LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN A CYCLE ONE CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

MARY SHEILAH STEWART

DEPARTMENT OF INTEGRATED STUDIES IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This qualitative study researched the meaning of instruction in a cycle one classroom. The following questions guided my research:

How is literacy instruction implemented in a cycle one classroom?

a) What events take place in the class?
b) How does the teacher provide for instruction?
c) How do students and parents perceive instruction?

Literacy instruction was defined as any support or intervention on the part of a teacher or more capable other that helped students to more skilfully engage with a range of texts in purposeful and socially responsible ways.

I collected data through classroom observation, collection of classroom artefacts, and interviews. Observations and informal interviews were recorded in my researcher's journal. Formal interviews were audio or videotaped. I used complementary approaches of analysis.

a) Two inter-related types of literacy events occurred in the classroom: formatted and open-ended activities. Formatted activities required students to participate in a way that could potentially be assessed. During open-ended activities students were free to select their own activities and to participate to the extent that they wished. Analysis of the data revealed that, even during formatted activities, students had a great deal of choice in how they could participate in literacy events. As a result, almost all literacy events were tailored to meet diverse individual needs.

b) Bea simultaneously deepened and thickened instruction to support the literacy development of students. Deepening instruction refers to the

fine-tuned precision that characterized the instruction she offered, and ensured that activities were neither too easy nor too difficult for students. Thickening instruction refers to how Bea enriched teaching by attending to variety and interest around activities and appealing to broader social, emotional and embodied needs. This seemed to contribute to learning by keeping alive a spirit of excitement and purpose in students, parents and Bea. The concept of deepening and thickening reflects instruction that is consistent with a socially situated view of literacy.

c) Students provided fresh insights by emphasizing the need to attend to embodied aspects of learning and instruction. Parents' contradictory expectations of instruction also suggested the need for continued ongoing collaboration between parents and educators.

Résumé

La présente recherche qualitative porte sur le sens de l'enseignement dans une classe de premier cycle. Les questions à la base de cette recherche sont les suivantes :

Comment se fait l'apprentissage de la lecture dans une classe de premier cycle?

a) Quelles activités se déroulent dans la classe?
b) De quelle manière l'enseignant dispense-t-il son enseignement?
c) Comment les élèves et les parents perçoivent-ils l'enseignement?

Le terme enseignement de la lecture désigne toute forme de soutien ou d'intervention d'un enseignant ou d'une personne compétente favorisant l'apprentissage des élèves au moyen de textes axés sur les buts et les besoins sociaux

Nous avons choisi comme techniques de collecte des données l'observation en classe, la cueillette d'artéfacts en classe et les entrevues. Les observations et les entrevues non structurées ont été consignées dans un journal de recherche. Les entrevues structurées ont été enregistrées sur bandes sonores et magnétoscopiques. Nous avons aussi utilisé d'autres moyens complémentaires d'analyse.

a) Deux types d'activités interdépendantes d'enseignement de la lecture se sont déroulées dans la classe, soit des activités structurées et des activités libres. Les activités structurées étaient conçues de telle sorte que la participation des élèves pouvait être évaluée. Pendant les activités libres, les élèves choisissaient leurs activités et participaient

selon leur convenance. Une analyse rigoureuse des données a démontré que, même pendant les activités structurées, les élèves avaient beaucoup de latitude quant à la façon de participer aux activités d'enseignement de la lecture. Par conséquent, la plupart des activités d'enseignement de la lecture étaient conçues de manière à répondre aux besoins diversifiés des élèves.

b) Bea a simultanément approfondi et concentré son enseignement afin de favoriser l'apprentissage de la lecture chez ses élèves. L'expression approfondissement de l'enseignement fait référence à la grande précision de son enseignement, caractéristique ayant permis d'assurer que les activités ne soient ni trop faciles ni trop difficiles pour les élèves. L'expression concentration de l'enseignement fait référence aux améliorations que Bea a apportées à l'enseignement lors des activités en mettant l'accent sur la variété et sur l'intérêt des élèves et en répondant à des besoins sociaux, émotifs et personnels plus larges. En maintenant chez les élèves, les parents et Bea un esprit d'enthousiasme et la volonté d'atteindre un but, ces éléments ont contribué à l'apprentissage.

c) Les perceptions des élèves et des parents corroborent d'autres compréhensions que cette étude fait ressortir. Pour leur part, les élèves ont jeté un éclairage nouveau en démontrant l'importance de prêter une grande attention aux aspects personnels de l'apprentissage et de l'enseignement. Aussi, les attentes contradictoires des parents face à la formation laissent supposer le besoin d'une collaboration continue entre les parents et les éducateurs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The questions that guided this study were shaped by a range of personal and professional experiences as well as by a critical review of the literature on literacy learning and instruction. I will explore in greater detail how these aspects emerged in this and subsequent chapters. The following questions guided my work.

How is literacy instruction implemented in a cycle one classroom?

a) What events take place in the class?
b) How does the teacher provide for instruction?
c) How do students and parents perceive instruction?

For the purpose of this study, literacy instruction is defined as any intervention or support on the part of a teacher or more capable other that helps students to engage more skilfully with a range of texts in purposeful and socially responsible ways. It can be understood as encompassing five dimensions: immersion in nurturing relationships, immersion in meaningful activities, direct instruction, reflective assessment, and critical political reflection with action. The term "texts" refers to narrative, literary, self-expressive, popular, and information-based types of texts. These can be written, spoken or visual (Anderson, 2000). Cycle one refers to a new system in Québec for organizing students in two year cycles rather than grades. Cycle one in elementary school refers to what was traditionally grade one and two, comprising children approximately age six and seven.

With my research questions in mind, I will begin by describing the organization of the rest of the chapters in this study. Then I will share

how events in my personal and teaching life sparked my interest in exploring instruction more deeply, and led to this research. Before moving on to Chapter Two, I will also introduce Bea, the teacher in this study, as well as the wider research context.

The Organization of this Research Study

I tried to organize my work in a way that shares what I have learned most effectively. Throughout the study, I attempt to weave in my own voice and those of my research participants with a more traditional and distanced academic voice. I want to show the research process as I experienced it, but I also want to link these personal experiences to the broader academic discourse.

In Chapter Two I rationalize the need for this study more fully. I review pivotal and recent research on learning and instruction from three perspectives: cognitive psychology, curriculum and literacy. I establish the need for more classroom-based studies that address instruction from a range of perspectives that include that of the researcher, teacher, students and parents. I carefully review work written in the last ten years--literature about "The New Literacy"--in order to address issues that are most current. I conclude by identifying two concerns that emerge from the literature.

In Chapter Three, I explore the research methods I used in this study. First, I situate myself on the research landscape in a broad sense, and then I examine issues of entry and ethics, trustworthiness, data collection, data analysis, and representation. I emphasize the inter-relatedness of these research dimensions, as well as the need to keep issues of relationship at the fore throughout a study.

Chapter Four is the first of three interpretative chapters that focus on in-depth, descriptive research findings. In this chapter, I explore the various types of events that occurred in Bea's class and how they were inter-related. This discussion prepares the reader for the in-depth analysis of instruction presented in Chapter Five.

In some respects, Chapter Five is the core of my research because it addresses most directly how literacy instruction unfolds in a particular cycle one classroom. In this chapter, I explore instruction more broadly by describing the role of students, parents and Bea. Since my primary interest, however, is how a teacher enables all this to unfold in the classroom, I view instruction primarily through the lens of Bea.

In Chapter Six I address student and parent perspectives on instruction. I examine how they discussed instruction during a number of in-depth interviews, and I share how I worked to represent their voices most effectively.

In Chapter Seven I explore instruction in Bea's class through a more conceptual lens to represent it more holistically, and to situate it within current literacy research. I also explore the implications of this research. To help teachers make meaningful connections between this study and their own practices, I summarize key insights that emerged and pose a number of questions. Finally, I address future research that would build on the findings of this study.

My Evolving Interest in Instruction

About three years ago, I realized that teachers were distancing themselves from the term "whole language." (Although definitions of whole language vary, in general, proponents believe that children learn language best if it is used for authentic purposes. This includes engaging in meaningful reading and writing tasks, using whole texts, avoiding part-to-whole study of language, and empowering children to direct their own learning.) I was at my daughter's soccer practice at the time, chatting with a friend with whom I had taught for a number of years. Because of our conversation, I put aside the book that I brought along for company. The title was Whole language: Deconstruction or reconstruction? At some point in the conversation, however, my friend looked down at the book and remarked, "Whole language. You mean they're still talking about that at McGill "? I just laughed and we went on to other things. However, this short comment informed me that somewhere in the time since we taught together, my friend had stopped identifying herself as the "whole language" teacher she once did. Why, I wondered? And how did she see herself now?

Shortly thereafter, I was having lunch with another friend who had recently adopted two school age daughters from an orphanage in India. Fiona was asking about my research interests. Although at that time I had not focused on a particular question, I did mention I wanted to look into better ways to address the needs of diverse students in the classroom. I had expected Fiona to praise my intentions. Her daughters certainly had unique needs due to the considerable transition they were undergoing as a result of adoption, and I knew that she had a strong history of advocating for individual rights. As a physiotherapist and

psychologist, she spoke out against overly simplistic answers to complex health issues, and as a parent, she had manoeuvred through yards of red tape to convince governments here and abroad that her children were entitled to a family of their own. So I was quite surprised at the comment that followed. "Mary, trying to meet everyone's different needs sounds good on paper, but my feeling is that it would be very difficult to implement with twenty-five students in the classroom." On one hand, it was an expected response. Of course it is more difficult to teach to the individual than the group, and it does not take a teacher to see this. But I could not understand why Fiona so readily accepted an easier solution in the classroom when, in every other area of her life, she fought tooth and nail for her rights and those of others.

From the time that these two incidents occurred with my friends, until last winter, I worked as a teaching assistant for a professor who taught language arts courses to prospective elementary school teachers. In each course, students had many opportunities to think about the kind of teaching they might engage in with their own students. Interestingly, regardless of how much emphasis was placed on uncovering the role of direct instruction within a student-oriented program (one that emphasizes "meaning making," student responsibility, and student independence over rote acquisition of skills and information), at the end of each term, a number of students would inevitably make the same sort of statement. They would announce that once in the classroom, they would mix student-oriented instruction with teacher-oriented instruction to make sure that students had the proper balance of creativity and fun, without losing out on the "basics." When asked, they explained the basics were phonics (letter-sound correspondences) and other skills taught in an isolated and

transmission way. The idea of student-oriented teaching at one end of the instructional continuum, and "the basics" at the other, seemed almost impossible to dispel in students who would be teaching full-time within two years. I wondered what could be done to help them better understand the whole meaning of instruction, in other words, what counts as instruction when the teaching and learning is predicated on a student-oriented approach.

The three examples described above help to show the confusion--even distrust--that surrounds the topic that research has shown to be sound classroom instruction. Parents, prospective teachers, and even seasoned teachers appear to be unsure of what counts as strong and appropriate instruction, how to name it, or how best to provide for such support in classroom settings. And yet to be honest, although the accounts that I have just shared made a strong impression on me, they were not shocking. The reason is that I have also experienced some of these same feelings.

I spent my first five years at university studying to become a physical education teacher. I was fortunate to land a job upon graduation in the late seventies, at a time when few teachers were being hired. In addition to teaching physical education to most levels at a small elementary school, I was asked to teach language arts and science to a multi-level group of students. At first I thought this dual role would cause me scheduling problems and concern that I did not see my homeroom students all afternoon. I was surprised to realize that it was my interaction with students that became a major issue for me.

At first, I was not as strong in the classroom as I was in the gymnasium. Five years of university had taught me how to integrate fitness training, skill teaching and lessons in sportsmanship into thirty minute blocks of time that addressed the needs of learners with different interests and abilities. I knew how to organize activities so when students practiced skills, they also exercised at a level of intensity and duration to produce an aerobic training effect. I also knew how to weave in the idea that team play is more important than winning by not keeping score during most of our games. Also, I was aware that, for anyone who visited my class without a physical education background, a lot of this very deliberate instruction would go unnoticed because it was seamlessly integrated into playful activities that the children clearly enjoyed. In fact, my classes have been seen as an "airing out" time for students,--something offered so that they could be able to settle down to "real work" once they returned to the classroom.

It was these subtle aspects of instruction that went on below the surface, that I felt needed shoring up in my classroom teaching. I knew enough to take on interesting projects with my students rather than to rely on de-contextualized exercises and drills, and I know that students enjoyed their time in my class. Further, standardized test results, as well as my own observations, showed solid student progress. I was not satisfied with the instruction I offered, however, because I was aware that I was not teaching in the same intensive, responsive way I had come to expect from myself in the gymnasium.

At one point I even questioned the relevance of trying to meet the needs of so many diverse learners at once. I was taking evening courses in literacy studies to improve my classroom instruction, but as I read

and wrote about ideas and methods associated with terms like holistic instruction, student-centred teaching, and reflective practice (Willinsky, 1990) I found myself becoming cynical. Although the courses helped me get a better handle on my own teaching, I knew that my own niece and nephew were floundering in poorly taught English language arts classes that were supposedly devoted to student-oriented learning. Their teacher-oriented French immersion classes were not adapted to individual strengths or interests in any obvious way, but most students were making reasonable and steady progress. I was uncomfortable with my thoughts, but some part of me began to feel that, in some contexts, it might be better to go with a "T.V. dinner" approach to instruction. Lessons would be predictable and uniform, but at least there would be no "disasters in the kitchen."

There was, however, another voice speaking inside of me, and it was this one that eventually guided me to this research project. As I pursued course work toward a master's degree, I gradually came to a deeper understanding of how students learn and the importance of providing instruction in ways consistent with how meaning is made. This process was partly a result of engaging in formal assignments around the topic. However, the experience of learning from and with a number of outstanding teachers who were committed to student-oriented teaching practices played a strong a role in fueling my interest in the present research. The change I saw in myself when I worked from my own interests, and in ways that built on my own strengths and experiences, convinced me that it was finally time to channel my energy away from ongoing debates around teacher versus student-oriented teaching philosophies. I finally understood that to aim for anything less than powerful learning experiences, regardless of the age of the students or

the nature of the teaching context, would be the first step to limiting student potential. But I also knew unless it was clear how to meet this ambitious goal in realistic settings that included large classes, diverse learners, and teachers with only human amounts of energy, I would just be contributing to the confusion already surrounding the subject. So, with a topic that had been simmering inside of me for years and had finally reached the boiling point, I set out to explore the nature of literacy instruction in a cycle one setting. This dissertation shares my discoveries as I studied along with Bea, a most extraordinary, and very authentic elementary schoolteacher.

Setting the Scene: An Introduction to the Research Context

For most of the months of the study, darkness still enveloped me when I left for my research site from my home on the south shore. The idea was to get in and out of the urban core before the morning traffic picked up so that I would make it to Borden School well before the children arrived. (Borden school is a pseudonym for the school where Bea was teaching.) A delay of even ten minutes made the trip a half-hour longer, and while I would not be late, there would be no time to settle in. Everything was much smoother if I kept my eye on the clock, stuck to a strict routine, and arrived unrushed.

Once on the road, however, things eased up a bit. I would take a moment somewhere on the bridge to quietly reflect on the view ahead. With the river in the foreground and the mountain in back, the tall city buildings actually sparkled as the sun came up. This brief moment always reminded me of how much I still liked living near the city where I was born and raised. Despite language tensions that had restricted my freedom to work in the English language for over twenty years, I knew

the charisma and cosmopolitan nature of this place offered something that was hard to find in other large North American centres.

Once I was on the island, past the downtown expressway, and onto the autoroute, I relaxed a bit more, knowing that the driving would be against the traffic the rest of the way. With my tea in a thermos beside me, I cruised past half a dozen suburbs that were home to people now lining up to get into the city, as well as to others who worked in the buildings along the highway. Although this was the most monotonous part of the trip, I noticed each new housing development was subtly different. The farther east I drove the more green space surrounded each house. The dwellings were also newer and the towns were more distinct than those closer to the city. By the time I crossed the short bridge to finally leave the island, I was in the countryside that surrounded Borden School.

This wider community was settled around the turn of the nineteenth century by French, English and Scottish immigrants. Roads are paved but narrow, and horse farms alternate with small businesses and houses of various ages and styles. An old village that stretches along a lake for several kilometers is still the heart of the area. Its blend of restaurants, churches, homes and shops attract visitors who want an escape from industry and big malls. Although there is much more of an English language presence than in most communities surrounding the city, the area is nevertheless made up of a mix of French and English speaking families.

Borden School is not in the village or the old rural area. It is situated in one of the many newer subdivisions that have sprouted up and

continued to grow in the last twenty years. In some respects, these clusters of homes are consistent with the countryside surrounding them. The lots are well treed and typically at least a quarter acre in size. The narrow winding roads that serve them lead to small duck ponds or open fields where children can play. However, because of the certain predictability in style and layout of these developments, and their tendency to attract young families, they are actually more of a hybrid of suburbs and true country living. About half the students who attend Borden School live in subdivisions such as these. Many of their parents commute to positions in firms closer to the city. The other students are bussed in from rural areas up to half an hour away. Their parents tend to work in the more immediate area in a variety of jobs.

Each time I drove up to the school, it made a favourable impression on me. Unlike in the city where land is expensive, this community could allow Borden to spread out. The school is a single story building that sits on approximately three acres of land cleared of many of the surrounding trees. About two-thirds of the land is grassed and gently sloped, and on this section is a playground equipped with colourful climbing apparatus. Most of the remaining flat area is paved for buses and cars.

Although pleasant, the inside of the school does not seem as spacious. The nine-year old building is impeccably maintained and overall very cheerful, but the four hallways that radiate from the central library/sunroom seem about a foot too narrow. During high traffic times especially, the congestion that this adds to an already buzzing area, is one feature that detracts from the calm atmosphere portrayed outdoors. Another is the size of the classrooms. For students who stay during the

lunch hour, this means most of the day is spent in compact, if not exactly cramped, quarters. Although many of the spaces within the school would benefit from a few extra feet, and a cafeteria would be more pleasant for everyone, a number of other facilities are in place. There is a music room, a computer laboratory, and a full gymnasium. As well, several smaller rooms serve administrative and maintenance needs.

