poetry Writing

During the second half of the workshop, I modeled for students how to use the painting as a source for a poem. Again it is important to recall Eisner's insight that representation stabilizes ideas. I borrowed one pair's art conversation (see Figure 5) and asked a student to display the painting for everyone to see. With the students, I looked closely at the painting and asked aloud what I saw going on. I deliberately modeled thinking aloud for students in order for them to hear how I was thinking (Baker & Brown, 1984; Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Kucan & Beck, 1997; Olson, Duffy, & Mack, 1984). I commented on some aspect of composition such as line, color, form, value, and movement. I also reminded students that we were investigating the question: *How do you think and learn?* I drew students' attention to how I placed this question in parentheses at the top of a large sheet of paper I was using to write the poem, explaining that I did not want to lose the main focus of the writing as I worked.

"Watch as I begin to write. I am going to start with what I see happening in the painting," I told the students. I then began to write on chart paper:

(How I Think & Learn)

The petals, deep green shelters
spring.
Colors explode.
And the sky soft blue water
is lost
in the riot of colors:
crocus purple
iris black

Fig. 5: Photograph of an art conversation I used to write a poem

After a minute of composing this description, I stopped and asked students how the images I had been describing might relate to how I think and learn. Students commented on how there were a lot of colors and that the painting looked like confusion. These comments were elaborated by others who added that sometimes thinking can be confusing. I continued writing about this connection, reading and rereading aloud, revising and editing my work as I composed the poem. After a few more minutes I stopped and reread the entire poem aloud, asking students to listen:

(How I Think & Learn)

The petals, deep green
shelters spring.
Colors explode.
And the sky,
a soft blue smear of water
is lost in a riot of colors:
crocus purple,
iris black.

Thinking is like this too.
The way thoughts hide
like the sky

backgrounded
yet so steady,
so blue beside
the sudden flash of color.

The differences between
reveal connections
I least expected.

When I asked students to tell what they had noticed I had done, they explained that I began by looking at the painting very carefully. Some commented that I had written words and crossed them out, as well as added new words. I included that I also reread and re-looked at the painting while writing.

"Rereading is one of the most important tools you have as a writer. Make use of it while you craft your poems," I urged the students.

I then invited the students to study their paintings carefully by looking at the colors used, the forms and the lines employed, and the movement in order to describe what they saw going on. I adapted this inquiry-based method of viewing from Housen's (1996) and Yenawine's (2005) work on visual thinking strategies (VTS). VTS is a facilitation technique that uses art and artifacts to teach thinking. Facilitators use non-directive questions such as: *What's going on in this picture?* or *What more can we find?* to guide students' viewing.

"Try to write what you see happening," I advised students. "Remember to ask yourself how the description you are writing might connect to how you think and learn."

Students Compose Poetry

Students had the option of working alone at the tables where they were seated or working with a partner. After students began, I surveyed the class and then conferred with those students who seemed to be having difficulty. I invited these students to compose at stations I had set up around the room's perimeter (see Figure 6).

Large sheets of paper were posted on the walls; temporary writing stations. At each station were colorful markers. At these stations I conferred with students,

helping them to record their initial description, often by asking them to look at the painting from different perspectives, such as looking down at the work or rotating the painting and looking again.

Fig. 6: Students compose poetry at a writing station

"What do you see here?" I prompted, pointing to a section of the painting. As students described what they were seeing aloud, I listened and then invited them to record what they had said or wanted to say on the posted sheets of paper. At times I called attention, depending on the painted conversations, to compositional elements I saw present, such as the use of line, color, texture, shape, and movement.

As we reread, I expressed interest in the description and at times drew attention to literary elements they might have included, such as repetition, personification, alliteration, assonance, and the use of simile and metaphor. I usually concluded by asking students to consider how their poem connected with the idea of how they thought while engaged in storytelling and science.

During the workshop, the students and I revised and edited their poems. Later, I entered each student's poem into a Word® document and sent the completed documents to their classroom teachers who conferred with students to ensure the poems best matched their intentions. I also returned to the school on subsequent days to confer with students as needed. After all the revisions and editing were complete, I prepared a final copy of the book of 73 poems and art conversations. This 50-page manuscript was printed in full color and each student and teacher received a copy (Wepner et al., 2008).

Transmediation

In participating in the art conversation and poetry writing, Benjamin Franklin students used multiple sign systems (visual and written) as potential ways of learning. In doing so they engaged in transmediation—the process of making meaning

through a range of symbol systems. The movement between and among sign systems, such as the project described here, provides students with multiple ways to come to understand concepts related to writing process and the genre of poetry. Having different means to make meaning benefits students as each method provides the potential for a new way of coming to know (Eisner, 1994, 1997, 2002; Leland & Harste, 1994; Siegel, 1995; Suhor, 1992; Tierney, 2005).

The potential complexity inherent in different sign systems is captured well by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1965) who wrote:

> [i]f the meaning of Goethe's Faust, of Van Gogh's landscapes, or Bach's Art of the Fugue could be transmitted in discursive terms, their authors should and would not have bothered to write poems, paint, or compose, but would rather have written scientific treatises (p. 41)

As Bertalanffy suggests, representation constrains and liberates thoughts. The combination of visual (word collage, slideshow, art conversation) and language (discussion, charts, written poems, voiced poems, soundtrack to slideshow) systems provided students with multiple forms of representation to learn from and to use while learning. I would suggest that this range of symbol systems helped students to compose powerful and metaphoric work.

Teaching that makes use of transmediation (Cowan & Albers, 2006; Eisner, 1994, 1997, 2002; Leland & Harste, 1994; Siegel, 1995, 2006; Suhor, 1992; Tierney, 2005) potentially produces more flexible thinkers, an important cognitive prowess. Eisner (1997) contends that "different forms of representation develop different cognitive skills" (p. 349). The work described here produced the potential for learners to not simply transfer their understanding as they engaged across sign systems, but rather to develop new understandings. Eisner states that "the choice of a form of representation and the selection of materials to be used both constrain and offer possibilities we use to represent what we think influences both the processes and products of thinking" (p. 349). I suggest that by thinking about the given topic through multiple representations, the end products were enhanced.

The students' teachers expressed surprise at the depth of the students' poetry and the students' willingness to engage in the art and writing. Andrzejczak, Trainin, and Poldberg (2005) studied the integration of visual arts and writing process and found that when visual art is used first there is an increase in the motivation to write and the quality of students' written work. The authors write, "[S]tudents who use

visual art as a pre-writing stimulus are composing their ideas both in images and in words. The result of the art creation process allows students the distance to elaborate, add details, and create more coherent text" (p. 1).

By studying the images in the paintings while students wrote, this process helped them to create powerful written work. Carroll (2001) explains that when viewing visual art, meaning is comprehended perceptually, "without recourse to any subtending code" (p. 348). This direct reliance on perception facilitated an increased sophistication, resulting in the presence of figurative language in all but 12 of the students' poems. For example, 11-year-old Serena told me as we reread her poem and looked at the painted conversation, "I didn't know that's what I was thinking. I was just fooling around really and it (the painting) kinda reminded me of mud and then I thought about what you said."

"What was that?" I asked.

"You know about how this," she said pointing to the painting, "is like how I learn." Aspects of play can be seen in Serena's poem, "Sliding in the Mud" (see Figure 7). Through the finger painting, Serena and her classmates experienced the work often as a form of play. It was not unusual to hear students comment with joy about finger painting, recalling earlier experiences from when they were young children or delighting in what was a new experience. Data collected in the form of a student survey (Wepner et al., 2008) confirmed this. For example, one student wrote that what s/he liked best about the project was finger painting because "we got to show our emotions" (p. 34). Another indicated that his or her source of enjoyment was that students "get to make a mess with the paint" (p. 34). As Eisner (2002) comments, "In the arts … permission is provided to explore, indeed to surrender, to the impulsions the work sends to the maker, as well as those sent from the maker to the work" (p. 4).

Sliding in the Mud

The brown squishiness of mud
Beneath you as you walk
And you slide a million yards.

Your wild dreams
Come true.
You laugh, giggle
Hard as you can.

Fig. 7: Serena's poem and a detail from her art conversation

You have fun
In that wonder
Of laughter.
A billion things
Wait for you
In this creation.

The Power of Metaphor

One sees this sense of free spiritedness in Serena's art conversation and poem. "Sliding in the Mud" captures the unexpectedness and unlimited vista of learning by comparing it to playing in mud where "[a] billion things/wait for you." Cynthia Ozick (1991) notes how "metaphor is the enemy of abstraction" (p. 282). They help make abstractions concrete, much like students did when exploring how they think and learn. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) cite metaphor as a critical tool in "trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness" (p. 193).

Similarly, Efland (2002) suggests that visual arts stimulate the production of metaphor. Efland writes, "It is *only in the arts where the processes and products of the imagination are encountered and explored in full consciousness*—where they become objects of inquiry" (p. 153, emphasis in original). Working as both visual artist and interpreter, students engaged in the exploration of process and product when they painted and then studied their paintings, trying to understand better how they think and learn. By asking students to represent visually how they learned while engaged as storytellers and forensic problem-solvers, I was asking them to create mental images that were often built on nonpropositional forms of thought, such as Serena's representation of thinking as sliding in mud. Students' bodily experiences served as a primary source of the metaphors they created. This is not unusual. Again, Efland (2002), quoting Lakoff (1987) explains that,

> the schemata that emerge from our bodily experience have a basic logic that enables them to form connections in at least two ways: first, things that are alike in some way can be grouped together as categories; and second, things that are seemingly unlike can be joined and made meaningful through metaphor (p. 148)

Seeing Thoughts

The production and use of metaphors and similes in the students' poetry helps one to see the complexity inherent in students' thinking. Through art conversations and guided interpretation of the paintings, students juxtaposed images, descriptions of images, and the question, "*How do you think and learn?*" while composing and interpreting visual art and poetry. This movement between and among sign systems (visual, oral, and written) heightened the presence of metaphorical thinking, helping students to make concrete the abstract concept of metacognition. Without first exploring metacognition through the visual arts, I doubt the students would have been able to create such powerful metaphors that re-presented their understanding of how they think.

Again it is interesting to note that slightly less than 85 per cent of the poems students composed employed metaphorical thinking. Students compared how they thought to an abyss, a shadowy path, waves, a cave, a garden, a series of highways, a flame, outcroppings on a beach, crawling spiders, cool moonlight, a fence, something wounded, and a light beneath the darkness—to name but some.

Consider again Ariana's poem and visual conversation (see Figure 1). Ariana describes the dominant image of curved lines as "swirls of ideas (that) whirl like colors of light" where "ideas float like streams." She then sets the speaker in a boat with an oar and the desire to get to "the shore." One can easily imagine the boat floating along the current of a stream like a "butterfly in the breeze." In such an environment, ideas flow. Ariana states, "learning is the key." One might surmise here that learning is the key because knowledge is made not simply by having an experience, but rather by understanding the experience—getting to the shore.

Similar to Ariana's and Serena's use of metaphor, Reynaldo too leans on metaphorical thinking to convey meaning in his poem, "Rainbow" (see Figure 8). The speaker in Reynaldo's poem writes how the moon is his mind and knowledge is beams of light that pour and blend color. Reynaldo begins by describing a surreal landscape in which both moonlight and a rainbow are present late at night in a meadow. He then bridges the poem with a two-line stanza stating the moon is the speaker's mind. The closing stanza, reminiscent of the opening one, now juxtaposes the surreal external landscape with an internal one where knowledge like the moon lights the speaker internally.

Rainbow

The moon
In the sky
Shines
Beams
Of light on
A rainbow
Late night
In the meadow.

The moon
Is my mind.

The beams
Are moments
Of knowledge
That blend
And pour—
Spilling color
And light
Into me
Like a rainbow.

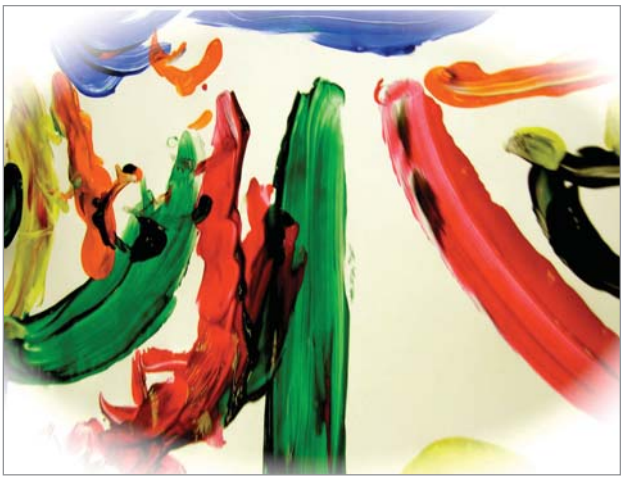

Fig. 8: Reynaldo's poem and a detail from his art conversation

Saying of What You See in the Dark: Valuing the Imagination in a Time of Testing

The insights composed by Ariana, Serena, and Reynaldo about how they think and learn remind me of the advice given by the guitarist in Wallace Stevens's (1990) "The Man With the Blue Guitar" who says: "Throw away the lights, the definitions/And say of what you see in the dark" (p. 183). In many ways, these students do exactly that: they look at the visual conversations they have composed and then say what they have seen through poetry. Art conversations and poetry writing workshops nudge students to imagine and name aspects of living that they may have previously noticed, yet remained unvoiced—ruminations that may well have been present in some fashion in their lives—in their visceral experiences.

At a time when the annual state tests often drive curricular decisions, how might one then answer critics who query: "*How do art conversations and poetry writing*

help students pass the state exam?" Apart from the more direct correlations between arts integration and increased student performance on high stakes tests (Andrzejczak, Trainin, & Poldberg, 2005; Reilly, 2008; Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanga, 1999; Deasy, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001), the work described in this article also suggests that the integration of visual arts and writing enhances students' habits of mind (Costa & Kallick, 2000).

Costa and Kallick (2000) identified 16 types of intelligent behavior (see Figure 9) that they captured as habits of mind. Most of these habits were present in the work students did to compose visual and written products, though some were more prominent than others. For example, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision; creating, imagining, and innovating; thinking flexibly; thinking about thinking; applying past knowledge to new situations; and remaining open to continuous learning were central to most aspects of the art and poetry project. Whereas art conversations and poetry workshops might not directly prepare students for a particular state assessment at the surface—the thinking dispositions and behaviors developed through such teaching and learning would most certainly enhance students' cognitive performance and aesthetic sensibilities and in doing so prepare students for the deeper learning represented on some high stakes assessments.

1. Persisting
2. Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
3. Managing impulsivity
4. Gathering data through all senses
5. Listening with understanding and empathy
6. Creating, imagining, innovating
7. Thinking flexibly
8. Responding with wonderment and awe
9. Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
10. Taking responsible risks
11. Striving for accuracy
12. Finding humor
13. Questioning and posing problems
14. Thinking interdependently
15. Applying past knowledge to new situations
16. Remaining open to continuous learning

Fig. 9: Habits of mind

Seeing beneath the surface—peering into the darkness—is brave and necessary work that needs to be done not only by students, but also by educators. At a time when high stakes testing has gained a disproportional emphasis (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Noddings, 2007), we need to guard against the displacement of thinking in lieu of practicing for tests. Noddings (2007) contends, "the overemphasis on testing and the use of test scores as the main measure of accountability may actually undermine the development and exercise of intellectual habits of mind" (p. 64).

Preparing for tests is not equivalent to educating one to learn. In such a schema, the imagination and the child may well be forgotten. Educating the imagination is about transformation, unsettling the known, disturbing held truths. One surely thinks here of Maxine Greene and her many inquiries into teaching and learning. In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), Greene writes,

> Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed.…Knowing 'about' is entirely different from constituting a fictive world imaginatively and entering it perceptually, affectively, and cognitively (p. 125).

In designing this art and writing experience, I wanted to occasion the possibility for students to begin to name how they learn, not from the stance of simply knowing about learning, but more so as Greene suggests to understand thinking and learning within the constituted fictive worlds of their imagination. Such imaginative work develops students' capacity to recognize and name patterns, an underlying function of thinking. Lowry (2001) explains that:

> to construct knowledge, the brain takes in data through the sensory perceptions, that enter through the body's five senses. Anything that a person does, perceives, thinks, or feels while acting in the world is processed through the complex system of storage and pathways (p. 179).

Similarly, the students commented via an exit survey (Wepner et al., 2008, pp. 32–33) that they learned how to communicate, how to imagine, how to write poems, how to use pictures as sources for poetry, and how to tell stories, while engaged in the art and writing work. Additionally, one student captured Lowry's notion of knowledge construction, by writing, "you can get literate from a picture you painted" (Wepner et al., 2008, p. 32).

In reading these student comments I thought about Dewey (1954) who in *The Public and Its Problems* noted, "the function of art has always been to break through the crest of conventionalized and routine consciousness" (p. 183). Through transmediated learning, Ariana's row toward a distant shore, Serena's slide through mud, and Reynaldo's internally lit landscape unseat routine consciousness, recast the ordinary, and perhaps, like Stevens's guitarist, inspire each of us to peer into the dark.

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Teaching the "Bad Boy" to Write

Gary McPhail, Shady Hill School

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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to address the gendered achievement gap in writing that exists both nationally and internationally, Gary McPhail conducted a year-long teacher research study focused on the gendered literacy interests of his first grade students and how they responded to a writing curriculum he created that included genres intended to be of interest to both boys and girls. This paper focuses on the experiences of one self-declared "bad boy" in Gary's class.

Writer's Workshop is an approach to writing instruction, widely used in elementary schools across the country, which gives students the opportunity to reflect upon their own lived experiences, write about them during class time, and share them with their peers. In many primary grade classrooms, students spend the entire year writing personal narratives and honing the craft of writing by reflecting upon their own experiences. The underlying idea is that students learn to become authors of their own stories while they simultaneously acquire age-appropriate writing skills.

I have taught first and second grade for 11 years. Over these years, I have noticed that many girls seem to enjoy writing more and encounter greater success

during Writer's Workshop than do many of the boys. As one of the few adult males working in an elementary school, this has always troubled me. Why don't the boys perform as highly as girls in writing? Equally as important, why don't the boys like Writer's Workshop as much as the girls?

Gender and Writing Development

When I began to research the intersection of the two topics of gender and young children's writing development, I quickly realized that the phenomenon of girls outperforming boys in writing was occurring all over the United States, not just in my classroom. Since the 1969 inception of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a standardized exam given to nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-olds across the country, girls at all grade levels have scored much higher than boys in writing skills. Newkirk (2002) points out that the gap between females and males in terms of NAEP writing scores is comparable to the "achievement gap" between whites and other racial/ethnic groups that have long suffered systemic social and economic discrimination in this country. Furthermore, the gendered pattern of females outperforming males on NAEP scores is consistent across all racial/ethnic groups.

Much of the research on gender and writing suggests that boys and girls actually have differing literacy interests and prefer to write about very different topics. For example, Hunt (1985) found that elementary school age boys often wrote about sports, war, fighting, and catastrophes while their female counterparts wrote more frequently about themselves, their feelings, their families and friendships. Peterson (2001) found that the characters in girls' narrative writing demonstrated more emotion and pro-social behavior (sharing, helping, empathizing) while characters in boys' writing exhibited more aggressive behavior and engaged in more high-intensity, dangerous actions. It is important to note, of course, that generalizations about differing literacy interests based on gender do not apply to the writing of all boys and all girls. Some boys like writing, and some girls do not. Some boys are interested in writing about their feelings, and some girls are interested in writing about aggressive behavior and violence.

However, a growing number of researchers (e.g., Dyson, 1997; Millard, 1997; Newkirk, 2002; Rose, 1989; Thomas, 1994) suggest that many schools cater writing curriculum and instruction to girls' learning and that boys are suffering because teachers do not acknowledge gendered differences in the writing preferences of

their students. Along these lines, Newkirk (2002) argues that there is a hierarchy of genres in the writing curriculum across the country with personal narrative and poetry at the top and the genres that many boys prefer (e.g., comic book writing, action-packed adventures and nonrealistic fiction) near the bottom.

Rethinking the Writing Curriculum

When I was preparing to be a teacher, I was instructed to teach writing using the Writer's Workshop model based on the work of Donald Graves and others (Calkins, 1986; Clay, 2001; Dorn and Soffos, 2001; Graves, 1983). I became a firm believer in this model as a way for students to develop the necessary writing skills while also exploring and sharing memories from their own lives. The main idea here was that it was easier for young children to tackle the daunting task of writing a story when they were writing about their own experiences, mainly because these stories were their memories of things that had already happened. Literary components such as plot, characters and setting were already in place so young writers could simply focus on writing down their stories, casting themselves as the main characters. According to the traditional Writer's Workshop model, then, children would spend the school year writing personal narratives about themselves, their feelings and their own personal experiences. Looking back, I now realize that as a teacher candidate, I never questioned the idea that placing a large curricular emphasis on personal narrative might privilege some writers over others.

Since then, I have come to acknowledge that this writing instructional model biases certain literary interests over others. Many of the genres and styles to which many boys gravitate (e.g., comic books, adventure stories, silly fictitious stories, sports pages) are considered low status by many teachers (and parents) and are not welcome in many classrooms during writing time because they are either "inappropriate" for school or deemed not worthy of instructional time (Newkirk, 2002.) Thus many boys come to realize that their interests are not worthy of being taught in the classroom and as a result come to view writing as more of a female activity than male.

I decided that I owed it to my students to try something new and so I created a writing curriculum that included some units that I believed would be generally more appealing to boys and some that would be generally more appealing to girls throughout the year. I designed a revised Writing Workshop curriculum with a focus on different genres of writing as follows:

September-October: Personal Narratives
November-December: Letter Writing
January-February: Comic Book Writing
March-April: Writing Fiction
May-June: Poetry

David[2] as "Bad Boy"

In this paper, I use David's experiences with the new curriculum to explore what happens when boys have the freedom and authority to write about their interests in class. In addition to documenting how David grew as a writer by connecting his own personal interests to the writing curriculum, I also show how important this connection was to David's social development. In fact, it was pivotal in his desire to transform his classroom reputation from a "bad boy" into an expressive and sensitive friend.

As a social member of the class, David was somewhat of a live wire who enjoyed testing limits and manipulating situations. He enjoyed his status as resident "bad boy" and had a powerful presence in the classroom. He pushed boundaries in order to obtain his rebellious classroom reputation. Image was very important to David. In addition to wanting to be known as mischievous and cool, he also desperately wanted everyone in the class to realize that he was intelligent, which he was. David was loud and animated. He loved an audience and occupied more classroom time than any other student. He once told me that it would be the worst thing in the world if people thought of him as dull. David was also obsessed with violence, which was an intense interest of his. He talked about it extensively throughout the school day to get attention from anyone who would listen. He depicted violence in his play at recess and often mentioned it during class meetings. He frequently made up stories and used violence to exaggerate these stories in class. He admitted that he purposely exaggerated in class and enjoyed being inappropriate. As his teacher, it was truly a challenge to figure out how to channel David's energy in appropriate directions. Throughout the year, I often talked with David about how to be a positive community member. David and I had a close relationship. He was a rather verbose, animated student, and partly because I gave him the attention he desired, he trusted me and we engaged in many conversations about his social and emotional development. At the beginning of first grade, David was often mean and disrespectful of classmates, particularly those he did not consider friends. From my perspective as a

teacher, I perceived David as a child with a keen understanding of power who enjoyed exerting it over anyone who would let him. I liked David. Despite his desire for a rebellious reputation, he was a very funny and curious boy who loved learning and cared deeply about his social reputation.

Compared to his peers, David's behavior was extreme. It is important to note however, that there were "bad boys" like David in every class I have ever taught, and I suspect they are part of most primary classes across the country. Many primary grade classes contain more than one bad boy; they are simply a part of the classroom population. They enjoy pushing boundaries and seeking out attention in negative ways. At an early age, they define themselves as rebels. As a result they tend not to connect with the classroom culture or the curriculum in positive ways. They crave social acceptance but find pride in having a social identity that lies outside, or in direct opposition to, classroom expectations for appropriate behavior.

The "Bad Boy" Abides by "The Boy Code"

Early in the school year, David stood out to me as someone who struggled with embracing the personal nature of writing about himself. As a writer, he had strong skills and a solid working knowledge of how to sound out words. It was clear to me as a teacher that he was extremely bright, verbal and articulate. It was also immediately obvious, however, that David did not like the subject matter of writing personal narratives. He did not like figuring prominently in his stories and being the main character. Below are David's own thoughts about writing personal narratives.

> It's not completely boring, it's not exactly the same as that. I mean, don't get me wrong, sometimes it can get *really* boring…but mostly it's just kind of hard. Not the actual writing part, but the "figuring out what to write" part. Sometimes I get headaches because I have to focus so much, and figure out what I want to tell everyone about myself. It just can get really tiring…

As a result, David was very hard to motivate during this unit. He spent the first several writing periods "thinking," which to me looked more like staring off into space or talking to other children.

When David finally decided upon a personal memory to write about, he did everything in his power to diffuse his own personal emotions out of it and to not

focus on how he actually experienced the memory. For his first personal narrative, David wrote a story about saying goodbye to his mother at the airport when she left for Denver the first time. David's mother was in medical school and was going to do her residency in Denver, which meant that she was spending the year away from her family. An excerpt from my teacher research journal on this personal narrative is as follows:

> September 17
> The cover of David's story shows an airplane ascending into the sky. The illustration is done completely in black crayon. The title of the story is *Sadness*. The next step of writing a personal narrative [in our classroom] is to fill out a story web, in which students think about the following elements of their story: characters, main idea, setting, and story sequence (beginning, middle and ending.) Interestingly, after looking over the sheet, David wanted to fill out his story web alone. Towards the end of Writer's Workshop, David informed me that he was done, handed me his story web and began to walk away. I called him back and told him that I needed to review his work with him. In the box marked "characters" David had drawn a picture of the airplane and explained that this was the central character of the story. I asked if there were any other characters in the story. He looked at me for several seconds with a strong gaze and then replied, "Yes, my mother is on that plane." I said, "OK, then you need to write 'Mom' in the character box. After he did this, I asked him if there were any other characters in this story. He said "no." Then I asked, "Your title is *Sadness*. Who is the one feeling sadness in your story?" After a long pause he finally admitted, "Well…I'm the one feeling sadness…(and then softly) obviously." I replied by saying that he should write his name in the character box as well.
>
> "But, I'm not focusing on me in this story, I'm focusing on my mother and the plane" he was quick to reply.
>
> It struck me that David was trying desperately to diffuse the intensity of his sadness, the emotion that he chose to write about, by having his mom and the plane be the main characters instead of focusing on himself. He wanted his story to be told, he just didn't want to focus on his own feelings. I told him that next writing time we would work together to figure out how to do this but also on how to include his perspective into the story. "Because it is a personal narrative and writing about yourself is what 'personal' means" I said. His somber look showed me that he understood.

During the next few days, it became even more clear to me that David did not want to elaborate how he actually felt about his mom being away beyond the poignant (and even powerful) title he gave his narrative--'Sadness.' "Isn't it obvious?" he would say. I had to agree with him. It was, very. David wanted the creative freedom to tell the story his own way. He wanted to diffuse the intensity of his own sadness—remove it from his personal narrative. This story was important enough to David that he wanted to write about it, but he was very clear in that he did not want to focus on his own sadness because doing so might tarnish his reputation as the resident bad boy. David was taking a risk in sharing this story with the class and I was proud of him for choosing this personal event. I did not want this process to be more emotionally charged for him than it already was, so eventually I gave David permission to tell his story his way. His final version is as follows:

SADNIS[3]
ONSE MOM HAD TO GO LIVE IN DENVER. I COODINT GO
MY MOM ROD A JETPLAN TO DENVER
HER APARtMENT WAS SMALL
IT WAS COOl BECASe it had a MAIL Slot
SHE HAD A BALCONY. SHE SAID THE SIGHT WAS beautiful
BUT SOMETIMES IT WAS COLD.
THERE WAS A MAIL SLOT
THERE WAS A GARBAGE chute
THERE WAS VACUMING TO DOO!
Then it was time to go! No!

(*Sadness*
Once Mom had to go live in Denver. I couldn't go.
My mom rode on a jet plane to Denver.
Her apartment was small.
It was cool because it had a mail slot.
She had a balcony. She said the sight was beautiful.
But sometimes it was cold.
There was a mail slot.
There was a garbage chute.
There was vacuuming to do!
Then it was time to go! No!)

When reading David's story, complete with illustrations, I could feel David's sadness but his actual writing did not tap into his own feelings about his mother liv-

ing away from him. This was a deliberate decision on David's part. Although he wanted this story to be told, he was not comfortable expressing his sadness outright, especially since others would be reading this story. This connects with what Pollack (1998) says about boys not being comfortable talking about their lives and their true emotions. He states that many boys are in a gender straight jacket because they feel it is not okay to express emotions because they must present a strong, stoic front. Instead of revealing their true emotional side, they learn at an early age to abide by what Pollack calls "the boy code" and to hide behind a mask of masculinity. Boys who abide by the boy code, boys like David,

> often are hiding not only a wide range of their feelings but also some of their creativity and originality, showing in effect only a handful of primary colors rather than a broad spectrum of colors and hues of the self (p. 7)

Once David figured out how to diffuse the emotional intensity out of what was a very important experience to him, he wrote a strong piece. Protecting his emotional vulnerability, and saving face, he was still able to embrace the process of writing about a personal story and share it with the class in a way with which he felt comfortable.

Deconstructing the "Bad Boy"

When the writing curriculum shifted from personal narratives to letter writing, David was more motivated to write. In this unit, writing became a meaningful form of social interaction for him. David wrote seven letters in one month, compared to one personal narrative in two months. Knowing that we were about to start writing letters but before I even taught the first mini-lesson to the whole class, David took the initiative during morning choice time and wrote the following letter to his friend Michael:

DERE MIKL-
SPY SUPLIS IS SO GRET!
I THINC THAT YOU ARE SO GRET!
WE WILL MEET AT THE BLOK AREA TOOMORO OK?
DOBLO-O AGENTS 005
SINSIRULY
DAVID
P.S. I LIK YOU!

(Dear Michael,
Spy Supplies is so great!
I think that you are so great!
We will meet at the Block Area tomorrow, OK?
Double 0 Agents, 005
Sincerely,
David
P.S. I like you!)

David was extremely attentive and excited throughout the unit on letter writing. He liked that there was a very specific and private audience for his thoughts. Personal narratives were read by the class at large, but with letter writing David was in control of who would read his letters. He enjoyed having this level of control as a writer. The lines "I THINC YOU ARE SO GRET! " and "I LIK YOU!" really stood out to me. As a social member of our class, David had a very hard time giving compliments to other students. Instead of being nice, he often hurt other people's feelings. It struck me that one of the first times I saw David take the initiative to compliment someone was in the form of a private letter. There was an audience of one in letter writing, and David did not have to worry about his public image. David wrote this letter to Michael to tell him that he liked him as a friend and wanted to keep playing with him. Letter writing provided a safe, private forum for him to do just that. David used letter writing to strengthen relationships with chosen friends. Ironically, he revealed more about himself personally and felt more comfortable expressing his true emotions through writing during the letter writing unit than he did during the personal narrative unit mainly because he was in charge of his audience. He could maintain his "bad boy" reputation with the group at large while strengthening specific friendships and reaching out emotionally to those he held dear.

David's interest in writing peaked during the comic book and fiction units, primarily because these units allowed David to depict violent scenes in his writing, but within established parameters. He informed me that he liked incorporating violence because he thought it made his writing more exciting. He stated,

> I do it because I don't want them to like, start telling everyone David's comic book is really boring. David's comic book isn't exciting at all. I don't want them to think I'm dull so I get violent to get their attention.

Similar perhaps to the reasons David behaved aggressively on the playground, he created violent comic books so his classmates would not consider him dull. David also wanted to be known as smart. The following excerpt from my teacher research journal shows how David learned to portray himself as both intelligent and interesting by utilizing violence in his writing:

> January 15
> On day one of our comic book unit, David started illustrating a very violent scene. He was working on a comic strip that featured a crime-fighting character that battled bad guys. Every character in the opening illustration had multiple guns and knives. Some of the bad guy characters were drawn with cut marks on their bodies. David's first draft of this illustration was very grotesque and he looked forward to having people think it was either disgusting or inappropriate. Feeling very proud of his violent scene, he ran right over to James, a 3rd grader who comes to the classroom to help during Writer's Workshop. James, who also enjoyed an occasional violent scene, told David that he liked the idea of this comic character but that there was a certain way to illustrate violence in comics and that it wasn't cool to show the goriest, grossest picture. As they were talking about this, I overheard James say to David, "As the author, you have to get creative. Remember, you have the power as the creator of the comic. Don't go overboard. Make the reader work for it a little. Give them a little bit, but leave a lot to the imagination for the reader. That's the sign of a good comic creator." This spoke volumes to David. It was very important for David to be portrayed as smart and James, a big kid in David's eyes, was telling him how to be smart about depicting violence in his comics. What could be more important and meaningful to David?
>
> Using the old Batman comics as an example, I instructed James to explain how comic writers draw a cloud of smoke (possibly with a head or a foot sticking out around the perimeter) with the words like BANG or KAZOW written over the cloud. That way, you could include violence in the writing but you don't go overboard drawing it. David loved learning this strategy, especially since it came from a big kid that he respected. Halfway through Writer's Workshop, James had to return to his own class. After he left, I watched David turn to Hunter and explain how to depict violence in his comic. David recited verbatim what James had told him.

There was real power in David's realization that there was a smart way to depict violence in his comics. He understood that the authors of comic books and fiction stories have a lot of power and creative control. Power and control were extremely important to David. He stated many times that he found it "freeing" to write fiction and comic books and he liked that the subject matter wasn't directly personal.

As a teacher, I learned a great deal about David's personal development by observing him and paying close attention to what he wrote about during these units. David was obsessed with violence, and he was glad that this was not a taboo topic for Writer's Workshop during these genres. He depicted violent scenes in every comic book and fiction story he wrote. Even though violence was not an interest of mine, and one I hoped he would soon abandon, David connected this interest to the writing curriculum. He was fascinated by the guidelines (such as using the cloud and words like "Zowie" to disguise the gore) for incorporating violence into comic books. He abided by them, for the most part, because these strategies made him feel intelligent and creative as a writer.

Importantly, because violence was a personal interest of his and not considered a taboo topic for writing, David made personal growth by incorporating this interest into his writing and sharing his thoughts with his peers. Prior to this time, David had used violence to rebel, to shock, and to get attention. Once the topic of violence was included in the curriculum, David did not rebel or act out as much because his interests were connected to the curriculum. Importantly, I learned more about David by watching him while he wrote about topics of interest to him. By listening to what he had to say and observing his behavior when there was violence in his writing, I learned that David incorporated violence in his drawings and his play when there was something emotionally upsetting in his life--his mother living in Denver, his best friend Ian moving to Brazil, his feelings of exclusion by some of his friends, his father working too much. Throughout the year, David and I often engaged in talks about social issues that were important to him and violence was a common theme that weaved together many of these conversations. I realized that there was usually a strong connection between David's depictions of violence in writing and his social life. The following excerpt from my teacher research journal explains the social ramifications of this very important point:

> June 27
> Many of the students in my class have expressed that it scared them when David talked about violence, wrote about it, or pretended to act out something violent. Even his close friends were beginning to think that his obsession with violence was inappropriate for school.