The physical structure of the school made a definite impact on me, but my first impression was probably shaped as much by the student work that greeted me as I walked into the building. What I remember most was a detailed mural of an orphanage in India painted by a group of grade five students. Beside it was a bar graph showing the amount of money raised by them to support these children. I learned that, throughout the year, students took turns at the booth underneath the mural during their lunch hours and at various other times, to raise money and awareness about the orphanage. The fact that my husband and I adopted our daughter from an orphanage in India no doubt influenced the impact that this important work made on me. Not all of the displays around the school reflected such a sense of purpose, but the overall feeling I got, over time, was that teachers at this school involved students in interesting and meaningful projects.

This was always the case with Bea, the teacher in whose class I conducted my study. Whenever I visited, the bulletin board outside her class had changed from the week before. Bea filled it with recent student work, and also posted photographs of important classroom events. For example, if a student had read a story for the first time to her classmates, Bea might take a picture of the child holding her work,

place it in the hall, and describe the event in large print underneath for students to read at their leisure. These displays invited students to pause as they packed their schoolbags or headed out to recess. Although a cluster of children at the bulletin board contributed to the already congested hallways, my sense was that the benefits to the students far outweighed the inconveniences.

I would always arrive at school a good forty minutes before the children. During this time, I made notes about the changes in the room since the last visit, or set up videotaping equipment while Bea did her final planning for the day. (Appendix A shows the basic physical organization of her classroom.) Bea was always there well before me, so often there were a few spare minutes for conversation before the bell rang. This turned out to be a pleasant time to get to know each other on an informal basis, as well as a chance to find out about the school in general. Since I did not have a regular opportunity to mix with the staff, this was also a good way to learn more about them and the parent body.

During one of these morning conversations, Bea discussed her relationship with her colleagues. She explained that she was trying to keep her pedagogical contributions outside of the immediate school quiet, and elaborated that she did not want newer, or less involved teachers, to think she put herself on a different plane because of the talks she gave at conferences, or the visitors that dropped by her classroom. I am sure her down-to-earth nature would never have led anyone to think this way, but these comments told me something about her expertise in the school. When I asked more about this, I learned that, although she was hesitant about taking a leadership role with staff at the beginning of the year, she eventually did because of the

responsibility she felt towards her colleagues regarding the impending educational reform.

As with all the schools in the province of Québec, Borden Elementary was in the process of reflecting on and improving its instructional practices to more effectively respond to each student's potential and interests. As part of the Québec Education Program (the name given to the provincial reform), teachers were learning how to integrate instruction in subject areas (such as mathematics or science) with instruction in a number of cross-curricular competencies and broad areas of learning. "Cross-curricular competencies" refer to general skills and strategies students use, such as the ability to exercise critical judgement, co-operate with others, or adopt effective work methods. Two examples of "broad areas of learning" are the ability to interact effectively with media and the ability to exercise responsible behaviour with the environment. Very generally, the reform addresses the inter-relatedness of all areas of learning.

Bea was already very experienced with teaching practices associated with the reform, and felt that she could help with the transition teachers were making. This decision was carefully thought out, however. She was aware that a number of teachers were used to a more teacher-oriented style of teaching, and might feel overwhelmed if she shared too many of her more student-oriented ideas at once. She decided on a slower approach that would more likely build up the confidence and sense of camaraderie among the staff. For example, she explained to me that she agreed to gradually share her expertise on using authentic assessment tools with the staff over the course of the year so that, together, they would begin to use them school-wide the following year.

I got the feeling that the sensitivity Bea showed in instances such as these was responsible for her informal leadership in the school. Although she would joke that she was the oldest person on staff, but not necessarily the most experienced, she was a true "teacher leader." The staff, including the principal, would often consult with her before planning or finalizing activities. The year I visited, a number of administrative decisions resulted in a change of principals before Christmas. I noticed that the new principal often visited Bea during teaching breaks to mull over ideas or check on school policies.

Borden School serves roughly five hundred students. All of them, from kindergarten to cycle three, are offered bilingual instruction. This means that students have two homeroom teachers and alternate between them. In Bea's class, for example, except for music and physical education instruction, students spent most of the day with her on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays most of the day was spent across the hall with the French language teacher. Fridays were more flexible. Students spent a little time with both teachers, but the scheduling and mix of students depended on what was planned in the days before. Bea had her seven year olds on the days her younger students were learning French. They in turn learned French when Bea taught the six year olds. (Appendix B shows the weekly schedule.)

The school had four kindergarten groups, and three classes in each level up to grade four. From there, the groups were mixed levels. As mentioned earlier, a basic part of the current reform is that students work in cycles rather than grades. That is, cycle one, for example, would consist of students formerly slotted in grades one and two. The idea is

that this facilitates student learning in a number of ways. Teachers and students have the chance to become more comfortable with each other and students have two years instead of just one to attain certain competencies. Further, the collaborative nature of learning suggests that students of different ages and abilities benefit from working alongside each other.

According to Bea, parents and some staff members were not in favour of mixing six and seven year olds in the same classroom, perhaps because of the added complexity of a bilingual instructional program. Students were still considered part of cycle one, and teachers adopted other aspects of the student-oriented reform. However, the logistics of bilingual schooling meant that some concepts of the reform were adapted rather than adopted in this school. I should add, too, that teachers and parents in this study tended to use the terms grade one and cycle one interchangeably to refer to Bea's classroom.

There were fifteen boys in Bea's class and nine girls. As the study progressed I learned that their parents worked in a wide range of occupations, and that in about one half of the families, both parents worked outside the home. Several students were part of single family households, and several more were from blended families. Most were bussed to school and stayed during the lunch hour.

The interests and abilities of the students were diverse. Some regularly chose reading or writing or activities during playtime at home and in school. Others preferred more physical activities. There were two students who had enough difficulties to warrant a full-time teacher's

aide in the classroom. In short, Bea's class was a mix of children with different needs and interests.

In our intervals without the students, I also got to know something of Bea's background. She had stopped teaching for a time to be at home with her growing family. When she returned fifteen years later, she reported being energetic, but somewhat unsettled. Referring to the transmission style of teaching characteristic of the early sixties that emphasized skill acquisition over meaning making, she felt a growing need to teach children to do more than to "bark at print," in other words simply decode words. Bea soon became involved with professional groups that focused on student-oriented teaching philosophies, and was quite strongly influenced by an older friend and colleague who helped her develop the skills and confidence to teach in ways that were still considered "against the grain" at the time. For example, she began using trade books instead of basal readers (series of sequenced books with controlled vocabulary) and involved students in reading and writing workshops (Calkins, 1994).

Bea explained that when she discusses her teaching philosophy with parents and others nowadays, she deliberately describes herself as a believer of "real language" rather than "whole language" (see p. 4). She is aware that the term "whole language" has at times been misinterpreted as a set of specific teaching methods rather than a philosophy that responds to the varying needs of students. As my year unfolded, it became clear that her succinct yet open-ended interpretation of her work resonated with what I experienced in her classroom, and was a very effective approach for meeting the diverse needs of her students.

Chapter Two: A Critical Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review literature relating to the role of literacy instruction in a New Literacy classroom (Willinsky,1990). The terms "New Literacy" and "instruction" will be examined. To orient the reader at this point a New Literacy classroom is one where the teacher recognizes the need to expand traditional definitions of literacy in order to reduce power differences in a changing and increasingly culturally diverse society. As well, it is one where the teacher pays greater attention to specific classroom practices, particularly instruction.

This chapter critically reviews literature on instruction from three perspectives: cognitive psychology, curriculum, and literacy. Although they are presented in separate sections it is important to note that studies from one perspective influence and are influenced by work from other sources. Further organization of this paper reflects my interpretation of the literature. I realized that the literature tends to focus on one of three areas: specific aspects of instruction, the cultural locatedness of instruction, or the political dimensions of instruction. (I present this classification of the literature in Appendix C.) Although I have adopted this classification for practical purposes, I acknowledge the inter-relatedness of these perspectives, as do many of the researchers who tend to focus on one area or another. For example, Cochran-Smith (2000) writes:

> It is a mistake to think that there is a forced and mutually exclusive choice in education--emphasizing either

> pedagogical and subject matter knowledge or knowledge about culture, racism, and schools as a reflection of societal conflicts and sites for power struggle. (p.174)

In addition to classifying the literature in this general descriptive way, I have analyzed "instruction" more closely. The purpose of this deeper analysis is to bring to the surface, or "tease out," dimensions of instruction that are present in the literature, but not always explicitly labelled as such. I have grouped the studies together using a common language to provide an overall understanding of the range of what is important, or "counts" as instruction. This deeper analysis shows, as mentioned on page1, that instruction can be understood as encompassing five dimensions: immersion in nurturing relationships, immersion in meaningful activities, direct instruction or assisted performance, reflective assessment, and critical political reflection with action. It also demonstrates that few existing studies explore instruction in its entirety, and that more research is needed in this area. (See Appendix D for a summary of the dimensions of instruction.)

A Cognitive Psychology Perspective

Much of the research on instruction relevant to the concerns raised by proponents of The New Literacy focuses on the inter-relatedness among the individual, society and culture. However, two other researchers, Chomsky and Piaget, are important to include here because along with the more culturally-oriented work of Vygotsky and others, their early work recognized the emergent nature of literacy. That is, their work suggests literacy develops over an extended period of time and quite naturally from birth. This is in contrast to an earlier "reading readiness"

view of literacy that held that students were not able to read until they reached a certain developmental stage, usually occurring at approximately six years of age.

Literature on Specific Aspects of Instruction

Early notions about the need for children to be actively engaged in language to acquire literacy were posited by the work of Chomsky and Piaget. Chomsky (1965) stated that young children are predisposed to learn language, and that it develops in the child the same way other biological functions develop. This special ability, once referred to as a "language acquisition device," has more recently been called "Universal Grammar." It is understood to be a set of principles common to all languages that prevents the child from going off in wrong directions trying to understand the rules of the language. He posited that children do need to experience language, but only to trigger this natural device.

Piaget (1962) focused on the cognitive structures and processes of language rather than its development. He introduced the terms "assimilation," "accommodation," "integration" and "differentiation." He posited that children use the process of assimilation or accommodation when learning. Assimilation occurs when a child transforms new knowledge to fit with what she already knows and is familiar. When the new knowledge is too different, or the child's strategies are inadequate, however, the child may accommodate it by modifying existing modes of thinking. This accommodation may be slight, but when new information is sufficiently discrepant, children experience an "aha" moment as they realize new rules or ways of constructing the rules. After these two processes occur, Piaget's theory maintains that the resulting cognitive

structure will be able to accommodate more things, that is, it will be more integrated. As well, it will be divided into more substructures, or more differentiated.

Piaget identified four primary cognitive structures (i.e., developmental stages): sensorimotor, pre-operations, concrete operations, and formal operations. Motor actions characterize intelligence in the sensorimotor stage (0-2 years). During the pre-operation period (3-7 years), intelligence is intuitive in nature. The cognitive structure during the concrete operation stage (8-11 years) is logical, but dependent upon concrete referents. Thinking involves abstractions in the final stage of formal operations (12-15 years).

Although Chomsky and Piaget acknowledge the role of others in language learning, their work does not focus on how the role of others affects changes that occur in a child's thinking (Raphael & Heibert, 1998). The following studies are more encompassing in nature.

Literature on the Cultural Locatedness of Instruction

Cole and Wertsch (2000) comment on the debate about the relationship between the ideas of Vygotsky and Piaget. They suggest that too much emphasis is placed on "the primacy of individual psychogenesis versus sociogenesis of mind" (p. 1) when the cardinal difference between Vyvotsky and Piaget is their views concerning the importance of culture. From a Vygotskian perspective, thinking develops differently depending on the context in which it occurs. Like Piaget, Vygotsky acknowledged that school literacy instruction is a sign-mediated activity, that is, an activity where students learn words as tools, or "signs," to shape

behaviour. However, Vygotsky posited that literacy instruction is also primarily a socially mediated activity. He meant that it is an activity where culturally established meanings are communicated and shape learning. This constructivist view of learning not only reflects the research to be discussed in this section, but also undergirds the curriculum and literacy literature that follows. Fosnot (1996) elaborates on what is meant by the term "constructivism." She describes it as a psychological theory about knowledge and learning, and states:

> Knowledge is temporary, developmental, nonobjective, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated. Learning from this perspective is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through co-operative social activity, discourse and debate. *(*p. *ix.)*

Vygotsky also believed that the developmental process moved from the social to the internal, and that language and thought first occurred in meaningful social situations before being internalised by the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky instruction both precedes and leads development and is defined as "any directive that elicits activity and development as the reorganisation of consciousness through that activity" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 113). The best instruction is aimed at the learner's zone of proximal development. That is:

> the gap between the child's level of actual development determined by independent problem solving and her level of potential development determined by problem solving supported by an adult or through collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky,1978, p. 15)

A number of studies have helped to clarify how a teacher or more capable peer gives support to learning within the zone. Wertsch (1984) focused on semiotic flexibility, a term used to describe shifts in speech in adult-child dialogue when giving responses or directives. These directives help the child understand the learning problem. Wertsch found that as the learning activity proceeds and the child gains more control, what begins as very explicit directives moves to vague hints or suggestions. Finally the learner does not need adult support to complete the activity.

Cole (1990) has further clarified the role of the teacher during an instructional activity. He found that the type of support given by the teacher varied with the type of learning activities. Instead of following a mechanistic, stepwise progression of instructional tasks, teacher support included several levels of tasks at once, including previous steps and the next steps. Three elements of teacher support were evident: the teacher mediated or increased the child's learning, the teacher adjusted her role based on learner feedback, and the teacher focused on the amount of help needed.

Other studies by Wertsch (1984) underline the need to think of the activity between teacher and learner in contextual terms. In describing how the zone of proximal development operates, he stressed that one

must consider how the situation is defined by each of the participants (situation definition), the degree of intersubjectivity, or shared definition between them, and the sign systems used by them (semiotic mediation). Related to this, researchers discovered that students' logical understanding is often underestimated--that frequently the real problem is a misunderstanding of what is required (Clermont, Perret, & Bell, 1991; Donaldson, 1979). Further, this is often because of different backgrounds the children bring to the learning situation. Wertsch's study of text-based realities (Wertsch, 1991) not only demonstrates particular qualities of school discourse that students must come to know if they are to succeed in school, but points to the need to address the reality that some students are less prepared than others. He identified four qualities that students must internalize: depersonalization (objective discourse is valued over subjective discourse), boundedness (only easily related information can be included in the discourse), conscious reflection (thinking about thinking), and systematicity (the relationships embedded within texts) (Wertsch, 1991). This work suggests the need for educators to teach explicitly qualities of school discourse to those who need it, and also to reflect critically on what discourses are valued in schools.

Wertsch and Givens (1992) offer guidance on how to design instruction to assist students in the zone of proximal development using a text-mediated model of instruction. This is a general framework that helps a teacher make instructional decisions by analyzing the student, the text, and the type and amount of mediation she needs to provide. It is more individualized and complex than modeling or simply showing learners how to do something, because each episode of social interaction

(purpose, strategy, reflection) leads to another episode and a new zone of proximal development.

The concept of conscious reflection is the focus of Mezirow's work (1990). His interest is in the dramatic change that can occur in learners themselves as they encounter a learning transaction. Recently, scholars considered the possibility that his theory of transformational learning applies to contexts other than adult learning situations, where it was conceived (Merriam, 1993). What is particularly valuable about his theory with respect to The New Literacy is that it attempts to explicate how powerful learning actually occurs (Clark, 1993).

He posits that critical reflection leads to transformations, and that thinking reflexively means critically examining the grounds of one's beliefs. It is achieved through instrumental or communicative learning. Instrumental learning, the domain we associate most with the natural sciences, can be judged empirically. Communicative learning, however, is assessed through discourse and is often more powerful. "It is more a process of searching, often intuitively, for themes and metaphors in which to fit the unfamiliar into a meaning perspective" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 9). Further, critical reflection that focuses on the premise of a problem (for example, why are we looking at the problem this way in the first place?) tends to lead to more powerful learning than that which focuses on the content or process.

Mezirow links critical reflection to action. To him, a transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act. This may involve social and/or political action,

but can also include making decisions that do not necessarily lead to immediate behavioral change.

Whereas the work of Mezirow helps expand the understanding of the process of learning, Gardner's research broadens the widely-held notion of intelligence as a single unchanging capacity (Gardner, 1983). He determined that humans are able to analyze at least seven different kinds of information (linguistic, logical/mathematical, spacial, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal). Reacting to what he considers superficial applications of the theory of multiple intelligences, his work in recent years has stressed the need to apply it in deeper ways; "to go beyond a reflexive invocation of a categorical scheme and ultimately bring about a different way of thinking about children and their education" (Gardner, 1995).

Bomer (1998) reminds us that explicit teaching is a transactional process between the teacher, learner and the material. He states that teaching can only be considered explicit if the students make sense of and use what is taught. If they don't, the teaching is not explicit, regardless of how clear it may have been in the teacher's mind or words. He suggests three strategies that can intensify the transaction between teacher and student: publicly and visibly enacting what is usually private, such as sharing the process of writing first drafts (demonstration), helping students actually do something personally meaningful rather than telling them how (assisted performance), and allowing for deliberate and regular structures that give students the chance to talk about how their work is going when working independently of the teacher's guidance (reflective description).

Summary

Relevant pivotal research from a cognitive psychology perspective acknowledges the importance of context for learning. That is, it recognizes human thought develops in activities embedded in particular social and cultural settings and is restrained as well as empowered by these contexts. With this in mind, a number of studies look at what actually happens within the zone of proximal development. In terms of giving classroom teachers direction, the text-mediated model of instruction is helpful. Mezirow's research helps to explain the process of powerful learning events, but does not address how to enable this in practical terms. The work of Gardner encourages us to recognize intelligences not previously given the same value as those associated with Western society. Finally, Bomer explores transactions that can intensify teacher/student connection. In-depth studies that document instruction in classrooms with these expanded notions in mind are missing in this area of work. Studies of this kind would provide a deeper and more holistic understanding of instruction that teachers could adapt to their own particular situations.

A Curriculum Theory Perspective

Pinar (1995) states that the four concepts of curriculum (the humanistic, the social reconstructivist, the technological, and the academic) put forward by McNeil in 1974 are still being modified, added to, and critiqued by academics more than twenty years later. While recognizing that placing theorists in categories is both artificial and tentative, the literature on literacy instruction in New Literacy

classrooms reflects a perspective that can be considered social reconstructionist in orientation. McNeil posits that:

> Social reconstructionists see schooling as an agency for social change, and they demand that education be relevant both to the student's interests and society's needs. Curriculum is conceived to be an active force having direct impact on the whole fabric of its human and social context. (1974, p. 135)

The following section briefly reviews key theorists beginning with Dewey's influential work.

Literature on the Political Dimensions of Instruction

Dewey (1916) fought against the traditional curricular split between elite and mass education passed down from ancient Greece that separated a practical experiential education from a philosophical one. He believed a democratic curriculum should simultaneously integrate working and thinking in action and reflection. He was able to demonstrate that this was possible in his experimental school in Chicago. He cautioned, however, that the weakest aspect of a progressive curriculum was the selection and organization of subject matter and argued that strong guidance is not an external imposition, but rather "the freeing of life processes for its own adequate fulfilment" (Dewey, 1900, p.281).

Dewey's commitment to grounding experiences in the present was also supported by Whitehead (1929) who opposed the belief that learning could be put on hold.

> Whatever interest attaches to your subject matter must be attached here and now; whatever powers you are strengthening in your pupils must be exercised here and now; whatever possibilities your teaching should impart, must be exhibited here and now. That is the golden rule of education, and a very difficult rule to follow. (p. 265)

Whitehead urged educators to stop teaching subjects in a disconnected manner, which he felt resulted in useless scraps of information. Rather, he advocated studying a subject in depth, believing that specialist study leads to a sense of style, and ultimately power, through efficiency. He described style as "an aesthetic sense, based on admiration for the direct attainment of a forseen end, simply and without waste. Style is the ultimate morality of mind" (p. 266-67).

Freire acknowledged the influence of Dewey on his own work. He criticized the "banking" method of education that viewed citizens as empty vessels to be filled with information. Instead, he urged teachers and students to work in partnership with each other to change oppressive structures. While he did not agree with the idea of accepting the status quo with plans to change it later, he realized "the need to master the dominant language not only to survive but also to better fight for the transformation of an unjust and cruel society" (Freire, 1993 p.135).

The work of Walzer (1983) is more recent. He acknowledges that students have different capacities and interests, and will eventually have different roles in society, but argues that a democratic society should

postpone this differentiation so that all students are provided with the common currency of political and social life. He stresses that eventual differences should be intrinsic to the work itself rather than a reflection of the status of the work.

Deweyan constructivist education has been related to Vygotskian theory. Shor (2000) believes the main difference between the work in critical pedagogy and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is that critical pedagogy is an activity that pulls teachers as well as students forward, whereas Vygotsky's focus was on student development. The emphasis in Vygotsky's work was not on power relations as a context for learning to the same degree as it is with curriculum theorists.

Other scholars have contributed to the development of more democratic goals in education by expanding widely held concepts of learning from different perspectives. For example, when feminists began to focus on women's development and demonstrated how previously this had been systematically overlooked, they uncovered the relational dimension to learning that is fundamental for both women and men (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan,1982). Grumet (1988), in Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, discusses this dimension and explains the ironic predicament of many women teachers. She tells how teachers deny their students what should be so natural--a nurturing, embodied way of relating--and explains that women teachers have been forced to perpetuate a male epistemology of detachment and control in the classroom. (The title Bitter Milk refers to the practice of rubbing a bitter tasting leaf on the nipples to encourage weaning.) She argues for a curriculum that would endorse the intimacy and specificity of the parent-child bond. Others have also noted that schools violate

this bond. Schubert, Schubert, and Schubert (1986) write: "the parent-child relation is a microcosm of curricular theorising" (p. 61); however, "the institution of schooling as we know it runs counter to the natural curriculum that is symbolised in the parent-child dialogue" (p.71).

Noddings (1984) proposed an ethic of care in schools, and explained that caring for the whole student, instead of merely the subject matter, does not imply a deep and consuming relationship with each student. Rather, it means when teachers encounter students, for however brief a time, they should be open and responsive to their needs. To facilitate this, Noddings suggests creating smaller schools, working with the same student for several years instead of one, and having teachers teach more than one subject.

It should be noted that although feminist work is responsible for many ideas that build on the relational aspect of learning, other theorists have also stressed the importance of relationship in teaching. For example, Daloz' (1999) work on transformative learning states, "teaching and learning are finally about relationship. In the dialogue between mentor and student lie most of the educational questions worth asking" (p.246). He also stresses that power relations between teachers and students are a function of larger social forces that must be confronted if we are to see transformation among students.

Examining curriculum through an artistic perspective has also served to challenge more traditional concepts of knowledge. Eisner (1997) explains that the forms we use to represent knowledge influence how we think and what we can think about. "If this were not so, there would be no need to dance, compute, or draw" (p.349). An artistic

perspective also challenges dominant social practices. Greene (1991) explains that the arts can give voice to those on the edges of society such as African Americans, women and immigrants because an aesthetic approach values different and imaginative ways of thinking that often are not part of society's "main text." Such moments can lead to opportunities for reflection and transformation that help us see the world in a new light. Rug has added that meaning often emerges through a phase of "quiet waiting in which conscious control is suspended" (Rug, quoted in Pinar, 1995, p.572) and posited that this meditative aspect of cognition can apply to science as well as art.

Sullivan (2000) shares childhood memories of summers with her marine biologist mother through poetry she has since written retrospectively about these experiences. She states that most of what she learned had very little to do with direct instruction. Sullivan relates her work to the current conversation about explicitness in teaching by suggesting that experiences such as these have implications for researchers "who are trying to make visible the invisible processes of cognition" (p.222).

Finally, the work of Delpit (1988), Cochran-Smith (2000) and bell hooks (1994) illustrates the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of transformative education. bell hooks warns us that transformative classrooms can be uncomfortable, and that often students do not understand or appreciate the experience until much later. Delpit questions concepts of social transformation thought up by white people, and argues that what some black children need are the very kinds of experiences that white educators are trying to eliminate. Reflecting on her own work as a teacher educator, Cochran-Smith

uncovers the social constructedness of the progressive pedagogy of language encouraged in teacher education programs. She explains that such a curriculum can legitimately be viewed as a racial text, that is, a text that promotes white middle class values. Students, however, are given the subtle message that it is culturally neutral.

Summary

The literature in this section is political. Curriculum theorists who contribute to The New Literacy aim to reduce power inequities in society through changed literacy practices. For the most part, this literature reflects a holistic approach that values learning through personally meaningful experiences in relationship with others. The idea that instruction should vary depending on particular contexts and needs is also put forward. Delpit and Cochran-Smith argue this point explicitly, but it is present elsewhere as well. For example, Dewey's school in Chicago emphasized conscious control of one's thinking, whereas Rug presents the need for moments of quiet waiting where conscious control is suspended. The issue of how to balance instruction to provide for broader concepts of knowledge and learning emerges in the work of these authors, but how to address this complexity within the context of daily classroom life needs more attention.

A Literacy Studies Perspective

Literature in this section is extensive and varied. It consists of theoretical models of literacy and instruction, classroom research, parent-child studies, and comparative studies.

Literature on the Political Dimensions of Instruction

Street (1995, 1999) contrasts an autonomous model of literacy with an ideological one. He explains the autonomous model represents literacy as a collection of skills. Proponents of this model believe that teaching the dominant social discourse is the route to social progress, and that standardized testing measures reading and writing abilities fairly. By contrast, an ideological model, one consistent with the perspective of The New Literacy, views literacy as a socially constructed practice with mainstream literacy as part, but not all of what literacy includes.

Like others, Street asserts that there is no clear division between oral and literate forms of expression (Scribner & Cole, 1981, Meek, 1992). He examines literacy practices outside of mainstream schooling to show the importance of acknowledging expanded definitions of literacy so that educators can help students more effectively build on what they already know. For example, he describes the work of Weinstein-Shr (1993) who studied Hmong refugees in Philadelphia. One of the participants involved in the research was studying English at night. The approach to the literacy learning in this course was the typical "school" variety. When he dropped out of the classes, it was assumed it was because he was "failing." Upon closer examination, it became clear that he had earned a respected position in his community mediating with outside agencies such as social services. His scrapbook collection of articles relating to the Hmong had make him an authority on the history of his people, and although it was unlikely that he could read in the conventional sense all that he collected, his literacy positively influenced his personal life and that of his community.

The New London Group (1996) provides a model of instruction. The authors argue for a pedagogy that provides for access to evolving multi-literacies, as well as opportunities for critical reflection. Their theoretical model consists of four inter-related components: student immersion in purposeful activities in a community of learners (situated practice), teacher-student collaboration within the zone of proximal development (overt instruction), critical thinking of what has been learned in the first two components (critical framing), and a return to immersion with changed purposeful activities (reflective practice). The authors explain that the role of overt instruction should not be interpreted as transmission style teaching, and stress that their view of learning is embodied, situated and social. However, "whatever help biology and maturation give children in their early primary socialization must be made up for--given more overtly--when we use immersion as a method in school" (p. 84).

Other scholars have also discussed the current direction of literacy learning. Cazden (1992) argues that immersion in rich literacy experiences is necessary, but not sufficient for literacy learning. She emphasizes the need to focus more on two areas: the specific features of the written language in learning how to read and write, and how literacy is situated more broadly in society, that is, the need to look at the politics and purposes of literacy.

Drawing on observations and reflections of a grade one/two teacher as well as statistical comparisons of her group with traditional classrooms, Willinsky (1990) describes a recent trend as well. He names it "The New Literacy" and defines it as an outlook that aims not only to create functional literacy, but also powerful political literacy. This

philosophy challenges and expands the meanings of literacy in the classroom and, with the help of the teacher, ultimately attempts to shift the locus of control from curriculum textbooks to the student. To illustrate, Willinsky uses the analogy of riding a bike, where the focus is on going places and the pleasures in getting there instead of just learning how to ride. Willinsky also explains what differentiates "The New Literacy" from the period of literacy learning that preceded it. Roughly set in the seventies and eighties, this is often referred to as the process period (Butler-Kisber, Dillon, Mitchell, 1997). He explains that, while still allowing and encouraging student expressions, "The New Literacy" needs to challenge students further by incorporating more explicit elements of an inquiry model of teaching into the curriculum.

The need for more explicitness in teaching is echoed by a number of other theorists in recent years. Raphael & Heibert (1998) stress that literacy learning from a social constructivist perspective allows educators to look beyond "the seemingly magical literacy acquisition of children in supportive home and community environments and identify strategies that can be applied in school settings for children without extended prior literacy experiences" (p. 13).

It should be noted that such an emphasis characterizes, but is not exclusive to, The New Literacy. During the preceding process period Heath (1983) conducted a pivotal study that researched the language and literacy of culturally different communities. The goal of her work was to help teachers make school a place where children could build on their knowledge and values, while developing mainstream forms of literacy. Part of this involved teachers helping students critically examine cultural differences and expectations so that they would be

able to navigate comfortably in various literacy contexts. The literature on natural or developmental learning connected to the process period clearly explicates the need for explicit teaching in addition to immersion in rich contexts (Holdaway, 1979). As Church explains, however, this was sometimes misunderstood during the process period (Church, 1996). Whole language was often presented as a set of rules rather than a philosophy. Consequently, teachers often were left with the mistaken impression that a "hands-off" approach to teaching was in their students' best interests.

More recently, teacher researchers have paid increasing attention to how students use literacy to integrate themselves into the classroom community (Dyson, 1993; Finders, 1997; Phinney, 1998). Dyson studied Jameel, a third grade African American boy, and found that for him learning to write was not so much a process of moving from the home culture to the school culture as it was a process of making school another kind of home by earning the respect of his peers. Jameel accomplished this through performances of his work that drew on the rich sociocultural resources he brought to the classroom. This led Dyson to suggest that too much emphasis has been placed on children's written products, and not enough on the social work that students accomplish through writing.

Referring to ideas of Delpit and Heath, Gallas et. al. (1996) suggest that explicit instruction in the rules of how to talk in specific classroom contexts is not always enough to help children bridge the gap between home and school discourses. They cite the work of Griffin (1993) and Dyson (1993) and conclude that children also need "child-orchestrated language talk within socially meaningful settings" (p. 611). Griffin's

research in a second grade classroom showed how David learned a mainstream way of storytelling, one in which there is a logical sequence of events and all details are tied together, through practicing and extending his personal style with the help of classmates. Just before telling his story, David would announce to the class, "I need people." His peers would then enact the story as he told it. This folk genre of storytelling spread to his classmates, and then by being an actor in their more logically sequenced stories, he was eventually able to master their more linear type of storytelling.

Evans (1996) researched literature discussion groups. She observed a fifth grade group (five members, three male) for six days within a two week period. Discussions were videotaped and transcripts were analysed using the constant comparison method. Contrary to the assumption that such groups provide a forum for all voices to be heard (Raphael & Goatley, 1992), Evans found a great deal of oppressive social positioning that appeared to be influenced along gender lines and according to cultural background. She concluded that teacher intervention must extend beyond academic concerns and focus more on issues of social positioning within these groups.

Similar conclusions were reached by Phinney (1998). For one year she studied social interaction during writing activities in a kindergarten class. As the study emerged, she focused on one small group of girls. In addition to learning more technical aspects of literate behaviours, she discovered that the students used their writing to explore, develop and maintain social relationships. Specifically, they would vie for positions in each others stories, especially high status positions such as being the youngest or smallest character. They also tried to change each other's decisions about who would earn particular character positions in

stories. Phinney concluded that group interactions had a strong influence on authorship, and that teachers need to be more concerned with socio-academic elements in classrooms.

Galda, Bisplinghove, Pelligrini, & Stahl (1995) conducted a year-long first grade classroom study to explore the meaning of phrases often associated with a child-centred curriculum. They focused on three terms: classroom community, getting out of the kids way, and teacher as literate other. Although instruction was not the focus of the study, its role emerged as the study progressed. It became clear that the teacher's encouragement of personal narratives was a chief way of building a classroom community. It connected the home and school lives of students, helped students and the teacher to get to know one another, and offered a wealth of material for reading and writing opportunities within the classroom. During this process, the teacher was very explicit with the children about how specific actions or comments contributed to community building, often explaining that she was saying something because they live together, and they need to get to know each other. Previous instructional interventions and things they discovered with her help eventually allowed her to get out of their way and permitted them to work independently. In addition, she modelled her literacy skills. For example, when she read to the class from a big book she would run her hand from left to right across the page. Depending on their individual needs, the students could then use or ignore what she had shared with them. This study begins to address the complexity of instruction within the context of daily classroom life, but does not focus explicitly on instruction. More studies with this specific focus are needed.

A number of recent parent-child studies investigate instructional approaches of parents in seemingly "natural" learning situations. Raphael & Hiebert (1998) explain that the current focus on explicitness in these studies is partly the result of educators' increased awareness of the amount and kinds of explicit instruction that actually take place between parent and child. It is also due to the realization of the need to level the field for some children by providing opportunities at school that are not available at home (Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham, 1991). Sigel, Stinson, and Flaughter (1991) discovered that mainstream, literate families provide instruction to their children in everyday activities such as during rhyming games in the car and read-alouds. These activities are strategically organized to fit with the conscious aims parents have about their children's learning. During these social interactions, children not only learn the code of the language, but also how literacy works more broadly in society (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham (1991) discovered that fathers asked their young children to make predictions and inferences, and to generate hypotheses about activities in which they had already participated at a less abstract level. These "distancing strategies" had a positive and significant effect on school achievement. On the other hand, children from less literate families tended to be limited to more didactic forms of instruction. This underlines the need for teachers to become sensitive to these differences, and to teach explicitly aspects of literacy that some students have not been taught at home.

Comparative studies on instruction are plentiful. Stahl, McKenna, and Pagnucco (1994) reviewed studies that compared the effectiveness of whole language and traditional classrooms between 1988 and 1994. (Although definitions of whole language varied among the studies, there

was a consensus that children learn language best if it is used for authentic purposes. Engaging in authentic reading and writing tasks using whole texts, avoiding piecemeal, part-to-whole literacy instruction, and empowering children to direct their own learning were common threads in whole language classrooms.) Of the forty-five studies found, twenty measured reading achievement. There were roughly no differences between the two approaches. Twenty-two studies used affective measures such as student attitude and self-esteem. Fourteen of the seventeen of these studies found no difference in attitude between traditional and whole language classrooms. However, when studies that used classroom observation and interviewing were reviewed, whole language classrooms came out ahead. Turner (1995) found children in whole language classes showed more task persistence, and more voluntary use of reading and volitional strategies such as using self-talk or removing oneself from distractions. When Stahl, Suttles, and Pagnucco (1996) compared traditional and whole language grade one classes, they found that except for one gifted child who stood out, students could not identify the "best" readers in the whole language classes. Children in the traditional classes, however, were able to stratify students according to ability, suggesting that whole language classrooms are more accepting of the diversity of learning styles and abilities than those in traditional settings.

Another interesting observation was made by Stahl, McKenna, and Pagnucco (1994). They wondered if differences in achievement between certain groups were more attributable to differences in difficulty of material than philosophical perspectives. Once they controlled for this they found that difficulty of materials was the only factor accounting for differences between these classes. As other research has suggested

(Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Pearson, 1997), they concluded that comparing methods was less fruitful than looking at specific activities within classes.

Duffy & Hoffman (1999) make this same point. They argue that researchers should focus on the complexity of classroom life, that is, study what teachers do with methods rather than what methods do alone. The need to artfully integrate programs, materials and methods as the situation demands is reflected in research on explicit instruction as well (Duffy, 1994; Duffy, G., Roehler, L., & Rackliffe, G., 1986). Although early comparative studies suggested explicit explanations led to higher achievement with low-ability students, subsequent qualitative analysis showed that highly effective teachers adapted the degree and type of explicitness to meet the needs of their students, much like parents do with their children.

All literacy studies with a political emphasis examine the teacher's role in helping students build on the literacies they bring to school. The need for explicit teaching is emphasized, and its meaning in various contexts is explored. As well, because of the socially complex and particular nature of classrooms, the need to think beyond explicitness to broader interpretations of instruction emerges. What is needed are more studies that explore the ebb and flow of how teachers decide on and adapt strategies to changing contexts in ways that work towards the various goals of literacy learning (Street, 1999; The New London Group, 1996).