Ian is one of David's best friends. At the beginning of the year, Ian found it fascinating that David knew so much about violence, war and catastrophe and sought out David's friendship. During the winter months, David became even more obsessed with violent movies and TV shows and he gained popularity with Ian as a result. Talking about violence and including violence in his writing and play became a way for David to connect with Ian. During the spring, things began to change, however. Ian began to move away from David because of his violent tendencies. During the early spring months, it was noticeable that David was being increasingly rude to many of his friends and was drawing and writing more violent pictures of war and bombings. David also became more physical during games out on the playground like "Cops and Robbers." Ian began to pull away from David because he felt that David was spending too much time drawing, writing and talking about violence and disasters. It scared him. When he began pulling away, Ian began to really feel David's wrath. David told Ian that he hated him and that he wasn't his friend anymore.

After talking with David and observing his behavior for a while, I realized that David was actually upset because Ian was moving away to Brazil for a year. And although Ian was coming back in third grade, missing someone for a year is like an eternity when you're in first grade. David had grown close to Ian and now he was moving away. David was acting out because he was upset and he was channeling his anger in the only way he knew how to: by using violence in his play, writing and drawing to get attention. At that point, I realized that David's use of violence had become a social barometer I could use to know how he was feeling.

I asked David if he wanted to have "a private meeting" with Ian to discuss how he was feeling. In this meeting, David explained that he was feeling confused because he felt that earlier in the winter he had been drawing more violent pictures and talking about violence to strengthen his friendship with Ian. But now, Ian was pulling away because of the violence. It didn't make any sense to him. David expressed this to Ian and in turn Ian acknowledged that he was indeed purposely pulling away from David. "I don't like it anymore when David gets obsessed with violence and I don't want to go down a bad road myself and get in trouble. I don't want to be known as a bad boy like David," he explained. Ian expressed that he used to be more interested in violence but he felt that he had outgrown it. "People grow at different rates," Ian explained "and sometimes people are just late-bloomers about some stuff. And maybe David is just a late-bloomer about

outgrowing violence." Instead of being upset about this, or even insulted, David nodded and accepted this rationale. David then told Ian that he was going to miss him while he was away. This made Ian smile and they spent the remainder of the recess devising a strategy to communicate with each other via their parents' emails using a secret code.

Similar to how I realized that my students' personal narratives could be considered windows into self, by using David's overall writing throughout the entire year as a window into self, I gained tremendous insight into his personal life. He used violence to communicate his emotions, and I believe he desperately hoped someone would pay attention. I realized I could use his depictions of violence as a social barometer to monitor how he was feeling emotionally without David having to state it outright. His actions spoke louder than his words.

In this way, David revealed a great deal more about his personal self during the letter writing, comic book, fiction and poetry units than he did when the curricular focus was on personal narratives. The real impact of David's social and emotional growth as a result of being able to connect personal interests (in this case, violence) with the writing curriculum was truly felt during our poetry unit at the end of the year.

David abandons the "Bad Boy" Stance

The following is a poem that David wrote the very next day after the conversation with Ian when he told Ian he hated him and that he was not his friend.

NO War
by DAVID

War is crazy, war is dumb. If war dozeNt stop I'LL eat MY thumb. Gun's are dangerous and no fun, I'm out to make WaR say GOODBYE. if I fail I'LL Pobably CRY.
HurrAY! I did it! YippY ME! Earth is pecefulk cause of me!

No War
by David

War is crazy, war is dumb. If war doesn't stop, I'll eat my thumb. Guns are dangerous and no fun.
I'm out to make war say "Goodbye." If I fail, I'll probably cry.
Hurray! I did it! Yippy me! Earth is peaceful because of me!

The picture that accompanied this poem depicted David and Ian, smiling and holding hands, standing on top of the Earth with a big rainbow overhead. When he was done, he walked around the class and shared the poem with anyone who would listen. This was a social breakthrough for David. Along these lines, Gallas (1998) said that "bad boys, like most children, are not naturally mean spirited; they are experimental. They are small, social scientists studying the effect of their behavior on others" (p. 44.). David was one such social scientist who experimented with violence throughout the year as a way to communicate his emotional state to others.

In his poem, *No War*, David not only took an anti-war stance but he also publicly displayed affectionate feelings of friendship towards Ian. This was in stark contrast to David's behavior at the beginning of the year when he was consistently mean to the majority of his peers. By writing this happy anti-war poem, David allowed himself to be vulnerable and showed his classmates that he was kind and that he wanted to change his reputation as resident bad boy. This social transformation took time but by the end of the year, when our poetry unit took place, David managed to break out of his emotional straight jacket and abandon the boy code.

It is important to note that if the writing curriculum had not been able to connect with David's interest in violence, he would not have been able to write about this interest freely, which contributed to his desire to change his social reputation. By being more inviting, the writing curriculum helped David rebel less against the classroom culture and become more interested in Writer's Workshop.

The Bigger Picture

David showed me that he had different literacy interests from those that are the focus of the traditional Writer's Workshop model. In fact, many boys in my class were similar to David in that they were not interested in writing personal narratives. When I opened the door and widened the circle of acceptable writing topics, most boys felt more connected to the writing curriculum and readily brought their literacy interests in. Their interests included fantastic intergalactic battles of good vs. evil, imaginative stories about being a coach of an NBA Dream Team, gory poems about haunted houses, personal narratives about being kicked in the crotch, and letters to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. These interests were not always appropriate and did not always focus on topics in which I was particularly interested. They were, however, of interest to these boys, and when they were allowed to pursue them, they wrote freely and willingly.

For the most part and with some exceptions, the boys and girls in my class tended to have differing literacy interests. The girls tended to prefer to write personal narratives and poetry while the boys tended to prefer to write comic books and fiction. What is most important about my study overall, however, is that both boys and girls performed at higher levels when writing in genres that were of interest to them.

If there are indeed differing gendered literacy interests among many young children, then would it not serve us well as educators to further investigate our approach to writing instruction? Perhaps we should offer a writing curriculum that includes a wide array of genres, including those that often tend to appeal more to boys or more to girls, especially if this shift will help many boys be more interested in writing. I wonder if the bad boys in primary classrooms across the country, boys like David, may feel more connected to the classroom culture when the writing curriculum is connected to their own interests. I have known many boys who are not interested or able to readily process their emotions, reflect, or talk about their personal lives with great ease or willingness. Should this have to impact their writing development as well? By shifting the content of what we teach, and by diffusing the personal from the curriculum, I believe these boys can learn how to write and use this skill in a socially meaningful way that helps them connect writing to their own interests, as different as they may be.

Notes

1. The reprinted article has been shortened and edited for purposes of the LEARNing Landscapes journal.

2. All names are pseudonyms.

3. I present and translate my students' writing exactly as they created it. The words I present are theirs. The texts I present are exactly the same as the writing they produced, with the exception for some key words that were changed to protect the anonymity of the child.

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How a Therapy Dog May Inspire Student Literacy Engagement in the Elementary Language Arts Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss theoretical possibilities for the inclusion of therapy dogs in the elementary language arts classroom, particularly which may inspire students otherwise reluctant to engage in literacy activities. I incorporate Guthrie and colleagues' work in engagement into research in Animal Assisted Therapy with children to posit a revised theory of engagement.

It was October, and my grade 2 students gathered around in what seemed to be breathless anticipation to meet my new little white Maltese-poodle puppy, Tango. Before I invited her out of her kennel, as a class we reviewed what we had researched and learned over the past two weeks about how to meet a new dog: stay seated and let the puppy come to you, put your hand out, palm-down to let her sniff you before petting her on her back or side. Ensure that you are gentle and quiet, because the puppy is little and may be afraid, just like us, if she hears sudden, loud noises. We had removed our shoes in a class decision to prevent accidental injury to one of her tiny paws, and student volunteers had placed fresh water and a blanket on the floor nearby. Finally, the moment the students had been preparing for had come.

As Tango pounced out of her kennel and seemingly into the hearts of my students, I became increasingly aware of her potential for engaging young learners in my classroom. She seemed to instantly connect with the children; the atmosphere was one of warmth and joy, of care and empathy for this tiny puppy. My students had been busy

researching, reading, and learning about puppies in purposeful anticipation of this first visit; their urgent questions now were how long could she stay, and when could she come back again? As I observed my students interacting with her, I began to wonder: In what other ways might this little dog inspire student literacy engagement in our classroom?

Literacy skills are a prerequisite for success in life, yet millions of children in North America are not reading at grade level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Because children are often reluctant to engage in literacy activities due to a lack of confidence (Guthrie, 2004), international innovative programs have been developed that pair reluctant readers with therapy dogs in schools and libraries. The philosophy of these programs is that dogs provide a non-judgmental audience that may offer a unique form of support for a child's learning (Jalongo, Astorino, & Bomboy, 2004). The Intermountain Therapy Animals (I.T.A.) Association has hundreds of trained Reading Education Assistance Dogs and their owners working as "literacy teams" in schools and libraries in over 40 states in the U.S.A. (I.T.A., 2008). In Canada, organizations such as the Pet Therapy Society of Northern Alberta have developed a "Paws for a Story" program in Edmonton's public libraries (Kienholz & Bailey Lindsay, 2006). To date, over 400 children in the Edmonton area have participated in this program. The popularity of the programs continues to grow, yet aside from promising pilot studies (I.T.A., 2007), very little research has explored the processes underlying how and why these programs work. Programs such as the I.T.A. in the United States report that their mission "is to improve the literacy skills of children through the assistance of registered therapy dogs as literacy mentors" (I.T.A., 2008). The term *therapy dog*, in the context of these programs, means that the dog is over one year of age, has completed basic obedience and temperance training, has veterinary certification of excellent health and is vaccinated, is well groomed, calm, and gentle (I.T.A., 2007). However, as I have written elsewhere, the term *therapy dog* implies that the dog is capable of treating maladjustment; therefore, a more appropriate term for the work that these animals do in the classroom context might be *animal-assisted learning* (Friesen, in press).

Numerous anecdotal reports by organizations such as the I.T.A., the *Tales to Tails* program, and *Reading with Rover* suggest that reading alongside a therapy dog can positively affect a child's reading. One such program was written about by a school library media co-ordinator (Briggs Newlin, 2003). In this program, 15 grade two students read aloud with a therapy dog for 20 minutes per week over one school year. Briggs Newlin states that "most participants improved their reading skills by at least two grade levels over the course of an entire school year" (p. 43). Many other small-scale reports have been written about animal-assisted reading programs (see for example Gerben, 2003; Hughes, 2002; Martin, 2001). Each article discusses

programs established at local elementary schools in the United States that involve students reading for a 20-30 minute period per week with a trained therapy dog over one school year. In these reports, the R.E.A.D. Dogs Program used school reading scores to determine pre- and post-reading levels of students "in an effort to reduce bias towards its program," and so that "teachers can see the progress of kids who participate right alongside the rest of their classmates' results" (I.T.A., 2008). Although children's reading was reported to have improved through participation in these programs and in pilot projects (I.T.A., 2007), the paucity of publications in peer-reviewed journals examining these programs makes it difficult to determine the quality of these studies.

In this article I discuss research possibilities exploring how the inclusion of therapy dogs may support children's literacy learning in classrooms, particularly for students who are reluctant to engage in reading. I incorporate Guthrie and colleagues'[1] work in engagement into research in Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) with children to posit a revised theory of engagement in the language learning classroom. Specifically, I explore how situational interest in a therapy dog (as compared to other animals) may inspire intrinsic motivation in literacy, how a therapy dog might foster social engagement (speaking and listening) during literacy activities in a supportive classroom environment, and how a therapy dog and its handler may uniquely support reading strategy instruction and practice. I have selected these aspects of Guthrie's and others' work because they are most conducive to illustrating possibilities for AAT in the elementary language arts classroom.

Background and significance of Guthrie's work

Guthrie, Wigfield, and Perencevich (2004) developed Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) to foster literacy engagement in grades three, four, and five. CORI emphasizes context-specific student choice which encourages student ownership in learning, hands-on activities, a text-rich atmosphere, teaching comprehension strategies, and student collaboration and discussion during a reading and science unit on ecology. During the 2001 to 2005 school years, Guthrie and his colleagues engaged in a systematic series of research studies to investigate how CORI might foster positive gains in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and science knowledge. Guthrie et al. note that "for many years, reading researchers focused primarily on the cognitive aspects of reading" (p. 250); however, researchers are becoming increasingly interested in how motivation affects reading engagement. What is significant about Guthrie and his colleagues' work is the manner in which they attend to the cognitive perspective of reading as well as the sociocultural

perspective by emphasizing not only the necessary role of strategy instruction but also the importance of peer socializing in language learning. As Stone (2006) acknowledges, "the cognitive science and sociocultural views of language are often more complementary than contradictory" (p. 11); it is the thoughtful combination of these two perspectives which may inform researchers and educators about how to best engage elementary language learners.

What does it mean to be an engaged learner?

Guthrie, Wigfield, and Perencevich (2004) define *engagement* as "the interplay of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction during literacy activities" (p. ix). The engaged reader is intrinsically and may be extrinsically motivated to read, is cognitively involved in the reading process, and is socially interactive. A motivated reader is a child who wants to learn and who has confidence in his/her ability to read, which in turn positively affects a child's perseverance when faced with literacy challenges.

Guthrie and his colleagues point out that we all have *disengaged* learners in our classrooms, and that as teachers, we know intuitively who they are. They describe disengaged students as the children who, despite being cognitively capable, rarely choose to read or volunteer to read aloud unless explicitly requested to do so by their teacher. When these children are asked to read, their answers in response to the text make sense, which shows that they are capable of comprehension. Often lacking confidence in their ability to read, these children may participate very little in peer group discussions. They will rarely engage in reading outside of school unless required to do so by their teacher, and will often then read reluctantly and sporadically. Although they typically are reading approximately one year below grade level, these children often do not qualify for special education. Guthrie and colleagues acknowledge that although many children come to school excited about learning, some children's enthusiasm for school wanes for reasons such as, but certainly not limited to, repeated negative experiences with reading or a growing sensitivity to peer comparison, possibly in combination with negative teacher feedback. Still other children may disengage due to the predictable nature of school schedules, in which learning has become repetitive and mundane.

Why is engagement important in the language arts classroom?

Guthrie et al. (2004) assert that engaged readers are higher achievers in school; when students are engaged, reading improves. They note that "engagement

and reading are reciprocal" (p. 6). Stanovich's (1986) "Matthew Effect" asserts that the more students engage in reading, the more opportunities they have to improve fluency, word recognition, and vocabulary. Engaged readers benefit from opportunities to discuss texts in relation to their own experiences and learn about texts in many genres and forms in both fiction and non-fiction (Pinnell, 2009). In contrast, students with limited engagement with text do not benefit from repeated opportunities to develop and expand reading skills and may therefore fall further and further behind their peers.

Despite wide recognition of this spiral effect in reading research, Guthrie et al. (2004) articulate that there is a lack of research exploring the "refined, empirical understanding about classroom practices that promote engagement" (p. 1). In response to this need, they argue that researchers should "identify and understand educational conditions that will foster reading engagement [and to accomplish this], we must try out new educational ideas in the classroom" (p. 20). This call for innovation in reading instruction is supported by McCormick Calkins (2001) who suggests that educators need to do more than simply collect new methods, but weave a sense of "vision, passion and grace" (p. 4) into teaching while taking into consideration children's interests. In so doing, it will become possible to "re-envision literacy learning" (Guthrie et al., 2004, p. 26) in schools. It is in this spirit of re-imagining literacy in the elementary school classroom that I turn now to one possibility previously overlooked: how a therapy dog might inspire children to engage in classroom literacy activities.

Motivation to Read: The Situational to General Hypothesis

After that first day, the students and I agreed that Tango would be able to visit our classroom for one morning each Friday. We agreed that the students could sign up for ten minutes of individual or paired "Tango Time" during a one-hour period, during which the students could choose to play with Tango, or sit quietly and talk or read to her. Over time, it seemed that my students' interest in Tango united them in a common and authentic purpose for learning, and therefore served as the springboard for numerous other literacy-based activities. For example, one reading and writing project evolved out of what seemed to be my students' protection of Tango and their observations of and interactions with other children. Because we had been learning how to care for a dog, the similarities and differences between human needs and a dog's needs had become quite clear for my students. Their concern was that children in other classes didn't understand these

concepts as well as they were coming to understand them themselves. Therefore, we decided that the best way to attend to this might be to teach others about what we had learned.

First, the students selected topics that they were interested in such as ways to approach a dog you don't know, feeding a dog, how to know if a dog is afraid or stressed, teaching a dog how to do a trick, and bathing a dog. Then, while referring to lessons and books we had read and discussed and searching pre-selected sites on the Internet with the assistance of their grade four book buddies, the students worked in pairs and small groups to develop posters (including both visuals and text information) about their topic. We then invited other classes, parents, and siblings to an information fair about dogs. This evolved into student requests to also "research" other animals and eventually other personal interests. It seemed that what began as a purposeful and meaningful situational interest in Tango then inspired many of my students to continue to read, write, learn and teach others about other topics of importance to them.

Fig. 1: Reading time with a trained and certified therapy dog

It is not difficult for educators to envision how children's interest in reading might be engaged if given novel or situational opportunities to learn about and interact with a therapy dog in the classroom context. Guthrie et al. (2004) define situational interest as "a temporary, affective reaction to an activity or a set of conditions, a reaction that may not last" (p. 268). However, Guthrie and colleagues note that "if the energy aroused by fascinating phenomena is directed into texts, engagement in reading increases" (p. 79). They propose that the initial excitement of a "situational interest … can develop into long-term motivation for reading" (p. 79). Guthrie et al.'s situational to general hypothesis is supported by Dewey's (1963) theory of educative experiences. Dewey's theory is grounded in the idea that "all genuine education comes about through experience" (p. 25), but that the *quality* of the experience determines both the "immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and … its influence upon later experiences" (p. 27). Dewey argues that "every experience lives on in other experiences" (p. 27), similar to how a situational interest in a specific topic may then "live on" through a more general fascination in future experiences with books on related topics. Guthrie et al. (2006) sought to explore how a stimulating situational interest might

"encourage the development of long-term individual interest in reading" (p. 232). The grade three students in Guthrie et al.'s 2006 study were engaged in a 12-week reading and science unit on ecology which provided numerous opportunities for hands-on, stimulating learning. "The two intervention groups compared in this study were students in classrooms that provided a high number of stimulating reading activities and students in classrooms that had a low number of stimulating reading activities" (p. 235). "All classes participated in one to four science investigations that included an owl pellet dissection, observation of guppy behaviour, an experiment on guppy defense, and an observation of a predatory diving bug" (p. 235). Reading comprehension was evaluated using a tool designed specifically for this project as well as a standardized reading achievement test, and motivation was analyzed using a student self-report measure and teacher's ratings of student motivation using the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Through systematic statistical analysis, the authors concluded that the "number of stimulating tasks increased motivation for reading, which was associated with increased reading comprehension on the standardized test" (p. 242).

The conclusions of this study are particularly significant for children whose reading motivation seems to decline as they progress through elementary school because the study authors suggest that a decline in reading motivation is not unavoidable or irreversible. Instead, capturing students' curiosity through situational interest activities may lead to generalized motivation towards reading in a supportive classroom context. Dewey (1963) would define this influence of past experiences on those in the future as the *continuity* of experience; "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those that come after" (p. 35). Therefore, a child's initial curiosity in a topic may affect and encourage student participation in future positive, quality educative experiences. Guthrie et al. (2004) suggest that situational interest can become deeper personal interest by "creating specific classroom environmental conditions that foster this interest" (p. 268).

Along with a deep, personal interest in reading, a main goal of literacy teachers is to develop a classroom characterized by a "sense of joy, playfulness, enthusiasm, and intention" towards text (Collins, 2008, p. xv). In the classroom context with a therapy dog, this sense of interest, enthusiasm, and intention might be encouraged by, but is not limited to, the example of the information fair about dogs and/or other animals given at the beginning of this section. Inspired by the developing relationship between students and the therapy dog, the teacher can direct students' attention towards other creative literacy projects incorporating the six strands of language

arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing. Because "all the language arts are interrelated and interdependent, facility in one strengthens and supports the others" (Alberta Learning, 2000). For example, in our classroom, the students self-published illustrated stories about Tango (and later about other animals they loved):

First, we took pictures of Tango and then, using the photos as a reference, we drew portraits of her. I incorporated an art lesson into this period of language arts whereby the children were taught how to use light and shadow to make their portraits more realistic. They were also thrilled to have the "real Tango" present to refer to as they drew and painted. The children were encouraged to then place their portrait of Tango in any setting they wanted to. After telling stories and brainstorming ideas with their book buddies about what Tango might do if she were in that setting, they wrote, edited, revised, and eventually published stories for our school library about the imaginative "Adventures of Tango." One of my students wrote a story about Tango as a professional hockey player on his team (he even gave her her own equipment and hockey stick in his picture); another dressed Tango in a pink tutu in her illustration, placed her on stage in a great hall and wrote the story of Tango as a prima-ballerina. Still other children chose to incorporate their own pets (or Grandma's cat or their cousin's gerbil) into their stories either in addition to Tango or in place of her. Laughter and excitement characterized the atmosphere of our classroom during this project; I beamed when my students would beg for more time to write.

A guppy versus a puppy: an important difference?

Guthrie et al. (2004) note that they selected topics from the science curriculum as the focus for their studies on reading engagement because they often stimulate children's situational interest and invite hands-on learning. I propose that it is no accident that the examples given in their work involve animals as motivators for encouraging situational interest in students' reading. Dewey (1963) stresses the importance of selecting "the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28). Likely because of elementary students' common fascination with the natural world, Guthrie and his colleagues (2006) include "observation of guppy behaviour" as a way to encourage situational interest in grade three students. Through this example, I consider why dogs may be a particularly suitable choice for sparking children's situational reading motivation. How is observing a guppy similar to or different from observing a puppy?[2] Guppies and puppies are both live animals that can be observed. Both animals rely upon humans in captivity for their survival and provide genuine opportunities for children to learn

about the life cycle. Both animals offer possibilities to teach children about the responsibility of caring for another living thing, and to develop empathy for a living animal's unique needs. However, there are important differences in the nature of interaction between children and these two animals which, taken together, highlight the significance of incorporating a dog into literacy activities.

Multisensory Experience, Oral Language, and Cognition

"A dog can express more with his tail in minutes than his owner can express with his tongue in hours." — Anonymous

Although many animals can be observed, it is both possible and probable that children will not only observe a dog, but over time, will also physically interact with it. Guthrie et al. (2004) speak to the importance of multi-sensory experiences "in which students see, hear, feel, smell, and touch … the physical environment for purposes of inquiry" (p. 62) in motivating situational interest. Moreover, research exploring interactions between children and animals seems to indicate that children prefer to touch furry animals (Nielsen & Delude, 1989), and conversation with children while interacting with a small animal seems to invite questioning, personal stories, and naturally occurring "teachable" moments (Hunt & Hart, 2001). This research seems to suggest that when children are provided opportunities for multi-sensory interaction with animals, including touch, they may be more likely to engage in cognitive thinking processes such as questioning, and may be more likely to relate the encounter to their own experiences than when viewing an animal either through glass or from a distance.

Connection with language

> "Dialogue with [animals] offer a time-out from the anxieties of human exchange … Despite most children's acknowledgement that pets cannot literally comprehend what they are saying, children have the feeling of being heard and being understood." (Melson, 2001, p. 51)

Puppies, unlike most other domesticated animals, have a unique relationship with spoken language in both their capacity and desire to understand language,

and their expressiveness in response to human requests. To children's delight, most dogs are highly trainable, and can respond to requests such as "sit" or "shake a paw" or to questions such as "Do you want a treat?" or "Should we go for a walk?" Particularly when they are spoken to on a regular basis, dogs can also respond to changes in voice inflection and volume, for example, by cocking their head or wagging their tail. Because children can observe a dog's understanding of language, they may feel more of a connection or bond with a dog compared to many other animals, particularly when reading to them, because there is potential for the dog to "listen" to the story despite the fact that dogs cannot read themselves. Hart (2006) refers to dogs and cats as "conversational partners," despite the fact that they cannot verbally interact, by noting how many people speak to their dog (Rogers et al., 1993 as cited in Hart, 2006) and how dogs can be catalysts for friendly conversations among people who are relative strangers. However, even more than as a conversational partner, perhaps a dog's inability to speak, to criticize or judge, allows children to perceive them as the most supportive communicators of all. In fact, in the many cards and letters Tango received from past encounters with children in classrooms, the recurring comment in children's writing has been to thank Tango for being "such a good listener."

Social Nature, Social Response, and Loyalty

"Dogs love company. They place it first in their short list of needs."
- J.R. Ackerley (as cited in Wright, 2009)

Unlike many other animals' apparent lack of interest in human beings, dogs are instinctually social and prefer to be members of a group. When this group is a classroom of children, dogs may, over time, become increasingly interested and responsive to the children and become willing participants in children's daily classroom activities. For many children, but particularly for the child who lacks confidence, a dog's consistently happy disposition and willingness to be near the child may help him or her to feel important and needed in this relationship. In my own classroom, it was fascinating to observe what seemed to be Tango's increasingly enthusiastic greeting towards students she came to know well over several months of class visits. In return, I observed children seeking Tango out when it seemed that they needed a hug or some comfort themselves. As acknowledged by Brendtro and Long (1995), classrooms can be stressful places for children due to a combination of academic expectations and social pressures to "fit in." The developing relationship between students and the dog may serve as a source of solace and calm within the complex social network of the classroom.

Expressiveness

In contrast to many other animals, dogs' expressions are animated and thus may ignite children's imaginations; whether or not dogs actually have unique personalities, many children and adults transfer human characteristics onto dogs. For example, we might say "Oh, look at the way he is laying there. I think he's feeling sad!" If a dog is able to capture students' imaginations, it is possible that stories about dogs and/or other animals may also become more appealing. Perhaps all of these differences between puppies and guppies taken together suggest that "man's best friend" may also be child's best friend in the literacy classroom. In a quantitative review of 37 peer-reviewed AAT studies, Nimer and Lundahl (2007) found that dogs were most often included in studies with children between 0-12 years, and dogs were associated with positive behavioural, emotional/social, or medical benefits for children in every study. I propose that incorporating therapy dogs into language learning lessons in what may begin as a situational interest has tremendous potential to develop into general motivation towards reading.

Social Engagement in a Supportive Classroom Environment

Guthrie (2004) clarifies that "at the heart of engaged reading is the notion that participation is a key to proficiency" (p. 8). Therefore, if disinterested readers choose to participate, this greatly increases the likelihood that they will become more proficient readers. Guthrie et al. (2004) explain that when children work together, "the whole class becomes a learning community, sharing what they have learned and asking further questions about it" (p. 269). Guthrie and colleagues (2004) emphasize that, when given opportunities to collaborate with others, students "use their social network to undergird their understanding and to enhance their enjoyment in learning from books" (p. 58). Further,

> [b]y explaining new knowledge to a peer, a student participates in the process of socially interacting to form new knowledge structures from text. The process of battling out the meaning of a text, and assuring full coverage of its content in deciding about the interpretation of material, enables children to learn from the art of social interchange and dialogue in a literacy situation.

Although research which examines social support usually only considers ways in which humans interact with each other (Melson & Fine, 2006), studies exploring the social and emotional effects that interacting with therapy dogs has on children in special-needs classrooms suggests that therapy dogs may be able to assist in encouraging positive communication (or speaking and listening) in the language arts classroom. Because "oral language is the foundation of literacy" and because it is through "listening and speaking [that] people communicate thoughts, feelings, experiences, information and opinions, and learn to understand themselves and others" (Alberta Learning, 2000), possibilities for how a therapy dog might encourage verbal communication in the classroom may be significant for children's learning. For example, a study by Anderson and Olson (2006) determined that because the children in their study viewed the dog as a non-judgemental "friend" in the classroom, interacting with the dog seemed to encourage positive communication between students. These authors suggest that dogs may have a calming effect on children aged six to eleven years by modelling acceptance, affection, and trust. A second study examining the short-term effects of a therapy dog on children's state of mind determined that interactions with a dog "increased to a large extent the alertness and attention of the child," and "caused more openness and desire for social contact and exchange" (Prothmann, Bienert, & Ettrich, 2006, p. 275). The authors note that

> animals seem to be able to cause a profound change in the atmosphere … leading to the above-mentioned changes in subjective experience and self-perception. The children and adolescents may feel transported into an atmosphere that is characterized by warmth, acceptance, and empathy. (p. 275)

The change in atmosphere attributed to the animals by Prothmann et al. (2006) may have profound implications for the elementary language arts classroom. Literacy educators have long been aware of how the classroom environment can either enhance or detract from learning. Cambourne's (1988) conditions for literacy learning emphasize that children need to feel safe to take risks in order for learning to occur, and that a young learner's literacy attempts must be "enthusiastically, warmly, and often joyously received" (p. 37). Collins (2004) acknowledges that particularly because "children in the primary grades are still so new at school, we need to provide the kind of safe environment where they'll be willing to face challenges and take on risks" (p. 5). Both Cambourne (1988) and Collins (2008) emphasize the importance of caring, genuine relationships between teacher and learners, and that educators need to pay careful attention to the conditions in which engagement occurs in their classrooms. "Experience does not go on simply inside a person" (Dewey, 1963, p. 39); therefore, educators commonly attend to the environment, or the "sources

outside an individual which give rise to experience" (p. 40). Particularly because our goal as literacy educators is to encourage children's love of reading, as students develop literacy skills in the classroom, "collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson" (p. 48) or other content matter at hand. What kinds of collateral learning takes place when children interact with a therapy dog during literacy activities? How might interaction with a therapy dog enhance the literacy learning environment? How do children perceive these experiences? What might be the significance of these experiences for children who are learning to read? An exciting area of future research may be to explore possibilities for how interacting with a therapy dog may positively influence students' collateral literacy learning and encourage students to take risks during oral literacy activities in the elementary language arts classroom. The following experience illustrates possibilities for increased social engagement within a positive classroom environment when a therapy dog and handler are incorporated into literacy activities:

I left classroom teaching after eight years to pursue my PhD, but I wanted to continue to explore how a therapy dog might be incorporated into other classrooms and at other grade levels. Therefore, Tango and I began volunteering with a local pet therapy organization after undergoing the required screening and training process. So many questions remained: Had my own students only been enthralled with Tango because of my own love for my pet? Would students older than grade two be interested in having my little dog and I visit their classroom?

Not long after receiving our certificate of completion for pet therapy training, Tango and I were invited to volunteer in a grade seven/eight class of students. The teacher wanted us to visit her classroom in part because she was very afraid of dogs, and she wanted to model how to eventually overcome fear for her students by facing it. In addition, she had heard about my experience working with my dog in my own classroom and was intrigued by the possibilities for incorporating a dog into literacy activities. We agreed that her students would be invited to sign up for "Tango Time" just as my own students had been. During this time the students could choose any book they liked to read aloud to Tango.

On one particular afternoon, a young lady named Kim[3] had her turn to read to Tango. On this afternoon, Kim was sitting in the corner in tears. Although doubtful that she would respond, Kim's teacher gently asked if she would like to come to read to Tango. To her teacher's surprise, Kim not only came directly over but was also ready to read as she wiped away the tears rolling down her face. As she read to Tango, Kim positioned the book so Tango could see the pictures, and she laughed throughout the entire story. I asked both

Kim and Tango questions while Kim read, and at the end of the story I explained to the teacher that we had learned three new words—and Kim proudly told her what they were. This experience suggests that by involving Tango we were not only able to help turn around an upsetting situation, but that Kim had been calm and involved enough to retain what she had learned during the reading. Tango, for her part, continually kissed away Kim's tears where they had fallen on her hands and arm, to which Kim giggled in response. It seemed like such a little thing, but it must have made Kim feel very special because in her words she knew that "Tango cared" about her.

As I reflected on this experience, I wondered: Would Kim have chosen to engage in reading if Tango hadn't been there? How might Tango have supported her reading efforts in a way that I couldn't have? What kinds of collateral learning may have been taking place during this experience, and how might reading with Tango "live on" in future reading experiences for Kim? Is this an example of the "enthusiastic, warm, and joyous" response to a reader's efforts that Cambourne writes about? Or was it something more than—other than—this?

The Unique Role of the Dog and Handler in Strategy Instruction

Because strategy instruction and practice can increase reading frequency (Wigfield et al., 2004), which can then lead to increases in vocabulary, word recognition, and fluency (Stanovich, 1986), the therapy dog's handler and the dog may work as a team under the teacher's direction, when reading with children either individually or in small groups, to offer a unique form of support in children's learning. Although simply having another adult in the classroom does increase opportunities for additional support for children in practicing their reading strategies, the dynamics among child, adult, and dog are unique in this context. Therapy dog handlers can be "enthusiastic facilitators of each child's reading practice," and "are encouraged to pay attention … and offer assistance when necessary" (Jalongo, 2005, p. 154). Literacy research suggests that caring and enthusiastic support of a child's reading efforts by an adult volunteer will likely contribute to literacy development for the child (Pressley, 2001), and that one-on-one, regularly scheduled mentorship opportunities with an emphasis on the quality of the relationship between the adult and child as well as on academics can positively affect a child academically, socially, and emotionally (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006; Ellis, Small-McGinley, & de Fabrizio, 2001; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Within animal-assisted literacy sessions, the therapy dog handler

does not rely upon a pre-established reading program to guide his or her interactions with the child. Instead, in line with best practice in literacy instruction, he or she offers responsive assistance guided by the child's unique questions and struggles as he or she reads (McCormick Calkins, 2001). As Harwayne (2000) notes, otherwise "joyful teaching moments" can be lost in the institutionalization of the teaching of reading when adults in children's lives become "fearful of sharing in the wrong way" (p. 200).

Within small group reading sessions, the therapy dog can "act as an intermediary as the handlers check the child's understanding and even ask young readers to explain [vocabulary] to the dog" (Jalongo, 2005, p. 154). As highlighted by McCormick Calkins (2001), the instruction most valuable for young learners is that which comes from observations of what they are doing already. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) explains this kind of instruction as working within a child's zone of proximal development, or working with the child to comprehend that which would be difficult for the child to understand without assistance. For example, upon observing that a child is struggling with a word, the handler might say "Tango doesn't know this word either. Maybe we can work it out together?" If the handler wants to check that a child comprehends the meaning of a word, he or she might say, "Tango doesn't know what that big word means. Do you think you can explain it to her?" At the end of the reading session, the handler might highlight how the child has learned and perhaps taught Tango three new words today (as was illustrated in the example earlier in Kim's story). Encouraging the child to be the one to teach may reverse traditional power roles of the adult and child. In so doing, the child may realize that, for the first time, he/she knows more than the other member of the group (the dog), which in turn may help to increase the self-confidence and willingness of a reader otherwise reluctant to engage.

Concluding Remarks

Although further research is required, there seems to be strong potential for how a therapy dog might inspire student literacy engagement in the elementary language arts classroom. Therapy dogs may be able to capture the situational interest of children because they offer a multi-sensory learning experience, are highly sociable and responsive to humans, and possess a capacity for limited comprehension of oral language. Over time, the initial excitement of learning about and/or reading to the dog may develop into long-term intrinsic motivation to read through related stimulating, hands-on reading, writing, oral, and collaborative literacy activities about dogs

and other animals. Research in AAT suggests that incorporating dogs into learning environments provides opportunities for social engagement which can enhance children's understanding, enjoyment, and interpretation of text in the language learning classroom. Further, the unique role of the handler in strategy instruction and practice, characterized by a shift in power relations between adult and child, may help to increase students' confidence and willingness to engage in reading. Guthrie et al. (2004) emphasize that "engagement in reading is crucial for the development of lifelong literacy" (p. ix). Perhaps it is time that we begin to re-imagine pedagogical possibilities which may not yet be mainstream in our school culture for the sake of students who have, until now, chosen not to engage in literacy.