Literature on Specific Aspects of Instruction

Responding to the increased emphasis on part-to-whole phonics instruction (breaking words into phonemes, teaching them, building up again into words) and explicit teaching in recent years, constructivist scholars have become more cognisant of the need to clarify how and when to best teach letter-sound correspondences within holistic settings (Dahl et al., 1999). Consequently, most of the literacy literature with a specific curricular focus addresses this concern.

The work of Moustafa & Maldonado-Colon (1999) describes how to teach letter-sound correspondences in ways that are explicit, strategic and contextually embedded using sounds of language children are already familiar with such as onsets, rimes and syllables. (Onsets are any consonants before a vowel in a syllable; rimes are the vowel and any consonants after it in a syllable.) First they review and critique literature that supports a part-to-whole approach. This method teaches the smallest units of sounds in words, called phonemes (e.g., /c/ in *cat*), before teaching whole words. They underline that the research concluding children's knowledge of letter-phoneme correspondence is the best predictor of early reading proficiency (Adams, 1990) is only correlational and does not establish causation. They also critique research concluding that children who have not learned to read have difficulty identifying phonemes and therefore need phonemic instruction before reading (Adams, 1990). They counter with research that suggests phonemic awareness is actually a consequence of becoming literate (Maliky, 1999; Treiman, 1985). The authors suggest using a shared reading approach to teach letter-sound correspondences, one in which students are taught to recognize a large body of printed words in

context, and then shown how to use letter-sound correspondences they already know to decode unfamiliar words.

The strength of this research is that it clarifies the role of explicit, systematic phonics instruction. It is limited, however, because it does not acknowledge less direct instructional approaches. For example, research indicating that young children often learn about phonics through early writing (Clay, 1991) suggests that ongoing classroom studies are needed to gain a broader understanding of all that teachers do to enable their students to learn about sound-symbol relationships. Only a few studies have addressed this need.

The year-long research of Price (1998) is one such study. She observed, videotaped, and audio-taped "code instruction" (which she defined as attentiveness by the teacher in interacting with students about sound/symbol relationships) in a grade one classroom. After the researcher analyzed the data, the teacher and children were interviewed to ensure that interpretations reflected those of the participants. When Price noted that the teacher did not approach code instruction from a traditional part-to-whole perspective, the teacher explained that such an approach would not build on the knowledge that many students already have about print. As an example, she explained that a part-to-whole approach would not build on early student knowledge about inflected verb endings (such as *ing, ed,* and *esses*), because teachers using such an approach would only introduce these late in the school year. Price found that the teacher also encouraged a number of other strategies for gaining meaning from print, such as paying attention to environmental print, illustrations, and the context. Further, the teacher based her instruction on student writing and their comments about print

awareness. Finally, because students often discovered strategies independently or with peers, she built in opportunities for this as well. Price's research on less direct approaches to instruction suggests the need for teachers to provide a variety of opportunities to students for learning about code.

Dahl et al. (1999) also uncovered the complexity of classroom phonics instruction. They observed eight whole language classrooms for seven months. Data included field notes of observations, as well as transcriptions of student and teacher interactions. As Price had discovered, phonics instruction occurred in the context of various reading and writing activities. Further, teachers provided differentiated instruction based on learner development and ongoing assessments across various contexts. The research also showed that phonics instruction often included instruction in phoneme segmentation. (A phoneme is the smallest unit of spoken sound, which, if changed, alters the meaning of the word, such as the /c/ and /t/ in *cry* and *try*.) This is interesting because phoneme segmentation is more often associated with traditional language teaching that bases instruction on building up parts of the language to wholes before using it purposefully (Moustafa & Colon, 1999). The research suggests that when it comes to phonics instruction, whole language teachers do not necessarily limit themselves to methods consistent with this philosophy.

There are a number of studies on specific aspects of instruction that do not focus on code. McGee & Tompkins (1995) uncovered how different teachers, all committed to holistic practices, used literature-based reading instruction (reading instruction that centres around trade books and other forms of literature rather than decontextalized texts)

in a variety of ways depending on their particular theoretical backgrounds, interests and student needs. Flood & Lapp (1998) examined ways to maximize the use of videos in elementary classrooms. They suggested teachers use a framework for watching videos that was similar to what they would use with information that is read. Specifically, they suggested that teachers encourage extensive discussion about an upcoming topic before viewing, note taking throughout the video, synthesis of notes after viewing, and engaging in related research. Graves (1994) and Calkins (1994) emphasized the need to be more explicit about the actual process of how to help students become empowered through writing. Graves questioned some of his earlier thoughts about conferencing with students, stating that students need more instruction about how to critically reflect on their own writing. He also cautioned teachers to be careful about a kind of "group think" that can result from too much emphasis on peer response. Calkins explained that we need to let children know that their wonderings, questions and curiosity are part of writing well. Further, she stressed that teachers need to show them specific strategies for including these qualities in their writing.

Summary

What emerges in research that focuses on literacy studies and contributed to the focus of my research questions is that the entire classroom context needs to be considered to come to understand the complexities of instruction. For example, Dahl et al. (1999) and Price (1998) uncover how code instruction is not restricted to a set time in the classroom schedule, but rather is woven throughout daily activities. This is consistent with other more politically-oriented literacy research

that points to the socially complex nature of classrooms, and the need for ongoing qualitative studies that more broadly explore more broadly the role of instruction in holistic settings.

Discussion

Theorists of the current period in literacy learning aim for social change through changed literacy practices. Specifically, they recognize that increased cultural diversity, as well as the richness to be gained by recognizing and encouraging other textual forms, calls for expanded definitions of literacy (Street, 1998; The New London Group, 1996). Two inter-related concerns are connected to this goal. The first is how to address diversity in classrooms so that students have equal "life chances" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 62). The second is how to balance explicit teaching with less direct forms of instruction.

The role of instruction that grows out of these concerns builds on the emergent nature of literacy learning. That is, like the process period of literacy learning of the 1980's, there is the recognition that children learn about language and literacy in informal and meaningful contexts long before formal schooling begins. For most, this happens in the context of nurturing and intimate relationships. Using a common language to describe the role of instruction that emerges from the literature, I would suggest that two important components of instruction are immersion in nurturing relationships and immersion in meaningful activities. (Refer to Appendix D for a summary of the five dimensions of instruction.)

However, literature from cognitive psychology, curriculum theory, and literacy studies reveals that The New Literacy focuses on three other dimensions as well. First, it draws greater attention than in the past to deliberate aspects of parental instruction that are sometimes part of these activities. (The terms "direct instruction" and "assisted performance" are used to describe this dimension.) Second, it emphasizes that such instruction leads to greater awareness and conscious control of one's learning--tools needed for mainstream literacy--and that children who have not had the benefit of this kind of instruction need it at school. (Reflective assessment describes this component.) Third, it recognizes the need for learners to become critically aware in the political sense as well, that is, to recognize "the cultural locatedness of meanings and practices" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 85; Barton, 2000) so that they will be empowered to make positive changes. (Critical political reflection with action is the term used to describe this dimension). Thus, theorists of the current period of literacy learning recognize five inter-related dimensions of instruction.

Not surprisingly, the practical implications for instruction are broad. This, by itself, is nothing new. Twenty years ago Holdaway criticized narrow concepts of instruction and listed fourteen suggestions for the classroom. Some examples were: providing a favourable environment for learning, guiding children to tasks on a level at which they will succeed, and telling children what to do and how to do it (Holdaway, 1980, p. 23). Further, he emphasized the importance of relationship in teaching and learning, positing that the teacher is a more important factor in the classroom than any particular method or pattern of organization. Yet the role of conscious reflection, either in the Vygotskian or more political

sense, is not part of Holdaway's list. In fact his final suggestion, to induce rather than instruct, is followed with a bold typed statement that it is more efficient to "put the pupil in a situation where he cannot help doing what is required, quite naturally, and without conscious effort" (p. 24). Again, although The New Literacy does not question the place of such teaching, it draws our attention to other components of instruction that either have been misinterpreted or received little emphasis in earlier periods.

The position of the current period in literacy learning is that explicit features of instruction are necessary components of instruction for positive social change. Perhaps there is reason to be concerned that the pendulum is swinging too far in this direction. Based on the current emphasis on explicit instruction, it seems that the latest period of literacy learning could be in as much danger of misinterpretation as the process period before it. It is only upon close and thorough examination of the literature that the complexity and limitations of explicitness become apparent. For example, Vygotskian and classroom research clearly demonstrate that the degree and kind of explicitness should vary from moment to moment depending on the learner and social context (Duffy et al.,1987; Wertsch,1984). A number of studies also demonstrate the need to look beyond strategic and explicit approaches to more socially embedded forms of instruction. Research on code instruction (Price, 1998) has uncovered this, as well as studies that focus on ways to bridge home and school experiences (Dyson, 1993; Griffen, 1993).

By broadening traditional concepts of knowledge, Gardner's work on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), and arts-based research (Eisner,1997; Greene, 1991) also have helped educators consider a

wider range of instructional possibilities. In addition to different kinds of explicit teaching that may be called for, appropriate instruction may focus on establishing a classroom tone that accepts and encourages risk taking, or moments of "quiet waiting" (Pinar, 1995). Finally, as other researchers have noted (Delpit, 1983; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Dahl et al., 1999), close attention to student needs reveals that what may be appropriate instruction in certain contexts is not what educators have typically considered to be progressive pedagogy.

How teachers implement instruction then, is at the heart of the meaning of instruction in a New Literacy classroom (Duffy et al.,1987). The literature indicates that to get a helpful understanding of this process, the classroom context in its entirety must be examined over time (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Pearson, 1997). Very little research has done this. Further, given that the parent-child dialogue is seen as a model for curriculum theorizing (Schubert and Schubert, 1986), input from students and their parents is called for to provide enriched insights into the meaning of instruction. In-depth qualitative studies of classroom life that emphasize these dimensions are needed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

> Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator. (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 105)

Situating Myself on the Landscape

It seems sensible to begin a methodology chapter with an examination of the broad belief system that undergirds the approaches used in the research being described. Further, it is helpful to situate the paradigm that guides the research alongside other interpretative frameworks to show that choices have not been adopted without reflecting on other possibilities. In this chapter, I will begin by explaining my choice of a qualitative study, and then will move to a more specific discussion of how I understand myself to be positioned within the qualitative field. This should provide a context for the rest of the chapter, where I will discuss how I proceeded with the study in more detail.

My review of the literature revealed a need for research that examines the classroom context in its entirety over time to gain deeper insights about the complexity of instruction in holistic settings. The literature review suggested that studies that examine the classroom context should include input from parents and children, as well as the teacher, and that the need to explore how teachers decide on and adapt various strategies to changing contexts should be made transparent. Bolster (1983) has suggested that qualitative studies are most appropriate for getting at the complexity of classroom life and, because

of their accessibility, provide the greatest possibility of generating useful and interesting knowledge about instruction.

A quantitative study would be useful if effective instruction was revealed to be a set of identifiable behaviours that teachers could do "to" students under specified conditions to produce specific learning outcomes. Quantitative research reflects this positivist stance. It assumes that one event causes another and through careful measurement a single objective truth can be discovered. This position accepts that a researcher's values can be suspended in order to avoid contaminating the results, and that it is possible to understand an entire situation by carefully dividing and studying its parts. Although there are variations to the general picture, research from this paradigm insists on explanation, prediction and proof (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Further, research results are understood to be generalizable to other situations.

Although quantitative studies are useful for answering certain research questions, I chose to engage in qualitative work because this type of research is more appropriate when in-depth understanding rather than definitive answers are sought. Qualitative researchers hold varying perspectives within the field; nevertheless, there are some generally agreed upon assumptions. For qualitative researchers there is no one truth to be discovered. Truth is understood to be socially constructed and so reality is seen as multiple and changing. Researchers also look for and examine interconnections among events, and understand that a researcher cannot suspend her values while conducting research, but rather shapes what can be known (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Interpretations, therefore, replace results with

qualitative research and are not generalizable in the traditional sense. Instead, interpretations are offered as rich insights from particular situations that can be adapted to other contexts as appropriate (Donmoyer, 1991).

Eisner (1991, p. 27-41) elaborates on the nature of qualitative studies by focusing on six characteristics that are present to varying degrees depending on the study. First, research tends to be field focused. This means that researchers attempt to study phenomena in naturalistic settings rather than trying to manipulate them. Second, the self is recognized as a human instrument. Instead of regarding one's experiences and values as a liability to research, unique personal insights are appreciated. Also, research is interpretive. That is, while the researcher tries to get at the meanings events hold for participants, she recognizes that they are necessarily filtered through her lens. Expressive language and use of personal voice are also encouraged in qualitative studies. Rich descriptions and emotions are seen as a way to enhance rather than cloud cognition and understanding. Since generalizability is not the goal of qualitative work, another aspect that distinguishes it from quantitative research is the attention to the particular that is seen as a way to provide flavour and distinctiveness rather than interference. Finally, Eisner notes that persuasiveness marks qualitative work. A good piece is judged by its "weight," by the coherence of the case, and by the cogency of the interpretation.

After deciding on a qualitative study, it is also necessary to narrow one's choices of methods within the expanding field. These choices reflect the researcher's philosophical positioning as well as the goals of the research project (Price, 1999). The practice of drawing from varying

perspectives, that is the "researcher as bricoleur," is not at all unusual in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

This research stance seemed to fit with the particular needs of my study and is how I decided to proceed. Although I anticipated that the emergent nature of qualitative work would inevitably shape or even change the particular methods I planned to use, and this proved to be my experience, the methods I incorporated remained compatible with what can broadly be defined as constructivist (Denzin, 1994) and feminist paradigms (Olesen, 2000).

It is difficult to define constructivist research because even within this interpretive style there are a number of developing strands. In general, though, a constructivist world-view holds that what is truthful, real and meaningful in large part reflects what is derived from community consensus. In other words, truth is socially constructed. Constructivist researchers are particularly interested in examining how these meanings are made because they are what undergird action (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In constructivist approaches, the traditional positivist criteria of internal and external validity are replaced by trustworthiness and authenticity. This position reflects a more relativist ontology. Constant comparative approaches (where theory is derived from the data rather than tested empirically as with positivist methods) are often used with constructivist research. Most recently Denzin has added that constructivist research also encourages experimental and multi-voiced texts (Denzin, 2000).

Feminist research is also characterized by numerous evolving and sometimes competing strands. Especially in recent years, the concept of

the feminist researcher as part of a unified group has been challenged and explored by women of colour, lesbians, disabled women and others, revealing the multiple stories and voices within feminist thought (Olesen, 2000). Very generally, however, "collaboration, reflection on one's own emotional reactions, acknowledging findings as embedded in context rather than fact, and an overriding ethical responsibility to participants" (Price, 1999, p. 12) reflects a feminist research epistemology.

Fine (1996) elaborates on the meaning of activist feminist research by contrasting it to both the positivist stance of quantitative research as well as more traditional forms of qualitative research. In discussing positivism she refers to what Harroway calls the "God trick... that mode of seeing that pretends to offer a vision that is from everywhere and nowhere, equally and fully" (p.584). She cynically provides her own term to name this position, calling it *ventriloquy*, where the anonymous author "tells Truth, has no gender, race, class, or stance" (p.17). She explains how the second stance of traditional qualitative research is not much better. *Voice* refers to researchers who appear to let the "other" speak for themselves by including snippets of narrative in research texts, but fail to acknowledge that these voices were selected. She stresses that "the problem is not that we tailor but that so few qualitative researchers reveal that we do, much less how we do this work" (p.22). This extended version of ventriloquy, which she states is characteristic of traditional ethnography, reflects an impulse to "translate for" rather than "translate with" women. It presumes that we can take at face value voices of experience as if they were events, rather than stories about events that need further interpretation. Activist feminist research, on the other hand, passionately questions that which

appears natural, recognizing the partiality of any one interpretation. It forces us to deconstruct stories that appear to tell themselves, making explicit their contextual, embodied nature. Most importantly, the goal of this disruptive research is to effect change, not just to uncover power inequities inherent in issues of gender, race, class and sexual orientation.

The three methods chosen for this study were influenced by both constructivist and activist feminist perspectives. The constant comparison method (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) comprised one method of data collection and analysis. This method, used to analyze observational field notes and interviews, helped to ground the analysis in the data and suspend early interpretation. Although acknowledging that all research is interpretation, I used this method because the researcher attempts to make interpretations that emanate from a core of agreed upon assumptions. In other words, "a rose is still a rose," and recognized as such by a community, despite many differing interpretations. There was not "a truth" that I was able to dilineate in the classroom, since what I could see was at best partial and shaped by my own background. However, my stance was that careful recording, coding, and analysis would be persuasive and useful to other researchers and practitioners.

Another approach I used was collaborative in-depth interviewing. The stories constructed by the participant in collaboration with me contained more "narrative truth" than observational field notes, which I believe had a larger "real" or "historical core" (Leiblich, 1997). The dimension gained with interviewing was that it provided greater access to the meanings held by the participants being studied because the facts

told were remembered facts. In other words, they were representations selected and presented in a way consistent with how the participant chose to make sense of her life at that particular moment and in that particular context. Such stories allowed for a deeper understanding of the "hows" and "whys" behind classroom routines. Whereas the goal of observational field notes was to record what was happening, the goal with in-depth interviewing was to explore, to a greater degree, the participants' interpretations of these events. These interpretations were explored through the form as well as the content of interviews. It was inevitable that cultural, as well as individual meanings emerged, because the act of constructing narratives is both facilitated and restricted by the culture of the individual (Leiblich, 1997). Thus, interviewing provided rich insights on instruction that would not have been possible through observation alone.

I realized that analysis of documents and artefacts could provide additional knowledge about instruction in Bea's class. I had noticed that she constructed a lot of her own materials and decorated the walls with stimulating work that constantly changed throughout the year. As well, she sent a weekly newsletter home to parents. Collecting artefacts and documents became a third method of gathering data for the study.

Naturally, my own experiences have had an influence on the approaches I used in this work. In my monograph for my Master's degree (Stewart, 1998), I studied the transition of older adopted girls into Canadian schools through a series of in-depth interviews. The process of data collection, data analysis and representation attended to collaborative and embodied ways of knowing, and reflected on the content and form of stories. Feedback from participants who were

interviewed indicated these experiences were powerful and positive for them. At other times, I have been a participant in studies that, for similar reasons, were equally powerful to me. I would go so far as to say that interviewing that encompasses collaborative and embodied dimensions has contributed significantly to what I would describe as transformative educational experiences. Thompson (1997) writes about such times:

> There is a moment in the experience of women's education at its best--which in different ways, at different times, for different women--allows 'the blinkers to come off', 'the penny to drop' and 'the light to dawn'....we know that, inside our heads at least, nothing will ever be quite the same again. From that moment--to use a well known feminist cliché--there's no turning back. (p.97)

My attraction to in-depth interviewing no doubt was a result of these previous experiences. As a result, I became aware how in-depth interviewing, or constructing meaning with participants, led to insights that, otherwise, would not be apparent. The decision to complement this approach with the constant comparison method of data collection and analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) was influenced by another more recent research experience. As a student in qualitative course work, I had the opportunity to revisit data that I had previously analyzed using only narrative methods of analysis. (Narrative methods attempt to keep data sets whole rather than break them down into parts, as is more common.) The process of subsequently using the constant comparison method with this original data showed me that richer and different interpretations could be reached when data was analyzed in

complementary ways. This strongly influenced my decision to rely on various analytic methods for my study.

In this section I have tried to position myself on the research landscape so that the reader will have a better understanding of my methodology discussed in more detail below. I have provided a general description of a qualitative orientation and broadly situated myself in a constructivist/feminist position within this. The various stages of research that make up the rest of the chapter: entry/ethics, data collection, data analysis and representation will be explored with this foundation in mind.

Entry and Ethics

> The terms "negotiating entry" or "gaining access" suggest that this is a single event, that once achieved, requires no further thought; those terms downplay the continual negotiation and renegotiation of your relationship with those you study. (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 135)

It is important to stress and illustrate how ethical considerations are woven into every aspect of qualitative inquiry. Nevertheless, how one gets started seems to go a long way in establishing a positive and secure tone for the rest of the research. In this section I will share how I became interested in the study and initially proceeded, emphasizing the steps I took to be fair with participants while gaining formal access, as well as what I did to get settled in the classroom. Then I will discuss more generally how I addressed ethical issues as they unfolded throughout the research project.

How I got interested in instruction and how I got started on this project are closely connected. As mentioned earlier, a curiosity to learn more about instruction in student-oriented classrooms came from helplessly watching my own niece and nephew flounder in a poorly taught English language arts class many years ago. Back then they attended French immersion classes for most of the day. Although my sister-in-law reported that instruction was dull and uniform, at least the children were progressing at a reasonable rate. On the other hand, the once-a-day language arts class seemed to include very little instruction. The teacher tried to convince concerned parents that her methods were consistent with a whole language philosophy and that, in the end, the children would be ahead. Parents were wary. So was I. By chance, I had the opportunity to visit this class as part of my university course work in literacy teaching and learning. What I observed in the classroom made me equally uncomfortable.

Not surprisingly, this particular classroom was not a very positive instructional environment, and I was left more confused than ever about the meaning of student-oriented teaching. I did learn one thing, however. Had I been immersed in a strong setting, not only would I have learned a great deal more, but the ethical dilemma of writing up assignments that necessitated a compromise in what I ultimately reported could have been avoided.

That unsavoury introduction to classroom research taught me to consider potential research sites more carefully. When I heard about a wonderful teacher through a colleague at McGill, I contacted her almost immediately by telephone to see if I could visit her classroom. She agreed, with the understanding that I was looking for potential research

sites at that point. Although both she and classroom felt "right" immediately, and she welcomed any further involvement, I considered two other sites just to remain open to other possibilities. I had taught with one teacher years earlier. Although a visit one morning reminded me of how strong she was in the classroom, her insistence that she would have nothing to teach me left me with the feeling that this would not be a workable arrangement. Although I had never taught cycle one, the fact that we had taught together as peers years earlier seemed to make her uncomfortable. I sensed the balance of power was too much in my favour, in her eyes at least. When my third tip turned out to be a much younger teacher I did not even pursue it. Instead, I realized that part of the "right" feeling with my first teacher was probably due to the fact she was a few years older than I. This has been documented as a helpful factor in compensating for the inevitable power differences between researchers and participants (Haraway, 1988).

I discussed my research plans with the first teacher, secured her willingness to participate, and then contacted the school by telephone. I also contacted the school principal. He was welcoming and outlined the formal procedures mandated by the school board. He explained that, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, I would need to present my project to the Governing Board in September. (The Governing Board is a decision-making body in the school made up of elected teacher and parent representatives. Its function is to provide the best academic environment for all students.) I learned I would also need to submit a copy of the statement of ethics approved by the University to the School Board.

A statement of ethics puts in writing general procedures to safeguard participants. It explains that they will be made aware that participation is voluntary, anonymity will be guarded, and that they are free to withdraw at any time (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). As well, it states that participants will be informed about the general nature of qualitative research, including the possibility of audio-taping, videotaping and interviewing, providing that participants give additional consent for that. (See Appendix E for the McGill Certificate of Ethical Acceptability). Along with the statement of ethics, the University requires copies of the letters of consent to participants to ensure that they understand the voluntary nature of their involvement. In my letter to the teacher, the collaborative nature of the researcher/teacher relationship was stressed. The parents were reminded in their letter that additional consent forms would be sent home before any student interviewing took place. Also, they were asked to obtain written consent from their children to participate in the study (to be done after my own explanations to them in class). I also included a sample of two additional letters of consent in the documents needed by the University and School Board. One asked selected students and their parents permission to interview the students. The other asked to interview selected parents. (See Appendices F, G, H, and I respectively for the letters of consent to the teacher, parents, selected students and selected parents.)

The entire process of gaining permission to conduct the study spanned four months and required considerable communication with those directly and indirectly involved. Further, although I was able to make my first of twenty-two visits on the day students began school in August, 2000 (see Appendix J for a list of visiting dates), permission to carry on throughout the year was contingent upon acceptance of the

research proposal by parents at the first Governing Board meeting in mid-September. I was also required by the Governing Board to submit a short interim report midway through the study as a further ethical check. These obligations are concrete evidence of how, in recent years, the research process needs to be renegotiated formally throughout the life of a project. (See Appendix K for the initial research proposal presented to parents and Appendix L for the interim report.)

Making the structures, boundaries, and commitments of the relationship explicit from the beginning is one facet of being fair to the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann, 1997). However, the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, as well as the importance of relationship in this kind of work, means that ethical considerations must be kept at the fore throughout the study and ethical situations must be dealt with as they emerge (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). For example, although consent forms were submitted and approved by my ethics committee, I realized after being in the classroom a month that I had not included the full-time teacher's aide in the consent process. Issues of relationship can be trickier.

Qualitative researchers, particularly feminist researchers (Jipson & Paley, 1997), claim that trust and rapport between the researcher and participants are of central importance. They believe that ethical as well as authentic interpretations can only result from embracing, rather than shutting out, this human dimension of the research process. Lawrence-Lightfoot expands on these ideas (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann, 1997). She explains how concerns of ethics and authenticity are addressed by attending to three dimensions of relationship building: the search for goodness, empathic regard, and reciprocity and boundaries.

She stresses that searching for goodness does not mean that every aspect uncovered should be given a positive spin. But an emphasis on what is working rather than the more traditional pathological approach to research is suggested. Empathic regard is the stance that the researcher takes. It is the process of letting oneself go to the extent that one feels part of the other temporarily. Not only is giving oneself in this manner considered an ethical way of working with participants who are sharing their lives, but this mysterious process is what can lead to deeper insights and understandings of participants' meanings--the goal of qualitative research. Knowledge is the result of being in relationship with others. Lawrence-Lightfoot also discusses reciprocity and boundaries. She suggests that for the time, energy and wisdom offered by participants the researcher should reciprocate in some way. Sharing research documents or offering small tokens of appreciation are in order. Like others, however, (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) she proposes that the act of careful attention to participants and the understandings that they gain from the research process are often the acts of reciprocity most valued by participants.

I think I took a first step in portraying "goodness" by situating myself in a site that felt positive from the start. This reduced the chance of having to deal with the sort of dilemmas that I described earlier. I also felt it increased the likelihood of portraying participants in ways that would make them proud, while still allowing me to uncover layers of understanding that might include inconsistencies or vulnerabilities. Although I will discuss how the research unfolded in more detail later, at this point I will say that my commitment to research with a positive focus seemed to pay off. At no point in the study did I ever feel that participants were less than generous with their time or stories. Part of

this was likely due to the written reassurances they had stating their right to veto anything written about them that made them uncomfortable. But I think, too, that informal conversations throughout the year contributed to the trusting atmosphere. One time, for example, the teacher's aide asked me out of curiosity what I would have done had she painted an overall negative picture of Bea in our interview. (Her respect and affection for Bea was actually very clear in our conversation, as it was throughout the year.) I answered simply that I would not have used the interview since it would not have been ethical or ultimately helpful in that particular research context. I elaborated that, on the other hand, a study without any complexity and contradictions would not only be unbelievable, but would not contribute to the understanding of instruction in a deep way. This kind of openness throughout the study reassured participants and seemed to contribute to an atmosphere than included me in a lot of relaxed conversation and laughter.

It was also my belief that research with a positive focus would more easily lead to another goal of the study, that is, it would contribute to the participants' own insights on instruction. As mentioned earlier, all the participants generously gave of themselves throughout the time I was in the classroom, as well as in subsequent interviews, and I expect that their engagement led to deeper insights about teaching and learning. Bea was quite explicit about this process:

> Formal Interview/May 8, 2001)
>
> B: ... a wonderful advantage of having you here this year is that it's helped me really do some more reflection on what I'm doing. Because of this year,

having a grade one and a two class, I don't have as much opportunity as usual to look back on what I've done.

M: Yeah.

B: It feels almost...sometimes...I have to finish with the ones and move to twos. So having you here has helped me to reflect on my year.

Although my weekly presence in class all year undoubtedly benefited me more than Bea, it was reassuring to know that she felt she gained from the experience as well.

The second dimension of relationship building outlined by Lawrence Lightfoot--empathic regard--seemed to come quite naturally, since I was deeply interested in learning about the experiences of my participants. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) borrow the term "indwelling" from Polyani (1967) to describe this frame of mind. They characterize indwelling as existing within an interactive spirit, or more simply, walking a mile in the other person's shoes. Further, they point out that indwelling involves more than understanding another person's point of view from an empathic position; it also requires a reflexive stance. That is, the researcher must be able to remove herself from the situation to make meaning of the experience. On a few occasions it proved difficult to find that delicate balance of "feeling into" while simultaneously "standing back from" the research participant. I would either get so engrossed in the participant's story that I would temporarily forget the need to distance myself from it somewhat, or I would stand back prematurely, which led to an evaluative rather than an understanding way of thinking. When these times occurred while I was trying to

analyze transcripts of data, I turned to various and complementary methods of analysis. I will explain this in detail later. These different methods helped me get back to a qualitative mindset.

It is doubtful that total research reciprocity can ever be fully achieved because of the tangible benefits that are more likely to be accrued to the researcher. However, as Glesne and Peshkin (1992) point out, it is the attitude that makes the difference in situations like this.

> When Mitzi's concern fastens exclusively on her personal gain, she is being unethical. When she writes honestly and cogently about the homeless mothers and the schooling of their children, sharing the knowledge that she gains, she is being ethical. (p. 113)

This understanding of reciprocity seems realistic; if my honest interest in literacy instruction has developed into a persuasive account of how it is understood by my participants, then I think I should feel satisfied that I have behaved ethically. Nevertheless, since small gestures also show a caring attitude, at different times throughout the year I tried to show my gratitude to participants. For example, I gave each interviewed parent a bottle of wine to thank them for their time and effort. Compared to what participants did for me, however, acts such as these can only be interpreted as tokens of appreciation.

Lawrence-Lightfoot also talks about the researcher's responsibility to establish boundaries as well as intimacy. Because of the nature of my study, I do not think participants were as vulnerable as they might have been if the research topic had been personal. Nevertheless, in the

context of interviews, where the participants have the individual attention of the researcher, they may offer more of themselves than they would in everyday situations. It is the responsibility of the researcher to create a secure atmosphere. The adult participants in this study shared stories that revealed their less public selves at times; however, they did not seem to be uncomfortable with me. While interviewing children, I felt my responsibilities were even greater in this regard, and I was conscious of occasionally steering the conversation away from certain directions. In these instances students were entering conversations that I felt were too personal. Possibly this compromised what I might have learned as a result, however I felt comfortable with this decision.

In this section, I discussed the planning and formal assurances that were an important dimension of the study. As well, because of the emergent nature of this form of inquiry and the emphasis on the human-as-instrument, I explored issues of relationship and how they remained a central concern throughout the research.

Data Collection

How data are collected and what is collected need to be considered in light of the research question as well as the philosophical orientation of the researcher. As explained earlier, when I was planning this study classroom observation and interviewing appeared to be sound approaches to learning more about the role of literacy instruction in a student-oriented classroom. I also collected and analyzed public documents and artefacts to help corroborate (or disconfirm) what was emerging in the observational data and interview, and to add depth and persuasiveness to the research.

Observational Data

I began collecting observational data in the form of field notes on the first day of school. (I integrated videotaping in November when students were more accustomed to my presence.) I was a bit nervous and assumed that the teacher and students probably shared my feelings. For this reason, I did not attempt to take detailed notes that day. Instead, I watched, listened and tried to establish how I would fit into classroom routines in a way that would disturb the setting as little as possible. I found that if I sat on a student chair near, but not exactly in, the action I could get a good feel of activities without seeming that I should be actively participating. Occasionally I did jot down general observations in a small researcher's notebook, but my focus was on how to facilitate a comfortable working arrangement for the rest of the study. Throughout that day in particular, writing was a way to tone down the intensity of watching events so scrupulously. I could appear to be less focused on any one event than I may have been, and likely this lessened the overall effect of my presence in the classroom.

Due to all the demands of the first day, Bea and I needed to postpone my explanation about the project to the students until my second visit. As anticipated and hoped for, they were very relaxed about the study. That day we sent letters of consent home to parents asking them and their children to sign if they were in agreement with the project. All twenty-four forms were signed and returned without question.

Although I stepped in on occasion, such as to help students find a piece of clothing in the cloak room, or to get activity folders assembled in a rush before students returned from music class, the "fly on the wall"

arrangement that I assumed for observation on the first day helped me achieve the necessary insider/outsider research stance (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) throughout the year. Students generally did not initiate conversation with me except for late in the year after I had interviewed a number of them. Some of these students were inclined to greet me and chat between or during activities in the classroom. At that stage of the research it did not interfere with my observations; in fact, it tended to add a richer dimension. However, concerned that this might lead to conversations that interfered with classroom instruction, I kept conversations short.

Until I integrated videotaping into the study, most of my early time in the classroom was spent busily recording events as I understood them to be unfolding, trying to get as much rich detail as possible. As the study progressed and themes emerged, there was more focus to what I recorded. Events were written on the right side of a research journal (a spiral bound small exercise book) with dialogue written in quotation marks. I reserved the left side of the page for reflections that struck me at different times, sometimes while recording events, other times later the same day, perhaps after chatting with the teacher. Recording this way kept different levels of interpretation separate.

After I left the classroom, I would give the journal to my transcriber. Although I was aware that the intense time spent transcribing one's own data can help to move the analysis along, I felt that the time saved by hiring someone else would outweigh this potential benefit. It turned out to be a sound decision. The person I hired was an experienced courtroom transcriber, and also my babysitter. The interest she showed in the project during our late afternoon conversations in her hallway not only perked me up, but often provided a unique perspective that I

believe contributed to a deeper understanding of the topic. Having regular contact with her worked out well in another respect too. She was able to give me helpful hints such as suggesting I give more time to a participant before responding, or recommending that I place the microphone closer to the participant. These comments helped to ensure that the interviews went more smoothly over time. From an ethical standpoint, I felt comfortable as well. Not only was my transcriber's life unlikely to intersect with anyone involved in the study (she lived an hour's drive from the research site and she was not active in formal educational circles), but I knew her to be trustworthy and discreet. This further reassured me that her involvement in the study would be entirely positive, and this proved to be the case.

There was, however, an adjustment we needed to make early in the project. After transcribing an initial videotape, I realized that my transcriber's competence had probably caused me to overlook the necessity of discussing our notational system for transcription beforehand. We discussed it and came to an agreement on a standard approach for all interview transcripts as follows:

_____	To indicate a word or phrase that she couldn't decipher. I This would tell me to check back to this part of the transcript.
(sounds like)	To follow a transcribed phrase or word that seemed correct but that I should check also.
...	To indicate that speech has been interrupted (added after interrupted speech and then before interrupting speech), or to indicate a pause in speech.
CAPITALS	To emphasize speech louder in volume than surrounding

speech.

[ ] To indicate words that I have added to clarify meaning.

After we established this system the transcription process unfolded smoothly, as anticipated.

In the days following each visit my transcriber typed my rough field notes onto a computer diskette for me to flesh out later. She typed my reflections in bold font to differentiate them from observations and then integrated them into the text. She did this by placing the reflections underneath the observations where they appeared in my notebook. Since I tended to write my classroom observations in complete sentences, the process of fleshing out the data, or "cooking" my "raw" notes, had a more interpretive feel to it than it has in times past, when a good part of the process involved filling in missing words of sentences. In this study I decided that when I recorded events after the fact, even exactly as I remembered them happening, I would write them in bold font (as reflections) to signify they were more interpretive than observations of events recorded as they occurred. Each time I elaborated my notes by remembering what had transpired, I dated my entries so they could be differentiated from reflections recorded in the classroom, or subsequently added weeks or months later as I revisited the data. Further, if expanded or new reflections turned out to be significant conceptual insights, that is, moments that pulled together data in a recognizable cluster, these were copied and put in a separate file for easier retrieval later. Such recordings, often referred to as analytic memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994), were important in moving analysis along.

> Memos are primarily conceptual in intent. They don't just report data; they tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept. Memos can also go well beyond codes and their relationships to any aspect of the study--personal, methodological, and substantive. They are one of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand (p. 72).