Notes

1. The work referred to in this article includes the following studies as indicated in the reference list: Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2006; Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada, & Barbosa, 2006; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004.

2. It should be noted, however, that puppies—or dogs under one year of age—are not permitted to be therapy dogs because of their naturally exuberant behaviour; I use the word "puppy" here lightly.

3. The name of the student has been changed to protect her identity.

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Life-Long Readers of Poetry? Why Not?

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ABSTRACT

I have come to believe that most students who have read and studied poetry in school and college do not go on to read and enjoy poetry in their adult lives because they do not expect to understand a poem of any complexity on their own. Unfortunately, years of conditioning into such dependence have also victimized teachers into functioning as guardians of the poem's meaning. In an attempt to find out what students could realize from a poem without teacher direction, I discovered in studies at various levels of schooling that students working in small groups without any expectation that the teacher held and would provide "the one right meaning," generated rich and powerful readings of challenging poems far beyond any understanding that the teacher could have mediated with questions.

Introduction

In January 2009 the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States reported in a summary research report that the number of American adults who had read a work of fiction in 2008, had risen to 50.2%, higher by 3.2% than the results reported in 2002 (*Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy*). This increase represents a reversal of a trend in declining readership; however, in sharp contrast the report also announced that only 8.9% of adults admitted having read any poetry in the previous year, a decline from 12.1% in 2002, and 17.1% in 1992, only 16 years earlier. I am not surprised by the results, for when I have spoken to adults about reading and asked them to recall when it was that they last read a poem *with any degree of attention*, invariably, the vast majority of them when pressed admit that they have not *deliberately* read a poem since high school or university.

It is remarkable that while most adults regularly read newspapers, magazines, short stories and longer fiction, reading poems with some degree of attention invariably remains associated with the classroom, which raises a question: while there are powerful arguments for the inclusion of poetry in the school curriculum, arguments rooted in the historical and universal belief in poetry's aesthetic and moral values, should we not be alarmed that our teaching of poetry and our belief in the significance of poetry to the lives of people produces only a few potential consumers of this vital good?

Overcoming resistance to poetry: Poems as everyday items?

How do we make poetry matter? The question has engaged librarians, teachers, and poets in several countries to initiate with the collaboration of town councils and education authorities the placement of poems on billboards and posters in public places such as shopping malls and town centres. An appealing approach called variously Poems on Buses, Poetry in Motion, Poetry in Transit, or Poems on the Underground, presents short poems riders can read between stops. Check out the London Underground Web site to sample the poems the tube riders are exposed to (http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/projectsandschemes/2437.aspx). Using poetry in these ways not only keeps poetry in the public eye, but it also promotes the notion of poems as familiar objects like public advertisements, all easily accessible and with a take-it-or-leave-it approach to them. The process of making poems familiar, comfortable objects (who's afraid of the big bad poem?) has obvious extensions to the classroom with the posting daily of a short poem, so that students begin to look forward to seeing and hearing a fresh poem each day, no questions asked, no explanations sought.

Cultivating ownership of and responsibility for one's reading

The familiarization aspect of this process is only a first step in the larger agenda of developing reflective, committed readers of poetry. What I am set on cultivating here is the role of students as primarily responsible for the meanings they make and not dependent on the teacher for the correct reading and the final word on the poem. In the words of Louise Rosenblatt's well-known admonition, "no one can read a poem for you" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 86). Such dependence persists from kindergarten to university and is hard to break. The notion of the teacher as the person to whom students are accountable for the right reading is at the core of students' fear of poetry and their reluctance to read poems of their own accord. I have so often heard students and even adults say that a poem rarely turns out to "mean" what they

think it means, and what it usually turns out to mean is the reading that the teacher provides. Such realizations, borne out repeatedly, build up a distrust of their own responses to a poem, and as a defensive measure a disinclination to entertain any reading or interpretation until they have some sign from the teacher's questioning of the direction in which they must proceed. A game of "Am I getting warm? or "Am I still cold?" is in constant play in the interchange between teacher and students. What is even more damaging to the students' confidence as readers of poetry is the seemingly perfect obviousness of the teacher's interpretation.

There is very little satisfaction to be derived from reading poetry if in most encounters the poem remains seemingly impenetrable. However, I have often been challenged with the question, "How then do children and adults manage to read stories and long fiction independently?" But then, stories have been and are in our lives from very early childhood. From the first "once upon a time," children are well on their way to recognizing and being alert to story genres. Unlike with poems, they are seldom asked what a story means. The question simply doesn't arise. As Barbara Hardy put it, "narrative is a fundamental act of mind" (Hardy, 1977). In whatever way stories may operate in our own lives, the study and reading of poetry remains very much a school subject.

As someone involved in teacher education, I used to be reminded of this apathy towards poetry, or more correctly, the fear of poetry, every time my students faced the prospect of student-teaching. When they met their classes and announced they were going to teach poetry, there was inevitably a collective sigh amounting to "Oh, not poetry!" Even though most of the student-teachers were fresh from their majors in literature, they had seemingly not shed their own uncertainty about how and what a poem means. When I read a poem aloud and invited them to speak about their responses, I was met initially with a general reluctance to make more than a few obvious observations. When I queried them about their uncertainty, there was an eruption of how often they had held back their own observations because they had often turned out to be far removed from the authoritative reading the lecturer offered. Inevitably they learned to read the lecturer's clues toward the preferred reading.

The role of the teacher: Steps toward developing self-reliant readers of poetry

Convinced that school practices in the teaching of literature cultivated a dependence on the teacher as the holder of "the one right reading," I decided to

explore what would occur if teachers abdicated their roles as intermediaries between poem and students, trusting them to make sense of the poem on their own, without the least expectation that the teacher would intervene to set them right when they strayed. For those assumptions to operate, the teacher would function as one who truly did not have answers, someone genuinely curious about the students' responses to the poem and expecting to be informed by those responses. In the context of schooling this is an alien role for teachers to adopt, but it is not difficult once it is taken on without pretence or dissimulation. Thus began the first of my many forays into the classroom in a search for answers.

The solutions I offer derive from almost two decades of such forays at different levels of schooling, deliberate testing and retesting of procedures in classrooms, collection and analysis of tape-recorded group sessions and individual interviews, discussions of findings with colleagues and presentations at conferences and workshops with teachers and a great deal of reflection, discussion, and writing. However, the key principles that undergird the procedures I now advocate took their shape during the first study I conducted in a Grade 11 classroom.

It was during that Grade 11 study I realized I had a natural advantage as a researcher from McGill; for students understood immediately that I was truly dependent on them for the information they could provide as to how they read and understood some challenging poems. That I tape-recorded their discussions confirmed my intentions. All I did was establish a procedure where after three readings aloud of the poem (by me and two volunteers), the students proceeded in previously assigned groups of five or six, to read the poem, share their initial responses, and then examine the poem in convenient chunks. Towards the end of the discussion period (they were allowed twenty-five minutes), they were to help their reporter to put together what they would report to the other groups.[1] The reporter took no written notes and had to report extemporaneously with the injunction to build on and take account of the previous reporters' comments. Time permitting, members of the group were invited to provide additional observations.

Several aspects of this process worked fortuitously for me (I have provided just enough detail for readers to grasp the general pattern of the process; there are several details, some of them cautionary, that need to be considered. Since I have written about this procedure several times, there are a number of sources readers can consult[2]). I provided when requested the dictionary meanings of words that were unfamiliar to the class, leaving them to work out the sense within the context. Several days into the ten-day period I had planned for the project, the students stopped

asking me about unfamiliar vocabulary, finding that the literal meanings often misled them, whereas they were more likely to get a better sense of the meaning from the larger context of the poem. I had asked them to be attentive to the feelings the poem evoked as they heard it, reminding them that poems often work at the level of sensation. Often such awareness provided an affective layer of understanding that curbed flights into abstraction, but more importantly, provided a key entry into the poem.

Limiting the discussion to 20-25 minutes was a practical necessity in a 45-minute period, but it provided the thrust needed to focus on composing a report, which was to be a summation of where they had arrived, their own differences, and the questions they needed to have answered by the other groups. Slowly the collaboration within the groups had extended to interdependence among the groups; together they were composing their response to the poem.

Several times as I circulated among the groups and found that a group had stalled, I encouraged them to read the poem aloud (poems need to be heard), be attentive to their feelings, and surely enough, they discovered in that rereading the points they had to return to or explore. In a few days I realized that they had adopted multiple readings as a strategy for breaking through an impasse. Often I counted between four and six readings during that short period of discussion. Such a demand coming from me would have been regarded as an unwarranted imposition.

Not taking or working from notes turned out to be a fortuitous decision; since the reporter had to speak extemporaneously, he or she often rehearsed the report in the last few minutes before the session was called. The rehearsal was highly collaborative, the group reviewing high points and promising to prompt the reporter if he or she had difficulty remembering. Moreover, not working from notes ensured the reporter was alert to what was being said by other reporters, and this often led to realizations about the poem that had not emerged in the actual discussion. Thus the members of the group were pleasantly surprised at these newer realizations. Sometimes, when a reporter had taken notes surreptitiously, the ruse became obvious. Relying on the notes, the reporter was paying little heed to what had gone before, and thus repeated much of what had already been reported.

In the first few days of this procedure, I was always asked after the reporting stage whether I would finally tell them what "the real meaning" of the poem was. This was a critical moment; I needed to tread lightly and said that I had heard so much during the discussions and from their groups' reports that I needed to reconsider my own response; so we needed to do one final reading. Several days later, knowing this

explanation had been accepted, I asked them after the reporting had concluded if they would like to know what I thought, and I received a resounding "no." They had moved from assuming that I had the "right" interpretation to the absolutely exciting (for me) realization that my interpretation (however appealing) was more likely to cut short or impede their own exploring.

Through all this without explicit instruction, they had become sharp, attentive, and confident readers of poetry. Moreover, their teacher reported that they were far more fluent and reflective as writers. What else could we have expected? Intense discussions of poetic text about issues of some significance in words that evoke feeling and concrete images cannot but flow into their writing. A few years later, a teacher replicating the procedure with her class of 14-year-olds told me that the students' journal entries on the poems they discussed each day had got longer and more elaborate and organized than she had expected, and that the students had become acrimonious about the additional writing demands they had unwarily taken on. The truth is that in revisiting a poem each evening they were unable to constrain their responses and the writing that followed. There was a felt need to explore, clarify, and elaborate to themselves their own understandings. With the exception of the group I have just referred to, all the classes I worked with were mixed-ability groups. I was anxious that teachers recognize that poetry was accessible to readers of all ages and abilities, and by poetry I do not mean light verse intended primarily to amuse.

The teacher <u>not</u> a mediator between reader and text; the teacher as "needing to know"

I need to stress here that in all my relationships with the students, I am always in the position of needing to know from them, but I am not the focus of their attention. They are not accountable to me but to one another within the group and to the other groups. The task the group takes on is always held in common, so that the reporting-back phase trades on their curiosity about the responses of others and their similarities and differences. Because they are more powerful in groups and because they are collectively creating a full and rich account, the poem or the story or novel is explored in some depth and in its relationship to their lives in ways I could never expect to replicate through teacher questioning and instruction. In the close comfort of a small group it is easier to say, something personal and private like, "This is just like the time when my parents embarrassed my brother." Moreover, it is very clear that what they know and have grasped is the common possession of every student to deal with in whatever way she or he finds relevant.

What is also important to recall here is that at no time has it ever been necessary for me to pitch in and tell them what it is I as an adult reader recognize that they as younger readers may not have realized. Such information is not relevant to their development as readers. Those who have qualms about not meeting "their responsibilities" as teachers, should take comfort in the fact that time and time again these students have gone far and beyond anything I could tell them. I feel extremely privileged to hear their twelve- or sixteen-year-old readings, a perspective I shall never fully recover without a time machine. We need to keep in mind constantly that we have lived longer, read much more, experienced new life, love, and longing, and death, and all that living will afford us a perspective on the poem at some remove from what they will have realized. No wonder then that they remain puzzled by how we arrive at where we have arrived when we offer them our reading and they must accept it as, of course, the authorized reading.

I can assure teachers that taking the stance of "needing to know" does not preclude providing any information the students seek or naming a particular device or strategy they have identified and do not have a label for. At such a time I have no quarrel with telling them that a particular comparison is what we call a metaphor or a simile, and now that they have felt the force of the particular image, they will be recalling the label in terms of their own experience rather than as an abstract definition, which is often the case. But again, the important work is to be particularly concerned to support their growing (collective) autonomy as readers.

I must admit that several years ago in Baltimore at a conference of English teachers, I was taken to task by a teacher for denying the teacher her voice. She insisted that she had a voice and the right to express her opinions and at the same time the students had a right to know what she thought. I pointed out that a teacher spoke with such authority that her voice would doubtless silence the budding ideas and formulations that are often so fleeting and fragile that they are very difficult to hold on to. I would have gone on to say that the reward for withdrawing from the centre is a group of students who feel so urgently the wanting to say something, that they resent the bell that announces the end of the period. "Oh damn," said one, as the bell rang for the end of the day, and their puzzled friends stood outside the classroom wondering why the door had not flown open as it usually did at the end of the school day. The students' engagement was stunning to observe, matters had to be resolved before they broke up, or the moment would be lost. Other groups remained similarly engaged, and my small group of McGill students, distributed among the groups, were going to miss their next class at the university because they were too embarrassed to leave before their hosts.

As I write, I have in front of me a note from a teacher in Fairbanks, AK: "My class has just ended; and they are leaving in clusters still talking about the poem. I have never seen anything like this before. Thank you."

Small-group work versus teacher-led discussion

After the first study I conducted with Grade 11 students, I looked for ways I might extend the study by working with younger students. Susan (all names are pseudonyms), a teacher in a Laval comprehensive school, offered me three of her Grade nine English classes for this study. I decided to work with one mixed-ability class and she with another; I requested that she teach the third group, a higher ability group, the same set of poems *in the way she would normally have taught them*. In other words, I was setting up the two low-to-middle range students involved in group work for comparison with the higher ability class studying the same poems with teacher direction. We agreed on the poems we would use over the ten sessions we had allowed for and set up the normal pre- and post-test procedures in order to track how students may have benefited from the procedure. I must make clear that the poems I use are always challenging, likely to engage the students, and at first glance not easy to grasp. My criterion is that *the poem should justify group effort and collaboration*, so that considerable discussion is generated and students return often to the text and are not unrewarded.[3]

Three or four days after the work began, Susan begged off teaching the higher ability group and asked that they be involved in the same small-group process as the other two classes. Just over two days, Susan had begun to notice that her small-group class was realizing far more from the poems on their own than were the students she was teaching directly. Despite all her attempts to engage those higher ability students, she was far too aware of the observations and insights the small-group class was reporting without any direct intervention from her. Those two classes (my own class included) were intensely occupied, whereas her "top class," as she labelled them, were bored and almost rebellious; for they had heard from their friends in the other two classes, that they were "having fun." Even in the interests of gathering important data, Susan was not prepared to impose her teaching on those students; the experiment had already produced results, there was no reason to extend it. I had no intention of trying to change her mind, but I asked anyway: "Wouldn't you have been teaching in the way you now reject if this project had not come along?" "Yes," she agreed, "but it would have been because I didn't know any better." (Susan, personal communication, May 1983)

In any case, the small-group work continued, and I saw my own mixed-ability group through to the end of the program we had planned. It was soon clear to the students that no poem was ever "done" in the time that was available. They left the class with more questions than they had begun with, but they knew they would revisit the poem that evening and be able to compose an account for their journals, sensing that in the time between new insights may have arisen, and the poem was no longer the poem they had just finished discussing. Each day with each new poem was an occasion for all of us to wonder where we were going and where we would end up. I have several anecdotes but I shall limit myself to just one.

I had asked the teacher to group the students so that they would get along with one another and no group would be overly dominant or reticent. When I entered the class for the first time, I noticed a group made up exclusively of boys, unlike the other groups which were a mix of boys and girls. The teacher explained that these were the students who were likely to be disruptive; and so they were somewhat segregated from the other groups under the watchful eye of the teacher. Contrary to our expectations the boys got caught up in the process, in the autonomy they were accorded, in the fact that they were always rushed for time, and ultimately in the interdependence among the groups that required that they attend to the other groups and in turn expect full attention from the others. Thus their first halting reports grew longer and more confident. In fact they valued the time they were able to speak out, and when their most reticent member spoke they prompted with supporting comments, all instantly recognized by the speaker, because he had taken ownership of all that had been said. This prompting was an exciting feature in all the reporting back, because I had planned that each member of the group would take a turn reporting for the group. Inevitably because the least confident member's turn came up on the fifth or sixth day, depending on the size of the group, the unsure speaker had had the time and opportunity to learn from what the others had modelled in the previous sessions. Thus there was a remarkable awareness of their joint stake in the outcome; the reporter was speaking for all of them, and it mattered that their contribution was a component of the group understanding that was being co-constructed.

My anecdote comes from this particular group of students. About the eighth or ninth day of the ten-day study, the class had been discussing Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1922, p. 60). In the final stage of the procedure, the reports from groups, several accounts had been advanced with general agreement about the poet's being drawn away from contemplating this quiet scene by recalling he had promises to keep. The poem was read aloud once more, and I

asked if anyone in the class could recall an experience similar to the one Frost wrote about. Luigi in the segregated group got my attention, stood up and said:

> Yes, one morning when I was coming to school, I noticed a bird flying to its nest. The nest was on a pole on a small ledge where the branch of the light starts. I stopped because I noticed it was feeding its babies. I watched and I could not leave, even though I knew I was going to be late for school. Just like this guy Frost, I kept thinking, I've got to go, I've got to go. But I still waited. (Luigi, personal communication, May 1983)

In that moment we were all linked with Luigi to the heart of that poem.

Poems as expendable

Often the question comes up, a most teacherly concern, about what happens if the students have not come to certain conclusions about the poem, or (what is worse) if they have the wrong interpretation? Teachers wonder if they should let the poem go without putting them right. This is indeed the sticking point. My response is always that there are thousands of poems in the world, and poets will not turn over in their graves because a misinterpretation has not been checked; poems are expendable, there are other poems. But that may seem flippant; so I always add that intervening as a teacher to put someone right about a poem is a high price to pay for inhibiting the growing confidence that is building. To move from the sidelines from our "not knowing and needing to know" status, to the position of someone who all along had the answers will betray that all the group work, and reporting in groups was a charade. But to a large extent this question is hypothetical. We need to trust the wisdom of the group; among the thirty or so students, there may be a few who offer alternative readings and often, when students reread the poem that evening in order to write a response for their journals, they recognize where they may have misread a line and some other reading they dismissed may have been spot on. Further to assuage any further concern, I remind teachers that we are not going to be around leaning over their shoulders in their private lives as readers to steer them to the interpretations we prefer.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the advantage of meeting students as an outsider, a researcher, who needed to know from them, and therefore students went along with the procedure I proposed (of course, there were strongly supporting teachers who had prepared the ground for my visits). Often teachers who grade and prepare students for public examinations fall in and out of this confidence-building

and competence-developing role. From what I have observed of a large number of teachers who work with small groups, students who have discovered their capabilities as readers of literature or as writers for that matter, will not easily revert to their passive, "tell-me-what-I-need-to-do-and-I'll-do-it roles." I do not wish to sound disparaging of some of the teaching in schools, and under some difficult conditions where teachers need to be directive and assertive; however, I know of some "difficult" and "turned-off" classes that have come alive because of the assumption by students of their full responsibilities as learners.

I need to remind myself constantly that for a significant number of teachers the shift I am proposing is quite radical and is hard to swallow. I had gone into classrooms to find out what happened when students in small groups were asked to discuss a poem on their own. I was not seeking a method for teaching poetry. I expected that once I knew what students could do on their own, I could then recommend what teachers ought to do to enable a fuller reading. What I learned very soon was that teachers needed to do very little. In my first foray into schools with this method, I had no expectations of the positive gains that would occur, and when I presented the videotaped evidence to small groups of teachers, I was excited by their response; however, I recognize that as I am asking for a radical shift in outlook and role, there will always be some degree of resistance and skepticism, no matter the promised gains.

Working with younger students

But that was several years ago. My most recent attempt at extending the approach involved a class of sixth graders in a split English/French program. Enjoying the freedom of early retirement, I planned a six-week program where I worked five days a week, involving the students in small-group work following the procedures I have described. I had the support of a superb teacher and three of my graduate students who helped with recording their observations, but were otherwise not directly involved with the students. My goal this time was to work with writing and with literature (short fiction, novels, and poetry). The whole project provides material for a book-length report, but for this article I wish to describe two events from near the conclusion of my work in the school.

Now that they were used to working in groups, *as a closing exercise I asked the students to bring in two poems each, which they would present to their groups and from among those poems the group would settle on the two poems* they would present to the whole class to discuss in their own groups, employing the procedure they

knew fully well. Consider that each group had to read and review in their groups between ten and twelve poems before they could settle on the two that would be worth presenting and discussing in class. In other words, they were functioning as reviewers and critics, roles students are hardly ever called on to exercise. And their choices would have consequences. Not for a moment did any of them feel it was necessary to call on their teacher or me for advice. So much had the groups come to respect the group process that not one of them clamoured to have their poem become the group choice. Interestingly, some parents telephoned the teacher to say how disappointed their children were to discover that there were not any books of poetry in their homes. In any case I had alerted the school librarian who had set out several anthologies of poems which the students could browse.

Most of the poems chosen were fairly challenging[4]—the students had taken to heart my suggestion that the poem should be interesting and at the same time challenge the resources of the group. Mike, one of the more engaged students in the class, had chosen a poem by Shel Silverstein (from his collection, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, 1974)[5] To Mike's dismay the poem generated little discussion in the several groups. The reporters without exception said there was nothing to report, the poem evoked little discussion, and they wondered why Mike had chosen the poem and his group had offered it as one of their choices. There were no losers here. Mike and his group recognized from the other groups' choices where they had fallen short, and what they ought to have offered. I make this point in order to point out that what is learned goes far beyond what can be explicitly taught in a teacher-at-the-centre classroom.

The class teacher had informed me that the parents had noticed over a short time a change in their children's school-related behaviour: increased reading, writing, and an eagerness not to miss school and consequently the opportunity to make a contribution to the group's efforts as well as satisfy a genuine curiosity about where the class as a whole was moving in the group project. The parents had been advised formally about the project, but wanted to know more. So it was meet-the-parents night for me. I was even more surprised when on the eve of this occasion, the students asked to be able to attend with their parents. Of course, they were welcome to do so, said their teacher, but I had known from experience that children of that age were particularly averse to being seen anywhere with their parents, and especially not in school.

Their teacher felt it would be interesting if the parents experienced the small-group activity themselves, and we agreed that their children would participate

but mixed in with the adults, but certainly not with their own parents. I chose a poem which would challenge and also speak to both groups. The evening was successful beyond my expectations. With one exception, the students were persuaded by the parents to be the reporters, especially when the parents discovered they were not permitted to take notes. It was almost immediately clear that the parents were no match for their children in terms of the confidence they displayed. It was obvious that the students had taken charge: there was a great deal to be said (as usual) and the parents appeared uncertain and reticent about their own responses, often deferring to or even soliciting the students' responses. In reporting back to the larger group, the students were fairly articulate and attentive to what had been already reported. There was one exception. The parent who had volunteered to report for her group spoke at some length and it was clear she was speaking for herself rather than for the group. This was an object lesson for the parents who saw how their children were non-competitive and accommodating of the observations of the groups. What impressed the parents was the assurance with which the reporters spoke extemporaneously. Many of the parents informed me later that it was a complete surprise for them to see their children in these unfamiliar roles. Some of them speaking of changes in home behaviour told me how much of a surprise it was for them to see their children reading the newspapers that hitherto had been opened only to the comics page.

It should be clear now that the outcomes I report are not only about poetry. There are applications and modifications that extend to all literary genres and to writing activities as well. I must mention specially the interdependence that develops within and among the groups. All students realize they have a stake with what happens within the group and what is reported. Such membership is exemplary in several respects, and I shall cite only the instance of the students who offered to visit and read to a group member who had reading difficulties, so he could keep up with the assigned reading of the novel each day and thus participate more fully in the group's discussions.

If poems are to be personally appropriated, if students are to realize their full potential as readers of poetry, then they need to have every opportunity to read and talk about challenging poems with the expectation of realizing a full and satisfying reading. Working in groups remains at the core of the practices I advocate. The philosopher, Michael Polanyi has said that "we can know more than we can tell" (1966, p. 4), his point being that much of what we know remains tacit and inexplicit. I believe group work is the most convenient and effective way of affording students the opportunity to speak often and at length from their own realizations, so that they can discover more often what it is they know and hitherto have not had the means and

the impetus to articulate. Poetry has the advantage of being so immediately available, appealing to the imagination, scornful of cliché, echoing so poignantly and fleetingly the feelings that gnaw at our insides when we recognize them. "Margaret, are you grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?" (Hopkins, 1880, p. 703) asks the speaker in Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem; and a 17-year-old Francophone girl about to cross over to college, sheds a tear as she reflects on the poem in her journal. She wrote later that until she had participated in the poetry group discussion project she had not realized that she was capable of reading and responding to poetry in English, and now had the confidence to apply to a college whose medium of instruction was English. And in Winnipeg, a 14-year-old girl in a bookstore given the choice of a birthday gift by her mother goes directly to the literature section in search of a particular book of poems.

Notes

1. There was never any suggestion that they should arrive at the "meaning" of the poem. My instructions were to report on their experience of the poem, or to report on what they thought was happening or going on in the poem, or on where they had arrived in their discussion.

2. An abbreviated account and demonstration will be found in "Literary Reading and Classroom Constraints: Aligning Practice with Theory." In J. Langer, Ed., *Literature Instruction: A Focus on Student Response*, Urbana, IL: National Council Teachers of English, 1992. Fuller accounts are available in *Reading and Responding to Poetry: Patterns in the Process* (Revised edition). Portsmouth, MA: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1996, and in *Developing Response to Poetry* (with Mike Hayhoe), Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1988.

3. For the kind of poems I have in mind, I offer a small sample of some of the poems I have used with a variety of age groups: William Stafford, *Travelling through the Dark* and *Fifteen*, Robert Frost, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* and *Fire and Ice*, Seamus Heaney, *Blackberry-Picking, Follower*, and *The Early Purges*, Al Purdy, *Detail,* Margaret Atwood, *This is a Photograph of Me*, Theodore Roethke, *My Papa's Waltz*, Langston Hughes, *Mother to Son*, and *Hold Fast to Dreams*. The latter is short enough to memorize with a few readings and ideal for students who have difficulty reading. Poems hold excellent promise for such students: the several

oral readings in the class and within the group before discussion begins offer the opportunity to be fully involved and engaged. Children can also be invited to write their own completions to the line, "Life is ..." Longer poems like Earl Birney's *David* or D. H. Lawrence's *Snake* are certainly worth offering as fluency and confidence grow. It is unlikely that either of these poems can be fully explored in the time available; however, the sharing among the groups in the reporting-back phase does allow for the emergence of unexplored facets, and then there is always the reading and reflection that occurs later when the students individually reread the poem and draft their journal response.

4. The students' efforts were somewhat frustrated by the limitations of the school library poetry collection, in that the poems were age appropriate for independent reading and as could be expected, not sufficiently challenging. The poems that the students chose as challenging were either early Victorian or World War I poems. If I were to repeat this exercise, I would ensure that the library was stocked with some of the more attractive poetry collections that are widely available and include some poems that are accessible across a broad age range.

5. This is not to disparage some of Silverstein's work as not worth reading; the point is that there are many poems that are worth reading and one can recall with pleasure, but do not call for group effort.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to so many teachers and English consultants who afforded me access to classrooms, which allowed me to explore the real abilities of students as readers of poetry and also develop approaches to enable their growth as readers. So many people helped me that it is with some trepidation I mention only a few of these benefactors: Alan Patenaude and Suzanne Duquette in Laval, Linda Fernandes, Gerry Foley, Anthony Paré, and Anne Peacock in Montreal, Heather McBride in Baie D'Urfé, Quebec, Coralie Bryant and Rudi Engbrecht in Winnipeg, Annie Calkins and Susan Stitham in Alaska, Mary Barr in San Diego, and Michael Hayhoe and Tony Adams in England.

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Inquiry Literacy: A Proposal for a Neologism

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ABSTRACT
Literacy definitions, the growth of inquiry literacy in science education, and the developmental nature of inquiry literacy within learners' experiences in diverse content domains are outlined. Classroom-based vignettes illustrate elements of inquiry literacy in science, social studies, and mathematics. A preliminary list of qualities of student inquiry literacy is presented. These qualities could potentially be monitored in individuals and classrooms as the range of literacy knowledge, skills, and dispositions increases in breadth, depth, and fluency.

What Is Inquiry Literacy?

Literacy. Once upon a time, literacy simply meant "the ability to read and write," the only definition still offered by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1990, p. 692). Yet the idea of literacy carries considerable social weight (Scribner, 1984). Meanwhile, common language has expanded the term to, for example, computer, information, media, religious, robotics, scientific, and technological literacy. Educational Testing Service (2009) has also cited prose, document, quantitative, and health-skills literacy. We even have a subset of general literacy called functional or basic literacy. And there are others.

We are proposing that "inquiry literacy" should be added to this list because the ability to engage in inquiry, and also to communicate within and about inquiry, is critical to the 21st century, especially in, by, and for education. There are more general and more satisfying definitions of literacy. Here is one:

> Literacy is a complex set of abilities needed to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture--alphabets, numbers, visual icons--for personal and community development. The nature of these abilities, and the demand for them, vary from one context to another.
>
> In a technological society, literacy extends beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to include multiple literacies such as visual, media and information literacy. These new literacies focus on an individual's capacity to use and make critical judgements about the information they encounter on a daily basis.
>
> However a culture defines it, literacy touches every aspect of individual and community life. It is an essential foundation for learning through life, and must be valued as a human right. (Centre for Literacy of Quebec, n.d., Web site)

Four "commonplaces" of literacy frame any construct of literacy. It always involves a *user* who acts within a *society* to learn a *text* through a *process* (Sinclair Bell, 1993). Text, the object of the user's (student's) literate behavior, can take the form of a printed word or image. Text may also be defined more abstractly as the conceptual content that is learned. Our paper focuses on the student as the user within a society or community of educational institutions that have guiding curricula, norms, and resources. Within this society, there should be a curriculum imperative that (a) students learn the text or conceptual understanding of inquiry, (b) they learn how to engage in the inquiry process independently, and (c) they understand why it is important to develop as an inquirer in preparation for being a critical consumer of information in one's professional and personal life. The suggested process of becoming inquiry literate requires that teachers themselves first become inquiry literate and then provide opportunities for students to engage in inquiry. Students thereby learn how to ask questions, conduct investigations, gain understanding based on evidence, report their findings, and so on.

From this perspective, inquiry literacy would be the individual's capacity to critically understand and use the language, symbols, and skills of inquiry, and to reflect on their meaning and usage during and after the activity. Aulls and Shore (2008) have presented a dozen theoretical perspectives from social constructivism to critical theory, from higher education to gifted education, that support inquiry as a curricular imperative in education, and all of us and our colleagues strive to make this a daily reality. At the same time we emphasize that inquiry requires considerable

personal investment to implement in teaching and learning. Although some inquiry elements can be initiated quickly (e.g., expanding student choices based on interests), it can be very challenging to go further without proper preparation, experience, and understanding of inquiry pedagogy. Depending on the level of granularity with which one examines the concept of inquiry as a set of educational and life skills, knowledge, and values, inquiry can be enacted in many ways. We shall provide some examples below.

Inquiry. The current view of inquiry is just as complex as it was during the 1990s, being perceived differently by different researchers and practitioners. For example, it is referred to as project-based science instruction (Blumenfeld, Krajcik, Marx, & Soloway, 1994; Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx, & Soloway, 1994; Marx et al., 1994), habits of mind (DuVall, 2001), problem solving (Helgeson, 1994), inductive teaching (Lott, 1983), discovery learning (Bruner, 1961; Wise & Okey, 1983), or the learning cycle (Lawson, 1988), to enumerate only a few.

Inquiry is learning by questioning and investigation; the questions asked and means for investigation are vast, nonlinear, and idiosyncratic. Inquiry encompasses diverse ways to study phenomena in all subject areas through dialog, asking questions, and proposing explanations based on empirical evidence (National Research Council, 1996). A requirement of inquiry is that the goal of learning activities is learning "to do" and learning "about" at the same time. Inquiry requires imaginative, evidence-based solutions achieved through critical thinking, and a deep understanding of concepts. At the most general level, Aulls and Shore (2008) identified two broad qualities of inquiry that appear to characterize all examples we have encountered in education: (a) learners' interests play a role in guiding curricular decisions--this does not preclude in any way teachers influencing these interests, and (b) shifts, or more properly, exchanges, in roles between teachers and learners--for example, responsibility for decisions about curricular choices--both content and pedagogy, evaluation roles--both formative and summative, and communication in the classroom--who speaks, to whom and when, who uses display space and for what, and the degree of communication that routinely takes place in classrooms.

It is also possible to extensively elaborate this list, including the specification of such inquiry elements as being able to exercise well-informed choices, using the language of inquiry in the discipline at hand, valuing the sharing of results of inquiry, asking good questions, designing procedures for pursuing answers to questions, evaluating the quality of evidence forthcoming in support or refutation of the answers, finding and solving problems, and working individually or collaboratively toward learning goals.

Working in the other direction, to the more general, inquiry is most often framed in a social-constructivist theoretical context (Vygotsky, 1978). Inquiry learning is about learners creating understandings in a social context. Aulls and Shore (2008) proposed a four-level model of inquiry ranging across (a) the *context* in which inquiry occurs and inquiry as a contextual variable for learning, (b) *process* or the steps that inquiry involves and the implied growth of inquiry knowledge, skills, and dispositions, (c) the *content* in two senses, what is learned through inquiry (e.g., teaching geography) and inquiry as content (e.g., how to do inquiry), and (d) *strategy*, the specific components of engaging in inquiry identified as knowledge (e.g., knowing what constitutes evidence), skill (being able to design and conduct a scientific experiment or make sense of primary sources in social sciences), and dispositions (a curious mind, valuing the sharing of results or collaboration). Inquiry can and should be associated with any subject-matter domain, either as a means to an end or as an outcome. It is, in large measure, part of what Keating (1990) called domain-general knowledge in contrast to domain-specific knowledge, although inquiry does have domain-specific qualities depending on the context.

Roots of inquiry instruction in science classrooms. Inquiry as we know it in education received its most visible impetus in science education (Aulls & Shore, 2008; National Research Council, 1996, 2000; Shore, Aulls, & Delcourt, 2008), but it is not exclusive to science, as we shall illustrate later. The idea of levels of development of inquiry or inquiry literacy (although the latter term has not been used) has been explored several times. Some of the language of science has remained attached to inquiry, but other prominent subject associations (e.g., National Council for the Social Studies, 1994; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989) have adopted inquiry as the core pedagogy and a desired outcome. It is also at the heart of just about every contemporary curricular reform in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Becoming an inquirer does not happen overnight or easily, and inquiry can look different at different stages. For example, early in the process one might observe the exercise of choices that are presented by a teacher. Students wait and are hesitant to make choices because they suspect the teacher has preferences. At a later stage, students arrive in the classroom or other teaching setting and get right to work in groups of various sizes on topics that they may have initiated in mutual agreement with the teacher; direct teaching might be occasional at most. In our work with teachers in schools, we regularly encounter teachers who describe themselves as feeling the need to remain in control out of a positive sense of professional accountability. Initial steps toward an inquiry orientation to teaching and learning need to be very

small for teachers as well as students, but should not stop with these small steps in order to promote the development of independent, self-directed inquirers. When we look at a student, class, or school and ask if this is an inquiry student, class, or school, we are asking about the level of inquiry literacy. Therefore, building capacity for inquiry as a fundamental pedagogical teaching and learning strategy takes time and effort as teachers and students develop the necessary literacies, skills, knowledge, and dispositions.