This multi-stepped process of data collection left an audit trail of generally increasing levels of interpretation. In addition to illustrating the fluid boundaries between data collection and analysis (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), the transparency of the study was increased because it was possible to substantiate themes later on by working back to their beginnings. Although this aspect of trustworthiness has traditionally been criticized for being neglected in qualitative work (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Denzin, 1994), it remained a priority throughout this study.

Another dimension of my participant observation activities included videotaping general classroom events. In November, I brought the video camera and tripod to school and set it up at the edge of the carpeted area in the classroom, pointing it in the direction of the teacher's easel. In addition to being able to film Bea when she taught at the easel or from the nearby rocking chair, I was able to record student actions on the rug as well as when they moved to the tables. This was a common spot for the camera. From time to time, I also moved it closer to specific activities at tables. For example, later in the year when I focused on specific students for a few weeks, I would place the camera closer to

them, but not so close as to make them uncomfortable. When Bea read with individual students, often I set up the camera next to her before she got started so that I would not disturb the subsequent flow of conversation. While the camera rolled I continued to write in my journal.

The students were so comfortable with the camera that an initial "settling in" filming experience was unnecessary. Bea, on the other hand, never seemed fully at ease with videotaping, even though she had been filmed in her classroom many times. It seemed that whenever the camera rolled, especially when it was directly in front of her on the carpet, she toned down her humour and natural casual rapport with the students. Since I found her personality to be an important dimension of her teaching I brought this up with her. She agreed that she was less animated when filmed, and explained that it was because she was self-conscious. From then on, I decided to limit filming to about an hour a visit, and was careful to be a little more discreet. This way I felt that she would be more relaxed in my presence, and I would still be able to revisit data that could help augment my notes.

For simplicity, I recorded on a new videotape each time I visited the classroom. I made sure to record a range of activities over the course of the year, and at different times of the day. On the front of the videotapes I wrote the date of recording, the range of activities that occurred, and the time of day I videotaped (before recess, afternoon, etcetera). I used the digital counter when recording so that I could easily compare videotaped data with my observational notes, where I also noted the time when events changed.

These videotaped recordings were beneficial for several reasons. First, when it turned out that I needed a more fine-tuned picture of two typical events that were pivotal in Bea's classroom--a morning lesson on the carpet and an example of Bea reading with individual students (home reading)--I returned to the films. While viewing these events I added interaction that I had missed earlier, as well as physical gestures, surrounding events, and new reflections. These "fleshed-out" observations were dated and typed in another font to differentiate them from what I had initially recorded about them in my researcher's journal, and from earlier reflections about them. While it could be argued that time had allowed me to see more in the video than I would have at an earlier viewing, I reasoned that this kind of revisiting of data was less interpretative than my process of reflecting on and writing memories of classroom events, as described earlier.

Videotaping was also practical from another point of view. It helped to keep a running record of the work hung in the corridor, on classroom walls and around the classroom. It documented the book displays that were always changing, documents and artefacts produced by the teacher and the students, as well as the play areas that evolved over the year. Although the classroom setting was described in detail many times in my notebook, having it recorded visually assured me that I could return to it later. When it came time to write about the physical setting and the work produced, this record made the task a lot easier.

Finally, videotaped footage was very useful in helping me stay close to the classroom experience after I completed my visits. I returned to the videotapes repeatedly to remain familiar with, and excited about, the entire project. During these intensive reviewings I tried to "soak up" the

experience rather than scrutinize the tapes closely, but I kept a notebook at hand so I could record any important details that were overlooked, or any new experiences. Several emerged. For example, as I played through a number of tapes I noticed how frequently Bea used affectionate names when she called students to see her for home reading (individual reading with her). Later, in my writing, this example helped me show more clearly how home reading sessions were characterized by a relaxed, accepting atmosphere.

Interview Data

Although observational documentation was the main source of data for this study, I also conducted several formal interviews and numerous informal ones throughout the year. Informal interviews at school took place before students entered class in the morning, while they attended other classes outside of the room, during recess break in class and on the playground, or during lunch hour. Outside of school, they occurred through e-mail correspondence and brief telephone calls. Bea always made a point of being helpful. Even when she spoke to me during small bits of time before or after preparing for the next part of the day, it was evident that she had thought about earlier discussions between us. Other informal interviews took place with Melissa, the teacher's aide. These occurred during small spaces in the day, and were equally helpful.

Formal interviews took place in April and May after permission slips were signed and returned from interested students and parents who had been asked to participate. I conducted interviews with thirteen people in all. The group included nine students, two parents (of these

interviewees), the teacher's aide, and the teacher. I invited Bea to be included in the process of selecting the students because I had sensed not only was she interested, but, also, for sensitive reasons, she wanted to steer me away from a few students. For example, one girl was suffering from a serious illness even though she was able to attend class most days. As Bea explained, her family "didn't need anything more on their plate at that moment" (Observational notes/March 12, 2001). Although it could be argued that Bea's involvement in this way interfered with the possibility of gaining valuable research perspectives, I respected her judgment and was committed to her comfort in all aspects of the study. I indicated to Bea I wanted to interview students that were diverse with respect to gender, talents and background, and that from these I would subsequently select the richest interviews to analyze in greater depth. Bea e-mailed me a short written profile of each student along with her comments and suggestions. From this list, I asked nine students to participate. I settled on this number because I thought it would provide a sufficient number for my purposes without drawing attention to the six children in the class (of twenty-four) who Bea felt should not be interviewed. All nine students were eager and able to participate.

In a small equipment room at the other end of the school, I was able to set up a video camera, table and chairs to conduct the interviews. All nine students were interviewed individually over the course of a day, with each interview lasting between twenty minutes and half an hour. Students were asked open-ended questions about their families, hobbies and the process of literacy learning. (See Appendix M for the interview questions.) As I subsequently viewed the videotapes in the days following, I wrote up a short profile summary of the nine students to

help me select which interviews to analyze further. This summary briefly listed the responses that students had provided during their interviews as well as any particularly interesting comments they provided. For example, I noted one boy's comment, "We need to help her because she always looks up to the ceiling when she reads." I used the summary to select the three interviews that were richest and most representative of the diversity in the class. Focusing on three rather than nine interviews enabled me to conduct an in-depth analysis of each interview. Follow-up interviews with the three selected students took place several weeks later.

Interviews followed an adapted version of Seidman's (1991) three part interview process. He suggests that the first interview should focus on the participant's life history to establish rapport and a sense of context. In the second interview, participants reconstruct details of their experience; in this case, it was their experiences in literacy learning and instruction. The third encourages them to reflect on the meaning their experiences hold for them, and provides the researcher with an opportunity to bring her evolving interpretations back to the participant. I combined the purposes of the first two interviews for several reasons. It required less scheduling and fewer overall demands on the young participants. At the same time, it still maintained the important space between the interviews that allows the researcher and participants to mull over their thoughts, and to probe previous ideas and/or new directions to help push the analysis further (Seidman, 1991).

To include parent perspectives on literacy instruction, I had intended to interview a parent or parents of each of the three focus students. I felt their comments could be interpreted along with their children's and

would reveal particularly interesting insights. I had also hoped that at least one father would agree to be interviewed because, as with the students, I was aiming for a range of perspectives. Unfortunately, although I approached the fathers of two of the students before contacting their mothers, in both cases they cheerfully passed me along to their wives. One father told me directly, but the other also implied, that "she took care of that kind of thing." Although disappointed, I was not surprised. These comments added weight to what I and others (Street, 1995) have noticed about early literacy instruction. That is, when it comes to family division of responsibilities, more often it is the mother than the father who addresses literacy issues.

Another small disappointment occurred when I invited the mother of the male student to participate. When the letter was not returned I sent another home thinking that perhaps the first had not arrived. Days later, the student reported that his mother had told him that she did not have any extra time for interviews. Bea had predicted this response. She knew the particularly heavy work and family demands that were stretching the mother's resources at the time. Although, from a research perspective, it would have been interesting to have insights from a single working parent, I did not push it further. Instead, I focused on the other two parents, neither of whom worked outside of the home. One mother was the parent of a girl who often chose to read and write in her free time; the other of a girl who experienced frustration with reading because of her difficulty decoding written text. The parents also had different experiences with respect to their involvement in the school. The first had two younger children, preventing her from frequenting Borden Elementary. The other was quite involved as a volunteer.

Melissa was the teacher's aide. Although she was assigned to Bea because of the special needs of two students in Bea's class, she explained that the job of an aide was to help the classroom teacher in any way the teacher saw fit. Late in the year I learned that Melissa was also the parent of a nine-year-old former student of Bea. In conjunction with an interview about her experiences with Bea in the classroom, I decided it would be fruitful to explore her ideas from a parent's perspective as well. I believed having a third parent interview would add to the persuasiveness of the study. Further, I felt her unique positioning could lead to particularly insightful discussion about instruction in Bea's class. I was not disappointed.

I interviewed Melissa and the other parents several weeks after the children, in the same spare room. (See Appendix N for interview questions.) I made the decision to audio-tape rather than videotape our conversations because I was concerned that the benefits of having gestures and expressions recorded on videotape would be outweighed by the added intrusiveness of the equipment. What tipped me off to this was the lighthearted joking from Bea and Melissa one day about whether or not it would be necessary to videotape. At the time, I casually reassured them that it would not be necessary and made a mental note to audio-tape instead. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour. As with the children earlier, I had a good feeling after each of these sessions because the participants seemed energized by our time together. One parent explained her decision to volunteer was because of the difficulty a friend of hers had recruiting participants. My sense was that the open-ended and conversational style of the interview had come as a pleasant surprise to her.

I explained to adult participants that the second interview would occur by telephone a few months later. This arrangement worked out well. After analyzing each interview, and while each was still fresh in my mind, I checked my emerging interpretations with the adults over the phone in conversations that lasted roughly fifteen minutes. These second interviews provided an opportunity to ask questions and flesh out emerging understandings. I documented these interviews by taking notes as we spoke and expanding upon them immediately afterwards. Although in past studies I have used a device to record telephone conversations, in this case I decided against it because I did not know the participants as well, and I sensed the equipment might make them uncomfortable.

My first formal interview with Bea had a similar format and took place in her room after school. (See Appendix O for interview questions.) In some respects this conversation resembled a second interview. This was because we had discussed a number of issues during the year as they naturally emerged during informal conversations. It would have been artificial and awkward not to refer to our earlier discussions when I brought up these or related topics again. Instead, I often recapped what I had understood to be her position and invited her to respond. Sometimes she simply said, "Right, you've got it." Other times she added to my observations or provided a somewhat different interpretation. In other ways the interview had a new feel to it, though. Bea delved into her early memories quite extensively and shared numerous thoughts that we had not explored together before.

Our second formal interview took place on the telephone--months after I had left Bea's classroom. In the interim I had contacted Bea

several times by telephone and e-mail, usually to ask brief and specific questions. The second formal interview, however, which lasted about forty minutes, served a different purpose. (Seidman would refer to this as the third formal interview since I combined the functions of the first and second interview in the first.) It occurred almost a year after my last classroom visit and was particularly helpful because, at that point, both Bea and I were able to stand back and address issues more broadly. For example, with Bea's help I came to an understanding of her role as a leader in the school in a way that I had not fully realized until then.

Artefacts and Documents as Data

As mentioned earlier, a smaller dimension of the study included collecting various documents and classroom artefacts. I realized Bea not only sent a lot of her own (versus school) documents to parents, but that she also created a number of books and activities with her students. I decided that these should be collected. Documents and photocopies of some artefacts (such as student writing samples, some teacher-made activity packs and some student artwork) were collected in a three-ring binder. Other artefacts such as classroom posters, models and decorations were impossible to collect physically, but were recorded with the video camera early in the morning. As with the videotapes, the artefacts helped to augment the classroom observations and also provided a permanent record to which I could return.

Qualitative researchers think about issues of persuasiveness, or trustworthiness, when planning and carrying out their work. In contrast, quantitative studies aim for validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin, 1994). Qualitative studies look to other qualities to convince a

reader a particular interpretation is plausible. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) state that the question trustworthiness essentially asks is: "To what extent can we place confidence in the study? Do we believe what the researcher has reported" ? (p. 145). Mishler (1986) adds that, taken together, these qualities should be convincing enough to lead to action.

The trustworthiness of this study has been increased in a number of ways: by using multiple sources of data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), by analyzing data using complementary strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 1996), by checking interpretations with participants (Ely, 1991), and by taking steps to make the work transparent (Mauthner & Doucet,1998). Although these steps are not all concentrated in, or restricted to data collection, since this phase of the research precedes a number of other steps, how one collects data has a strong bearing on the trustworthiness of a study. For example, the use of multiple sources of data makes it possible to see later if interpretations from different data sources converge or "triangulate." The idea behind triangulation is that, generally, convergence increases persuasiveness. It should be noted, however, that analyzing "outliers" (data that does not fit the general pattern), can also add to persuasiveness. Attending to outliers shows research interpretations are not overly simplistic.

Richardson (1994) prefers the term "crystallization" to triangulation because it is more in keeping with postmodern mixed-genre texts. She states that although the concept of triangulation recognizes different research methods, there is still the assumption of a "fixed point" or "object" that can be triangulated. She proposes that the image of a crystal is more appropriate because "it combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances,

transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change and alter, but are not amorphous" (p. 522).

Richardson also states that a deepened, more complex understanding of the topic that is necessarily more partial points to the tentativeness of our knowledge. "Paradoxically, we know more and we doubt that we know" (p.522). This is not to suggest that less rigor is required. It implies, however, that multiple sources of data deepen rather than just confirm interpretations. This modification is consistent with the overall framework of this study. Where analysis of data from different sources appeared to converge, I continued to use the term "triangulation" because it best described what I saw. At other times, however, when interpretations of a similar event were not understood the same way, I interpreted the different shades of understanding as added richness resulting from the situated lens through which all events are viewed. It was my belief that more could be learned about literacy instruction this way.

In summary, to increase the persuasiveness of my study I collected data in three ways: by observing classroom events, interviewing participants, and collecting documents and artefacts. I hope my detailed explanation of this process adds to the trustworthiness of the study by allowing the reader to judge the approaches and processes I used. By bringing my initial interpretations back to participants, and using these as well as their responses to formulate new interpretations, I was able to incorporate the voices and perspectives of the participants to enhance the rigor and ethical dimensions of my work.

Data Analysis

The use of various methods of data analysis was another a way to contribute to the persuasiveness of the study. Maxwell and Miller propose that more recognition should be given to "the complementarity of paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches in qualitative analysis, and of their joint utility as a form of triangulation" (Maxwell and Miller, 1992, p. 2). They state that most research relies on either paradigmatic (categorizing) or syntagmatic (contextualizing) strategies for analyzing data, and that categorizing tends to be used more often. Categorizing unitizes data that are then compared and reorganized into patterns and themes. This logico-scientific approach makes use of different thinking processes. Contextualizing strategies look for relationships within the data to provide a more holistic understanding of the context. Categorizing emphasizes similarities and differences; contextualizing emphasizes how data from a specific context are related. To illustrate, Maxwell and Miller use the phrase "a pint of milk" to show that "pint" is in paradigmatic relationship to such words as "cup", "glass" and so on, while also in syntagmatic relationship to the words "a", "of" and "milk." Noting that researchers have traditionally used narratives merely as a check to categorizing strategies, and usually to present rather than analyze data, Maxwell and Miller suggest researchers move back and forth between analytic strategies as a way to inform deeper interpretations, and to avoid the one-sidedness of each of these approaches. This prevents the context stripping associated with exclusive use of categorizing, and an undue emphasis on individualistic interpretations risked through over reliance on narratives.

The constant comparison method of analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) was the categorizing approach chosen for this study. I used it to analyze observational and interview data directly, as well as documents and artefacts indirectly. (Documents and artefacts were analyzed indirectly in the sense that they were discussed in observational notes, reflections, as well as interviews.) I began the process by making copies of the observational fieldnotes and interview transcriptions so that data could be moved about and played with without losing the chronology of events. Next, I re-read the fieldnotes and transcriptions several times to re-familiarize myself with the data before unitizing it and giving each chunk a name/category. Unitizing, as mentioned previously, means data were divided into units of meaning--bits that are understandable without additional information other than the general research question (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, one of my questions was entitled, "What events take place in Bea's class"? One unit, "station work" meant that this was one category of one classroom activity.

Although the entire process of unitizing and subsequent analysis could have been accomplished on a computer, I chose to work with separate pieces of paper and a pencil. In this way I was able to see all my emerging categories at once if I wished and, also, I was able to carry my work around with me. This was a good arrangement. In previous studies I had learned that the process of analysis requires the right balance of focus and relaxation. By working with my data over the summer months in pleasant outdoor surroundings, sometimes at the side of a soccer field or swimming pool, I feel I was able to move the analysis along more easily than if I had tried to restrict myself to working at a computer within a strict routine.

As I read over the data I underlined chunks of text that could stand on their own, and wrote the name of each unit at the side of the page. On separate paper I recorded, dated, and referenced the page number of the first few chunks. The next step was to compare these chunks, or units of meaning. As each unit was considered, I compared it to what had been analyzed previously. If essentially it seemed to have a similar meaning as another unit, I placed on the same page; if not, I categorized the chunk and placed it on a new page. About twenty tentative categories emerged quite quickly, but many were changed or refined later in the analysis. It is important to stress the inductive nature of this process. Rather than squeezing the data into existing categories, I developed categories to fit the data.

At this point I refined categories by writing rules of inclusion. These are propositional statements that "convey the meaning that that is contained in the data pages gathered together under a category name" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 139). To illustrate, a provisional category name was "optional enrichment activities." After examining units in that category, I tentatively wrote the rule of inclusion as "Optional enrichment activities occur when students choose to take part in literacy activities outside of class time or during free time in class. Students work alone or with others." Units that fit the rule remained on the page. I categorized the rest elsewhere. Then I entered my categories and their rules of inclusion into the computer in preparation for the next step.

With twenty or so categories in hand, the process finally moved from one of expanding the data to synthesizing it. I did this by looking for relationships between categories in ways that explained events and

issues. To help move into this more interpretative frame of mind it was often helpful to think about categories that had been labelled descriptively in a new way. For example, when I asked myself to think about the role of the category named "storytime," I realized that along with two other categories--"bridging home and school" and "framing activities"--this activity helped to make connections for students so that their learning would be more meaningful. Seeing this, I was able to collapse the three categories into one entitled, "connecting." On the surface these categories looked very different. It was when I was able to see how they functioned in similar ways that my analysis became more conceptual, and I could understand things in new ways. Although some categories stood on their own, over time many were integrated with others in a similar manner to form more general themes. I kept a record of this process and dated my revisions as I made them. My analytic memos that documented earlier insights and connections I had made facilitated this process. Concept mapping was useful too. Here I wrote the names of categories on a large sheet of paper and played with them in various ways to help bring a more integrated meaning into focus. At one point I felt the need to draw a concept map. There were a number of insights swirling around in my mind at that stage, and I decided to preserve them on paper before they slipped away. When I floated words on a page and tried out relationships among categories with tentative lines, question marks and arrows I was able to move my tacit ideas to something more concrete and easy to articulate. Working quickly with a pencil, paper, and eraser was particularly suitable at this messy stage. Eventually, when I was eventually satisfied with my interpretations, I entered them into the computer. This allowed me to manipulate the text more easily when I began writing the thesis, and provided a basis for presenting interpretations in a textual way later on. All work that I was

not able to record on a computer, such as drawings of concepts maps, I also photocopied and placed in a filing cabinet to facilitate easy retrieval and to maintain a clear audit trail.

Earlier in the chapter I discussed how I used analytic memos to move analysis along. One memo that was particularly helpful deserves elaboration here. As I was working with data in ways that I have just described, I became increasingly aware that, if I did not present a rounded picture of Bea's teaching, her thoughtful and sensitive nature could be overshadowed by her charisma and strong presence. I was concerned that her direct approach with students might be misinterpreted as evidence of a teacher-oriented, transmission style of teaching, or that her strong presence could be interpreted as a compromise to sensitivity. I did not have a specific strategy for dealing with this concern at first; however, the use of a metaphor proved helpful in bringing to the surface ways of thinking about Bea that helped me later in the study.

One Sunday morning I took out my researcher's notebook, thinking that I would address a particular issue I was analyzing at the time. What I found myself doing, however, was using my background as a physical education teacher to make sense of Bea's teaching style. I was writing metaphorically about Bea as if she were a favourite basketball coach. Almost effortlessly I wrote several pages, and as I did, I wove salient qualities of her grade one teaching into this other description. I did not consciously identify these qualities before integrating them in the text but, interestingly, later on I was able to refer back to specific chunks of data from the observational notes that had intuitively guided me. Being able to do this reassured me that I was deep into the data,

and had a good grasp of Bea's unique teaching style. More importantly, however, writing the memo showed me that once I left the cycle one setting behind, I had no difficulty integrating Bea's forthright and charismatic qualities into a description of her teaching. This helped me to see that I had been subconsciously sublimating preconceptions from the literature of what typically outstanding cycle one and physical education teachers do, preconceptions that characterized cycle one teachers as soft spoken and demure, and physical education teachers as more gregarious and outspoken. At that point I realized how my stereotypical thinking had prevented me from focusing on and integrating the more forthright qualities of Bea's teaching into my analysis of instruction in her classroom, virtues that contributed to the dynamic nature of the class and her positive tone with students. Not only did I come to see the need to include these qualities in a portrait of her work, but I finally understood that as long as I did a thorough job portraying Bea in the classroom--if I wrote a persuasive account showing the subtle nuances of her personality and teaching--then I would not have to worry about existing images of teachers or instruction. My account of Bea might help to break down teacher stereotypes, and offer new ways of thinking about exceptional literacy teaching. The intuitive decision to temporarily distance myself from my data had been a necessary step. It gave me the confidence to embrace Bea's charismatic teaching style throughout the rest of the study to an extent that, otherwise, I might not have.

To show this process more clearly I have included the first three paragraphs of what I wrote that Sunday morning. I have also incorporated names and page numbers of chunks of data from my observational notes that correspond to sections of the memo, to show

how my metaphorical description of Bea as a physical education teacher is grounded in my experiences in the classroom.

(Analytic memo/April 15, 2001)

As the varsity players work through their warm-ups Bea walks around the outside of the gym toward the equipment garage. "Get the lead out girls," she yells, keeping her eyes on the group (p. 11, teacher-led transition time). She yanks up the garage door midway, then quickly adjusts her grip to protect her nails before heaving it up over her shoulders. Without taking her eyes off the team (p. 32, juggling), she reaches in for a stack of pylons and places them on the gym floor.

The sound of bouncing and rebounding balls ends abruptly when Bea calls the players over (p. 4, responding to explicit rules). In the huddle, she first listens as a group of girls tell her about some events in the dorm the previous night. They joke together and Bea's infectious laughter stretches the moment out (p. 66, incorporating fun). Then, although no one else is nearby, she inches closer to the middle of the circle and lowers her voice slightly (p. 36, bonding through "secret club" rituals) She explains that the team's next opponents will be coming off several back-to-back games, and will likely be tired. Using her large hands to gesture, she explains how the team strategy will take advantage of this vulnerability. Then she reviews the warm-up exercises by congratulating the players on what worked well, and

> pointing out specific skills that need shoring up (p. 30, planning reflectively with students)
>
> "We need to get back more quickly. Tina, you're sleeping out there. Caitlin, same thing. (p. 50, sidecar disciplining) As soon as the pass is completed, move back girls." Bea reaches down for her clipboard to explain the next phase of the practice but realizes that she has left it in her office. Half to herself and half to the team she grumbles, "Mrs. Bea is having another one of her senior moments... When a coach can't find her clipboard... I don't know"! (p. 59, leveling the field). Tina sprints to the gym office on this cue, (p. 68, students taking initiative to help out) and Bea uses the break (p. 72, grouting activity) to survey the players about warm-up suits that her husband (p. 9, soliciting support from others) can get for the team at cost.

Because of my own preconceptions with how exceptional teachers of young children act in the classroom, I had not known how to incorporate comments like "You're sleeping out there" and "Get the lead out," in a way that would show the sensitivity that I observed and felt when Bea interacted with students. By seeing that Bea's direct personality was not in any sense at odds with that of a caring and responsive approach used with students in a physical education setting, I was able to feel at ease integrating this aspect of her personality into the study.

Although this exercise underlined the need to look carefully at what truly counts as caring teaching, it also pointed to the need to examine

how thinking about teaching is shaped and restricted by images of instruction projected by our culture, as well as our own memories of schooling (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). It illustrated how beneficial it can be to step outside familiar settings in order to understand them more deeply. Finally, in terms of research, the writing of this analytic memo demonstrated how the use of metaphor as an analytic strategy can effectively accomplish this.

When I moved away from analyzing observational data to analyzing interviews, I continued to use the constant comparison method of analysis and various forms of memo writing. To have a general overview of themes across the three student interviews, I also constructed a grid to show how students understood instruction individually and collectively (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because the focus of interviews was quite different from observational data, however, I also incorporated additional strategies.

I discussed earlier how narrative methods of analysis allow for insights about data that are not possible through constant comparative (categorizing) approaches. Whereas the emphasis with observational data is to record action and interaction among individuals, lending itself to categorizing data, the focus of open-ended interviews is to explore reality as it is experienced by participants (Lieblich, 1998). Narrative methods of analysis reflect an understanding that individuals often tell about and make meaning of their lives through story, and that by attending to how stories are told and their content, the researcher can uncover deeper understandings about participants' experienced reality (Reissmann, 1993). The role of locatedness and relationship is emphasized in narrative analysis. The story told is understood to be

shaped in a way that makes sense to the teller at that time, for that purpose, and with that listener. As the context changes, it is expected that the story will too. Further, how the story is interpreted by the listener is recognized to be shaped by her own background, experiences and specific interpersonal context as well. Thus, by looking beyond the content of participants' stories, to how and why they are constructed and interpreted in particular ways, provides access to more complex individual and cultural systems of meaning (Leiblich, 1998).

The narrative strategies I used with the interviews were dictated by the nature of the data that emerged. Although the methodology chapter is normally where I would show how I worked with these strategies in specific ways I have proceeded somewhat differently. This is because I found myself using a series of analytic steps with each interview, and these steps were shaped by what I learned from previous ones. Separating method (what I did) from interpretations (what I found) in most cases would be inappropriate and confusing to the reader. Instead, I will introduce the general narrative strategies that I turned to here, and show how I adapted these to meet particular needs later on in the study. The one exception to this approach is the poem I created using Melissa's interview transcripts. I discuss it in this chapter rather than interrupt the flow of the larger discussion of Chapter Five.

The three narrative approaches that I turned to included separating the coherent structural frame of a narrative from its supporting features, writing individual case synopses, and using poetic form to analyze data and represent findings. Separating the coherent structural frame of a narrative from its supporting features (Mishler, 1992) is a tool for understanding meaning in stories by temporarily attending to their

paradigmatic and syntagmatic qualities. This analytic move helps to clarify, or "unravel" important and complementary features of a narrative that may be presented by the teller in ways that initially confuse the listener. After numerous readings of the narrative the researcher physically separates the parts of a story before re-integrating them. This helps to understand at a conceptual level how the various features of a narrative are inter-related and leads to deeper understandings of the research material.

Individual case synopses (Fischer & Wertz, 1979) are another way for the researcher to get at the essential meaning of a narrative from the participant's perspective. Again, the researcher rereads the narrative transcripts numerous times to get close to the data. Then she organizes the transcript into temporal order and groups sections of the text into themes. Next, she condenses the transcript by dropping elements that are not essential to the overall meaning. Except for changing minor features to facilitate readability, the researcher maintains the language of the participant (p. 144).

The use of poetry as an analytic tool and representational form helps the researcher attend to emotional, intuitive and embodied dimensions of knowledge. It can also be very effective in showing how this knowledge is shared amongst the participants, the reader, and the researcher (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Unlike more linear and distanced research forms, poetry is especially suited to narrative contexts. First, there is often a close rapport that unfolds between the researcher and participant leading up to and throughout the research process. This can result in stories that might not otherwise be told, or told differently (Butler-Kisber, 1998). The more intimate nature of poetry

lends itself to sharing such stories. Poetry is also suitable because it is often closer to a participant's original speech than what is presented frequently in traditional texts (Tedlock, 1983). The pauses, intonations and tone of actual speech can be portrayed more naturally in poetry than more linear texts using line breaks, spacing and the play of language. The use of found poetry, that is, poetry that uses only the words of the participants, provides yet another way to speak "with" rather than "for" her participant. Finally, since most participants are usually not members of the academic community, poetry is appropriate in the sense that it may resonate more with them than traditional texts (Richardson, 2000).

In this research study I turned to poetry to represent more effectively a theme that I had already identified (see below) as well as to help uncover dimensions of instruction that were not yet clear in my mind (see p. 206). In these examples I used it as a final representational form as well. Although I used it differently depending on the context, in all three cases I took the following general analytic steps: First, I narrowed down the larger narrative by focusing on a broad theme or topic. Second, I condensed the selected theme or topic in some way. Third, I played with the condensed data until I was pleased with the product that emerged. These steps enabled me to simultaneously remain close to my participant's words while viewing them in new ways to gain deeper insights.

One of the themes that emerged in terms of Bea's instruction was "anticipating." Melissa, the teacher's aide, seemed to have a deep understanding of how this played out in Bea's classroom, and her contribution expanded my thinking about it. Further, her words, pauses

and the tone of her voice lent themselves to poetic representation. I decided to use found poetry to represent Melissa's understanding of this theme. I identified parts of our interview where she spoke of Bea anticipating instruction by highlighting those sections of the transcribed text. From there I played with her words trying to illuminate the perseverance that Melissa attributed to Bea's planning, a quality I had not articulated. I also wanted to portray the deep respect Melissa had for Bea. My method was to rearrange lines and line breaks until I felt the text represented what Melissa had noticed and articulated so well. The process spanned several weeks and was expedited by leaving and returning to it repeatedly.

Open minded, really
A communication change
"What can I do
So he can get it another way"?

I've been to workshops where
She's said, "Oh,
This might work
With that kid"
And on Monday
She'd be trying it

She's always out there
Innovative
Reflecting back
...and absolutely tough on herself
It's part of the reason
She's wonderful to me

Melissa (Formal interview/May 1, 2001)

In this section I discussed the various analytic moves used. I explained in detail how I analyzed observational data using the constant comparison method and analytic memos. I also discussed more

generally how I analyzed interviews. I referred to the constant comparison method, an analytic chart, and I introduced three narrative approaches. These included separating the coherent structural frame of a narrative from its supporting features, writing case synopses, and using poetry to analyze and represent data. I also explored my use of poetry in greater detail.

Representation

It should be restated that boundaries between phases of qualitative work are artificial. Ethics, data collection, analysis and representation blend together as the researcher moves among these various considerations throughout the study (Ely, 1991). Representation, rather than an end stage of "mopping up the research" (Richardson, 2000, p. 923), is an integral part of inquiry.

Throughout this study I have adopted and adapted analytic strategies in response to evolving interpretations. In Chapter Six I clearly explicate how this occurred using a range of narrative methods of analysis. In chapters four and five, however, chapters that appear to report findings after the data was analyzed, were also crafted in new or different ways as I reached deeper insights through the writing process. For example, at times I consolidated or expanded themes, chose more appropriate examples from the data to illustrate a concept, or saw something in an entirely new light. The point is that in traditional and more experimental approaches to my study, the distinction between method and interpretation has been blurry.

It is also important to underline that representational forms are shaped by decisions made early on in a study. In addition to more recent analytic moves, decisions such as interview style, the length of time spent in the classroom, or the research questions themselves influence what representational choices will eventually seem natural and "right" for a study. For example, in my study the open-ended research questions and interviews, as well as the extended length of time in the site, allowed me access to subtle nuances of instruction that seemed suitable to poetic form. Had I asked other questions, or spent significantly less time with Bea and her students, my interpretations and ways to represent them surely would have been quite different.

How I chose to represent my work, what I found, and the methodological choices I made throughout the study, were closely intertwined. For this reason my interpretative chapters need to be thought of as an integral part of the research process and incorporated into a discussion about it.

Summary

I began this chapter by positioning myself as a constructivist/feminist researcher so the reader would have a better understanding of the methodological choices I made throughout the study. Next, I discussed the formal and informal steps I took to address ethical issues, and how this meant that issues of relationship remained a central concern. Following this, I explained the three ways I collected data--through ongoing classroom observation that included taking fieldnotes and videotaping, interviewing, and collecting artefacts--and how this served as a foundation for a persuasive study. Then I discussed the

complementary nature of using paradigmatic and syntagmatic methods of analysis. I explained how relying on both methods, rather than using either method alone, led to deeper insights about data. Finally, I discussed how the ultimate representational form was closely tied to earlier methodological steps, and thus was an extension of the rest of the research process.

Chapter Four: Classroom Events

This chapter will describe the various events in Bea's class, how they were inter-related, and the general role they played in contributing to literacy learning. Literacy here, and elsewhere in this study, is defined in a broad sense. Consistent with Street's ideological model (1999) and most of the literature reviewed earlier in Chapter Two, the term includes mainstream reading and writing skills, but extends well beyond this. It reflects a belief that, in order to empower people whose lives traditionally have not been part of the dominant social discourse, there is a need to acknowledge and build on what people know and bring with them to a learning situation. Borrowing from Paulo Freire, Anderson (2000) writes that literacy is "the connection between the learner's world and words, and that literate people use language to communicate their world views, values, beliefs and knowledge, as well as use language to take action in the world" (p.57). Literacy defined as a socially conscious practice then, includes and values wider activities and forms of expression as texts. For example, fairy tale literacy includes knowing how to read and understand written narratives of fairy tales, but also includes making sense of references to them in visual texts such as films, television commercials and so on (Anderson, 2000). It was this expanded definition that helped to guide my analysis of events in Bea's classroom.

Over time, it became apparent that most activities in the classroom, and many outside of it, were rich literacy events. (The terms "activities" and "events" are used interchangeably in this study.) For example, activities around counting or sorting almost always blended with more traditional forms of literacy learning such as reading or writing to the

point where it would have been difficult to separate "mathematics" from "language" subjects. The issue of classroom management is another example of this phenomenon. Student participation in housekeeping duties that did not appear to be literacy activities were, upon closer examination, times that directly or indirectly enabled students to interact meaningfully with texts in the classroom and outside of it.

Although activities were numerous and varied, students in Bea's class engaged in two general types of events: formatted and open-ended events. Formatted events were activities where, with the help of close monitoring and support from the teacher, students were expected to make a product or do an activity that Bea could assess. She provided some sort of format that helped structure what students were doing and guide them in a particular way. The students were expected to produce something tangible as a result of their work. Typical examples included making a craft, reading aloud or telling about an experience. In contrast, during open-ended events participation was much more flexible. They were free to contribute according to how interested or able they were at the time. Although they were expected to engage in activities appropriately, that is, they were required to pay attention if someone was speaking, and to work respectfully in other ways, it was not compulsory to participate overtly, or to produce work, or a response that could be assessed. Bea anticipated and accepted that students would participate to varying degrees. Formatted literacy events comprised roughly forty percent of each day, with some variation. (Appendix P shows this relationship between formatted and open-ended activities during a typical day.) Students engaged in open-ended literacy events for approximately the remaining sixty percent of the day. These events occurred before and after formatted events in the daily schedule.

Sometimes they served as a preparation and follow up in a very indirect way, while at other times, open-ended activities contributed very specifically to planned, formatted activities.

In some ways, the role of these two general types of activities was similar. First, formatted and open-ended activities both provided students with more choice than it appeared at first glance. As I will show later, regardless of how structured the event appeared, close analysis revealed that there were always individual ways that students could participate to ensure success. Even the most rigidly formatted activities, for example, whole group testing times, actually incorporated a fair amount of flexibility. It became apparent upon closer scrutiny that formatted activities were quite differentiated (Gouvernement du Québec, 2001; Wehrmann, 2000) that is, responsive to individual needs. As a result, students were never left frustrated or embarrassed because they could not achieve what was asked of them.