Schwab (1962) was the pioneer within the science community to acknowledge different levels of inquiry instruction that target three different levels of openness and permissiveness in laboratory inquiry, increasing gradually their degree of difficulty as they progress from the first to the last level. At the simplest level, the students are provided with the problems and ways by which they can discover relations or can conduct their inquiry. At the second level, students are again given the problems while the methods of investigations and the answers are left open. At the third level, however, the problem, methods, and answers are left open and students are confronted with raw phenomena.

Furtak (2006) and Bybee (2006) envisioned inquiry as a continuum of different science-teaching methods. At one end is traditional or direct instruction in which students are passive recipients of information. At the opposite end are open-ended student-centered activities in which students design and conduct investigations of phenomena of interest (Aulls & Shore, 2008). The latter is the canonical vision of scientific inquiry. In reality, depending on the perceived curricular needs of a program, science instruction usually takes place somewhere between these extremes and is itself more aligned with an integrated view of instruction put forward by the National Research Council (2006), in a form of guided scientific inquiry in which students are guided towards particular answers usually known by the teachers. This approach to instruction combines the scientific and constructivist rationale with the scientifically accepted facts and principles emphasized more recently by science-education reforms (Magnusson & Palincsar, 1995). These describe instructional design as combining various types of teaching (e.g., laboratory, lecturing, discussions) in which neither direct instruction nor unguided inquiry are exclusive approaches, and it is supposed to enhance students' knowledge of the discipline, interest in science, and their scientific reasoning skills (Bybee, 2006).

More recently, Windschitl (2002, 2003, 2004) discussed the concept of inquiry continua using the framework of inquiry levels proposed initially by Schwab (1962) and restated later by other researchers (Germann, Haskins, & Auls, 1996;

Herron, 1971; Martin-Hansen, 2002; Tafoya, Sunal, & Knecht, 1980; Zion et al., 2004). Inquiry as practiced in science classrooms is indexed on a continuum by the degree of independence students have in both posing the question, generating the problem and conducting the investigation, or providing the methods and answer to their questions or problems. There are four levels included within this continuum that gradually increase their degree of openness to students' independence in inquiry. The continuum starts with *confirmation of experiences* or *cookbook labs* as the lowest level of inquiry, in which students simply verify known scientific principles by following a given procedure. Commonly, science laboratories are used less as activities for practical inquiry-skill acquisition (Fensham, 1981; Finn, Maxwell, & Calver, 2002) and more as activities in which students perform these demonstrations in their roles of technician rather than inquirers (Bell, Blair, Crawford, & Lederman, 2003). The next level is *structured inquiry* in which the students are provided with both the problem and the procedure of investigation to complete the inquiry. The third level is *guided inquiry* through which students are given the problem to investigate but the methods for resolving the problem are left open to the students. Fourth is *open* or *independent inquiry* in which students generate their own questions and design their own investigations. There are clear similarities between Schwab's (1962) levels and Windschitl's (2002) continuum of inquiry. These levels, models, or types of inquiry can be summarized as follows. In the first model, the teacher is the authority for both the content and direction of inquiry. In the second model, the teacher still controls the content, yet provides students some opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of inquiry. In the third model, the teacher maintains control over the content, but the teacher and students collaborate about the process. The fourth model emphasizes the collaborative processes between the teacher and the students for both content and process of inquiry.

Examples of Inquiry and Inquiry Literacy in Different Domains

Although inquiry has been more conventionally identified in science, it exists across domains and will look different depending on the classroom. Often there are observable indicators that signal when the process of inquiry is occurring in the classroom. For example, Ash and Kluger-Bell (2000) provided a comprehensive reference guide to identify when students are engaged in inquiry, when teachers are engaged in inquiry and also, what an inquiry classroom environment might look like. For example, a common indicator signaling that a teacher is engaging his or her

students in inquiry involves the use of open-ended questions in order to encourage further observation or investigation. Although these indicators took root in science, many can be modified for broader application to other domains, particularly observable indicators of inquiry classroom environments (e.g., students are comfortable when interacting with the teacher and other students).

Here are some vignettes, derived from real classroom experiences, that highlight instances of inquiry literacy.

Science education. Emma (all names are pseudonyms) was a self-motivated student who entered an Applied Science Research Class with a great deal of enthusiasm. She was a unique high school student because, before this inquiry-oriented science research class was offered, she found her own inquiry opportunities through special projects in her civics class and through an arts magnet school that she attended for a few years. Because she knew how time-intensive a self-directed project is, she quit the arts school for the year so that she could focus on the project she would do in her science-research class. This was the first indicator that she was inquiry-literate--she had an understanding of how much time and commitment was required to be responsible for an independent project, and she took the steps necessary to make room in her schedule.

Emma hit the ground running through the problem-finding phase because she identified a problem space in a community of practice that was meaningful to her (on-line gaming, a domain in which interactive competition places extreme demands on computer processors). She knew that it was important for her project to have an impact on an audience that extended beyond the walls of her high school. This was a second indicator of her level of inquiry literacy--she knew that authenticity was an important aspect of the inquiry process.

She had defined and framed a meaningful question for study--focused on developing a novel, efficient cooling system for the excess heat generated from computer processors--and began to pursue it with vigor. As she conducted her project, she encountered obstacles. She quickly recognized that she needed to modify her research plan to adjust for the limitations of the materials she was using to generate data. Emma was not committed to only one predetermined method for solving the problem. As a third indicator of inquiry literacy, she recognized that problem solving was not a step-by-step process, but rather required an idiosyncratic, nonlinear, adaptive, and flexible use and understanding of inquiry.

Emma's ability to identify the time required, the value of applicability to an authentic audience, and flexible use of problem-solving techniques, indicated that she did more than just engage in the inquiry process that was supported and facilitated by her teacher. She also demonstrated an understanding and awareness of how and why inquiry is a meaningful process. This metacognitive knowledge is part of inquiry literacy.

Social studies. Fred and Gina were 14-year-olds who met during a summer school program devoted to guiding the students through a research project. Both students were delighted to have independence and the resources needed (e.g., teachers who knew how to mentor independent work and time) to direct their own learning with peers who shared their level of curiosity. To enter the program, the students needed to have completed an assignment that began to narrow the focus of their interests for their independent projects. In the introductory exercise during which students introduced themselves, Fred and Gina realized that they both wanted to work on the relationship between personal decisions about urban-community involvement (e.g., volunteering, making green space, recycling, mode of transportation) and the decision-making processes of local businesses regarding the same issues, and how these issues influence marketing and employee and owner behavior.

They quickly realized that, although they had shared interests, they did not have the same ideas about the operationalization of the project. Did they want to focus on one or two issues or did they want to survey a large range of the factors that affect urban communities? How many people should they approach? Should they interview or give questionnaires? What should the questionnaire look like? Although challenging and sometimes stressful, this experience made them both aware of how problems are ill-defined and of the multiple approaches that could be used to solve the same problem.

Gina and Fred often contradicted each other during the process of doing research, when trying to resolve questions such as: How do we explain this? How do we plan the specifics of our study? Who exactly is our audience? How can we divide the work? What work do we need to do this week? With the support of their mentor, Gina and Fred managed to figure out what question to ask themselves next during this open-ended process, and came to agreement on the answers to their questions. Through the shared project, they had an opportunity to socially construct their inquiry literacy. Communication was imperative to ensure that they both contributed and were both satisfied with their summer project. Their ability to play devil's advocate with each other tested the soundness of their reasoning and taught them about

the importance of reflection when making decisions during the inquiry process. Their realization of the importance of questioning each other and their ability to defend their ideas based on evidence was a sign of inquiry literacy. For both Fred and Gina, the discussions about their project made the inquiry process explicit and resulted in a socially constructed sense of inquiry literacy--for example, knowing that there is more than one possible solution path and more than one possible solution, realizing the importance of questioning and of providing rationale and evidence for decisions made, and understanding the importance of communication and the role of a mentor in the inquiry process.

An example from mathematics. Thirty-some students were in their third year of high school. They were, as a whole, rather good at mathematics, but that judgment was based on arithmetic computation accuracy and the ability to do simple word problems on their own. Many regarded mathematics as their favorite subject. Their expectation, however, based on years of experience, was that the teacher would introduce each new topic, do an example or two on the board or screen, ask if there were any questions (there rarely were any beyond requests for repetition), ask students to do half the practice examples in class while the teacher walked around and offered hints, then assign the rest for homework, due at the next class. Their first surprise came in the first minutes of the first class. The textbooks were not yet available. Everyone expected free time while a monitor was sent to the stock room to collect the books. To their surprise, the teacher sketched three signal flags attached to a rope on a pole on the blackboard, told the class it was a mast on a sailing ship, and asked, "How many messages could the crew send with these three flags?" After a moment of silence the teacher said to discuss it. The teacher then interrupted the conversations, asked for answers, and asked how each responder came to the answer reported. Additional questions were posed to the students: Suppose the crew is allowed to flip one or more of the flags upside down; now how many messages? After another dialog the students were asked to suppose they did not have to use all three flags. How many messages with one, two, or three flags? Four flags? How can you change the question to make it more interesting? The homework was to assign a code for each flag, sketch some flags to send a message, and see the next day if the messages could be understood. The importance of knowing the assumptions made by the sender became very important. This exercise was followed by a more formal introduction to permutations and combinations, and the computation was easy because everyone understood the idea behind the arithmetic, using only a limited amount of formal knowledge. The class also learned that mathematics is the language of patterns, and that there is not always exactly one right answer to every question--the answer depends on the assumptions made. On they went to number

theory and a deeper understanding of why one must know the assumed assumptions before testing a hypothesis.

The teacher did not rush to distribute the textbooks. The class was actively discussing mathematics and the topics of the year before the formal vocabulary was introduced. Several elements of inquiry literacy grew in those first few days. The students grew in their ability to ask each other questions as a part of the learning process. With that came the disposition to do so; the teacher had let go some control, but still set the direction and the theme. The students quickly grasped that learning mathematics was part of a process of being able to communicate with others. Their inquiry literacy included a recognition that at a certain point they needed to look at the generalizability of their ideas. They questioned the evidence behind claims for how many messages could be delivered. They looked for patterns in predicting how many messages could be sent with different numbers of flags and different assumptions about order, direction, duplication, and multiple use. They learned to avoid simplistic explanations and to request to be able to explore a problem before being told how to do it. This combination of subject knowledge, motivational dispositions, and intellectual skills could be readily tracked as growth of inquiry literacy as well as mathematical learning as these were extended to other topics.

PS: Every member but one of that moderately inner-city class graduated from university.

A Preliminary Definition of Inquiry Literacy

The goal of this overview of our current understanding of inquiry and of literacy, its roots in science inquiry, and vignettes of inquiry literacy in action, was to propose a definition of *inquiry literacy* that is domain-general and useful for teachers and researchers alike. There does not yet appear to be a unified definition of inquiry literacy. We propose that there is a need for one, and we are proposing that it belongs in the common educational vernacular. Teachers, in particular, need to have it, value it, know how to impart it, and be able to recognize its growth in learners. Our focus is on learners, and inquiry literacy as a quality acquired by learners with help from teachers (and other adults including their parents) who are themselves, inquiry-literate.

We propose, in general, that inquiry literacy refers to an individual's knowledge of, skill with, and valuing of inquiry. Over time and with experience, these increase in breadth, depth, and fluency.

Critically, *inquiry literacy* is not only about what the students do, but also that they understand the process of what it is that they are doing. It is not enough to follow the teacher's direction and be able to ask a question, gather evidence, and come to a conclusion. The student who is inquiry-literate understands why he or she is asking a question, how much time it takes to investigate the question, how many options there are for ways to answer a question, that the evidence must be linked to the question in a meaningful way to generate conclusions, and that inquiry activities are an opportunity to take initiatives, be creative, and gain independence.

The process of inquiry is fairly well explicated by this point, and teachers who are inquiry-literate can guide students through both the challenges and rewards of the inquiry process. A student cannot be expected to intuitively know how to be an inquirer. With explicit explanation from teachers, parents, and more knowledgeable peers, as well as practical experience, students will begin to understand why they do what they do in inquiry settings. When they gain this level of understanding of the process of inquiry, they are inquiry literate. When they have become inquiry literate, their teachers can have faith that they will be able to apply the inquiry-process independently, in school, life, and work. With an inquiry-literate population, we will have a creative workforce with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to find creative solutions to today's environmental, economic, and political challenges.

Inquiry literacy results in students being able to take ownership of their learning, to find inspiration and learning opportunities in unique places, and to be able to pursue their curiosities without complete dependency on an educator. This empowerment gives the gift of resiliency. When students understand why they are engaging in inquiry, and how idiosyncratic the process is, they will not become discouraged when they hit a dead-end or do not find the results they expected. They will realize that there is more than one way to approach a question and this inquiry literacy will allow them to pursue other approaches to reach their goal. Inquiry literacy is not only about what students do, but also that they understand and value the process.

Conclusion

Here, in three categories, are the salient elements that we propose form the essential details of student inquiry literacy. We expect that experimental, case-study, and theoretical follow-up will shape this list, delete or add items. We have omitted

"solve problems" and "positive work ethic" because these are not unique to inquiry, and the points below include more specific qualities of what it means to find and solve problems. This proposal opens a conversation rather than closes it. These, along with inquiry outcomes we are also identifying, might have the potential to form a basis for eventually evaluating the growth of inquiry literacy at the individual and institutional levels.

Student knowledge essential to inquiry.

- The inquiry process can commence with a small amount of formal information
- Students need language, symbols, and skills of inquiry appropriate to their level (e.g., age and experience) and in context
- Their own interests and strengths are relevant and help guide curricular decisions
- Inquiry has many forms that vary in the degree of autonomy
- Inquiry is goal-driven; the goals should be clear, shared, and simultaneously include learning "to do" and "about"
- Exchanges occur in classroom roles between teachers and learners
- Inquiry requires an idiosyncratic, nonlinear, adaptive, and flexible use and understanding of the process.
- Inquiry literacy grows over time in the breadth or quantity of knowledge or skills or dispositions, their depth, and the fluency with which they are invoked.

Student skills essential to inquiry.

- Use the language of inquiry correctly in context
- Read regularly, broadly, and for a purpose when researching an inquiry topic
- Identify or select an area of interest
- Generate or find problems
- Take initiatives, intervene, co-own knowledge
- Use dialog to learn: Listen, discuss respectfully, communicate clearly
- Engage in the inquiry process independently and collaboratively
- Manage time effectively
- Assess the relevance and authenticity of a proposed problem or topic
- Ask relevant and nontrivial questions, for oneself and an appropriate audience
- Develop an appropriate approach to a problem and conducting investigations

- Collaborate with, seek advice from, and use adult or peer mentors effectively
- Develop specialized or deep understanding of concepts and content associated with the inquiry topic
- Evaluate necessity and sufficiency of resources (material, expertise, time, relevance, authenticity, etc.) to make an investigation worthy of investment at this time
- Locate, document, and organize relevant information, data, and evidence for interpretation by self and others
- Evaluate or question evidence according to source and content
- Use formal logical and analytical skills
- Monitor and evaluate progress toward solutions, adjust plans as needed (metacognition)
- Propose explanations and build understanding based on empirical evidence
- Determine the assumptions that underlie alternative answers to questions
- Evaluate solutions
- Assess the generalizability of their ideas to larger questions and others' interests
- Communicate results in writing and orally

Dispositions (on entry or acquired) essential to student inquiry.

- Be curious
- Value and pursue personal growth (breadth, depth, and fluency) as inquirers
- Positively value collaboration
- Look for patterns and links across knowledge
- Use imagination, creativity, and critical thinking
- Be comfortable with problems being ill-defined
- Be reflective about why they are engaged even if not fully succeeding
- Be comfortable with the existence of multiple approaches to solve the same problem
- Positively value sharing the results of inquiry

Closing point. In a study nearing conclusion, student teachers who experienced inquiry in more than one context or subject during their secondary or earlier school years, had a more complete understanding of what inquiry means and how to implement it. In another new study (Leung, 2009), extensive experience is required

before students express high self-efficacy in inquiry; indeed self-efficacy drops with small and moderate amounts of experience. Inquiry challenges teachers and students. Inquiry literacy benefits from each instance in which it is nurtured, but the greatest gain requires a team effort within schools to ensure it happens across the curriculum and years, for maximum impact on students' inquiry literacy.

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On Screen: Writing, Images and What It Means to Be a Reader

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ABSTRACT

The majority of English Language Arts curricula in North America, if not worldwide, draw on traditional literary texts as their core content. By contrast, the confluence of image and written word on contemporary texts—including the literary—and the impact this evolution has on our comprehension of the changing face of literacy is one of the most compelling issues in contemporary pedagogy. It seems clear that the rise of the new media and its range of textual genres challenge prevailing views about what it means to be a reader and how reading is taught in our schools. Since word and image demand different reading paths and strategies, how can teachers begin to re-vision their pedagogical practices while taking an active role in addressing the literacy needs of their elementary and secondary students?

A World of Texts

Unlike writing, we come to images like those on television and the Internet with the understanding that we *are* reading them—that we do not need to learn the kinds of codes and conventions that are basic when learning to read the written word or ask the kinds of questions we learn to use when interpreting a written text. Too, when we come to the screen, to a communication environment that integrates images, sound and speech, the assumption is that once we learn how it works technically, the rest follows in a kind of natural, logical way.

In our work with teachers around the province of Quebec over the last five years, it became quickly apparent that learning to read both images and multimodal texts that incorporate images and print in formal, explicit ways is often regarded as a

"frill" in an otherwise sound English Language Arts (ELA) program. The misperception that we come to these texts with a kind of "built-in wiring" to comprehend and evaluate them, making formal instruction virtually unnecessary, is a prevailing notion in contemporary elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, including teacher education programs. In ELA classrooms it is the literary text that forms the nucleus of literacy pedagogy, a tradition based on the privileged place of the texts of "high culture" in the evolution of the discipline over the last century. Moreover, current examining trends continue to reinforce the connection between literary analysis and the attainment of literacy. Understandable, then, are the deep reservations teachers harbor about the texts of popular, or "low" culture and their conviction that bringing the new media into the classroom will diminish the status of the literary text, as well as lower the standards by which the educational system has historically determined literacy and academic excellence in the discipline. Of course there are other issues deeply related to these convictions, including the complexity of weaving aspects of student culture and sensibility into contemporary teaching practice. However, it is doubtful that the world will wait for the culture and content of schooling to catch up, leaving our students the unenviable task of spanning a breach which could have disastrous consequences for their future in contemporary society. In this light, whether we teach prospective teachers, graduate students, teachers in the field, children or youth in our schools, it is time to re-vision what it means to be a reader in a world of rapidly evolving communication technologies and communication genres. At the heart of our inquiry needs to be another tradition of equal importance to our profession: namely, the social contract of preparing students for life in a democratic society by teaching them critical reasoning skills that will enable them to judge the significance of what they read, see and hear for themselves. It is, after all, this capacity to interact with the world in a conscious, critical fashion that is deeply associated with our understanding of freedom, power and concepts of self and other.

Reading print and image

The texts we read on television, the Internet or in a newspaper—even when in real time where we feel that we are there *"as it happens"*—are constructed. As is true of any written text, from fairy tale to Shakespearean tragedy, the texts we view are never neutral in their meanings, messages and intent. They are deliberate constructs that carry stylized and structured meanings and messages to a predetermined readership. Here the comparisons between image and print end, since the *world shown* in images is different from the *world told* in a written text. The systems of representation used to create each world offer different possibilities, resulting in distinctive ways of representing and constructing meaning.[1] And although images may

appear to be more accessible than print, the meanings they connote and the intent of those who produce them are no less complex. Standards of success and beauty, the outcome of national and local elections, perspectives on world events and issues, the evolution of the concept of community and the rise of a consumer mega-culture comprise a modest list of just some of the aspects of contemporary life that are mediated by powerful images constructed to position their readers.

Indicative of the prevalence of new media in shaping our actions, attitudes and experiences is the relatively recent coverage of the death of Michael Jackson. In the real time of the event, the mass media ran through a cycle of narratives, from the arrival of the ambulance transporting the superstar to hospital, through the announcement of his death and the worldwide response of his fans, to the denouement, in the form of a televised and streamed memorial service for the "King of Pop." Coverage of the event, circumscribed by the recurring mantra that Jackson was a person " … we all knew and loved," dominated channels of communication for ten days.

This kind of relentless coverage of death and disaster is a familiar venue to most of us by now. As Henry Giroux (1988) was first to observe, a particularly powerful aspect of screen media, beginning with television, is their ability to *construct us* into a virtual community in a matter of minutes. Giroux goes on to point out that there is a connection between the debut of television and the need of those in power to give their citizenry, who had emerged from the Second World War as active participants in democratic life, a real sense that they could continue to participate in decisions made by leaders on their behalf. Television provided a perfect environment, since it could convey a sense of real time and, therefore, a genuine connection between what readers saw on their televised news programs in the 1950s and their sense of social involvement in what was going on in their country and in the world. Today, the fact that our understanding of the world and of events that take place in it is mediated by television, radio and the Internet is something we tend to take for granted.

However, as would be the case with regard to any event we read "on screen," the television and Internet narrative of Jackson's life and times involved the scripting, cutting and editing of appropriate images to convey a meaning and/or message, interviews and information designed to achieve a specific effect, decisions about content based on a target audience and optimal viewing times, and the use of sound, music, color and an overriding organizational device, such as a stance or a viewpoint. In the days immediately following Jackson's death, it also became clear just how vulnerable images are to processes of de-contextualization, which is what makes them

so versatile, on the one hand and so easy to manipulate, on the other. Images can be plucked from the landscape—the foreground and background—in which they were originally rendered with the simple flick of a switch, making their potential as sources of meaning and the so-called truths they convey virtually infinite. While literate people are familiar with the journalistic style of pulling quotations and factual material from their original context to build an argument, the possibilities afforded by the combination of screen, speech and visual discourse enable producers to connote messages and meanings rapidly and, apparently, succinctly. Indeed, images are powerful tools when enlisted as consensus-creating tools. Portraits of Michael Jackson alternated between the construct of an unstable and tormented genius in the form of "Jacko," to the proverbial child-star who, like Peter Pan, could never grow up and built a "Wonderland" to buffer his own innocence from the encroachment of the adult world, to the musical genius of albums such as *Thriller* (Jackson, 1982). In several instances, the same image or footage was used to connote quite different meanings, as the narrative moved away in time from its coverage of the events surrounding Jackson's death to reflections about his contribution to the popular music entertainment industry.

The terms of reader-text engagement when images are central to our understanding involves the comprehension that the meaning or message we construct is designed by the relationship between the elements of the composed image(s), print or speech (i.e., in multimodal texts), the intent of the producer and the social context in which the text is situated. Since the texts of television and the Internet are fleeting in comparison to the written texts of book, magazine or newspaper, readers process intended meanings at rapid speed without necessarily subjecting them to the kind of critical questioning they are likely to bring to texts that they can reread and reconsider. The rapid-fire processing of the texts of the new media, given their power to influence our values, beliefs and view of the world, needs to be examined in our classrooms, in order that the young can begin to consider how texts are designed to influence them in quite explicit ways. One way to begin the process is by examining one of the oldest forms of image production, the photograph.

Visual design

Despite our sense that still or moving images allow us complete liberty in the meanings we assign to them, images demand a very particular kind of reading. When we look at the photograph below, for example, certain elements are very precise and their interrelationship connotes, in turn, meaning. For example, the woman is dressed in a manner that tells us this is not a recent photo. Her hat, in particular,

suggests the Flapper era of the 1920s. In the background is a building of odd proportions and its canvas-type roofing suggests a seasonal structure. We also notice that the photograph is posed—rider and horse are attending to the camera. The positioning of the subjects tell us that the portrait was meant to capture a special moment or perhaps to hold a memory in place, since, in the tradition of portrait photography, the foregrounding of the subjects is a convention that connotes their significance. The photographer is likely a professional—or, if not, a gifted amateur—given the grace of the composition, the textures of grass, leather, skin and so forth, and the play of light. In present time, all of the elements in the composition combine to evoke a sense of nostalgia for a past that is no longer.

Fig. 1: Photograph of rider on horse

Images are semantically precise and clear, and the meaning(s) we associate with them depend upon the *relationship between the elements in the representation* (Kress, 2003) and how we interpret them, aligning the context in which the image appears, its visual elements and our own social context for reading as we build meaning. In other words, the reading path of an image asks readers to explore the relationship and relevance of its visual elements to the context(s) in which they are situated,

and from which their meaning derives. The world depicted in images is a *designed* world and this is precisely why it can hold memories in place for us over time. As example, the photo in question will always be one of my most treasured family heirlooms. It portrays my grandfather's champion mare outside the fairgrounds in Huntingdon, Quebec, a scene of her many victories. Since my grandfather was also a resident of Huntingdon, his beautiful black mare became a local character and accrued her own fan club—when she entered the Huntingdon arena, the audience stood to applaud her. My grandfather and his beautiful mare shared a narrative that held a very central place in his life. She had been an abused, angry filly when he bought her and through his patience and perseverance, she grew to trust and love him. My grandfather had been a very sickly child and a rather frail young man, making it impossible for him to follow in the farming tradition of his father. There was something in the relationship between the tiny man and his tall, black mare that overcame the pain and disappointment of his youth. Her portrait hung over his desk until the day he died. Each time I look at this photograph, I am plunged into memories of weekends spent with my grandparents when I was a little girl and the shared narratives that held us close.

The casual viewer, however, shares none of this personal context, reminding us that an image-based representation, such as the photograph above, also *withholds information*. It is not only the wider social context of my family history that the photograph eludes. Even I am unable to read beyond what the image shows me—I have no idea if my grandfather was standing next to the photographer in order to get the mare's attention, or what else was beyond the periphery of the lens. Cameras "lie"—the person capturing the image or images is at a particular place in a much larger and possibly more complex landscape that he or she has, consciously in this case, relegated to the periphery of the lens. Whether a personal photograph or televised footage, we are shown only a slice of the whole, actual event and it is this edited representation that constitutes the description of a world in a designed, deliberate fashion.

In writing, even when the genre of a text is unfamiliar to its reader, the combination of textual structures, linguistic structures such as syntax and lexical elements, as well as the codes and conventions of the genre establish a reading path that cues readers to build an interpretation. Readers bring their literacy repertoires—their experience with a given genre, with reading written texts and their own personal knowledge and experience—to the task. As reading experience grows, readers' interpretations become more fluent. The possibilities inherent in writing are responsible for giving us the impression that the written text offers a kind of depth of

meaning that is not available through the lens of a camera or on the screens of television or other new media. It may well be this impression that is responsible for the skepticism of many educators regarding the intrusion of popular media such as television and the Internet on the traditional texts that have always formed the core of their curriculum. However, the impression that writing offers more to readers than other types of texts is flawed, if only because the practice of interpreting the written text is more established than that of teaching readers how meaning is designed in contemporary visual media. Literacy in the twenty-first century is based on the prerequisite of knowledge about both the demands and the possibilities inherent in two distinct systems of representation and three modes of discourse—written, visual and spoken. Rather than questioning which system offers or withholds more, it becomes critical to better comprehend the possibilities inherent in each.

Turning to a new page: image and print in the classroom

Writing provides us with a semantic and semiotic openness on which to base interpretation, largely due to the manner in which its fixed reading path, stable syntax and pre-established lexical elements combine as a system for communicating meaning. By contrast, texts that are composed of images, illustrations and a range of visual effects convey meaning(s)/message(s) based on the design, or relationship, among their visual and discursive elements. And, since familiar contemporary texts increasingly blend image or illustration with either writing or speech, it is impossible to render a critical interpretation of them using what we have learned about reading and writing print. In other words, readers need to learn interpretive reading strategies based on the *relevance* of elements in a given text that incorporates image(s) and writing and/or speech. The context of this kind of reading demands knowledge of different modes of discourse, together with an awareness of the text's intended audience and a capacity to weave these aspects together when reading the text. Thus, readers need to bring an understanding of the production process itself to their reading, in order to move from literal to interpretive reasoning about the significance of the message/meaning in a text. As an example, when readers understand that television is funded by commercials that are shown at optimum times given the target audience of a particular program, they are able to weave this knowledge into their explanation of why it is that Saturday morning cartoons are accompanied by toy and fast-food commercials, whereas weekday afternoon soap operas are accompanied by promotions of household products. Moreover, readers can begin to draw on specific aspects of how the commercial appeals to its audience to frame their own interpretations. Over time, secondary students learn to consider the interface between the advertising and television industries, in order to look critically at prime-

time programming. All of these examples draw on the notion that establishing relevance when reading the texts of visual discourse is the key to becoming a critical reader.

Media educators have long stressed the difference between teaching *about* the media and teaching *through* the media. The well-established practice of building reading-writing connections in the case of written texts is founded on a similar principle: namely, that we learn how writing works by adopting the roles of both readers and writers of texts. Similarly, learning about the image demands that students be given the opportunity to *both* read *and* produce them. When students produce multimodal texts (i.e., texts that incorporate images and/or writing and/or speech), they gain the opportunity to enter fully into different systems of representation in a manner that deepens their understanding of audience, context and the principles of relevance that govern multimodal meanings and messages.

Even the very young can be introduced to the unique ways that print and image influence our construction of meaning. The illustrated picture book is an excellent resource with which to begin the process of examining how writing and image offer different narrative possibilities. Children's author-illustrators abound and all use images, color and a full range of artistic features to extend and deepen the meanings conveyed in their written narratives.[2] It is almost impossible to examine an illustrated picture book and overlook the distinct contribution of words and images. Traditionally, images are used to connote aspects of the narrative that do not appear in the printed text, such as emotions evoked by a particular event. Some authors, such as John Burningham and Maurice Sendak, narrate in a style that sets out an almost parallel text, using the interplay of writing and illustration to transpose different layers and voices in their narratives. It is worth noting that the transposition of narrative structures and voices is an elegant and sophisticated literary device, adopted by authors such as James Joyce, Doris Lessing and, more recently, Sarah Waters and Michael Cunningham, to name only a few. Understanding how this technique is used in the illustrated picture book provides a solid grounding in narrative genres that young children can reinvest throughout their elementary and secondary years. There are also any number of information-based texts written for children that use visual material to supplement explanations and/or factual detail, as well as children's magazines that incorporate images and print to good effect in articles and special features. Arguably, principles of relevance are easier to spot in these kinds of texts than they tend to be in illustrated picture books like *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), providing still another important reason for introducing a range of information-based texts in elementary school. In non-fiction produced for children, including

school textbooks, the inclusion of visual material complements the writing in a manner that tends to facilitate comprehension. Since factual writing tends to be more alien to the young than narrative and, consequently, more difficult to read, let alone read critically, focusing on the complementary role of the visual material in information-based texts becomes central to unlocking their meaning.

The combination of image and print in story is familiar to most children through their own early writing experiences, making opportunities to produce illustrated picture books and a range of information-based texts, such as magazine articles on topics of interest to them, "low tech" points of entry into the world of the multimodal text. The reading-production connection in these instances would involve teachers reading and discussing the conventions and techniques used to make, for example, an illustrated picture book, before asking students to produce one of their own. As the production process moves forward, teachers are certain to discover any number of "teachable moments," from helping their students to use the language of color effectively, to teaching the finer points of characterization and how images and print may be asked to work together to give depth to the depiction of a character.

Products directed at child-consumers, such as cereal boxes, magazine ads and toy packaging, also provide important opportunities to examine the interrelationship of images and writing. These types of products are easy for even the very young to produce for themselves, making them ideally suited to learning first-hand how those who manufacture consumer goods for children design packaging to attract their target audience. Again, the texts to be produced should be examined in detail first, noting the placement of image and print and having students discuss how the composition manages to get their attention, i.e., the overall relevance of words and image in appealing to the child-as-consumer. It is a very short step from reading and producing cereal boxes and magazine ads to examining television commercials directed at children. In the case of commercials, it is important to focus on elements such as speech, color, music and resonant images that attract children's attention and make them want to purchase the item. The Internet is also rife with advertising aimed at children, including Web fan clubs for popular toys such as Barbie®. These sites provide teachers with fantastic opportunities to examine how a media text on the Internet works and how advertising is enhanced by phenomena like Web-based fan clubs.[3] In professional seminars with Quebec teachers, Elementary ELA Resource Team members invited them to explore how toys such as Barbie® or popular action figures could form the basis for children doing their own ethnographic research, an exciting way to introduce questioning techniques and a range of additional research skills to children.

Another important aspect of examining the Internet has to do with the way it presents information and so-called factual data. It is a common misperception that much of what is conveyed on Web sites is accurate, making instruction that focuses on evaluating what we read and see there vital. In this kind of activity, older children can learn how to evaluate information they retrieve for themselves by comparing Web sites to other more conventional sources of information, such as encyclopedias and resource books in the library. In these, as in the examples above, it is by studying the relevance of images, writing and/or speech, music and other elements that appear on a particular site to the meaning/message conveyed, both as *readers* and *producers*, that helps students to "unpack" how these kinds of new media actually work. Secondary students can be invited to also consider the place and prominence of online advertising and what this suggests about the site and/or e-commerce in general.

There are numbers of easy and affordable resources that interweave image, illustration, print and additional features, such as speech, into texts aimed at young adult (i.e., secondary and post-secondary) audiences. As is the case in elementary reading instruction, secondary students should similarly be given opportunities to both read and produce a range of visual texts, since this remains the most effective way to learn about how different systems of representation work. In particular, contemporary media texts provide an excellent opportunity to examine the concept of audience and the techniques that can be used to attract readers' attention, as well as principles of relevance in more sophisticated, conceptually demanding texts. Newspapers, magazines, illustrated picture books, graphic novels, wordless illustrated texts, magazine advertising and television commercials are particularly good resources in this regard and divulge a number of strategies that producers use to establish a relationship with their intended audience. Moreover, excerpts from television or radio newscasts that demonstrate how the same news item can be presented differently, provide opportunities to focus on truth-value and how this is established; for mature students, the contrast may lead to questions about how certain voices, opinions or viewpoints are silenced and to what effect, as well as to questions about ideology and the television production industry in general.

By high school, students are also ready to begin to identify common stylistic and rhetorical techniques, as well as textual structures, codes and conventions that are present in all texts of a particular genre, regardless of the system(s) of representation used, such as would be the case with narrative. Opportunities to compare and contrast traditional and contemporary narratives, for example, provide an important means to examine the different possibilities inherent in films versus novels. As the

Secondary ELA Resource Team worked with teachers on ways of weaving image and writing into their curriculum, one popular activity became producing book trailers based on, in this instance, a wordless picture book called, *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (2007). Book trailers fall into the same genre as movie trailers and abide by most of the same production conventions; however, the invitation to create book trailers also provided an optimum context for examining the construction of a graphic novel and different interpretations of the narrative in greater detail.[4]

Local resources for teachers

In Quebec, we are also very fortunate to have a number of organizations that provide resources for elementary and secondary teachers who are interested in expanding their pedagogical repertoire to include texts of the new media. One example of a literacy project that combines images and writing is that of the Blue Metropolis Foundation's "*Quebec Roots*." Initiated in 2005, *Quebec Roots* is a collaborative effort between authors, photographers, educational resource teachers and K-11 classroom teachers in Quebec that involves students composing ethnographies about their communities in photographs and words. Writers and photographers work as teams, visiting classrooms throughout the production process to provide on-site instruction and feedback on everything from using digital cameras to editing the finished text. The students' anthology is launched at the annual international Blue Metropolis Literary Festival.[5] Both LEARN-QUEBEC and the Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) also offer a number of different resources and other types of support, including sessions on the media at ATEQ's annual *Springboards* conference.[6] In addition, there is no shortage of useful Web sites for teachers and students alike on the different media, as well as free programs, such as *Wordle*, and these are easy to locate using any of the popular search engines.

Conclusion

The urgency to embrace non-traditional texts in our educational institutions, whether we teach children, youth, adults or prospective teachers, is critical. There is no question that other issues related to the new media are complex and challenging, but pretending that they are simply the frivolous outcomes of popular culture does a great disservice to our students, who require more than print-based literacy knowledge and skills if they are to fully participate in private and public life in our society and in the world.

Notes

1. For more background on the construction of meaning and the integration of visual and conventional communication systems, see Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996), Norman Fairclough (1989), James Gee, Alan Luke, and Cope and Kalantzis (2000).

2. Illustrated picture books are a genre that features illustrations and print. The difference between the genre and books with pictures rests on the fact that the illustrated picture book weaves images into the writing that provide more detail in the story, rather than just literally depicting what has been said in print. Examples of celebrated author-illustrators include John Burningham, Maurice Sendak, Ezra Jack Keats, Molly Bang, Eric Carle, Tomie de Paola, Shirley Hughes and Chris Van Allsburg.

3. The purpose in examining these types of sites should not be to "inoculate" children against presumed negative influences, so much as informing them about how these sites are designed in a conscious and deliberate way. There are many positive aspects to fan clubs such as the one designed for Barbie®, including the creation of virtual communities where children can share interests and interact with peers. These positive aspects should be explored, as well as those aspects that focus on consumerism for its own sake.

4. For further information on how to make book trailers, please contact: sela.cycleone@gmail.com.

5. Further information about *Quebec Roots* and the other educational projects of the Blue Metropolis Foundation are available on the LEARN Web site (http://www.learnquebec.ca) and at http://bluemetropolis.org.

6. The Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) may be contacted through its Web site at http://www.ateq.org.

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Multiple Definitions of Reading: Why They Continue to Be Used in the Same Contexts, and What This Has Meant for Literacy Instruction

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ABSTRACT

What literacy means has evolved significantly in recent decades, but even in the context of Quebec, where the provincial curriculum embraces a forward-thinking definition of literacy, multiple understandings of literacy and reading coexist within the same community. This article argues that how the concepts of reading and literacy are understood, and how best to teach them, continues to be framed within the boundaries set out by traditionally opposing research paradigms, and that these frameworks have further complicated the challenge of helping students become strong readers of print. With a specific focus on the reading of print, this article examines how these understandings differ and what this has meant for reading and literacy instruction. It is argued that a rethinking of the way that research informs pedagogy may further the benefits that the researcher-practitioner relationship brings to classroom practice.

The decades-long debate over how best to address literacy education is not over, as some authors (Stanovich, 1991, p. 9) have been suggesting for some time; it continues, both within the scholarly community and in the political arena of policy-making situated in government bodies and school-board offices. In part, this is because literacy is a slippery topic; it means different things to different people. This is true within the Quebec context, where the provincially determined curriculum—now more than a decade old—clearly embraces a very forward-thinking definition of literacy. Even within this context, however, there remains a degree of confusion.

Helping students develop as strong readers of print remains the dominant concern for many teachers in spite of a mandate to address a broader concept of literacy. Teachers face a complicated debate that involves disagreement about what literacy means while still struggling with more traditional conflicts about how best to teach it. There are several reasons for this. Most familiar perhaps are the polarized views expressed in the "great debate" (Chall, 1967) between a code-breaking emphasis (Gough, 1980; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1991; Perfetti, 1991; Stanovich, 1991) and a whole language approach (K. S. Goodman & Y. M. Goodman, 1979; Newman, 1985; Smith, 2004) to the teaching of literacy. But there is more at issue in this debate than pedagogy; it is also about competing notions of what we understand literacy to be, and what functions we expect it to serve. This is a debate that is defined by differing, often opposing research paradigms (Foorman, 1995; Weaver, 1998a) and by the social and political tenor of the time. And so, while we see literacy commonly referring to the ability to decode and make sense of print texts (Gough, 1980; Liberman & Shankweiler, 1991), we also see it defined in broader terms, as a socio-cultural process involving a complex set of behaviours that allow individuals to engage with the social world around them, to understand and communicate their own perspectives of the world (K. S. Goodman & Y. M. Goodman, 1979; Halliday, 1978; Smith, 2004). Clearly, this debate is driven in part by the opposing approaches of different research paradigms (Aoki, 1984; Stanovich, 1991; Weaver, 1998b); however, it is also clear that the existence of different meanings of literacy and, more specifically, reading commonly being employed complicates the issue. The often-opposing pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy, and the divergent research paradigms that support them, have unnecessarily hindered efforts at finding a balance when it comes to instruction, leaving teachers to make sense of contradictory advice. The central purpose of this paper is to clarify how differing concepts of reading are understood, and what these various understandings mean for practice under the broader umbrella of literacy within Quebec schools. I argue that while our priority must remain the teaching of literacy viewed as a natural, socio-cultural process of communication and meaning-making through a variety of modes—literacy as it is viewed within the Quebec Education Program—we can still attend to the teaching of print reading as a vital component of literacy, and as a skill that requires some explicit instruction. The ongoing shift in recent years in favour of a balanced approach to literacy instruction demonstrates that pedagogies that have been seen as mutually exclusive, even oppositional, can instead be viewed as complementary. Moreover, it provides the opportunity for a reconsideration of the way research has tended to inform pedagogy, allowing for academics and teachers to work collaboratively in reflecting on how students become literate, and, importantly, on what it is that teachers are supposed to teach.

The Quebec context

When we speak of literacy, we need to make explicit that it is an evolving term; its newer connotation goes well beyond traditional notions of literacy as a set of skills—reading and writing at a functional level—possessed by an individual and acting as a passport of sorts to higher levels of education and work. The Quebec Education Program embraces a more evolved understanding of literacy, establishing at the outset that "the goal of any literacy program must be to provide opportunities for students to experience language as a way of making sense of their experiences and of breaking down barriers that separate individuals" (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2001, p. 72). The Quebec curriculum frames literacy as complex, as multimodal, as social: what was once a skill or set of skills is now a development of those knowledges that students bring with them; what was once a containable body of material to be passed on to students has been replaced by a set of competencies in which knowledge and social function come together to give purpose to literate behaviours.

Importantly, within the Quebec Education Program, the meanings associated with reading and writing have become more complex and varied as well. They have shifted away from a focus on the reading and production of written language to refer instead to a wide array of language modes. As with the concept of literacy itself, the Quebec curriculum defines texts and reading in far broader strokes than is the case with more traditional approaches that focus on reading and producing print texts. Students are expected, for example, to "read, view, and/or listen to a variety of children's texts" (Quebec, 2001, p. 76). Reading has evolved to include "listening to" and "viewing" texts as well as to reading print, a sophisticated idea that recognizes the ubiquitous presence of texts of many modes and genres in our lives. While it is not the purpose of this paper to examine the story of the evolution of literacy, it is important to understand that the concept of literacy described in the Quebec curriculum finds its roots in a long line of social and educational theorists who have argued that the traditional focus on reading and writing is neither appropriate in a new, multimodal age, nor can it best serve the complex social needs of a diverse and culturally mixed student body.

That the Quebec curriculum embraces a forward-thinking, sophisticated understanding of literacy is not in question. The issue is complicated, however, because this newer concept of literacy has not completely replaced traditional understandings of what literacy means: the two notions coexist within the educational community and our society in general. When parents and politicians speak of literacy, there is the understanding that they are speaking about levels of print

literacy—they are concerned with how well students learn to read and write print texts. Teachers, too, struggle with this issue. Even teachers who strongly embrace the curriculum reform grapple with the issue of how best to teach students to read print, and, importantly, what portion of the day should be allotted to this goal. Teachers express concern that their students will not thrive in our educational system, or our culture at large, without strong skills in reading and writing print. Indeed, the issue of how best to teach literacy and reading continues to be a topic debated by teachers in Quebec. The issue is even more complicated because it is highly charged politically. That is to say, those teachers who tend to maintain a stronger focus on the reading of print, or who lean more heavily on explicit strategy and skill instruction are viewed, rightly or wrongly, as being more conservative, more traditional. There seems to be, for many people, the sense that certain approaches are strictly exclusive, that, for example, a holistic, broad view of literacy and literacy learning does not dovetail with some regular explicit teaching of certain strategies and skills.

It is useful, in this context, to re-examine some of the arguments that inform discussions around the teaching of literacy in order to clarify why the issue continues to be divisive, and to point out some of the limitations offered by research.

A legacy of disagreement

A brief look backward demonstrates that the debate regarding how best to define (and teach) reading and literacy has changed very little in the last 40 years. Jeanne Chall (1967) argued that the evidence gathered from the "laboratory, the classroom, and the clinic," (p. 307) over a 50-year period, established that the teaching of reading was in need of a change. Chall's interpretation of the research held that children were more likely to read for meaning when taught with a code-emphasis approach. This result ran counter to the meaning-centered approach's tenet that instruction out of context will not produce real readers. While Chall's study was enormously influential in affecting the objectives of teaching at the elementary grades, many authors argued Chall made errors both in her reporting of the data, and in her conclusions as to how the data should affect pedagogy (Carbo, 1988, p. 228).

This debate has played itself out several times since Chall's work was first published, and the script in each case has varied very little. This occurred most recently, and perhaps most significantly, in the United States following the report of the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000b). The report was the result of a two-year review of research conducted by a 14-person panel, produced at congressional request to "assess the status of research-based knowledge" in the area of reading

instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000a, p. 1). The report establishes that the panel set out to review approximately 100,000 studies on reading from 1966 to 2000, and an additional 15,000 prior to 1966 (section 1, p. 1). The panel, in establishing that only experimental or quasi-experimental studies would be examined, noted that this is the same type of evidence used in "psychological and medical research," (National Reading Panel, 2000b, p. 5, section one) making a clear effort to construct a tone of authority, one that carries the greatest weight in advancing the panel's claims. They were very successful in this regard, so much so that a 2001 federal plan recommended that "funding be distributed or withheld based on the district's compliance with the NRP findings" (Garan, Shanahan, & Henkin, 2001, p. 62). There was a notable increase in pressure following the findings of the report to institute the pedagogy outlined by the panel. These recommendations included, for example, that reading programs should comprise specific instruction to support phonemic awareness (National Reading Panel, 2000a, p. 7); that systematic phonics instruction is a powerful, important tool for reading instruction to be used from kindergarten through grade six (p. 9); that fluency is an important skill in reading development that should be fostered through oral guided reading and independent reading (p. 12); and that properly managed vocabulary instruction leads to gains in comprehension (p. 14).

As in the case of Chall, 33 years earlier, the NRP report was hotly contested on a number of levels. A central criticism levelled at the NRP is the manner in which the panel framed their search at the outset. The strict adherence to experimental, scientific studies resulted in a massive cull of available data: In the case of phonemic awareness, for example, 1,962 citations relevant to the topic were identified by the panel sub-committee. In keeping with the panel's policy, the sub-committee, after "detailed examination," used only 52 studies from the original selection (p. 7), omitting 1,910 studies because they did not conform to the scientific research standard set by the panel. This is not to suggest that the studies that were included were poorly done, or that they fail to offer important insight into the teaching of reading, but that they clearly represent a very small selection of the available data, and exclude a significant amount of important work (Garan et al., 2001, p. 62).

As in the case of Chall's work, the considerable effort by the NRP to adhere to strict scientific methodology fanned the flames of contention rather than extinguished them. Numerous attacks were made on the quality of the science itself (see for example, Allington, 2004; Camilli & Wolfe, 2004; Garan et al., 2001; Krashen, 2001) as well as on the approach. Gregory Camilli and Paula Wolfe express the broad tenor of the complaints against the NRP conclusions, suggesting in effect that it is not that the research used by the panel had nothing important to offer, but that the flawed

science and narrow window resulted in a misuse of the data. They suggest instead that a more accurate reading of the data might have concluded that "direct instruction in phonics is necessary for certain at-risk kindergarteners, but only if embedded in a print-rich, comprehensive literacy program and delivered in brief individualized lessons" (p. 28). It seems, in sifting through the debates on how best to teach reading, that answers we can be sure of are hard to come by. What is far more certain is that there is a clear connection between the answers that are given and the research paradigm adopted by whoever frames the questions.

Competing evidence, or competing approaches?

Clearly, the debate over how best to teach literacy is a dispute that is as much about polarized research paradigms as it is about pedagogy, or students themselves, for that matter. Challenging questions are raised as a result. In an article discussing the acquisition and application of knowledge, Wendel Garner begins by suggesting that "in discussions of the sort we are having today, there frequently occurs an impasse, or at least a hesitation, while the discussants come to realize that they are not discussing quite the same thing" (1972, p. 941). Garner is focused here on how research specific to psychology is conceived of and applied, but his point is certainly applicable to the issue of literacy where the shift in the status of a particular research paradigm is paralleled by a shift in pedagogy.

Barbara Foorman (1995) points out that the debate is indeed a clash of paradigms with supporters of code emphasis drawing from cognitive psychology in one camp and whole language enthusiasts in the other from a "constructivist psychology and continental philosophical perspective" (p. 2). The resulting situation, then, is one in which educators who are more firmly embedded in the cognitive psychology camp argue for a bottom-up approach that sees literacy as reading, and reading as a learned skill, instead of the top-down, whole-language view that accepts the notion that reading, as a component of literacy, is a natural and far more complicated process than just decoding (K. S. Goodman & Y. Goodman, 1979; Newman, 1985). At its core, this is a clash of traditions that govern what kinds of research we choose to accept as valid. Ted Aoki (1986/99) has argued that the dominant intellectual paradigm within North America has been one in which "positivistic science and its derivative technological world view are dominant" (p. 126). And, indeed, if we examine the power of documents such as the report of the National Reading Panel (2000a, 2000b) to influence policy and pedagogy, Aoki's argument seems accurate. Garner (1972) describes a fable that offers some insight into our collective understanding of how knowledge is applied, one which he suggests frames a myth central to our culture

that describes how we view the relationship between scientists and problem solvers who require information:

> The fable is that scientists acquire knowledge, that this knowledge goes into the public domain, and that when a problem solver needs some knowledge to solve his problem, he extracts it from the public domain, uttering words of gratitude as he does so, and solves his problem. (p. 942)

The nature of the debate on literacy is clarified somewhat when exposed to this perspective, suggesting that negative responses to the scientific paradigm might be better seen as a challenge to the myth described by Garner. It should not be surprising that critics of this approach tend to draw attention to the simplicity of the scientific response, highlighting the omission of deeper, more complex explanations when dealing with human interaction. David Labaree (2000) points out that, while the soft knowledge produced by the humanities treads on less well-defined intellectual terrain and tends to be less prestigious, the broader scope of the research allows it to be more useful in fields such as education. Research focussed on establishing scientific credibility, on the other hand, necessarily needs to "zero in on the effects of a particular treatment," and in doing so is "also likely to be [more] trivial, since real education takes place in extraordinarily complex settings where variables are inextricably intermingled" (p. 65).

Barbara Foorman has written that "debates often end when paradigms shift" (1995, p. 15), and some argue this is what we have witnessed in recent years, as the evidenced-based, scientific authority of broad literature reviews such as the one conducted by the NRP have concluded an emphasis on the code is the best approach for teaching reading. The impressive political support that has translated into policy in many areas—most notably in the United States—is further evidence that there has been a paradigm shift in some areas.

Interestingly, we witness the continuation of the debate on literacy, even as the first evaluations of the Reading First program are being made public. Reading First is a federal program in the United States, mandated under the No Child Left Behind Act. The program allocates monies to Title 1 schools based on their implementation of scientifically based research on reading—the kinds of research highlighted in the 2000 report by the National Panel on Reading. In the U.S. government's own interim report (Gamse, Bloom, Kemple, & Tepper Jacob, 2008), the effects of a code emphasis approach fall far short of the intended goals. And, not surprisingly, articles are appearing to point out the failure of scientific, evidence-based research in

dictating curricula (for example, Kennedy Manzo, 2008). While critics say that the billion dollars per year spent by the U.S. government has not affected students' reading comprehension, supporters of the program continue to argue that funding should continue, and that the problem lies in faulty implementation, not pedagogical approach (Kennedy Manzo, 2008, p. 2). What is evident in this debate is that there remain fundamental differences in terms of both what kinds of research opposing paradigms feel should be informing educational policy, and, importantly, what skills and knowledge opposing camps argue are central to the teaching and learning of reading.

The importance of reading to literacy

At the core of the debate over how best to teach reading are competing understandings of what reading is in the first place and what function it plays within literacy development. The differing research paradigms begin with alternate understandings of the kinds of cognitive processes involved in learning how to read. Researchers who support a meaning-centered approach to reading, which has been categorized either fairly or not as emerging from a "constructivist, hermeneutic phenomenology and from critical theory" (Foorman, 1995), hold that people learn to read in much the same manner as they learn to speak; reading, they suggest, is a natural phenomenon (K. S. Goodman & Y. M. Goodman, 1979; Smith, 2004). Goodman and Goodman (1979) argue that the process of learning how to read requires us to consider the nature of people in general, and children in particular, who learn how to read because of the natural desire to make sense of the world around them: "The reason is need. Language learning, whether oral or written, is motivated by the need to communicate, to understand and be understood" (1979, p. 138). The view that reading is natural extends to inform instruction. In fact, they suggest that teaching in the conventional sense is not needed: "Instruction does not teach children to read," they maintain: "Children are in no more need of being taught to read than they are of being taught to listen. What reading instruction does is help children to learn" (1979, p. 140). From this perspective the best teaching involves the creation of the best environment, one in which language users necessarily bring their own understandings and curiosity to the reading process in order to make meaning from it (Newman, 1985). Without purpose, without the social context, neither spoken communication nor reading provides the driving force that lures children to apply the energy needed to decode and use language.

The argument that reading is natural presents a convincing, holistic view of children and learning that links learning to our personal experiences and social realities. Moreover, it centres learning in the affective domain, in which purpose, meaning construction, and individuality play a key role. There have been, however, hundreds of studies that seek to disprove the notion that reading is natural and all that such a view implies for teaching. Where the teaching of reading from the meaning-centred perspective is often referred to as top down, focussing on meaning first, proponents who argue for a code-breaking emphasis approach the teaching of reading from a bottom-up methodology (Adams & Bruck, 1993). They begin with the fragmented components of textual decoding, and assume understanding comes later. The central, recurring point that underlies arguments from this camp is the belief that without the ability to decode the meaning of written letters and words in print, comprehension will be impossible. To researchers who argue for the need to teach decoding early and explicitly, it is absurd to suggest that the letters on a page do not represent a specific message encoded within a set phonological system for a specific purpose; the notion that texts have "no independent meaning seems like errant, if not pernicious, nonsense" (Gough, 1995, p. 84). To imply that meaning is guessed at through a set of clues is to ignore the very system in which the message is coded. The assertion that language processes are "limited to semantics, syntax, and pragmatics" (Liberman & Shankweiler, 1991, p. 12) misses the mark altogether: "They seem not to consider that before one can get to the meaning or get to the words, whether one is a beginning or a skilled reader, one must understand the alphabetic principle" (p. 12). And, there are hundreds of studies examining all aspects of the decoding process to support these claims. Gough (1977) has examined the minutia of eye movements in the process of reading to establish that readers attend to individual words—even to individual letters (1977, p. 513). Others have examined the importance of phonemic knowledge as a critical factor in learning how to read (see for example, Perfetti, 1991). Many researchers have addressed the significance of phonemic awareness, establishing an important link between an early awareness of rhyme and alliteration and later reading and spelling ability (see for example, Bradley & Bryant, 1983). Some researchers have attacked the problem from a different angle, arguing that there is abundant evidence that children who do not achieve an adequate level of decoding ability by the time they are in grade one are at significant risk of being weak, less engaged readers in later years. To advocates of teaching decoding, it is the power of decoding itself that leads to comprehension, not the other way around (Foorman, 1995, p. 55; Gough & Juel, 1991).

Simply put, reading is not considered a natural act (Gough, 1980; Gough & Juel, 1991; Stanovich, 1991); rather, it is something that must be learned. It is a skill that

allows the reader to access meanings encoded in print. Not surprisingly, authors in this camp argue that to suggest spoken language and literacy develop in similar fashion is of little use.

> Again, we are struck by the profound dissimilarities in the psychogenesis of language and literacy. To say they emerge as part of a common developmental pathway is to rob from the notion of natural its psychological frame of spontaneously occurring, biologically given, and maturationally driven. (Foorman, 1995, p. 6)

One of the challenges in sifting through the arguments of opposing research paradigms lies in the allure that a scientific approach seems to offer. Ted Aoki writes of a difficulty in distancing himself from the paradigm that is favored within his own culture (Aoki, 1986/99, p. 126), a reality that likely affects us all; however, even with this in mind, the arguments typified by Adams and Bruck, Liberman, Stanovich, and Foorman ring true. We may well recognize the fact that Western culture and thought have a preference for the scientific, the instrumental, the verifiable, but that does not mask the tendency we probably have to feel comfort in such an approach. Theorists who argue from a scientific platform are convincing in suggesting that if reading print were natural—at least in the way we understand oral language to be—then it would be less difficult to learn, and there would not be so many people who have trouble doing it. If we want to attend to reading, we need to consider that the mountain of research from the scientific paradigm has significant insight to offer. In effect, it is reasonable to acknowledge that both the code-breaking emphasis and the meaning-centered emphasis are correct in their arguments, but that they are not always discussing the same thing.

Finding a scientific answer to the question of how to teach reading and literacy has significant cultural and political appeal, and has no doubt resulted in a great deal of research being discounted in recent years. But, even if we accept this as a reasonable interpretation of the current state of affairs, and conclude that errors have been made in how code-emphasis research has been used to inform policy, it is very difficult, and probably unwise, to reject the results *en masse* of the work from the evidence-based research paradigm. There is, for example, convincing evidence that not all children learn to read in the same way or have the same kinds of instructional needs. Some children have good decoding skills, but require significant work on comprehension, while others clearly have a good ability with comprehension of complex ideas, but experience difficulty at the decoding phase (Aaron, Joshi, & Williams, 1999, p. 125). Another point of caution in discounting a code-emphasis pedagogy is that

weaker readers, who are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, tend to benefit more from explicit instruction in code breaking, and risk being left behind in a classroom that does not attend explicitly to strategies and skills (Pinnell, 1989). This phenomenon, referred to as "the Mathew effect" (A. E. Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997, p. 934), is observed when early reading exposure gives some students a notable advantage in school, and that within a strictly whole-language classroom this advantage generates rewards, followed by greater enthusiasm, followed by further success. Students entering school with little or no reading exposure are at risk of falling into a cycle of frustration and failure as they lag behind their peers and experience little success.

We construct definitions to serve our purposes, but we are at some level bound by the definitions that we create. Whether by design or by inertia, definitions of reading and literacy have evolved—or remained the same in some circles—to allow for many things. The belief, for example, that literacy equals reading, that it is apolitical, that it is equally accessible to everyone (Gough, 1995), has enormous implications for pedagogy and for our commonplace beliefs of who is responsible when there is failure in the system. Viewing literacy from this perspective suggests that failure to become literate is a failure of the individual, not of society (Hull, 1993). If the essential component of literacy is reading (meaning decoding text) then the development of literacy is freed from any cultural or political baggage; a failure to succeed might be a failure of the teacher, or of the student, but it does not imply any social advantage to a particular culture or class. Phillip Gough (1995) argued that it is through a separation of literacy from politics that we ensure all students are treated equally. Gough's suggestion is that by approaching literacy as a technical skill, as decoding text, we make it apolitical and give all students equal access to it. This argument may have some common-sense appeal, but it ignores the evidence that literacy is a complex, culturally determined practice. It ignores the fact that in treating all students equally in spite of differing needs we are not promoting equity at all.

Balanced Literacy

Given that arguments about how to teach literacy are as much about approaches to research and knowledge as they are about pedagogy, it seems unlikely that we will see an end to the debates on reading without a paradigm shift. An alternate solution is hinted at by Garner (1972, p. 942) in suggesting that perhaps we need to approach the problem from the opposite perspective; that is, it may be more advantageous for the scientist to be in touch with the people who have the questions than the other way around. Michael Pressley (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, &

Dolezal, 2002; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta Hampston, 2006) has made a similar suggestion. Instead of examining aspects of reading in isolation, or of approaching literacy from a theoretical model alone, Pressley and his team studied highly effective teachers with a view to finding commonalities in method, and found that there is a great deal to be learned from teachers. Interestingly, almost all the teachers involved in the study reported that they "identified, at least to some degree" (Pressley et al., 2006, p. 243) with a whole-language approach. That is, they stressed the value of a rich literacy environment in which the students would engage with reading in a wide variety of meaningful ways. Other commonalities amongst the teachers selected included fostering a) positive classroom environments, b) little competition within the class, c) clear classroom routines, d) a variety of teaching configurations (modelled, shared, guided, independent learning), e) a mixture of direct skills instruction and whole-language-type instruction, and f) encouragement of parental participation (p. 250). Notably, the teachers did not feel skills instruction and whole language were antithetical in any way; rather, reading skills were taught both in context and through explicit decontextualized approaches such as games and spelling tests (p. 244): "These teachers were emphatic in stating that whole language and skills instruction are not contradictory but, rather, complementary approaches in their instruction of struggling beginning readers" (Pressley et al., 2002, p. 3).

Pressley's findings, along with the work of others, begin to define the notion of a balanced literacy (Allington, 2001; P. M. Cunningham & Allington, 2007; Pressley et al., 2002)—at the simplest level an amalgamation of the opposing sides of the great debate—and for some (Spiegel, 1998) an end point to the ongoing problem of how to teach reading and literacy. The notion of *balanced literacy* accepts that children become literate through a variety of means and practices simultaneously, and not through only a skill-centered instruction or a whole-language environment in isolation. Yet, in spite of this seeming compromise, the debate continues to flourish. The problem, in part, is that there is some uncertainty about what we mean by "balance" when we speak of literacy. At one level the term is used to describe an effort to find a middle zone between various dichotomies: first among them perhaps being the gulf between whole language and explicit strategy and skill instruction (Fitzgerald, 1999), but it also refers to the need to balance explicit teaching with learner-directed discovery; between whole group and small group work; between unplanned and planned instruction. The haziness Fitzgerald speaks of has allowed the concept of balance to be used to describe vastly different programs. Constance Weaver (1998b) warns us that the research of the last thirty years is being misused, and that what in many places is being touted as balanced literacy is far closer to a phonics-first model. They threaten, she says, "to maintain or restore an old imbalance in the opposite

direction: too much skills work, and too little thoughtful reading and discussion of texts read" (p. 12). The result is the implementation of mandated policies either by district offices or government agencies that are based on a misuse and misunderstanding of narrow, segmented components of research: "They do not understand that good teaching requires knowledgeable teachers able to teach flexibly, not locked into a mandated methodology or a prepackaged curriculum" (p. 13). Weaver's caution reminds us that the concept of balance means far more than a simple compromise between code-breaking and whole language perspectives. In recognizing both the social complexity and the presence of diverse learning styles, balanced literacy highlights teaching approaches as well as content. A balanced approach ensures students experience several learning contexts that vary in their level of support: these typically include modeled reading and writing, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, and independent reading and writing—all of which are supported through whole-group, small-group, and independent practice (Brailsford, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Underpinning the concept of balance is the belief that students learn best through a variety of experiences, and through a gradual release of independence that moves from modeled toward independent learning (Brailsford, 2002).

Descriptions of balanced literacy demonstrate an understanding that literacy must be fostered in a complex environment that attends to both the skills and strategies needed to decode, as well as to the more complex affective domain that leads to high levels of engagement and sophisticated understandings. Researchers working on the concept of balance (Allington, 2001; P. M. Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Pressley, 2006) recognize that reading requires explicit teaching (for example, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 1), and that explicit instruction within a diverse environment allows students who arrive with little reading exposure to thrive alongside stronger readers (P. M. Cunningham, 2003; P. M. Cunningham et al., 1999). They are unequivocal as well in arguing that attending to reading can be done well (in context) within a rich, whole-language environment (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). In other words, the suggestion by researchers who argue that a whole-language environment necessarily ignores the need to teach reading skills seems unfounded in light of successful teachers' experiences with balanced literacy programs (for positive case studies, see Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; P. M. Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1998; Dicembre, 2002). Similarly, the arguments suggested by Goodman and Goodman, and Smith are equally weakened by evidence demonstrating a high level of engagement within a classroom that attends to reading skills explicitly. Strangely, what began as an argument regarding opposing approaches is reframed within the idea of balance to suggest that a program that omits either perspective will be ineffective—both paradigms, it seems, hold part of the answer.

Conclusion

Very likely, the paradigm shift Foorman spoke of will not come about as a result of any new research on reading or literacy. The problem is not that researchers are coming up with the wrong answers; instead, we need to consider the possibility that they have tended to ask the wrong questions, or, at the very least, that they have in some cases attempted to address exceptionally complex questions through a narrow lens. More complete answers may be found by considering Wendel Garner's advice and abandoning our worship of researchers as holders of knowledge, and by encouraging academics and teachers to reflect in concert on what seems to work in classrooms. The nature of the communication between researchers and teachers might be better served by considering the relationship as a reciprocal, flexible partnership rather than as a unidirectional source of guidance. In this sense, research from both paradigms can inform what teachers do and how they reflect on their practice without prescriptive blindness to dissimilar realities. A balanced approach acknowledges the unique nature of classrooms that require as much attention to how any one teacher will succeed in fostering engagement as to what they ought to be teaching: context, approach, and content are considered collectively, rather than in isolation. The point is that we do not need to adhere to any one paradigm, but to pay heed to the insights each has to offer in light of the definition of literacy that we choose to adopt. Indeed, the sheer volume of research into this debate is staggering, and while there seems to be some tendency to suggest the debate is over and to continue to argue for one side or the other, the more germane question for us to pursue is, "What knowledge can we exploit from the research on both ends of the continuum in order to support literacy learning?"

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Whose Literacy Learning Landscapes Matter? Learning From Children's Disruptions

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on my shifting concepts of literacy, re-researching and re-positioning about multiple literacies over decades of working with bilingual and multilingual children in diverse language contexts. I use the metaphor *children's disruptions* as entry points in establishing cultural dialogues about children's literacy accomplishments in multilingual contexts. Disruptions refer to children who along the way by a casual utterance, question, informal text or drawing unsettled my thinking about how languages and literacies impact on their identity, cultural positioning and ideological affiliations in different discursive spaces and diasporan communities.

Reflecting Back: Re-researching and Re-positioning

What is literacy? What is second language literacy? These questions preoccupied me and many researchers and theorists in the 70s and 80s. Many looked beyond sociocognitive approaches and views of literacy as technical skills and concluded that literacy is context specific, variable and not an autonomous, monolithic concept (Street, 1985). Fagan (1998) argues that it is one thing to create a definition of literacy; it is another to situate oneself within an interpretation of literacy. Meek offered insightful comments about literacy in the early nineties as concepts of literacy shifted; her comments still resonate:

> Literacy has two beginnings, one in the world, the other in each person who learns to read and write ... Behind the visible words of written texts there

> lives the writer's context, his or her life, in the world, and in the mind, in actions and in language. Language and thought meet and change each other at the bumpy intersection of literacy events. (Meek, 1991, pp.13, 35)

In the 1990s, New Literacy Studies emerged, as did new concepts such as multiliteracies, multimodal literacies and multilingual literacies (New London Group, 1996). In 2009, increasing cultural and linguistic diversity, border crossings, and new technologies calls for "New research on New and Multi Literacies" (Moje, 2009), which are as multiple as the discourses on and about literacies. I have argued that literacy practices are deeply rooted in sociocultural, historical, economic and cultural forces that are sometimes visible, sometimes invisible (Maguire, 1994, 2005). Missing in this academic rhetorical sovereignty about literacies is this question: *Whose voices and perspectives about literacies and literacy landscapes really matter?*

In this article, I reflect on my shifting concepts of literacy, re-researching and re-positioning about literacy and literacies over decades from working with bilingual and multilingual children in diverse language contexts. I offer bilingual/multilingual *children's disruptions* as entry points in establishing cultural dialogues and reflective understandings about children's literacy accomplishments in multilingual/multicultural contexts. The metaphor *children's disruptions* characterizes my initial curiosity about how bilingual children, and now especially multilingual children from non-mainstream backgrounds, negotiate multiple and multilingual literacies in the contexts in which they find themselves. By *disruptions*, I mean children who along the way by a casual utterance, question, informal text or drawing unsettled my thinking about how languages and literacies impact on their identity, cultural positioning and ideological affiliations in different discursive spaces and diasporan communities (Maguire, 2005). Using children's textual representations written over several decades, I engage in a little Foucauldian strategy—the historical episteme—ideas and knowledge debates over the decades that circumscribe what is permissible or fashionable to talk about in any historical period.

The *children's disruptions* I present reflect three overlapping phases in my inquiries into children's textual powers and agency, which in turn reflect the prevailing and fashionable literacy discourses in different decades: 1) *Mid 1970s: Emergent literacy, biliteracy phase* that focused on individual children's development; 2) *Early — Late 1980s: Social constructivist phase* that focused on the sociocultural worlds of children from diverse backgrounds in school, classroom and family contexts; and 3) *Early 1990s — present: Critical literacy and applied linguistic phase* that focuses on multilingual literacies in heritage language contexts and diasporan communities. Emergent

literacy theorists in the 1970s and early 1980s focused on individual children and their control of written language in reading and writing. In the mid 1980s, social constructivist theorists focused on children's construction of knowledge, social relationships and collaborative learning while in the early 1990s critical literacy and applied language education theorists focused on issues of social status, power relationships and social justice as manifested through class, race, gender and culture in diverse communities. The disruptions I selected are pivotal examples when children moved me from labeling them as "creative linguistic explorers" to describing them as "bilingual story writers" and readers to my present thinking that focuses on working *with* children and understanding their "speaking personalities," ideological becoming and positionings (Maguire, 1987, 1988; Maguire & Graves, 2001).

Entry Point 1: Emergent Literacy, Litteracie & Biliteracy: Differentiating Language Systems

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s my work focused on and respected bilingual primary children's generativity—their abilities—embedded in nested context of collective and personal meanings and social relationships—to imagine and create new ways of being (Maguire, 1987, 1988, 2005). Three-and-half-year-old Marie (all names are pseudonyms) first disrupted my thinking about biliteracy, niggling me from my comfortable academic pew by her French and English scribble writing as she was about to start school in a French-language kindergarten. In response to my question as to why she wanted to go to French-language school, she replied: "*Because I already know English and I know how English stories work*." She then produced two stories, one in English and one in French as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

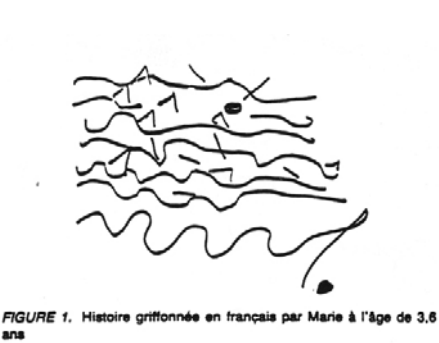

FIGURE 1. Histoire griffonnée en français par Marie à l'âge de 3,6 ans

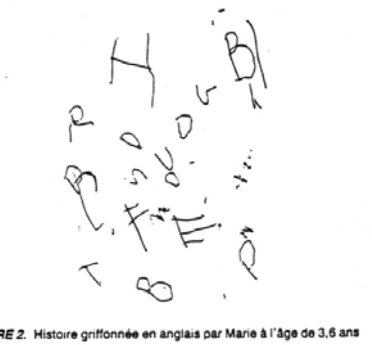

FIGURE 2. Histoire griffonnée en anglais par Marie à l'âge de 3,6 ans

Fig. 1 and Fig. 2: English and French scribble writing as two panels

Individual children like Marie offered many emergent textual representations that started me on a journey to understand bilingual children's positionings, hear their voices, appreciate their viewpoints and understand their identity politics in more than one language. Their discursive positionings provoked me to consider Bakhtin's sense of "new interpretive horizons" and ever new ways to mean" when conceptualizing bilingual children's textual representations. Bakhtin's dialogic theory (1986), which assumes a fusion of languages and social worlds, has been pivotal in my explaining and understanding bilingual and multilingual children's utterances and texts. Their texture efforts are not ideologically neutral nor do they occur in ideologically neutral environments such as schools, classrooms, homes and communities—what Bakhtin calls "contact zones" (Maguire & Curdt-Christiansen, 2007).

Like many language and literacy theorists in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Britton, 1970; Halliday, 1978; Meek, 1991; Street, 1985), I focused on individual children's emergent literacy development. Only decades later do I have a much better understanding and appreciation for how their texts could be linked to their "ways of being" in the world. Although exciting times for researchers interested in developmental issues, very few inquiries during this era focused on biliteracy. I rejected deficit models of language and literacy, especially for children learning to read and write in more than one language and for which pejorative ways of labeling learners prevailed (*At Risk* in Canada, *Lotes* in Australia and *Leps* in the USA). These pernicious, pervasive prevailing discourses about literacy used explicit deficit metaphors for illiteracy such as a disease, handicap, and sickness. Regardless of chosen metaphor, children were viewed as having deficit pathologies to be eradicated and needing treatment and remediation. These discourses prioritized the alphabetic encoding of the reading process in mainstream languages and alphabetical languages as a prerequisite to learning how to read. Mainstream languages were deemed superior to other orthographies. This narrow, static view of literacy as "knowing one's letters" was not culturally or linguistically informative when applied to the processing of syllabic or logographic languages in indigenous contexts such as Cree, Mohawk or Inuktitut.

Countervailing discourses emerged as scholars challenged essentializing concepts, deficit views and resisted "a one size fits all" model of language and literacy pedagogies. Cummins' (1996) theoretically compelling construct of common underlying proficiency in second language learning was particularly attractive in explaining bilingual children's intertextuality in more than one language (Maguire, 1987). Heath's work and other scholars in early literacy (Goodman 1987; Hudelson, 1994) confirmed from their "kid watching" that children had different "ways of taking" from different literacy traditions in different communities. Even though these researchers

positively viewed children as active participants and social actors in their language learning and social worlds, children were still perceived as essentialized homogenous groups of "kids." Some children had community designations such as Heath's "Trackton" kids; some had racial identifications as "Black," "Hispanic" or "Latino" or some had status identities as "minority language," a label that many Canadian researchers and I used uncritically. Teachers and researchers in L1 and L2 language and literacy worked in their own professional, homogenized silos, neither group talking to or with each other. Jane Miller (1983) was one of the first to argue that bilingual children were not deficient, nor stranded but poised between languages. Jezak, Painchaud and d'Anglejan (1995) were the first to use the term *litteratie* in French research and challenged the term *alphabétisation*, a term that reflects a narrow and static view of literacy in French literacy discourse as well as English. However, much discourse in this era still focused on mainstream languages rather those with different alphabetical systems such as Chinese, Japanese, Persian or Arabic, to name a few. Few considered the interplay between what Elsa Auerbach (2005) refers to as local and globalizing forces that impact on individuals' and groups' access to and uses of multiple literacies in particular contexts and communities.

Entry Point 2: Moving from Literacy, Littératie to Non-Mainstream Literacies

Two pivotal moments, *Epiphanies of the Ordinary* to borrow from James Joyce (cited in Bruner, 1986), disrupted my thinking once again in the mid and late 1980s. The first occurred in 1985 when teaching a course on biliteracy in a summer institute for Micronesian teachers on the Island of Pohnpei. I became aware of my own white Caucasian identity as the only "visible minority" on this island. There amidst the chatter in my lanai classroom I heard many new languages from the Astronesian family that ranged from Nauuan, Kosrian, Marshallese, Chamorro, Woleaian, Paula, Trukic, Polynesian East Carolinian, Yapese and Pohenpeian. There in the middle of the South Pacific, I was confronted by my own ethnocentrism working in mainstream languages, discovered English as an International language taking on new identities and multiple ownerships and was forced to think about not only multiple literacies but multilingual literacies. Unsettling were the local children's daily questions and disruptions to my lanai classroom on this tiny island in the South Pacific: *Why are you so white? Why do you have blue eyes?* Working in Micronesia unsettled my neat western categorizations about literacy and ways of looking at literacy landscapes and turning on its head my rather amateur armchair voyeurizing,

ethnographic posing as an observer of young children to think more about inquiries and dialogues WITH multilingual children in heritage and indigenous contexts. The second Epiphany occurred locally the fall of that same year when I returned to Montreal and was working in urban diverse classroom contexts on a funded SSHRC study of "minority language children." A grade one Iranian child, Heddie, made me wrestle with new issues and how literacy was defined, written and conceptualized in non-mainstream languages and cultures from the perspectives of trilingual or multilingual children themselves (Maguire, 1999). These issues are still timely and relevant in 2009 as we live in a climate of increasing globalization and diverse demographic and migration patterns. Even today, mainstream academic discourses about literacy still prevail. Whose literacies and literacy landscapes are privileged and recognized in our classrooms and scholarly communities of literacy practices? Heddie piqued my curiosity about the meanings of children's biliteracy in non-mainstream cultures and languages as illustrated in Figure 3.

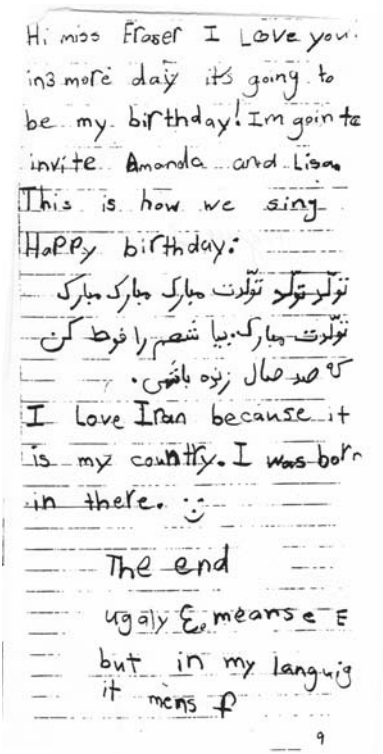

Fig. 3: Bilingual textual representations in non-mainstream languages

This text emerges from a 1994 dialogue journal writing teacher-researcher project in a grade one classroom in a Montreal inner city school. My initial inquiries into children's biliteracy began with a three-and-half-year-old's English and French scribble writing as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. My Vygotsksian focus on individual bilingual child story writers and their emergent literacies at the time convinced me that children's emerging construction and self-regulation of any symbolic system like written language is simultaneous with their participation in cultural dialogues with significant others. I often argued that children do not derive any language system by osmosis but from their experiences in literacy practices and how teachers and parents interpret and respond to their textual efforts. In 2009, I look at Heddie's text again and think about whose literacies are privileged in our academic conceptualizing of multiple literacies and whose literaces are included or excluded in classrooms. Still strikingly absent in the academic discourse about literacy and multiple literacies is reference to multialphabetical systems such as Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Arabic, to name a few. Children like Heddie forced me to think about more complex questions about language, learning, identity, schooling and society. For example, what kinds of people are children becoming in schools? How do multilingual children negotiate the processes of becoming a self in schools? In society? As citizens of the world? Or as ambassadors in diasporan communities—communities that know only too well the tensions and struggles between identity construction and identification with self and others. In reflecting back on my attempts to create a research space for myself that I could inhabit with imagination, integrity and credibility, I found that I could enter theoreticians' worlds such as Bakhtin (1986) and Vygotsky (1978) very easily. I have since learned that I cannot enter children's worlds so easily. I have learned to better appreciate the complexities of their sociocultural and personal worlds from their perspectives and locations as I try to understand their envisioned possibilities for selfhood, real or imagined.

Just when I thought I had discovered how bilingual children construct language for themselves and others in more than one language and context, another child, Hosi, disrupts my thinking about language and literacy with his text on Language and Hair:

> *All my friends at Saturday school speak Japanese. They all have black hair. But my friends at English schools do not. My best friend, Daniel speaks English and has blond hair. Jennifer has black hair like me but she is Chinese. Bejan speaks French and he has dark brown hair, friends at English school has all kinds of color hair and speaks all kinds of language. But we all speak English in class. I like both English and Japanese very much. I like my friends very much. (Ishibashi, 1993)*

Speaking in the present tense, Hosi talks about his classmates who all speak English and different languages and have different color hair but are friends. However, it would be a decade before I conducted inquiries in heritage language contexts such as our Multilingual Research Group's Heritage Languages Project (Maguire, 2007). Despite my strong child advocacy stance, I was still "othering" children as minority language children or students—a subject position that is distinct from persons, or friends.

Entry Point Three: Social Constructivist Phase Appreciating the Complexity of Multilingual Children's Textual Representations

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, many social constructivists (Wertsch, 1991) argued that as children engaged in relational activities with others, they appropriated and self-regulated their literacy actions by assuming a sense of agency in the coming-to-know process. There began the era of more contextualized, situated sociocultural perspectives, multiple ways of looking at identity and consideration of the myriad relational possibilities. Like many social constructivists, I located my research activities in traditional venues such as schools and teachers' classrooms—institutional venues inscribed with the power to name, label, to recognize or not. Hybrid identities, multiple identities, ethnolinguistic youth became the new labels for characterizing what minority language children did and/or did not do and who they were. By the mid 1990s, this social constructive turn led researchers influenced by Vygotsky (1978) to begin talking about the complex intersections among languages, cultures, communities and classrooms. The next text invited me to further think about the complexities of children's textual representations and different types of mapping of social relations that are possible within one text just as Multiple Literacies had become the new fashionable discourse about literacy.

During this era the emergence of New Paradigm Diversity (Denizen & Lincoln, 2000) brought new motions that came in multiplexes. Everything seemed to be in multiples, multiple voices, multiple realities, multiple literacies and multiple forms of representation, multiple interdisciplinary approaches, multiple perspectives to knowledge construction, multiple discourses, multiple tensions and multiple challenges. Although I intellectually thought I understood these academic discourses, Sadda disrupted my thinking about children's textual representations to consider critical literacy and more *critically examine literacy* as a negotiation of one's

orientation towards written language through one's discursive positioning within multiple forms of complex relations of power and status as illustrated in Figure 4.

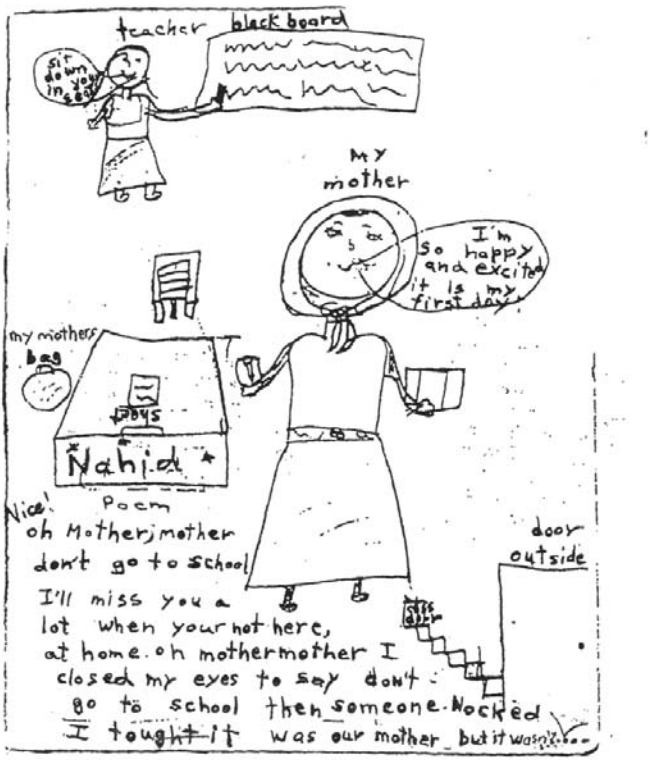

Fig. 4: Sadda—a grade 3 Iranian multilingual child and multiple textual representations

This text emerged from another Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded study of minority language primary children's negotiation of literacy practices and cultural positioning in home and schools contexts. I use and continue to use this text in my multilingual literacies course as a stunning example of a voice-centered relational approach that views children as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations and discourses and what Bakhtin calls "sympathetic co- experiencing" (Bakhtin, 1986; Maguire & Graves, 2001). I ask my students to engage these questions: *What has Sadda appropriated? What is she reifying or resisting in this text?* Her evaluative stance towards her social worlds—the most immediate one of which is her mother's situation as a second language learner, demonstrates her internalization of the indexical signs of modernist literacy practices and discourses of schools and classrooms. Her evocative poem addressed to her

mother with a plea not to go to night school is juxtaposed with her mother's voice and expressed delight of attending school in a dialogic bubble: "*I'm so happy and excited. It is my first day.*" Her drawing includes the traditional, modernist semiotic resources and tools of school learning situations, such as a teacher, a blackboard, a school desk and chart, her mother's school bag and a sheet of paper. She represents diverse social roles and subject positions as student and teacher, mother and daughter through complex multiple representations. Giving voice to multilingual children's perspectives on becoming and being multiliterate requires a continual audit of the meaning of their contextual worlds where subtle shifts and slides of meanings collide, occur and reoccur (Maguire, 1997, 1999).

Writing is a critical resource for the development of multilingual children's textual powers, agency and writing identity multiple languages. I use the term "textual powers" to refer to children's sense of agency to use and create texts as resources to represent aspects of human experiences, self and identity. Children's texts in more than one language offer interesting insights into their envisioned possibilities of selfhood and writing identity (Ivanic, 1998). Ivanic argues that "writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socioculturally shaped possibilities of selfhood playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody" (p. 31). The textual powers of Lingling, a trilingual child author who claimed an authorial self in three languages, Chinese, English and French (Curdt-Christiansen & Maguire, 2007), have been previously documented elsewhere. She is just one of the many trilingual or multilingual children who have had opportunity to encounter the last decade working in trilingual literacy contexts. They frequently reflect on their own sense of self, their insider and outsider status, their sense of belonging, race and ethnicity. They have their own articulate preferences for the multiple schools and literacy practices they are asked or required to or volitionally engage and through their textual powers reveal a trace of their own ideological becoming and affiliations (Maguire & Curdt-Christiansen, 2007).

Fig. 5: Zaz & Zinette comic strip

Lingling's text, *Zinette, la génie !*, disrupted my thinking about multiple literacies, multimodal literacies and multilingual literacies and forced me to consider new questions about writing and literacies in multiple languages. Lingling reads and creates comics in English, Chinese and French (Curdt-Christiansen & Maguire, 2007). This self-initiated French comic strip textual endeavor illustrates her agency in creating texts that disrupt the social order in her third language! Do children's particular discourse choices support particular ideologies and representational perspectives of knowledge making and social orders in particular contexts or languages? As this

generation of multilingual young people grows to adulthood, what literacies will they value and embrace, resist or discard? What loyalties will they retain or reject? What languages will they choose to speak, read and write? How will they define their individual and collective identities? What and/or who will they define as their community or communities, or communities of practices? Social institutions and power relationships pattern literacy practices, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others. And why? The answer to these questions requires a continual audit of Literacy Life Worlds (spaces for community life where local and specific meanings can be expressed, represented, shared and understood) and Worlds of Literacy (distinct literacies that exist alongside each other in complex societies—each with their own historical literacy trajectories).

Revisiting and Rethinking Multiple Literacies, Literacy Signs: Reading the Signs and World of Literacies

"Literacy" is now viewed as complex social practices and ways of knowing, being and becoming, believing, doing and valuing. New Literacy theorists argue that literacy practices are always rooted in particular worldviews that reflect the values, cultures and patterns of privileges in different social, cultural, linguistic, political contexts (Gee, 1996; Luke 2003; Street, 1985, 2008). They maintain that reading, writing and meanings are always situated within specific practices, specific Discourses (Gee), and I would add nested contexts (Maguire, 1994). As Sadda's text reveals, there is always more than one context intersecting with literacy practices. Literacy events, practices, activities replace literacy skills, tasks, narrow concepts of reading and writing such as learning letters. The term practices, central in the New Literacy Studies approach to literacy, is used in two ways: (1) To refer to observable, collectable or documentable specific ethnographic details of situated literacy events, involving real people, relationships, purposes, actions, places, times, feelings, tools and resources. The term "practices" in this sense often contrasts with and complements the term "texts," since it refers to those other aspects of literacy beyond the text itself; and (2) To refer to culturally recognizable patterns of behavior that can be discerned from specific literacy activities around "texts." The term "practices" in this sense often includes "textual practices," the culturally recognizable patterns for constructing texts. The New London Group (1996) also uses the term multimodal literacies to include the range of modalities, printed words, still and moving images, sound speech, music and color—that authors combine to design texts. Literate practices refer to specific sways of utilizing literacy shaped by the values, interests and

knowledge-making practices of particular communities. Literate activity refers to the broad spectrum of actions of particular communities.

New conceptualizations of literacy have led to new ways of naming literacy/literacies: In 2003, Kress referred to Multimodal Literacies while Martin-Jones and Jones edited a collection of articles about Multilingual Literacies and Cope and Kalantzis (2008) talk about Multiliteracies. These significant epistemological changes in concepts and conceptualizing literacy have led to a rich lexicon of literacy definitions. Some are: traditional literacy, functional literacy, cultural literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, computer literacy, scientific literacy, musical literacy, spiritual literacy, health literacy, emergent literacy, family literacy, technical literacy, local literacy, community literacy, city literacies, world literacies, indigenous literacies, vernacular literacies, civic literacy, ecological literacy, biliteracy, multiliteracies, and multilingual literacies. To what extent is it appropriate and useful to distinguish between and among these uses of the term "literacy"?

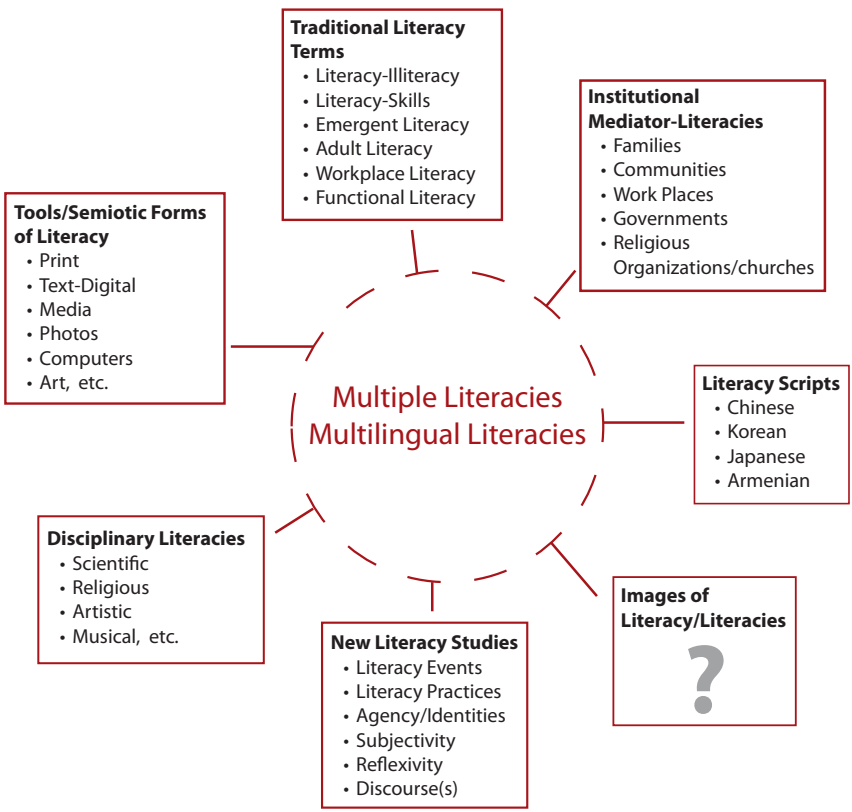

Fig. 6: Multiple Literacies, Multilingual Literacies

Indeed there are myriad ways to focus on contemporary understandings of multiple literacies as a complex set of social practices in diverse multilingual and multicultural contexts. In learning specific literacy practices, children are not just developing technical skills but are taking on particular identities and values associated with them. Thus, different literacy practices position children differently in socio-cultural-linguistic-political spaces. This view of literacy practices assumes that literacy learning and literacy development is connected with much deeper cultural values about identity, personhood and relationships. The concept of "literacy event" (Heath, 1983) highlights the mediation of texts through dialogue and social interactions in the contexts of particular practices and settings. The concept of "literacy practice" incorporates events, and people's individual and collective beliefs and understandings about them.

In 2005 The Executive of the National Council of Teachers of English approved a summary statement developed by the Multimodal Literacies issue team that calls for declarative statements concerning the broadest definitions of multimodal literacies:

> It is the interplay of meaning-making systems (alphabetic, oral, visual, etc.) that teachers and students should strive to study and produce. "Multiple ways of knowing" also includes art, music, movement and drama, which should not be considered curricular luxuries.

In 2008, the Executive of the National Council of Teachers of English included this statement about literacy on their Web site:

> Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies—from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups.

In all this diverse conceptualizing of literacies, a missing dimension is reference to Heritage Literacy and Literacies in languages other than dominant ones, and what these multiple, multimodal and multilingual literacies might look like in diverse

languages. Heritage literacies involve complex intergenerational, interlingual literacy practices, beliefs, values and ways of knowing. These context-specific literacy practices are embraced, adapted or rejected by learners within and across generations. They reflect the choices individuals and communities make about literacy practices, identities and identity politics. Although Montreal is a North American city with the highest number of trilingual students and reported highest retention of languages other than dominant mainstream languages, we know very little about multilingual literacies and identity politics within these heritage contexts. I return to my question signaled in my title: Whose Literacies and Literacy Landscapes matter?

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Unexpected Learning: Two PhD Candidates Narratively Inquire Into Their Experiences With an ESL Group

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ABSTRACT

We inquired into stories we lived whilst members of an ESL group. We used a narrative inquiry methodology. Our inquiry revealed tensions between identities given and identities continually negotiated between teacher, student and group member. Dewey's (1938) concept of experience, notions of literacy acquisition (Collins & Blot, 2003; Cummins, 2001; Heath, 1983; Rose, 1989; Street, 1995), and Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) ideas about teacher knowing, teacher identity and curriculum serve as the theoretical framework. Our inquiry helped us imagine educational landscapes which are responsive to ESL learners and a place where members of dominant discourse communities can wonder about the existence of hegemony.

"I chose a course-based Masters. I made this decision because I assumed Canadian and Chinese scholars conducted research differently. I was confident of my ability to be successful with course work, as I had always been in China. The differences in research methods concerned me, so I decided to avoid the issue by taking the course-based route. My confidence was soon interrupted as I encountered huge differences between what I expected and what I faced. I tried my best to adjust to the Canadian way of doing things, not just with my courses, but with everything. I felt it was my responsibility to change. I was the newcomer; therefore, I believed I had no right to ask people to make changes for me. Moreover, it was my repeated experience that people were not interested in my ways of knowing and being." (Miao Sun, in conversation with Sandra Jack-Malik, 2009)

Introduction

We hear Miao say she arrived in Canada confident of her ability to successfully engage in and complete a course-based Masters; however, this confidence was quickly interrupted when she repeatedly encountered situations where her way of knowing and being did not garner acceptance or result in a successful outcome. Moreover, we understand Miao believed it was her responsibility to make the required changes which would allow her to successfully "fit" in.

We began our doctoral studies in the fall of 2007. By December of the first year we were involved in a weekly ESL group. We came to the group for different reasons. Miao, as noted in the above snippet of conversation, was hoping to acquire native-like fluency and in so doing move away from the tensions and take a step towards acceptance within the academic community. Miao's coming to the group, therefore, was part of her strategy to develop the skills which would allow her to fit in. Sandra, who was also experiencing tensions, was hoping for a quick and safe return to the position of teacher and expert because she was struggling with a torrent of change which sometimes results when an experienced teacher returns to the academy and assumes a student identity. Moreover, Sandra believed she had the knowledge and skills which she could dispense to Miao and thus help her to fit in. In this paper, using a narrative inquiry methodology and narrative constructions of identity and identity shifts, we inquire into our involvement with the (ESL) group. We framed our autobiographical inquiry into our experiences with the ESL group as a journey and as a conversation because we see it as a series of linked, relational experiences, which over time afforded us the opportunity to shift our identities by telling and retelling our stories to live by[1] as teacher, student and as members of discursive communities. This paper includes both our perspectives and it is written as a series of dialogical stories, followed by an inquiry into these stories. Our aim was to deepen our understanding of the lived curriculum[2] as we experienced it within our ESL group and to understand the possibilities it afforded us for identity shifts.

Framing Our Study

Drawing on the following epistemological and theoretical ideas, we framed our narrative inquiry into our experiences of participating in the ESL group. We began with Dewey's notion of experience (1938) to provide a foundation upon which our thinking rested. Then we considered notions of literacy acquisition (Collins & Blot,

2003; Cummins, 2001; Heath, 1983; Rose, 1989; Street, 1995) which afforded us the opportunity to consider the links between literacy acquisition, power and identity. Moreover, we leaned on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995) for ideas about teacher knowing, teacher identity and curriculum.

Experience and Identity

As we began to inquire into our stories we had many wonders. We understood we are both doctoral students within the same faculty; however, because of our life experiences we had positioned ourselves differently in relation to one another and with respect to our place within the academy. We wondered about our individual positioning and in particular we wondered what had and was influencing it. With this in mind, we turned to Dewey's (1938) notion of experience which allowed us to appreciate

> every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences, [such that] the continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after. (p. 35)

With Dewey's theory of experience in mind we then considered Macintyre's (1998) and Bruner's (1991) argument that humans are narrative beings telling who they are through story. Moreover, they posited identity is constrained by one's place in society and by the interconnectedness of the events and experiences as we meaningfully thread them together. This thought allowed us to wonder about the hegemony embedded in Sandra's decision to set up the ESL group and about Miao's feelings that she was solely responsible for making what she perceived as the required changes which would result in her fitting in. We also considered Carr's (1986) and Crites' (1979) narrative coherence such that, we struggle to make sense through the stories we tell across time and context. Moreover, because we were researching our involvement in the group over an extended period of time and because we believed we had both experienced identity shifts, we thought about Connelly and Clandinin (1999) who view identity as embodied, fluid and multiple, depending upon context. Finally, we understood our experiences in the ESL group had generated a new relationship between ourselves and the discursive communities in which we engaged. In

constructing our descriptions and explanations of our experiences with the ESL group, we wanted to account for the identity shifts which had allowed us to "generate a new relation between a human being and her environment — her life, community, world" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). According to Dewey (1981) this new relation will be "... more significant, and less overpowering and oppressive" (p. 175); this is what we imagined in our future stories.

Literacy Acquisition, Power and Identity

Sandra created the ESL group believing she had skills and knowledge to dispense; she supposed said skills were required by her international colleagues. Miao came to the group because she saw it as part of her strategy to acquire the skills which would allow her to fit in. These were our intentions at the outset; however, over time we both realized there was much more going on and we wanted to understand it. We began by reading in the area of subsequent language acquisition which views language learning as a process embedded in a number of sociocultural contexts (Toohey, 2000). Collins and Blot (2003) and Street (1995) described reading and writing as processes embedded with values, attitudes and beliefs. Heath (1983) described literacy learning as a process which included and privileged some while excluding others. Bucholtz and Hall (2003) described this exclusion as markedness or the "hierarchical structuring of difference" (p. 3). This markedness is problematic, they argue, when the unmarked group is assumed as the norm and its right to power is taken for granted and therefore difficult to challenge. Those whose identities are marked as not possessing the "norm" may struggle within hegemonic discourses as they attempt to meet the unmarked norm. Cummins (2001) described a process where language learning ought to be viewed through a lens of what he called, "identity negotiation."

Teacher Knowing and Teacher Identity

As we shared our stories it quickly became apparent to us that Sandra had shifted her identity away from expert teacher / knowledge dispenser. What originally began as well-planned, detailed lessons had morphed into otherwise and we were curious to understand why this had happened. Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1999) described teachers as knowledge possessors or knowers. They coined the phrase "personal practical knowledge" to describe teachers as holders of knowledge:

> Personal practical knowledge is past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in a person's practice. It is, for any one person, a particular way of reconstructing the past the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present future. (1988, p. 25)

With teachers as knowers, Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) view of curriculum is as "something experienced in situations." They saw situation as "made up of people and their surrounding environment" (p. 6). Curriculum then is experienced by teachers in dynamic relationships with students whilst living out previously composed stories and directing thought to future stories. Therefore, they argued if a teacher understands her personal practical knowledge, she is better able to understand the curriculum making she is engaged in.

Connelly and Clandinin turned to the work of Carr (1986) in their efforts to connect teacher experiences and teacher identity. Carr spoke about narrative coherence such that "the narrative coherence of a life-story is a struggle" (p. 96). Connelly and Clandinin used the term "stories to live by" to narratively conceptualize teacher identity which includes personal practical knowledge and identity. Reading this work encouraged us to wonder what had happened and continued to happen in our weekly meetings which had supported our shifts in identity.

Our Method

We wanted a way to inquire into the stories we were sharing, therefore we turned our exploration to what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. This metaphorical space has the notion of temporality along one side (Dewey's continuity), personal and social along a second side (Dewey's interaction) and place along the third (Dewey's situation). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) added to this description by including what they termed the four directions of inquiry: inward and outward and back and forward. They used the word "inward" to focus attention on the internal conditions of those involved with the inquiry; hopes, feelings, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions were things to be inquired into. By using the word outward the authors were referring to the existential conditions: the environment. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the inquiry process as follows: "to experience an experience — that is, to do research into an experience — is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways

and to ask questions pointing each way" (p. 50). Leaning on this three-dimensional space which is grounded in Dewey's theory of experience, we continued our explorations.

We begin with the story which was the catalyst for the formation of our group.

Sandra: How the ESL group began

I am a participant in a weekly gathering (research issues) of students and academics at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development at the University of Alberta. D.J. Clandinin is the director of the centre and she is also my supervisor. Participating in these meetings, I came to appreciate what Steeves et al. (2009) described when they wrote about their experiences having attended research issues: "participants come to know the necessity of creating a safe and caring tone for sharing work and experiences in their lives, for inquiring and voicing concerns related to issues of research and teacher education" (p. 308). I was, however, reluctant to attend the meetings. Dr. Clandinin began inviting me to participate early in 2008; however I did not feel I had anything to contribute. After several invitations I tentatively began attending. One day I was seated next to a colleague who had chosen to share some of her writing. As the woman read I was moved by the originality of the sentence structure and by the depth of my emotional reaction to the writing. When she finished reading I expected the group to offer response as was the custom; this did not happen. I did not understand and I was too shy to offer my own response. I wondered if perhaps those in attendance had experienced difficulty in understanding what had been read; English was not the woman's first language. I realized I had been reading along because the pages were on the table in front of us and therefore, I had understood everything. Later that evening as I reflected on the meeting, I thought I would like to offer my expertise (Master's Degree in ESL) to the woman. Tentative e-mails were exchanged, lesson plans were written which included lists of target skills (correct phoneme production, vocabulary development, voice projection, stress, tone and intonation, etcetera) and so began the weekly ESL group. After a month, two more members joined the group, a visiting scholar and Miao.

Sandra inquires into the beginning story

Because of the experiences I was having at the weekly research issues meetings, I felt I could and wanted to help. Today, when I inquire into my decision to offer assistance, I believe it was grounded in my desire to stand on familiar, nonjudgmental

ground. Moreover, I believe it was grounded in the university counterstory[3] experiences I was having at research issues where relationship and respect were consistently foregrounded. Many things about being a doctoral student were otherwise; at each turn, what I thought, wrote and said was judged. I worked as a teacher for eighteen years; I had reached a place where I felt a certain degree of confidence in my work. When I began my studies this instantly changed because I was a student, studying within a system where judgment and competition were central to the process. I now believe, therefore, that part of the reason I offered to help was related to a familiar embodied story, part of my personal practical knowledge[4] that I was experiencing. I wanted to return to the comfort of teacher and expert in an effort to interrupt the constant judgment. I chose to design a new in-classroom space, one where I would position myself in a way that let me live out my personal practical knowledge. When I prepared the skills checklists and the lesson plans, I was comforted not only by the familiarity of the routine but also by my anticipated return to the front of the class. This was part of my stories to live by, my identity, who I knew myself to be in my teaching practice and how I understood the meaning of literacy.

Thinking about the personal and social side (Dewey's interaction) of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, I acknowledge that when I began my behaviour was grounded in hegemonic thinking in that it did not occur to me that my involvement would quickly become as much about who I am and how I position myself in the world as it was for Miao. When I began, I saw myself as teacher; dispensing knowledge from the front of the class and in so doing I would experience the comfort of familiarity.

Miao's first story: A classroom spectator

It was the fall of 2003, my first term in Canada as an international student and I was studying for a second master's degree. I was sitting in a classroom of approximately ten students. Two thirds of the class time had passed and I had not said a word. My classmates were actively discussing something with our professor. A student was talking and several others were raising their fingers or pens, indicating they would like to share something. I watched and listened; my eyes constantly switching from one person to another as the speaker changed. People were speaking so hurriedly and the topics continually shifted; I had no clue how and where to fit my ideas into the conversation. Sometimes I nodded when the others nodded and laughed when the others laughed although I did not really understand why.

Miao inquires into this story

My early experiences as an international student in Canadian classrooms were so frustrating that I often lacked confidence and therefore did not frequently participate. I most often behaved as a spectator rather than an active participant, unless I was invited into a discussion by a professor or a classmate. Even after I was accepted into a doctoral program in 2007, my reluctance to participate lingered. I believed that in the eyes of my classmates, I was a quiet, Asian girl, with no personal opinions to contribute to discussions. When I began the course work for my PhD I continued to pretend to understand and often I pretended to laugh. I read Crites' (1979) broadened notion of coherence which included self-deception and the cover stories humans sometimes tell in efforts to make the narratively constructed story appear more acceptable. I now understand my pretending and laughing were cover stories created and enacted in my efforts to be included. Moreover, I understand my classmates pretending to understand me as their contribution to the cover story. This pretention allowed them to avoid having to take the necessary time to clarify when communication barriers arose which I perceived to be the result of my English pronunciation. They joined me, it seemed, in co-composing shared cover stories.

When Sandra invited me to the ESL group I was delighted to have the chance to learn correct English pronunciation from a native speaker. Crites (1979) described forward-looking stories. I wanted to improve my English, I wanted to participate in class discussions; these were my forward-looking stories to live by. I expected Sandra to tutor me in my pronunciation and tell me exactly what to do in order to improve my productive communication skills. When I envisioned my participation in the ESL group, I imagined I would listen and imitate what Sandra, the expert native speaker, asked of me. This was a comfortable and embodied story, a habitus (Kerby, 1991) one I had lived for many years as a student in China. Also, I hoped that at long last I would acquire native-like pronunciation and fluency: two skills which are highly regarded in China. Furthermore, I believed having these skills would allow me to fit in while garnering immediate acceptance from the Canadian academic community.

Considering Dewey's notion of temporality, I now understand my imagined behaviour and my identity as a student as linked to my cultural and educational background as a highly successful student within the Chinese system. A system where the teacher is expert and the student's job is to receive the knowledge being transmitted by the teacher; I was skilled in this method. Moreover, I think it is important to note that when I was a child I would not have directly asked the teacher a question because it might have been interpreted as a sign of disrespect and a challenge to the

teacher's authority. There were very clear expectations of what constituted appropriate student and teacher behaviour. Teachers were considered exceptional if they had limitless subject knowledge which they daily poured into the minds of their expectant students. Pupils were marked for success by hard work, outstanding grades and unequivocal respect for the teacher. Being a student in Canada, I experienced tensions therefore, between the identity, the stories I lived by when I arrived in Canada and the stories I was expected to live out (Carr, 1986) and that were required for success on a Canadian academic landscape. These tensions continually bumped up against (Clandinin et al., 2006) the stories I was composing, such that I was regularly asking myself who I was, who I wanted to be and who I needed to be. Coffee and Street (2008) "argued that learners own retrospective accounts of their learning draw on a range of discursive identities [which in turn] allows more nuanced glimpses into how individuals narrativise language learning as an identity project" (p. 452).

Sandra's second story: The first hint of an identity shift

I was delighted when Miao joined our group. At the time we were in a class together. One of the assignments involved individuals or small groups presenting a forty-minute seminar on the work of a pivotal thinker, in the area of literacy. It was the first time I heard Miao speak; she completely captured my attention. I realized how very clever Miao is and I felt myself listening differently from that moment forward. Later we were together in a second class and I was impressed by the professor's repeated invitations to engage Miao in class discussions as a valued member of the group. Miao always had interesting things to offer which allowed me to think about an issue from a different perspective; however, she only shared her thinking when invited to do so.

Sandra inquires into this story

Today when I think about my relationship with Miao, I understand I had a homogenized notion of her (King, 2003) because of her non-native sounding speech patterns. I had, as Bucholtz and Hall (2003) argued, marked her as less than the norm because of her non-native speech production. I now realize this notion was grounded in hegemonic thinking. I acknowledge that my homogenized, less-than labelling of Miao prevented the uniqueness of her identity from penetrating the label (Khayatt, 2001). Understanding this allowed me to wonder how I was manipulating the stories of other students I met, who did not speak with native-like fluency to fit within the homogenized, less-than label. I was wondering about this while meeting each week for an hour and a half with international students and visiting scholars. Slowly and

over time as members shared their stories to live by, I was afforded the opportunity to understand individual and sometimes shared stories of life within and upon an ESL landscape.[5] This in turn led to a broader range of possibilities, some which were resistant to and some which were complicit with my homogenized labelling of students for whom English was not their first language (King, 2003). I was glad for the realization because understanding this tendency and recognizing it allowed me to experience it as a tension when listening to the stories being told. When this happened I actively opened myself to hearing the story and experiencing the tension which was most useful in that I was able to see my own experiences reflected in the stories I heard. This shared experience drew me inward and allowed me to experience what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as hopes, feelings, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions of myself and of others. In the midst of this I felt a tiny slip from my pedestal of teacher, and a move towards an alongside relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Lugones (1987) described a process of world travelling to someone else's lived experiences with loving compassion. Each week as I inquired further into the stories we were sharing, I felt a non-judgmental space opening up within myself, which in turn allowed easier travel to the worlds of otherwise described by group members. Moreover, the inquiry into the stories has facilitated moments of what Hoffman (1994) referred to as resonant remembering because the stories shared drew forward some of my own memories, which had been dormant. This resonant remembering facilitated another shift in my teacher identity as once again I experienced coming alongside as a member of the group and not as the expert teacher because I saw myself, my struggles for narrative coherence (Carr, 1986), reflected in the stories being shared. I also understood that there are occasions when a student's personal practical knowledge coupled with the uniqueness of a particular context and our place within it (MacIntyre, 1998) can act as a limit upon participation. As the teacher I could behave in ways which invited participation and perhaps mitigated some of my students' reluctance to participate, while also shifting me away from the limits of labelling.

Miao's second story: How will I learn if the teacher speaks less?

I was a little surprised when Sandra told us she had listened to the digital recording of our class and concluded she was speaking too much and she wanted to reduce the number of minutes she spent speaking. I considered Sandra the teacher and role model in our group and I assumed she was the person who should be doing most of the speaking. I wondered, therefore, how I would learn from Sandra if she spoke less.

Miao inquires into this story

I appreciate my expectation for Sandra to do most if not all of the speaking is a result of my early stories to live by when I was a knowledge receiver who was expected to say very little. I now understand that within this cultural narrative, my personal practical knowledge was, and to a certain extent, continues to be embedded. I also understood that myself, as a student spectator, had become what Kerby (1991) described as habitus. I began to realize I was appreciating the opportunity Sandra's reduced talking provided for me and the group members. As I was encouraged to speak more, for the first time I felt I was a contributing member of the group. It made me feel I owned my place and my opinion was valued and sought out. As the weeks passed and my active participation in our ESL group increased, I realized my identity as a student was shifting from that of a spectator to that of an active, contributing participant in both the ESL group and in my regular classes.

Over time my participation in the ESL group brought me feelings of belonging and accomplishment within the Canadian educational landscape. As Bateson (1994) argued, education *is not* a preparation for participation; rather, in Dewey's (1916) words, "education is participation." I had felt frustrated when I identified and was identified by others as a quiet, passive, and sometimes marginalized spectator in a classroom. I was more able and willing to actively participate in the ESL group because within this landscape we created an environment where we belonged based on our willingness to share, respond to and reflect upon our stories to live by. Within this space I felt emboldened to begin a process of identifying as a participant learner while rethinking my identity as a knowledge receiver (Belenky, 1986).

Sandra: Another look at the tape recorder story

One Friday morning I asked the group if I might digitally record the session in efforts to reflect on my teaching practice. When I got the recording home and downloaded it to my computer, I was stunned to realize how many of the ninety minutes I spent talking. I decided I wanted to speak less and hopefully create more space for the students to speak, to practice. In my weekly meeting with my supervisor I explained my plan of action. I felt very good and rather clever about my decision. Dr. Clandinin responded by suggesting that I think about who I was in the group. She spoke about standing in front of a class and about being a member of a community; she wondered how I perceived my participation in the ESL group. Dr. Clandinin's response had not been what I wanted or anticipated, however, it did encourage me to consider my stories to live by as teacher and I realized I was still clinging to the pedestal which I had moved closer to the group; nevertheless I was still not a member

of the group. I now believe this to have been the case because my teacher stories did not include a vision of myself as a member of a group. Moreover, my story was a cover story (Crites, 1979) told and retold to avoid genuine group membership which required a commitment to intimacy of relationship, something for which I was not ready. Remaining upon my teacher pedestal and shrouded within the comfort of my familiar teacher story kept intimacy at arm's length. While I was having experiences which served as interruptions to this story, I was reluctant to engage in what Vinz (1997) described as "dispositioning," such that I would create spaces where I might "rethink and reconceptualize what it means to educate and to be educated" (p. 138). I began to wonder how I could story my teaching and learning in ways which did not reinforce my place on the teacher pedestal. I began to consider forward-looking stories (Lindemann Nelson, 1995) of teaching and learning and I envisioned myself within a group; and I was hopeful. hooks (2003) wrote "I work to recover our collective awareness of the spirit of community that is always present when we are truly teaching and learning" (p. xv).

Miao's third story---Stop me if you don't understand

In one of the ESL group meetings in the second year, Sandra suggested we try something new. She invited each of us to share a story from our recent winter vacation. She asked we do this first in pairs and then our partner would stand up and summarize our story. When someone was speaking, Sandra asked the listeners to raise their hands, signalling to the speaker that a member of the group did not understand what had been said. We had a great time with this activity. We were laughing together and joking around with our hands up and down when there was a misunderstanding caused by pronunciation or expression errors. Sandra kept encouraging us to help each other in clarifying meaning and offered her help only when necessary.

Miao inquires into this story

In retrospect, I was amazed by how calm and comfortable I was when fellow students raised their hands to stop me when communication barriers occurred. I could not have imagined this happening when I first arrived in Canada because I often acted as a spectator and felt so hesitant to participate because of my lack of communicative confidence. I wonder if I was not relieved that my classmates did not stop me for clarification when they did not understand. If they had, I suspect I would have reacted by becoming more frustrated and, in turn, quieter. I began to wonder how the landscape of the ESL group made such a difference in my learning experiences.

I realized that the ESL group not only provided a belonging place for my participation, but also a safe and inclusive space for my playful engagement. As Steeves (2006) states, "If as Dewey (1938) believed, education is a social process and participation holds the key for continual learning, then intentionally creating safe reflective spaces in educational institutions for inclusive participation is a necessity" (p. 107). The ESL group created a space where I felt safe and I knew I belonged, which in turn supported my increased willingness to participate. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) stated, it is a "secret place" that provides a relationship space that is more favourable for learning and growing. Compared with the formal classroom settings, this secret place was more responsive to an international student like me. I wonder if the academy could provide more secret places such as the ESL group, in which we could create our own secret stories instead of trying to fit within standardized academy stories.

Conclusion

As Coles (1989) stated, "their story, yours, mine---it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (p. 30). Our stories to live by, our identities as teacher, student and members of the ESL group reveal the tensions between the identities we brought to the group and the identities we continually negotiated in and through relationships. Through the story-telling we realized not only were our individual stories to live by (our identities) shifting, but also our perspectives on each other were shifting.

Although we came to the ESL group for different reasons, through our inquiry into our stories we learned to think differently and in so doing, shifted our identities. Miao began to explore other possible stories as an international student within the Canadian academy and she began to question her previous belief that it was her sole responsibility to make the changes which would allow her to experience feelings of fitting in. Sandra, on the other hand, began to question the contribution she was making to the hegemonic doctoral student environment, her homogenized notions of international students and her position as expert teacher and knowledge dispenser. Our inquiry into our stories therefore allowed us to consider other possibilities and to "move out of the lived story to tell with another 'I', another kind of story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 141).

Willis (1997, p. 388) reminds us that, "There is no singular history of literacy, nor is there a singular definition of literacy for there have been multiple definitions of literacy, multiple histories of literacy, and multiple paths to literacy" (Graff, 1995). Our ESL group is a secret place where we create our own literacy stories as knowledge holders, teachers, learners and as members of community. The constant identity negotiation in our ESL group helped us gradually develop a safe and comfortable language and literacy acquisition environment for the teacher and for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The alongside, relational commitment between group members reveals literacy acquisition is embedded in and reflects the social and cultural contexts. The lived curriculum we experienced in this ESL group provides insights for how better to support international ESL students in academic communities while also highlighting the hegemonic beliefs carried by members of the dominant discourse communities.

When we return to Miao's original story from her early days in Canada, we wonder how her experiences might have been different if she had had a secret place where she could have shared her lived stories and inquired into them. Moreover, we wonder what it would be like for international students, professors and instructors if they each began at the point at which we are presently. Can we learn to think about international students differently? Can the ESL markedness be something we value? It has come to mean precisely that for Sandra because she understands and appreciates that the shifts she made and continues to make were possible because of her involvement with the ESL group.

Notes

1. Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1999) described the storied lives lived and told by teachers as a conceptual framework for narratively understanding the links between what teachers know, the various contexts in which they live and their identities.

2. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) described curriculum as "something experienced in situations" and they described situations as being "made up of people and their surrounding environment" (p. 6.).

3. Clandinin et al. (2006) defined counterstories as "narratives composed to shift the taken-for-granted institutional narrative" (p. 171).

4. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) described personal practical knowledge as "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practices."

5. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) used a landscape metaphor to describe as the places where we live, work and play and as storied places where lives are composed, lived and relived.

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Arts-Based Research as a Pedagogical Tool for Teaching Media Literacy: Reflections From an Undergraduate Classroom

Patricia Leavy, Stonehill College

ABSTRACT

In this paper I review my use of arts-based research practices as a set of pedagogical tools for teaching media literacy in an undergraduate sociology course titled "Images & Power: Popular Culture." The paper details how I incorporated arts-based research into my course as a part of my holistic and participatory approach to media literacy. Arts-based practices are an effective tool for fostering critical consciousness. Samples of student work are included.[1]

Introduction

"Man of the Hour" by Sean Lynch

He's been pulled off stage without a word or a notion of what's going on
He was the last hope, the last chance for men of times gone by to define who we are
But now it's only those men who define women and those men who resent women
Who are defining who I am and that's not what I want or why I'm here

I'm here because I want a chance to speak for myself
And I have that chance

But most of the time those same women who are defined by those same men don't get it
That one chance to really say or do or be or hear or act in a way that is
What they are

And they let women define them until all the men and all the women are defined by one thing
Or another and there is nothing unique and nothing different
It is either this or that or nothing at all

The preceding poem was written by my student, Sean Lynch, as a part of his final paper in my undergraduate course, "Images & Power: Popular Culture." The poem explores his struggles with social constructions of masculinity and femininity and how those constructions confine and limit people his age. In the poem he tries to address how these constructions impact young men and women differently and how he does not want to be defined by them or to use them to define others. It is a powerful personal statement of awareness and resistance. Moreover, it illustrates the emergence of a critical consciousness, the ultimate goal in my course.

In this paper I review my use of arts-based research practices as a set of pedagogical tools for teaching media literacy. Eisner (2008) suggests that the concept of literacy can be re-conceptualized to recognize the multiple ways in which people can be literate or "multi-literate" (p. 27). I make a case for specifically using the arts to teach media literacy. I used arts-based practices in an undergraduate sociology course on critical approaches to popular culture. In order to explain the effectiveness of this approach to media literacy education, I begin with a brief review of my teaching and learning goals. Then I offer brief literature reviews on media literacy and arts-based research, respectively. The remainder of the paper details how I incorporated arts-based research into my course as a part of a participatory approach to media literacy. I include examples of student work. I conclude by suggesting that arts-based research can be a powerful tool for teaching media literacy.

My Teaching and Learning Goals

To think about effective teaching on its own is to put the cart before the horse. Teaching is always linked to learning and learning must be at the center of

teaching efforts. Finkel (2000) suggests that the dominant model of teaching is based on telling: "the sage on the stage," so to speak, where professors lecture and students learn through listening, copious note taking, and studying. Research indicates that traditional models of lecturing do not produce significant, long-lasting learning (Finkel, 2000). Finkel challenges the dominant model by redirecting attention to learning:

> Good teaching is the creating of those circumstances that lead to significant learning in others … good teaching must be conceived in terms of learning … [this] formulation reminds us of the primacy of learning, not teaching, in education. Learning is the end, teaching is a means to that end. (p. 8)

Similarly, Brookfield (2006) writes: "Skillful teaching is whatever helps students learn (p. 17)"—again, emphasizing student learning. Eisner (2008) notes that how something is taught impacts what students learn. Encouraging professors to think beyond traditional lectures, Finkel asks: "What other shapes could teaching take?" (2000, p. 1). Through a process of participating in teaching seminars and pedagogy conferences, I have come to consider "new shapes" for my own practices. In recent years I too have come to think extensively about my profession, teaching, and how to best produce meaningful student learning. When considering other forms for teaching, I am influenced by hooks' (1994) focus on the importance of making students "active participants" in their learning process.

Based on my own experiences teaching, as well as my review of teaching and learning scholarship, I suggest that the fundamental issue professors must consider as they choose pedagogical strategies is: *the alignment of teaching methods with learning goals*. In my discipline of sociology, this is clear in the research process; research methods are merely tools that are selected because of their utility for addressing particular issues. Put differently, you do not use a wrench to bang a nail into the wall if you have access to a hammer. Standard approaches to teaching cannot simply be employed irrespective of particular desired learning outcomes. Rather, desired learning outcomes must be identified and teaching practices selected that best facilitate those goals. This is a *problem-centric approach* to teaching.

In reflecting on the goals of my courses I have come to realize that in a four-year college setting, working exclusively with undergraduates, and within sociology, my goals typically are not content based, or at least not exclusively so. Rather, my primary goals are to help students develop critical thinking skills and a critical consciousness. As a feminist, my commitment to fostering critical consciousness is at the forefront as I construct courses and navigate with my students through them. In

this regard I emphasize issues of race, class, gender and sexuality. I aim for students to come to a deeper understanding of social power, and how it operates through ideologies, and impacts the psychic life of individuals. A heightened critical consciousness is a necessary precondition for this kind of reflexivity. My secondary goal is to foster self-expression and personal growth. The question then becomes: How do I best achieve my goals? In other words, what pedagogical strategies best align with my desired learning outcomes?

I teach an undergraduate elective course called "Images & Power: Popular Culture." The course is cross-listed as a sociology and gender studies course and, over the ten or so years I have been teaching the course, I typically get a mix of students from across the disciplines. Students read a variety of essays and articles presenting critical perspectives on various dimensions of popular culture: advertising, television, toys/games, globalization, movies, music, and so on. Most of the readings have race, class, gender, and/or sexuality perspectives looking at how popular culture can be used to create and reify existing relations of power or to subvert and resist those relations. In short, the goal of the class is to raise students' critical consciousness. In order to reach this goal, I adopt a critical media literacy approach to the course, helping students to become sensitized to the pop culture images and messages circulating in their environment.

Media Literacy

Media literacy projects propose that in order to be literate in contemporary society which is media saturated, people must be given strategies for reading media. Media literacy education assists people in understanding the ways in which messages are communicated to audiences through advertising, narrative, and images in the media. Media literacy programs typically have two main goals: to teach people to critically analyze mass media, and to offer people tools to develop new ways of putting their own messages into the multimedia network. Brown (1998) suggests people need to develop "media logic" about how they use and relate to their mediated environment. Learning about the strategies of the media can better enable individuals to question what is portrayed in media images and how they as individuals are impacted by media narratives (often in insidious ways). For example, media literacy challenges people to take media consumption seriously instead of assuming media is trivial and therefore not worthy of their focused attention. Media literacy projects cannot disavow the pleasure people take in their media consumption, but rather must address this complicated issue head on. One way to do this is to address people's process of media selection.

This spotlight on "media logic" draws people's attention to the ideologies, assumptions and values that circulate via media images. Research indicates that developing new ways to process these messages—critically, rather than passively—may intervene in the absorption of unhealthy images (Berel & Irving, 1998; Levine & Smolak, 1998; Levine, Piran, & Stoddard, 1999). Therefore media literacy projects aim to make media consumers active rather than passive (Brown, 1998, p. 47). This is not to imply that media literacy simply inoculates people against harmful messages. Media literacy aims to *sensitize* people to their media consumption.

For example, and as related to my feminist agenda, media literacy may seek to help people unravel idealized versions of femininity. Research indicates that while media literacy cannot inoculate girls and women from the harmful influence of idealized images, it can foster vital critical thinking skills. Irving and Berel (2001) studied the effectiveness of short-term media literacy on college women's resilience to media images of femininity. They found that media literacy programs that include a fifteen-minute educational feminist video about images of women in advertising resulted in "greater media skepticism" in female viewers (p. 109).

Scholarship suggests a vital link between media literacy and "empowerment education." I briefly elaborate on this connection because it is central to how I approach media literacy in Images & Power.

Media literacy is an integral component of "empowerment education," which is based on the premise that "population health and well-being are intimately tied to, and are consequences of, power and powerlessness" (Bergsma, 2004, p. 153). Health education and prevention research indicates that empowerment education is an effective model for both individual and social change, particularly for vulnerable or marginalized groups. Empirical research shows that empowerment education is most effective when it creates "resilience" towards "unhealthy" media messages by fostering "critical thinking skills" (2004). "Consciousness-raising" is a necessary first step towards empowerment education and media literacy can provide a consciousness-raising experience (2004).

Arts-Based Research Practice

I view my Images & Power course, like all of my courses, as an exercise in empowerment education. My hope is that students will develop a critical consciousness for two main reasons: to develop a social justice perspective, and so that they can become empowered to make reflexive and self-affirming choices. Both goals are

products of the feminist sensibility I bring to my courses. In Images & Power these goals are achieved by teaching media literacy.

Arts-based research practices (ABR) or arts-based educational research (ABER), on the rise since the 1970s, have developed in an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary methods context, requiring the crossing and blurring of disciplinary boundaries, cross-disciplinary collaborations and reevaluations of valid research and pedagogical practices.

Arts-based research practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in *holistic* and *engaged* ways in which *theory and practice are intertwined*. Arts-based methods draw on literary writing, music, performance, dance, visual art, film and other media. Representational forms include but are not limited to short narratives, novels, experimental writing forms, poems, collages, paintings, drawings, performance scripts, theatre performances, dances, documentaries, and songs (Leavy, 2009, pp. 2–3).

The arts have the capability to be evocative, provocative, emotional, and at their best, arresting. Moreover, the arts can "stimulate, refine, and convey meanings that cannot be expressed in any other form of representation" (Eisner, 2008, p. 23). Arts-based practices offer the following possibilities: unsettling stereotypes, building coalitions across difference, promoting dialogue, cutting through jargon and other prohibitive barriers, extending public sociology, building critical consciousness, raising awareness, and expressing feeling-based dimensions of social life (such as love, loss, and grief) (Leavy, 2009). With respect to unsettling stereotypes and raising awareness, the arts can be used to jar people into seeing things differently. With respect to promoting dialogue, the arts open up a multiplicity of meanings (instead of closing off possible meanings). Finally, art can speak to diverse audiences irrespective of education, social class, and other status characteristics.

I started using arts-based practices in my research, here and there, long before I had heard the term. I ended up discovering the field of arts-based research during my research into innovative approaches to research methodology.

In recent years I have turned to arts-based research practices as a part of my holistic qualitative research practice (primarily using poetic forms of data analysis and representation). Among the many benefits, I have found that incorporating my

research poems into conference presentations as well as class lectures seems to quickly serve as a consciousness-raising experience, at times based on resonance and at times based on the evocative disruption of stereotypes or assumptions. These experiences encouraged me to think about how my students could explore ABR as a hands-on means of consciousness-raising. Greene (2008) notes that imagination is vital to consciousness-raising and thus advocates "aesthetic education," which motivates students to actively participate in their learning. In this vein, Eisner (2008) suggests that open-ended tasks promote imagination. Two studies relying on arts-based participatory research strategies pushed my thinking about how to use ABR in my courses.

First, Knowles and Thomas (2002) conducted a study exploring students' sense of place and space in secondary school. The researchers asked a sample of school students to use art to convey how they see themselves and what they think about school as a place to be. Students were asked to use one or more of seven multimedium options: self-portrait, memory map, photo of place, photo of self in place, narrative, found object, and two- or three-dimensional artwork. Students were also asked to textually describe and explain their art. The artwork presented great insights into the students' experiences that may not have been captured via traditional prose alone. Many students focused on issues of "fitting in." For example, one student created a self-portrait that she partly explained as follows: "My portrait is cropped closely around my face to represent the lack of freedom I feel at school" (p. 127). I see this work as implicitly containing threads of empowerment education.

Hershorn's (2005) study investigating how students in urban school settings feel about violence in their environments also fostered my thinking about ABR in the classroom. Hershorn asked students to, in any way they chose, create a visual picture of "violence and destructive behavior *from their own lives*" (p. 2). Many of the students incorporated media images of war and bloodshed into their art. Hershorn had not anticipated these data to emerge. As a result she added a second phase to her research about the impact of media images of September 11th and the Iraq War. Hershorn's research makes important linkages between global crises and their impact on individuals' psyches. The nature of this study directed my thinking towards my Images & Power course, in which I apply a critical feminist approach to media literacy.

Using ABR in my Undergrad Pop Culture Course

In the past, in addition to course readings I have turned to films as a pedagogical tool to heighten students' awareness as well as to illustrate and punctuate course readings. I think many professors use films as a "reliable standby." However, given my research with arts-based approaches to inquiry, I wondered if the capabilities ABR has for raising critical consciousness could be applied to my media literacy agenda in Images & Power. I decided to omit one educational film from the course syllabus and replace it with a unit on ABR. Students were assigned about two-thirds of the book *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (Leavy, 2009) and one class period was devoted to reviewing it. I then incorporated an arts-based component into their final mass media research papers. In addition to their conventional research paper they were now required to represent some aspect of their work using an arts-based approach (collage, poem, script) with a brief artist-researcher statement explaining their project. As described in the course syllabus the students' mass media research paper assignment is as follows:

> Your final paper/project will be a 6-8 page single authored analytical reflection on a media-based topic of your own choosing, for which you will conduct a literature review and incorporate course readings and/or films. The first part of this assignment can be done in a variety of ways. You can present a traditional literature review on your topic (it may be sociologically grounded or interdisciplinary); you can construct a thesis statement and write a paper based on your thesis; you can conduct a small scale research project in which you carry out a content analysis or some other method of original data gathering and analysis; you can write a debate paper; you can write a paper weaving together a selection of course readings; or many other options (feel free to discuss your ideas with me). You are not being graded on your opinions (whether or not you agree with the authors whose work you engage with); however, you are being graded on your critical engagement with the ideas and themes presented in the material you use—be reflective and analytical. Show how course materials and your own literature review have encouraged you to unravel your own assumptions. However you approach the paper, you need to demonstrate that you have in some way grappled with the *ideas* presented in this course. The paper must also contain an arts-based component. In other words, you will use an arts-based approach to representing some of your themes (i.e., collage with media clips, poetry, a performance script, etc.). We will be reviewing arts-based approaches to research before this assignment is due. Your readings in this area should be clearly evidenced in your final paper/project. For

example, a collage in which you randomly tack some media images onto a piece of cardboard would not be appropriate. Rather, use one of the collage-making strategies reviewed or create and explain your own strategy. What data will be included? How will images be juxtaposed to each other? Will words be used? If so, in what ways? What are the various interpretations of your collage? Does your collage reinforce or challenge your paper or some theme there within? Think outside the box—feel free to develop an arts-based approach beyond those we have reviewed in class. The most important thing to consider is the relationship between the paper and the arts component: is there reinforcement, magnification, tension, and/or something else altogether?

The resulting work was *outstanding*. Significantly, although some were initially apprehensive about doing something "arty," the result was a much higher performance level *on the traditional paper*. I believe this is because students became more invested in their projects. I now turn to some examples of student work and then I review the advantages of the ABR component in relation to course goals. Students mentioned by name were contacted and enthusiastically agreed to have their work included.

Illustrations of Student Work

The students in my Images & Power course tackled a diverse range of topics pertaining to media (and demonstrating their media literacy) and they created many different kinds of arts-based projects to go along with their final papers. For example, one student wrote his paper about how issues pertaining to the American dream circulate via advertising. He ultimately argued, and quite convincingly, that the American dream has been systematically linked to consumption via the media. His ABR component was a three-dimensional work of art. He took an apple pie box and decorated the borders with American flag imagery and phrases/slogans. Inside of the box he created a multi-dimensional arrangement of various items including toy soldiers, a slice of pie, and so forth. Another student conducted a content analysis of the ways in which environmental issues are dealt with (or made invisible) by advertising. For her ABR component she created a large green leaf-shape backdrop out of posterboard. On one side of the leaf she created an intricate collage out of advertisements. On the other side she wrote a poem about how the media makes consumption attractive and renders environmental consequence invisible. The poem was followed by an artist statement explaining her project and how it "opened her eyes."

The poem that opened this paper was a part of Sean Lynch's paper about the media's negative portrayal of feminism, which he argued makes college students fear the label. His paper weaved together several course readings and examined the media's treatment of gender with respect to the female beauty ideal as well as the portrayal of women in public spheres (such as politics and sports). His ABR component consisted of a set of five original poetic works. The poems all deal with issues of female and male identity struggles within a mass-mediated context. The two poems that follow are largely inspired by Deborah Tannen's reading "There is No Unmarked Woman" and the film "Dream Worlds 3," which analyzes the objectification of women in music videos.

"The Dress" by Sean Lynch

She exits
Looking in on the girl wearing her dress
Watches as she grows up
Growing, slowly—into it
No matter what she learned, what she said
What she wanted, who she met
That dress told him
How smart she was, how far she'd been—that she liked men

It let slip her view on the right to choose
That she only watched tv for the news
It whispered to him her secret past
Of relationships that never last

Everything he wants to know her dress would surely tell him so
Utterly exposed speech has decomposed

The firm marked grip of helplessness around her waist

It ravaged through her confidence
Groped her self-esteem
Dragged her back into dress
Silenced her righteous scream

It stripped her of her independence
Forced itself upon her
Leaving a stale resonance
Dark and deep within her

Out of breath and out of voice
She sees what has occurred
Need not set the record straight
Her dress will say the word

"Ideology of Love" by Sean Lynch

You would love me
You would love me and hold me tenderly
Love me and squeeze me
And never leave me

You might sing to me—it could be a Coldplay song
That's what love is that's how you show it

With songs and notes
And anchored feelings
That never float

I give my origami heart to you
Complexly created
But easy to un-do

You'll tell your friends I'm yours to keep
But cool and hot—the double threat
I'm like a guy to hang out with

Like a guy

I won't make you made or be annoying
Won't ever be sad
And pretend I'm enjoying

The attention that you give
Your feigned interest in love

I'll be your Mrs. You
You'll be all I have
It'll be my identity for which I grab

We've taken our vows
Through sickness or health
I've taken my final bow
As my true self

My final examples come from two students who created "booklets" along with their papers.

Charlotte Tuminelli wrote her paper about the effects of mass-mediated consumer culture on the psychic life of the individual. For her ABR component she created a "Diary of Discontentment." The collage-style book was made with a hand-painted cardboard cover, marked with magazine images including a diamond ring, a donut, a swing set, money and other images.

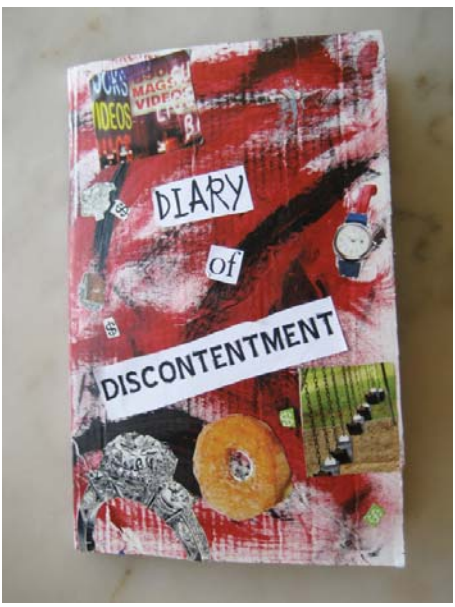

Fig. 1: Diary of discontentment

The intricate book uses a cut-out approach in which one page has a square cut out of the middle. The border is decorated with images and phrases collected from media sources and the cut-out presents a window into the next page.

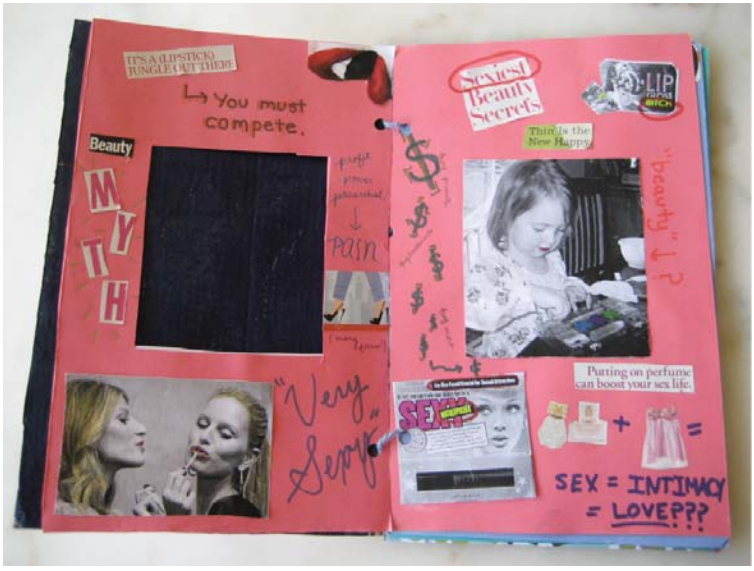

Fig. 2: Cut-out approach

Each set of pages has a theme. The themes include: cosmetics and attraction; the commodification of "magic" and happiness; and mass production (including the effect on consumers and workers in a globalized context). The thirteenth and final page offers a quote by 1920s singer Margaret Young: "Often people attempt to live their lives backwards; they try to have more things, or more money, in order to do more of what they want, so they will be happier."

Diane Tobio wrote her paper about the role of media in creating "girl culture." For her ABR component she made a collage-style booklet titled "When I Grow Up," designed to be read by young girls. She created a mosaic-style cover using bright paper clippings and images that might appeal to young girls, such as butterflies (imagery which also works on the level of metaphor) and outlined the title with colorful glitter, again appealing to young girls.

Fig. 3: When I grow up

Each page in the booklet is inspired by a particular reading from the class, and is so labeled. The top of each page states: "When I grow up…" and then presents a collage of magazine clippings (imagery and words) focused on a particular theme. Beneath the collage reads an affirmative, positive, empowering statement. The themes include: women having opportunities in politics, freedom with respect to love and sexuality, a celebration of physical uniqueness, women having opportunities in the economy, and the falsity of television's portrayal of women.

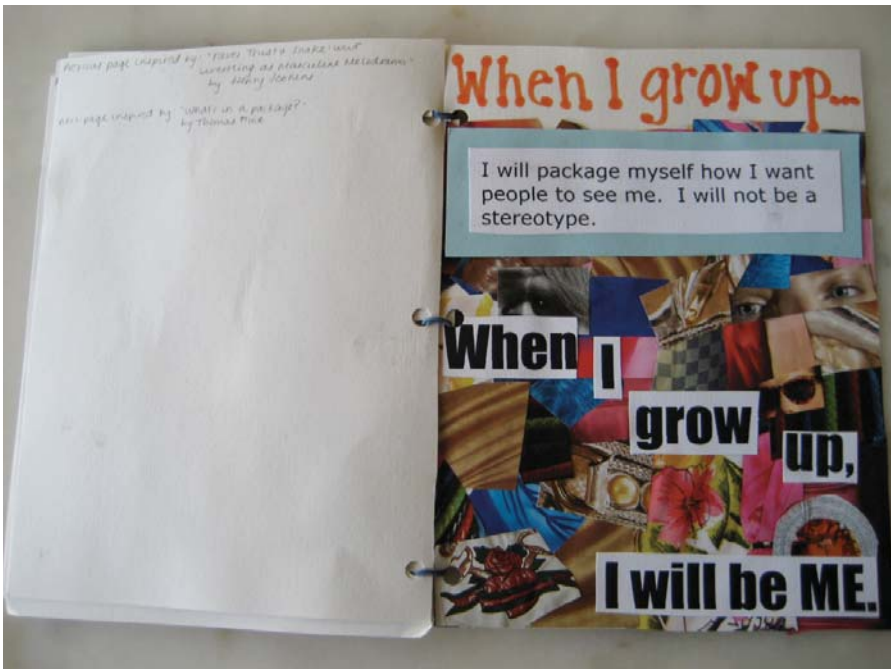

Fig. 4: Sample page

The last page says: "When I grow up… I will package myself how I want people to see me. I will not be a stereotype. When I grow up, I will be ME." Clearly the message of Tobio's work is empowerment education for the next generation of girls.

Advantages of ABR as a Media Literacy Teaching Tool in Images & Power

As the preceding examples indicate, the arts-based component allowed the students to do several things: 1. make micro-macro linkages (typically using personal perspectives and experiences), 2. see connections between different dimensions of media and the visions of social reality they create, and 3. focus on issues of social power (race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality). All of these factors together increased their media literacy and fostered the development of a critical consciousness. Looking at the highly personalized autoethnographic approaches most students elected to apply to their projects (in which they demonstrated a far greater understanding of the media than at the beginning of the semester), I believe students experienced consciousness-raising and hopefully empowerment. Student course evaluations as well as unsolicited comments (made in person and via e-mail) confirm that students felt more sensitized and empowered.

Conclusion

ABR was a powerful tool in my media literacy curriculum. With minimal effort on my part, and virtually no reduction in standard course content, the addition of ABR greatly increased student learning and engagement. The ABR work involved active, engaged student learning (rather than the passive learning that characterizes a great deal of lecture and film viewing approaches to pop culture courses). As the teaching and learning literature indicates, and as my own teaching over the years has confirmed, active learning leads to more in-depth and meaningful learning. With respect to media literacy and consciousness-raising, there is no doubt that learning by seeing and doing is invaluable to students. In my experience using ABR in Images & Power, students both learned "more" and also learned the traditional material better. Arts-based practices will continue to serve as a part of my holistic approach to student learning.

I intend to incorporate especially designed, problem-centric, ABR projects into my sociology of gender elective and required research methods courses. I plan to systematically record my impressions regarding the impact on student learning. Further, I will compare the effectiveness of ABR in elective versus required courses and the ways that ABR can be used to accomplish different desired learning outcomes. I hope that my experiences can be used as a springboard for others considering ABR as a teaching strategy.

Notes

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Crossing Thresholds and Expanding Conceptual Spaces: Using Arts-Based Methods to Extend Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The context for this paper is a teacher education program for adult literacy practitioners at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland. This paper describes and reflects on the use of arts-based approaches to enhance these practitioners' conceptualizations of literacy, presenting their arts-based responses and their evaluations of the methods. The discussion raises questions about the inclusion of visual literacy in adult literacy teacher education programs.

Introduction

This paper describes and reflects on a study of the use of arts-based approaches and methods on a teacher education program for adult literacy practitioners in Northern Ireland. The study explored the capacity for arts-based methods to enhance students'[1] understanding about the complexities of literacy and learning and the multiple ways in which meaning-making occurs.

> *"I see literacy as basic English language, as reading and writing."*
> *(Student A comment: Start of learning program, September 2007)*

> *"My understanding of literacy has changed dramatically over the past two years. In today's world as methods of communication have expanded, it is no longer simply being able to read and write. Due to the development of technology*

> *such as computers, television and mobile phones it is almost impossible to shop, use banking systems or apply for a job without having a good understanding of literacy and technology. People with poor literacy skills find it difficult to integrate into society and to be independent and make their own choices and decisions. To me being literate should be more than being an economic asset to the government—it should be about people fulfilling their ambitions and reaching their full potential."*
> (Student A comment: end of learning program, May 2008)

The first statement above is an example of a student's definition of literacy at the beginning of a teacher education program for adult literacy practitioners at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland (NI). The limited perception of the nature of literacy in the first comment contrasts with that of her later, fuller account with its implication that literacy involves social and civic participation and multiple practices and forms of meaning-making. The remark about the "economic asset" is a reference to the Essential Skills for Living Strategy (Department for Employment and Learning [NI], 2002), which established standards for learning for adult literacy and numeracy and frameworks for teacher qualifications in NI. This Strategy was a response to the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey at the end of the twentieth century, which determined that for members of the population aged sixteen years and older in NI, over twenty percent were unable to complete basic everyday literacy tasks, such as finding information in a newspaper or from a travel timetable (OECD). Essential Skills for Living established the right to literacy and numeracy support for those who had scored at the lowest level; it outlined initiatives to address this deficit, emphasizing the importance of literacy and numeracy skills for personal contributions to the economy. The focus on employability in the Strategy has increased since its inception, with the majority of learners enrolled in programs no longer being the adults who enrolled in classes voluntarily to develop their personal literacy skills, but instead, young people, aged sixteen to nineteen years, who are required to complete their literacy and numeracy qualifications as a compulsory component of their vocational programs.

There is an inference in the second of Student A's comments that individual skills and strengths which fall outside the parameters of the employability agenda in NI are not acknowledged, and that wider goals for individuals and communities are not being addressed. Shortly after the inception of the Essential Skills for Living policy here and other similar policies elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Crowther, Hamilton, and Tett (2001, p. 1) commented on what they described as a deficit model of literacy and numeracy embodied in such policies. They argue that learners are

judged by their inabilities to perform rather than their strengths, and called for the recognition and development of what are termed "wealth" models which respect the existing skills and multiple literacy practices of learners in communities. It is this concept of wealth models of literacy and learning that underpins the teacher education program described in this paper, one that aims to support practitioners in engaging with broader perceptions of literacy and learning.

Background and Context

In 2002, Queen's University Belfast developed a teacher education qualifications program for adult literacy and numeracy tutors in order to support the Essential Skills for Living Strategy. Since that time, this has taken the form of a two-year, part-time course which aims to integrate the development of competence in the subject specialism of literacy or numeracy with the acquisition of a range of appropriate methods for teaching and learning. Students in the program attend weekly classes and also complete a teaching placement in a setting where literacy is taught. The program, in common with all teacher education in NI, is based on a model of reflective practice.

Traditionally, notions of reflective practice in teacher education programs conceive of reflection on learning and experience in terms of developing a set of reflexive cognitive skills in order to enhance and improve classroom practice. The program extends this conceptualization to take cognizance of the diversity of students' approaches to learning and teaching and the range of literacy practices of their learners and themselves. The "multiple perspectives model" of reflection that underpins the curriculum encompasses group as well as individual reflection and the use of action methods, and nonverbal as well as verbal forms of reflection (Queen's University Belfast, 2009; Tracey, 2006, 2007). This enhanced notion of reflection responds to Leitch and Day's (2000) call for "the development of more complex models of reflection, related to purpose, which take greater cognisance of existing knowledge from other disciplines, particularly those aspects of psychology concerned with cognitive processes including problem-finding, insight, wisdom, creativity" (pp. 186–187). Broader conceptualizations of reflection raise questions about how to extend approaches to reflection that embrace the aesthetic, creative, symbolic and emotional as well as the cognitive. Additionally, such a multiple-perspectives approach to reflection challenges traditional methods of assessment that tend to revert to assessing the written form through the medium of reflective learning journals and/or lesson evaluations.

Design of the Study

This study comprises two main aims. The first is to describe and reflect upon participants' experiences in using arts-based approaches to explore and enhance their understandings of literacy and learning in the university teaching program, during one academic year. The second aim is to extend the application of appropriate criteria for assessing arts-based methods, centring on the development of multiple forms of reflection to develop practice.

Twenty-seven participants, aged between 22 and 58 years (Female: 20; Male: 7), agreed to participate in the ongoing study. Thirteen were enrolled in the first year of the literacy qualification program and the remaining fourteen in the second year. Previous teaching experience in adult literacy ranged from 0 to 48 months; an experience profile typical of tutors who had engaged in the program since its inception. A small percentage (15%) already had a teaching qualification, approximately half were graduates, and most were working full-time and studying part-time. These students were carrying out their teaching practice placements in a range of contexts including further education colleges, training organizations, state programs for the unemployed, the prison service, voluntary and community organizations and a hostel for homeless people. Although there was a variation in the ages and motivations of the learners enrolled in the literacy classes taught by these tutor-participants, the vast majority of the learners had recounted previous negative experiences of learning that had impacted on their self-esteem and on their willingness to engage in learning.

The study consisted of two phases. The first phase involved the inclusion of arts-based approaches to learning and reflection throughout the sessions on the literacy qualification program. During these sessions, students explored a variety of course themes relating to literacy and learning by means of creative thinking activities, storytelling and the development of posters and acrostic poems. Additionally, they created individual collages and designed and produced a range of resources to implement in their literacy practices. Students reflected on the efficacy of these arts-based methods and provided their responses to them through the completion of a written evaluation at the end of the course.

The second part of the study related to the consideration of fit-for-purpose course assessment in order to match an extended perspective on reflective learning. In year one, for instance, one assignment requires students to create a collective interactive exhibition in order to demonstrate their conceptualizations of literacy; the purpose of this assignment is to extend creative thinking and representation and to

encourage the use of alternative approaches to essay writing. The program also offers participants in both cohorts the opportunity for two assignments that use arts-based approaches as alternatives to the usual written essay-type reflections. These comprise a reflective learning journal and a portfolio of evidence about the teaching practice experience.

Arts-Based Methods

Arts-based methods offer opportunities for expanding ways of knowing as well as building on what Eisner conceived of as the innate "artistry" involved in the craft of teaching (Eisner, 2002, pp. 382–383). As Higgs suggested (2008, p. 552), engaging with the arts has the potential to facilitate transformative learning. "Arts encourage a transcendental capacity. They allow the creator and the viewer to imagine possible ways of being, encourage the individual to move personal boundaries, and challenge resistance to change and growth." At the same time, whatever the potential that the arts hold for learning and change, engagement with them can be challenging for teachers, who may not necessarily conceive of themselves as creative or who may not value creativity. A further issue for the use of arts-based methods is the uncertainty about the process as well as the outcomes. There are also conceptual challenges. Open-ended methods such as those involved in using approaches from the arts to address expanded models of reflection and of literacy require students to explore and integrate a range of conceptual spaces into their learning. The metaphor of expanding spaces in the title of this paper builds on Boden's (2004) notion of creativity as the capacity to explore and transform conceptual spaces. Meyer, Land, and Davies (2006), exploring the difficulties involved in mastering new concepts, suggested that "any conceptual space will have terminal frontiers, bordering with thresholds into new conceptual areas" (p. 6).

Crossing frontiers and thresholds and exploring new conceptual areas can be daunting. Students require support for engaging in the journey; they need to identify and build on the prior knowledge and strengths they take with them into the unknown, and they need opportunities for engagement in creative explorations of the new areas of learning.

Tracey's (2007) model of creative reflection provided a framework for the arts-based study on which this paper focuses. This model constitutes a structured approach to supporting student teachers in their engagement with arts-based

methods. It builds on Poincaré's notion of creativity as a series of phases of preparation, incubation, illumination and verification (Balzac, 2006). Creative reflection comprises the stages of preparation, play, exploration and synthesis, and includes individual and group activities such as creative thinking exercises, playing games, drama, creative writing, and art-making. The preparation stage acknowledges the uncertainties of the creative process and provides "threshold activities" (Tracey, 2007) to support engagement. These activities do not require participants to generate creative artifacts, but to respond to existing images. The second stage, play, offers opportunities to explore ideas in an unthreatening environment. Typical activities include creative thinking exercises and the creation of acrostic poems and collage-making. The third stage requires a more deliberative exploration of ideas, whereby individuals and groups design and produce artifacts such as films, poems, artwork, pieces of music and dramas. The final stage, synthesis, involves individual and group reflection on the processes of learning and meaning-making and on applications to students' practice.

Fig. 1: Using arts-based approaches: results and reflections

This part of the paper presents the results of students' engagement in arts-based methods and approaches, providing information about the nature of the artifacts created and their responses to these. The images in this paper are representative examples of the work; further examples appear on the Web site which exhibits this work, including films and presentations.[2]

Phase 1: Use of Arts-Based Methods in Class

At the end of the academic year, students completed written evaluations on the arts-based methods and approaches, reflecting on the extent of their enjoyment in this type of work as well as its capacity to enhance their learning and influence their literacy practices in their various professional contexts. In general, there was little variation in the responses, although students at the end of the first year of the program tended to maintain that the method might have less application to their actual teaching practice than those at the end of the two-year program. This result might be indicative of the comparative lack of teaching experience of the first-year students.

The following results that comment on the use of arts-based methods are divided into four main categories: reflections on images used as threshold activities to stimulate discussion and idea sharing; creative writing activities; images and artifacts created through the use of art materials; and digital images (still and moving). The focus of the reflection and discussion in this part of the paper emphasizes image-based categories, rather than that of creative writing. This is in order to illuminate the exploration of multiple literacies in general, and to lead into a discussion on visual literacy in the following section.

Category 1: Reflections on images (threshold activities)

A wide array of images from the media and art postcards was used to stimulate discussion and idea sharing on learning, literacy and creativity in general and course themes in particular. Students made individual selections and shared responses suggested that these activities were helpful for supporting reflection on learning experiences in general. As one participant indicated: "Images really helped me to reflect and my learners to do the same." Another participant commented that the use of images was helpful because "Learners in my organization are extremely visual." The activities also had specific uses: variously, they "helped with storytelling"; they also supported creativity: and most typically this type of activity was seen as valuable for self and others because it "Allows the imagination to run wild but in a constructive way."

Category 2: Creative writing activities

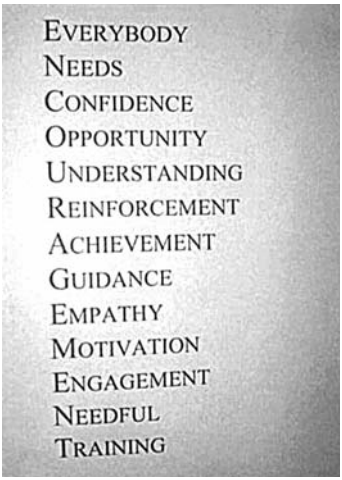

Fig. 2: Acrostic poetry

This form of poetry was used to explore the themes of literacy, motivation and reflective practice. Acrostic poems, simply described, consist of a word written vertically, with each successive line of the poem starting with the first letter of the word. While this method is discussed within creative writing, it also has visual components in its incorporation of aspects of visual design. Students' responses suggested the usefulness of this approach for their literacy practice; these included that it: "Can be adapted and used on a variety of areas and learning levels" and "Learners like reflecting on their disabilities though poetry." One participant commented on the personal learning involved in engaging with acrostic poetry: "New to me, found interesting. Allows for creativity."

Other forms of poetry included shape and spatial poems. There was a more guarded response to these forms of expression, with one student declaring: "Yes, there are many benefits to using poetry in the classroom but my students don't enjoy it."

Storytelling

Students worked in groups and composed and presented stories based on their response to a selection of images, which they subsequently developed into a group narrative. The versatility of this approach was acknowledged: "I have incorporated storytelling into my class and found it useful and important to learners," and it was also noted that "Learners with [learning] difficulties enjoy this activity." There were, however, contradictory responses regarding the impact of storytelling on the students' own learning: while one declared, "I reflected much more on my learning through this," another stated: "I struggled to see how this would benefit my learning but it was an OK icebreaker in teaching practice."

Category 3: Images and artifacts created through the use of art materials

Creating resources for teaching

These resources included image-based activities to stimulate discussion, and collections of images for storytelling and theme-based reading and writing tasks. Responses to these activities suggested their usefulness for practice: illustrative examples of positive responses were that they: "Provided great ideas" and "It really helped me in my teaching practice."

Fig. 3: Collage-making

While there are different forms of collage-making, the course focuses on the practice of individuals arranging on a piece of card or paper selected words and images from magazines and newspapers to explore an idea or theme connected with literacy. The collage depicted is a student's reflection on the processes involved in learning literacy. Responses to the use of collage indicated its relevance to practice: It was "something that I could use with my learners," and that such a method was "great for kinaesthetic learning sessions." One student reflected in a course assignment on her use of collage in the final session of the literacy course which she taught in a hostel for homeless people:

Although none of the learners in my class made it as far as accreditation while I was there, we did use the final session as a time of acknowledgement. The learners participated in collage making (something none of the men had ever tried before), with the theme "What I have learnt about myself." Afterwards we engaged in a discussion about the collages, what they meant to us, and how much we had learnt about ourselves, as learners and as people, through the classes. I acknowledged the work each individual learner had done and highlighted their progression with particular note to some of the more difficult areas in their literacy learning that they had overcome. Everyone, myself included, came away from that final session inspired by the potential and possibilities we had seen for ourselves and each other.

This comment indicates the potential for the development of self-awareness and confidence for literacy learners through the process of collage-making; it also demonstrates the significant role which the tutor plays in facilitating such a process. As a multidimensional form of meaning-making that juxtaposes image and text, collage provides opportunities to identify new understandings of the relationships between word meanings and visual symbols and how the individual learner relates to these; it thus provides a process for crossing thresholds into expanding conceptual spaces.

Fig. 4: Using art materials to reflect on course themes

This image represents the outcome of a group reflection on the nature of ideal environments for teaching and learning. The shape of the classroom, the open windows and roof and the unconventional seating arrangements suggest that the process of creating this piece allowed the students to expand their ideas about learning spaces. Responses to this activity were all positive, including: "I enjoyed this," "It was great to share ideas with each other," and "It took me out of my comfort zone. I surprised myself."

Category 4: Using digital images

The information in this section is a brief summary of the findings which are presented and addressed in more detail in Mullan and Tracey's report (in press) on student responses to the use of digital images and technologies in their learning. These digital images took two forms: photographs of aspects of individual teachers' practice and the incorporation of these images into short films, using the software package, Windows Moviemaker®. With reference to the first use of images, one student wrote that this "really enabled me to see my teaching through the eyes of my learners—especially when they took their own photographs!" Another related comment was that "… photos and images of my practice provided the opportunity to show others the nature of my teaching and the range of learners."

Phase 2: Assessment: Responses to Use of Arts-Based Methods in Course Assignments

Creating exhibitions

This assignment in the first year of the program required students to create an interactive group exhibition on any aspect of literacy on which they chose to focus. They used a range of arts-based approaches to express the themes of their exhibitions, including posters and creative artifacts, creative writing activities, dance and mime. Their responses acknowledged that "this was a great learning activity," and that "it allows for imagination, creativity and collaboration with peers." Another participant suggested that this kind of activity generated "Good ideas for learners." There was one negative response: "I felt this was not a useful activity as more time was spent gathering resources than thinking about the learning." This suggests the importance of allowing for preparation time in using arts-based approaches. The diverse responses to the assignment indicate that these approaches enhance students'

capacities to acknowledge the existence of multiple literacies and therefore to engage with the implications of incorporating these into their practice.

The second element of the assignment required students to write a reflection on the process of designing and participating in an exhibition. One noted: "Images were used in my reflection on the group project and I felt that they did help when writing up my reflection. I used them to enhance the presentation and to 'jog my memory' of the presentation."

Use of arts-based methods in other assignments

This part of the paper describes and reflects on student responses about the opportunity to use alternative methods instead of the usual written reflections compiled in a reflective learning journal and portfolio assignment. The table below shows the extent to which the students across the two cohorts adopted the use of arts-based methods within these two assignments.

Table 1: Use of Arts-Based Methods in Course Assignments

Response	Reflective Learning Journal: Year 1 (n=13)	Reflective Learning Journal: Year 2 (n=14)	Teaching Practice Portfolio: Year 1 (n=13)	Teaching Practice Portfolio: Year 2 (n=14)
No use of images/arts-based methods	4	3	1	0
Use of existing images as focus for reflection	2	6	5	7
Images created for assignment (drawings/cartoons/games)	3	3	2	6
Use of photographs	0	0	1	2
Film (Windows Moviemaker®)	1	1	1	2
Collage	2	0	1	2
1. Acrostic poetry	2	7	4	6
2. Storytelling/creative writing	1	1	2	2
Total:	**15**	**21**	**17**	**27**

NOTES

1. Acrostic poetry was always used in conjunction with other arts-based methods.
2. The category of storytelling and creative writing is included at the end, as the focus of this study is on the use of visual images.
3. n = number of students in year of program

The table illustrates the frequency of use of each of the methods. The higher frequency of use by the second year students is borne out by their comments on the evaluation forms, which indicated a higher level of willingness than among the first-year students to engage and to try these methods out in their practice. Given their additional experience, this is not unexpected, nor is the relatively extensive use of preexisting images as a focus for reflection. This suggests that the threshold activities were a supportive way of engaging students with arts-based methods.

Fig. 5: Snakes and ladders game

The Snakes and Ladders game above was included in the final reflection in the students' teaching practice portfolio. This student used the game to synthesize and reflect on her barriers to learning as well as her support systems.

The following comment demonstrates the capacity for film to enhance reflection:

> *I find self-reflection quite difficult. I find it hard to express myself through words—I can't seem to be able to state how I feel using only language. Being able to use [Windows] Moviemaker® greatly enhanced my ability to reflect not only on what I had learned but also on what my learners had learned. To say all I wanted to, using only words, would have required me to write page after page! Using Moviemaker® allowed me to address the many intricacies of my reflection in a fuller and more interesting format.*

While other students acknowledged the effectiveness of film in supporting reflection and learning, the time required to make a film prohibited the majority from doing so. One student noted: "It's a great idea and I liked learning how to use Windows Moviemaker®, but I just didn't have the time for this." Eight (29.6%) of the students' final comments on the use of arts-based methods for their assignments referred to the lack of sufficient time for this. This points to the need to allocate time in teacher education programs for developing the range of arts-based methods realistically and effectively.

Only one student declared that he or she would not have used arts-based methods for his/her assignments, under any circumstances:

> *I am not a creative person and prefer written theory and learning to creative displays. I have used some aspects in my teaching practice—but reluctantly! I enjoy using some creativity in creating (teaching) resources, but not really for learning.*

This comment is a reminder of diversity amongst learners and in their approaches to learning, and an indicator that the use of arts-based methods may not be suitable or acceptable for all students and learners. At the same time, it points to the need for student teachers to experience methods and approaches to which some of their learners might respond positively, even if they do not do so themselves.

Discussion

Students' responses

All except one of the students' responses to their experiences of arts-based approaches indicate that these methods supported them in engaging with a variety of forms of meaning-making and in developing methods for enhancing their practice. This outcome supports Leitch's comment (2008, p. 150) that "… arts-based methods of inquiry still wrestle for mainstream acceptance in the world of educational research but are nevertheless rich in their capacity to create opportunities for teachers to reflect and self-direct."

The students' responses to exploring and using images in both parts of the study suggest that the experience has enhanced their awareness that literacy and learning involve complex processes of meaning-making. These processes include active engagement through play and art-making, as well as reflection on this engagement to synthesize understanding. A further learning from the process is that the capacity to communicate ideas can be developed through non-text based methods as well as through the more traditional literacy practices of reading and writing.

An analysis of the images created by the students and an exploration of their reflections on these images suggest the capacity for arts-based methods to support different approaches to learning and meaning-making in literacy. These approaches vary in terms of the degree to which the arts-based methods are a core part of the process, or peripheral to it. A continuum of the role of arts-based methods in literacy is proposed. At the peripheral end is the use of images such as photographs and preexisting images to illustrate and support the content of text. In the middle of the continuum are the arts-based methods which are used to generate and play with ideas, such as collage and acrostic poetry. At the end of the continuum are deliberative uses of methods to synthesize, represent and communicate ideas, such as films and other works of art. The latter however require opportunities for the development of significant skill sets and the time to develop these must be taken into consideration in the design of such programs.

Implications for Teacher Education for Literacy Practitioners

Alberto, Fredrick, Hughes, McIntosh, and Cihak (2007) argued that perceiving literacy as a capacity for reading and writing limits the participation in learning of those with severe learning difficulties; they proposed instead a broad notion of literacy as "obtaining information from the environment," suggesting that this "may be accomplished in a variety of modes, only one of which is reading words" (p. 234). Their study explored the notion that reading pictures and logos might be a primary means for obtaining information for learners with learning difficulties. This study has implications for the teacher education program which is the focus of this paper. Many of our students have learners with learning disabilities in their groups: either one or two individuals with disabilities such as dyslexia, or whole groups in special educational settings. In order to address the needs of a diverse range of learners in their practice, literacy practitioners require confidence and competence in the processes of creating and making meaning from images.

This study concurs with the suggestions of Elkins (2002) and Metros and Woolsey (2006) that visual literacy should be a component of all learning programs in higher education to acknowledge the visual aspects of culture and learning. The literacy curriculum established by the Essential Skills Strategy in NI requires learners to demonstrate their ability to use images effectively in one of their assignments. Learners are required to produce a portfolio of evidence based on the exploration of a relevant theme and to include in this evidence an image which supports this theme, as well as a reflection on it. The criteria for this use of image are under-elaborated. Supporting practitioners in teacher education programs to reflect on the development and production of images has potential for enhancing their practice. A useful model of visual literacy for programs of literacy teaching and learning is Langford's (2003) conceptualization of it as the skills of interpreting, decoding, analyzing and synthesizing the images around us. Rose (2001) has designed a set of questions which students might pose to enhance their awareness of the nature of the image itself, its production, and the role of the audience in the production. These questions might be added to Langford's model to support the decoding process.

Griffin (2008) introduced another dimension to learning about visual literacy by pointing out that because students in the twenty-first century are receptive to visual images, this does not necessarily mean they are knowledgeable about them or about aspects of visual design. They need to engage with images more closely to support their awareness. The results of this exploratory study of arts-based approaches

in the Queen's University Belfast teacher education program suggest that students' creation of images enhances their awareness of the processes involved in the design of these images.

The inclusion of visual literacy in curricula for learning and teaching literacy raises questions about assessment, including the appropriate criteria for judging the aesthetic qualities of the work. A further question is about the proportion of the grades which should be awarded for each of the components of visual literacy. The coexistence of visual and text-based forms of literacy in a learning program poses a different set of questions: about the extent to which these forms incorporate similar epistemological frameworks, and therefore might be evaluated referring to similar standards. There are limitations in seeking a single set of criteria for understanding both visual and text-based literacy. Elkins maintained that images should not be analyzed in the same manner as written forms of communication, rejecting notions of visual literacy as the capacity "to identify images and to parse them according to the ways they refer to the world" (2002, p. 137). A more critical engagement with both text-based and visual literacy is necessary in teacher education programs for literacy practitioners in order for them to understand the complex and diverse processes of meaning-making.

A framework for including and assessing arts-based methods in teacher education needs to incorporate spaces for reflection on the experiences of engaging with and making images. This supports Hoggan's (2009) assertion that,

> The use of images, whether of one's own or another's creation, can reveal our otherwise hidden worldview assumptions. Those hidden assumptions have a profound impact on the way we think and make meaning from our experiences. It is in the purposeful estrangement from those assumptions, envisioning of alternative realities, and critical examination of both old and new points of view — although not necessarily in a conscious and rational way — that transformative learning occurs. (p. 73)

Conclusion

This paper began with examples of practitioners' conceptualizations of literacy before and at the end of a teacher education program. The focus of the paper was on the potential for arts-based methods to facilitate expanded conceptualizations. It

is not possible to claim that the elaborated notions of literacy which 32 (96%) of the students articulated at the end of the arts-based study last year are a direct result of their engagement with arts-based methods. Nevertheless, some of the students' reflection on literacy in the final course evaluation in June 2009 referred to issues which might be related to the use of arts-based methods:

> *"I have learnt about visual literacy, for example, which I had not considered before."*
>
> *"I now see literacy as a complex web of realities—different for different learners and communities."*
>
> *"My definition of literacy now includes speaking and listening, also visual literacy and social practice view of literacies."*
>
> *"I understand that literacy is much more than just writing, that it takes many forms and this impacts on the resources I use."*
>
> *"The course has opened up for me the creative and powerful aspects of literacy. It has also made me aware that I have neglected my own development in this area."*

Notes

1. The terms "students," "practitioners" and "teachers" are used interchangeably in this paper to refer to the participants in the teacher education program described in this paper, while the word "learners" refers to the members of the groups they teach.

2. See http://www.qub.ac.uk/eskills.

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Adult Literacy … and the Children Shall Lead

Joe Norris, Brock University

ABSTRACT

The author, a successful academic, admits that reading for him, as an extrovert, has been primarily considered a painful experience and throughout his schooling, he often viewed it as punishment. Through the needs of his nephew, the author and his brother, another non-reader, embark on a series of reading adventures that bring reading for pleasure into their lives and model it for family and friends. The article provides a justification for personal narrative as form of research and concludes with some insights on informal literacy advocacy.

Tom Barone (1990) claims that story telling can be a research act that invites the reader to conspire or breathe (spire) with (con) with the author. When a reader resonates with a part of the story, the reader has a greater likelihood of bringing that part of the story to his or her living situation. It is the reader, not the research, that determines the generalizability of the research, as the reader finds what is applicable to a given situation and acts accordingly. Using the adage, "show; don't tell," themes and abstract concepts are imbedded within the story, rather than always being made explicit.

Short stories or vignettes can play a role in "research in practice." As we examine our practice (our autobiographies), we can find events that have moved us and may have the potential to move others. It is these stories that we are called to tell with the hope that others can use them in their own lives (Kopp, 1972). Storytelling can be both a literacy act and a research methodology (Reason & Hawkins, 1988).

The following is a literacy story that I have related verbally a number of times and now put to ink as an example of storytelling as a reflective research genre.

It was mid-evening when I received a call from my brother, Vincent, (permission given to use actual names) on the east coast of Canada. It had been months since we had talked and one of the few times that he had called me in Edmonton. While we were close, we had more of an in-person relationship. Phone calls were a rarity. This time he was on a mission. His son, Eric, was having reading difficulties at school and he called me, his older brother, an "education" professor, for help. Immediately, I confided that literacy was not a specialty of mine and while I felt that I had little specific expertise to offer, I would be happy to discuss the general situation with him.

My nephew's teacher had told my brother that his son was reading below grade level and with practice, he could improve. The difficulty was that his son did not want to read. But before discussing my nephew, my brother and I talked about our own educational experiences, discussing what we considered the problems we had with our schooling and how some of our experiences may shed some light on his son's situation. I related my own difficulties in grade two, long before my brother was born. I was given a book to read over the summer for "practice" but I considered it more of a punishment and did the task reluctantly. My brother related similar stories. I informed him that according to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley,1985) I was an extrovert and learned best with my mouth open. For me, reading was a solitary activity and therefore painful. My brother shared similar feelings about himself and his son. Being actively engaged with people was our preference and private reading was an intrusion on the way in which we saw ourselves in the world.

During this conversation we began to brainstorm approaches to take with his son and talked about how modeling was important. In my own home my wife and I purchased children's books for our daughters to read and to be read to. We had a supply of magazines along with the daily newspaper that were visible. They saw my wife and I reading at home. Both of my daughters are avid readers, and although I would hesitate to claim a strong cause-and-effect relationship between their reading and my modeling, I am certain that modeling was one of many factors.

I asked if he thought modeling might be useful. Vincent claimed that it could not hurt and was willing to give it a try. I asked if he had magazines around the home. He did not. Knowing that his son was into hockey, I asked if he thought that the

purchasing of some hockey magazines might be a good idea. He was uncertain. Continuing to brainstorm for possibilities, I asked him if he had heard of the "Harry Potter" (Rowling, 1997) novels. Not only had he, but his daughter had also read them from cover to cover. "Good," I said, "Start reading Harry Potter." I also told him that I would put my proverbial "money where my mouth was" and would start reading Harry Potter along with him.

Being an academic one could surmise that I was/am an avid reader. However, I must confess that I am not. I read professionally and that is the extent of it. As mentioned earlier, my pleasure is found in being with people and reading for pleasure; being solitary, is not an option. I need to balance my solitary work-related reading activities with my need to be with others. But I had made a promise with the hope that my behavior and that of my brother might play a small part in my nephew's education. My brother and I would model reading "as an enjoyable way to entertain one's self and to understand the world" (Mikulecky, 1996, p. 57).

Over the next few months my brother and I called each other many times discussing Harry's exploits. He and I were hooked by the adventures at Hogwarts and would phone each other to discuss the characters, plot and issues that arose. Unintentionally, we had created our own literature circle (Daniels, 2002). These pieces of fiction created a new bond between my brother and I, and we were eager to share our thoughts with one another. Although the books were a pleasure to read, I also anticipated my brother's calls as he did mine. As extroverts, there was a need for a reading companion to discuss our thoughts (King, 2001). We found this in each other. Besides being an end in itself, reading had also become a means to another end, kinship.

Since then we finished the "Sword of Truth" series by Terry Goodkind (1994) and, on more than one occasion, to his delight, my brother was often ahead of me. I had stalled when I took a new administrative position and while my attention was directed elsewhere, Vincent continued to read.

Since that first phone call, the atmosphere in my brother's home has changed drastically. Vincent's wife, Becky, with a smile of amusement, told me that she has to ask him on a number of occasions to turn off the bedroom reading lights after midnight. She is proud of but sometimes strained with his new-found joy. He was disappointed when he received a gift certificate for a book for his birthday. Not because it was for a book, but because, due to his work schedule, he could not start reading immediately. Vincent would read on the bus going to and from work and at one time

his family begged him—no, demanded—that he stop reading for a while. His household now views him as an avid reader, as does he.

Little did we know that his telephone request would bring us both to this adventure. Up until that moment neither of us would have defined ourselves, even remotely, as readers for pleasure. His son's need and J. K Rowling's delightful works brought us into a new and enriching world. As extroverts we found our ways into one of the many faces of literacy and began to look forward to some time alone with a new set of characters, albeit fictional.

Inadvertently, we stumbled onto a few insights that reinforce studies and activities of those working in literacy programs. 1) For some, reading may need to be tied to social activities that supplement and complement the loneliness of the solitary reader. My brother and I knew that we had someone to talk to about our reading (Powell-Brown, 2006). Encouraging someone to read aloud to another may be a way to address his/her social needs and find the pleasure in this type of reading. 2) Searching for materials that engage an individual is not and easy task and can take time. While I sporadically had read science fiction and my brother read nothing, the works of J. K Rowling engaged us, beckoning us to a new world. My sisters, Cec and Therese, and I found that we were both interested in soulful living and are beginning to share our interests with these types of books. Studies show that "students who believed that their school work was interesting and important were more cognitively engaged in trying to learn and understand it … (and) … social interaction is motivational" (Turner, 1995, p. 418). My sisters and I found a shared interest, so the ripple continues with other members of this extended family. 3) Informal reading initiatives can be productive if we can find ways to encourage and support them. My brother's and my re-initiation to reading was as grassroots as it can get. "… helping parents use the informal events of everyday life as the primary way to promote children's literacy often works best and seems less like an assignment from school" (Wasik, 2004, p. 336).

In conclusion, I am surprised at how my nephew's need catapulted my brother's and my reading. Did my nephew read Harry Potter? Yes! Has his reading improved? Yes. Was it because of his father's reading? Maybe. Answers to this question require a different type of research. But what I have come to believe from this experience is that adult and children's literacy are interconnected. My nephew's need led his father, my brother, and I into a new and exciting world. "Literacy development is not limited to children. It occurs across the life span, and, for adults, it can occur in the informal settings of home and community as well as in more formal settings" (Wasik, 2004, p. 5). While we often believe that adults can model good practices for children, sometimes it is their needs that spur us on.

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