Formatted and open-ended activities also played an important complementary role. Formatted activities provided Bea with regular opportunities to observe closely and assess student work by examining what was produced. This enabled Bea to give more freedom to students during open-ended activities because she had these ongoing ways to assess where individuals were in their learning. As a result, even during open-ended activities when Bea stood in front of the group and directed the event in a way that might have seemed congruent with teacher-oriented instruction, she could allow students to have a great deal of say about the pace and nature of their own participation. Further, because formatted activities kept Bea in touch with individual progress so reliably, the choices she offered to students during open-ended activities

could be, and indeed were, selected with the diverse needs of her individual learners in mind. As a result, situations that looked like traditional (teacher-oriented) teaching times were actually quite similar to more individualized tutoring sessions--with the benefits of broader social interaction. Formatted activities, then, facilitated the effectiveness of open-ended activities. Open-ended activities invited students to explore literacy in a variety of ways, and Bea could observe a wide range of student activity that helped her tailor events in ways to serve as relevant and meaningful assessment tools.

The rest of this chapter explores formatted and open-ended events in more detail to illustrate more fully the range and coherence of student activity in Bea's class. This discussion provides a backdrop for the subsequent chapters that focus more specifically on the important role literacy instruction played in her classroom.

Formatted Literacy Events

Formatted literacy events in Bea's class were activities, where with teacher support, students were expected to make a product or engage in an activity that she could assess. The following table gives an overview of the categories included in formatted and open-ended literacy events.

Table 1. Literacy Events in Bea's Classroom

Formatted Literacy Events

1. Monitored literacy
2. Station work
3. Gentle group assessment

Open-ended Literacy Events

1. Transition time
    a. student-led transition time
        i. optional enrichment activities
        ii. housekeeping duties
    b. teacher-led transition time
        i. connecting activities
            - bridging events
            - framing events
            - storytelling
        ii. grouting events
2. Group exploring
    a. theme study
    b. skill and concept lessons

Monitored Literacy

(Observational notes/September 20/2000)

There is a low buzz of noise in the classroom as students work on tasks alongside their friends at one of the five student tables. Bea is sitting on a student chair at another low table that is closest to the edge of the room. She opens the black binder in front of her to the name she is looking for, and records the date in pencil so that she will be ready

for the first of eight students who will meet with her this afternoon. Then she calls Julie over to read.

B: Miss Julie Julie, would you come with your home reading please? I need to see you.

Julie promptly brings over the book that she has been practicing at home together with the response sheet that her mother has filled out. She sits next to Bea. Before Julie opens the cover Bea initiates some talk about Julie's new belt as well as what Julie thought about her book. When Julie begins to read Bea stops her here and there asking prediction types of questions. As this goes on, Bea moves the hair that keeps falling into Julie's eyes to behind her ears on three different occasions. This doesn't appear to distract Julie who keeps reading.

J: He can see the monster.

B: Can you show me "the"? (Julie points to the word. She has no trouble with any of the text.)

J: He can see <u>the monster!</u> (reads loudly with great expression).

B: Ooh, you said that in a louder voice. That's very interesting. Can you explain why? (Julie shakes her head that she can't.)

B: You see, it's written darker and there's this mark. Some people call that an excitement mark. You have to read it with gusto.

As Julie continues she reads "a egg" instead of "an egg." After finishing the book and some discussion about the content Bea leans closer to Julie so that she can turn back some pages to the part that Julie had misread. With her finger under "an egg" she asks Julie to reread the words. Julie reads them slowly but correctly this time. Next, Bea asks her if she knows why the author has used "an." When Julie says no Bea provides a short explanation using examples from the book.

B: O.K. You go and see if you can find another book. (Bea writes that Julie can identify "the," that she reads with expression, and notes the confusion about "a" and "an." Julie returns with an easier book.)

B: Ooh. After reading all those long sentences that might be too easy. See if you can find a harder book. (Julie returns with the same easy book.)

B: You still want this book? O.K. That's fine.

Bea calls Fred over next. Before he begins reading about magic and juggling, he tells about his sister having a juggler at her birthday party. He talks about this at great length. Bea notes this interest in her notes by writing "good discussion of juggling." When he begins reading he restarts a lot of his sentences. Bea writes this down as well, and later shares with me that this is a good strategy, as long as it doesn't get excessive.

I have defined monitored literacy as intense observation and guidance of students as they engage in a literacy activity. The home reading session that I have described above is a typical monitored literacy event. Bea closely observes Julie as she reads so that she can follow up with appropriate questions and fine-tune her guidance within a relatively short period of time. Monitored literacy, however, was not restricted to working with an individual on home reading sessions. At times it occurred with a small group of students with similar needs, or during other activities such as silent reading, writing or mathematics. For example, one time Bea led a monitored literacy session with a group of four students all of whom needed help understanding the processes needed to solve some mathematical problems. Bea did not always lead monitored literacy events either. Sometimes the teacher's aide or volunteer would monitor the event in the classroom, and parents were asked to monitor work at home by interacting with their child and noting observations on the home reading chart.

Home reading sessions made up the majority of monitored literacy events. They included the assigned reading the children did with their parents at home, as well as the ten or fifteen minutes Bea spent with each child in class. In the process of home reading, the students chose a text to read and then practiced it at home with a parent or an older child. Back in school, the student reread the text to Bea while she observed, made written notes, and prompted the child as needed. At some point Bea would discuss the content of the book with the student, and check that the parent had signed and made a short comment on the home reading sheet that went home with the book in a plastic bag. (Appendix Q shows a home reading sheet and the accompanying

literature that Bea sent home.) Before meeting with another student, Bea would send the child off to choose another book. At the same time she recorded the child's selection.

The home reading bins contained short paperback books. They were organized according to the level of difficulty. Frequently, for example, Bea encouraged a student to select a book from a particular bin. Yet, Bea did not insist her suggestions were followed as long as students did not choose books consistently below their level of difficulty. She explained to me that she wanted students to feel they were in control of their own reading choices (Informal interview/October 11, 2001).

Home reading sessions usually occurred at one of the student tables, but sometimes it took place on the carpet or on the high captain's bed in the corner next to the carpet. Regardless of where it occurred, there was a warmth and intimacy in the interactions. Bea sat shoulder-to-shoulder with her students, and their exchanges were interspersed with joking and banter. When I reviewed videotapes of home reading sessions to get a better sense of these times, I noticed, too, that in most instances when Bea called students over to read, she used an affectionate nickname. This was another feature of the warmth that enveloped this activity.

Although the scheduling of monitored events varied, there was a definite pattern to their occurrence. When students engaged in station work (another formatted event that I will describe next), Bea almost always called upon and met with individual students. In addition, Bea regularly took advantage of shorter periods to meet with students throughout the day when activities did not require her constant presence. By incorporating monitored literacy into station work as well

as in informal pockets of time, usually Bea was able to meet with all her students in one day.

What impressed me most about monitored literacy was Bea's thoroughness. One morning I noted that she met with sixteen of her twenty-four students in the space of forty-five minutes. In addition to seeing individual students regularly, Bea also recorded in writing what occurred in these sessions and then regularly incorporated what she learned into subsequent instructional times. Amid all of this, she managed to stay relaxed, focused and even playful. Although I have observed many teachers do home reading with their students, I have not witnessed the same relaxed rigor in other settings.

Station Work

Bea incorporated station work into her teaching on a regular basis. Stations provide a way to structure teaching and learning so that students have a fair amount of independence within a predictable format (Butler-Kisber, personal communication, February, 2001). Typically the whole class meets first for motivation and instruction. Then, in smaller groups, students circulate through four or five activities set out in different areas of the room. Although these tasks generally relate to an overall theme, the idea is to vary the work at each station so that students use a range of strategies and skills to study a topic. After students visit all the stations, they either participate in a supplementary station while waiting for others to finish, or they meet immediately as a group to reflect on the experience.

I defined station work in Bea's class very broadly. It included activities that were structured as described above, as well as when Bea worked with an individual or small group of students while the rest of the class completed two or three different tasks that did not necessitate their moving from one place to another. My rationale for clustering these was because the role of these activities and the rules involved were the same. For example, students knew during these times that they were not to disturb Bea unless they were sick, going to the washroom, or there was an emergency. They were also aware that quiet conversation was permitted as long as they got their work done. Then, if time permitted, they could engage in other activities of their choice. Another reason I grouped the times together was because the very explicit format that guided the station work appeared to carry over and contribute to the smoothness of the activities during these other events. The work patterns established in stations seemed to contribute to the ability of the students to complete their assignments independently and responsibly.

Station work fitted the category of formatted literacy events because in most instances each station required students to produce a product. For example, even when students had the freedom to write on any topic during a writing station, it was expected that they would have something on paper before the activity ended. On rare occasions when it appeared that students were not getting the work done, Bea intervened to help with writer's block or to break up unproductive conversations. Occasionally, though, what transpired at a particular station did not require a product. For example, "chick holding" became a regular event after eight chicks hatched in early spring, and continued until the chickens became too large to keep in the classroom. Bea wanted to give students as much opportunity for safe and uncrowded interaction with

the chicks as possible, so she incorporated this as an activity at one of the stations. This resembled what I described earlier as a supplementary station in that it did not contribute directly to the work/theme at hand, but it provided a way to regulate the ebb and flow of activity.

When station work took place in the morning it occurred after recess and lasted for the rest of the morning. If it took place after lunch hour, first Bea and the students would meet for a time on the carpet so she could make them aware of what they would be doing. Then, they would disperse to stations for the remainder of the afternoon. Sometimes portions of the morning, as well as the afternoon, were devoted to station work. When this was the case, one session was always more toned down than the other. For example, if students had engaged in morning station work that required considerable set up time, extensive props and perhaps the help of volunteers, then the afternoon stations were fewer in number and engaged students in activities that required little adult support. When station work in the morning was low key, it always had a festive, almost street fair atmosphere, in the afternoon. By exploiting the structure of station work this way, Bea was able to ensure that students experienced excitement and enrichment, and also benefited from an efficient organizational structure that was familiar to them.

In Bea's classroom station work was organized as follows: Students generally rotated among four or five activities located in different spots in the room, or outside of it, over a period of roughly an hour. Usually they were required to visit at all the stations, but occasionally they could choose among them after completing a number of compulsory activities. Often they would record their visits on a sheet of paper that either

traveled with them, or remained at the various locations. As mentioned earlier, Bea almost always set up one station for monitored literacy events, which included home reading, or individual or small group instruction. The other stations were sometimes directed by volunteers or the teacher's aide. When this occurred, the adults involved would occasionally walk students through an entire activity, such as the time students were asked to piece together different anagram-shaped animals as a parent read the directions to them in narrative form. Frequently, though, station work was an opportunity for students to work alongside classmates more informally on activities that had been introduced earlier by Bea. Volunteers would nudge students along and help with organizational aspects at the station, such as pouring paint or stitching the binding of books. It was expected and accepted that students would chat together as they worked. It was also usual for students to work at some stations without direct adult guidance. In these instances, Bea would keep an especially close eye on the overall activity by making occasional comments and organizational adjustments between her meetings with students.

Sometimes all the stations dealt with a common theme such as space or birth; however, this would occur only after Bea had spent a substantial amount of time with the students as a group studying the topic together. The resulting knowledge and interest gained under Bea's direction meant that students were motivated to participate in each activity, and were capable of successfully completing work that appeared quite advanced for six and seven year olds. I particularly noticed this one afternoon when students were participating in station work on the theme of eyesight. Their enthusiasm at three of the stations did not surprise me because the stations incorporated multi-sensory tasks,

unusual props and physical movement. For example, the "blindfolded" station required students to identify objects such as a silk scarf, an orange or an alarm clock by relying on senses other than vision. Students wrote their name in Braille at another station with the help of a machine borrowed from the regional centre for the blind. At the third station students experimented with various magnifying lenses. The last station, however, required students to label the various parts of the eye and, by matching pictures, show understanding of how the parts functioned. Even though adult guidance was available I did not expect the students to perform this difficult task so easily or enthusiastically. That moment showed me how much the preparation and excitement generated in earlier work on the theme with Bea positively influenced what students were able to achieve.

Stations were not always organized around themes, though. Sometimes they were a mixed bag of activities within this familiar structure arranged so that Bea and her students could follow through with tasks that needed completion, or engage in events that worked best in individual or small group settings. For example, during one of my visits, the station work involved five activities. Students wrote in their unlined folders on any topic at the first station. The writing folders consisted of ten pages of newsprint stapled together and folded with each student's name on the front sheet. The second station was a handwriting centre where, with laminated letters and directional arrows to help, students worked on phonics stencils. The third station, set up with a volunteer in another room, was for tape recording oral reading. Students also visited a painting area if they had been absent or unable to complete work on an earlier day. The fifth station was one where Bea took individual students aside, asked them to spell their names aloud,

and recorded what they dictated on large graph paper underneath the word "Chrysanthemum." This was the name of a character in a book they had read together. Using graph paper, she put each letter of their name under a letter in Chrysanthemum. Following this, she asked them to identify the longer name of the two, and to elaborate on their decision. Although the resulting list of names served other purposes as well, Bea used the activity to get a better understanding of how students made sense of concepts such as longer and shorter, as well as one-to-one sound/symbol correspondence early in the year.

There was not the same degree of excitement among the students when the stations were comprised of disparate, rather than theme-related, activities. However, the overall structure that stations provided allowed Bea to work with individuals or small groups while the others worked independently.

In summary, station work played a number of roles in Bea's class. First, the organizational structure of stations encouraged students to develop responsibility as they worked away from the direct supervision of Bea. Although parents helped out at some stations, there were many opportunities for students to work alone, or collaboratively with peers, and set their own pace. Station work also enabled Bea to meet with individuals or small groups for more individualized instruction, or to stand back from the class and observe the activity in a way that was not possible at other times. Being able to observe, without being directly involved, was important because it allowed Bea to see different patterns of behaviour and interaction. This enabled her to base instruction on more varied, and thus richer, classroom observations. When station work was organized around themes, students also benefited from a

range of activities that approached a similar topic from different perspectives, and thereby tapped into different individual strengths and ways of understanding and representing (Gardner, 1983). For example, the series of stations about sight incorporated tasks that called on reading and writing skills, sensory awareness, manual dexterity and problem solving. These kinds of activities encouraged students to develop in ways beyond the traditional notions of literacy, that is, reading and writing activities. As a result, these activities provided Bea with a way to help students with diverse needs to achieve success in the classroom.

Gentle Group Assessment

Gentle group assessment refers to the sensitive way that Bea evaluated students during group work to determine appropriate future instruction. It was not a frequent occurrence; only twelve incidences were recorded in my notes over nine months. Each of those lasted between ten minutes and half an hour. This was a formatted literacy activity where the entire class engaged in the same task at the same time. It usually took place while students were seated at the tables, however, twice it occurred on the carpet. During gentle group assessment, Bea observed how students were developing both cognitively and socially. She always made a point to explain the purpose of these activities and to make them as unthreatening as possible. For example, when she dictated a few sentences to the class to get writing samples from each of them she explained, "You are going to write something that will help me teach you. That's why it's important that you do not get any help from your neighbours." (Observational notes/March 11, 2001) Also, I noticed that she never referred to spelling quizzes as tests, even when students used this term in conversation with her. While some might argue that this is

overprotective, I felt it was appropriate. Her language was consistent with how she used the activity to assess student progress. Quizzes were just one of many assessment tools, and did not hold more importance than other work that students completed. Further, the use of the term "quiz" was an opportunity for Bea to reinforce her low-key approach to assessment with her students.

Gentle group assessment was a particularly interesting event to observe. At first it appeared no help was available to students while they produced what was required. It was true that students did not have access to the intensive help they received from Bea or other adults during monitored literacy events. Nor could students work together informally or ask for occasional guidance the way they could during station work. Nevertheless, upon closer examination it became clear that during these times Bea made sure no students were cornered into failure, frustration or embarrassment. She did this by providing needed support in subtle ways.

For example, when she asked individual students to read a colour poem aloud, she made sure that another version, one with coloured cues, was prominently displayed nearby so students could refer to it if necessary. At other times, such as when she dictated the few sentences for the writing sample, she supported students who might otherwise have difficulty by hovering near them. This way she knew how to pace her oral directions, or whether it was necessary to repeat them. Another way that Bea took the pressure off, or provided an "out" for students, was by handing out small blackboards and chalk when she wanted to quiz them on mathematical or phonics concepts. During these times she was effectively asking for an attempt rather than a product. After each

try, students would hold up their work for her to see and then erase it to start fresh. This helped reinforce the idea that mistakes are transitory and learning opportunities. Although Bea noted who needed help during these times, she never singled out students. As a result, even those having difficulty looked forward to the times they worked on their slates.

Spelling quizzes were the most test-like instances of gentle group assessment that I witnessed. Although Bea slowed down and provided hints to students as needed, the fact that students had studied with their parents at home and were to be evaluated on their performance generated a different kind of anticipation about these events. Although I never saw anyone visibly anxious, a number of students did talk about how well they would do, or did do on "the test." Interestingly, this activity, the only one of all the literacy events in Bea's class that had a somewhat competitive air to it, was something that Bea planned as a response to parent requests. It contrasted with the more relaxed atmosphere of all the other events and helped me realize that, even when students occasionally engaged in competitive games, the literacy events, including almost all incidences of gentle group assessment, were relaxed and comfortable activities for students. Many teachers who believe in holistic approaches to literacy get pressure from parents to prepare their children for the "real world" by exposing them to competition through tests. Bea demonstrated how she was able to respond to this kind of pressure from parents without compromising her beliefs about literacy learning.

Open-ended Literacy Events

As explained earlier, open-ended events did not require students to produce a tangible product for assessment purposes. Students were free

to participate according to their needs and interests at the time. Open-ended events, comprising of transition time and group study, framed the mornings and afternoons in Bea's class. These events usually filled the first forty minutes of the day before students left for physical education class, music, and recess. After recess and approximately forty-five minutes to an hour of station work, students engaged in open-ended events again for a short time before breaking for lunch. During the afternoon, the basic pattern was the same except that it was not punctuated by activities outside the room. The days I visited always ended with at least a few minutes of open-ended events regardless of what activities had taken place previously. It should be noted that Bea's students spent Tuesdays and Thursdays studying French with another teacher. Fridays were a flexible mix of activities between the French and English classrooms, and sometimes with children in cycle two. These days did not follow the predictable pattern outlined here, and were not included in the study. Bea felt that I would learn more by visiting on Mondays and Wednesdays. I was committed to respecting her ideas, and followed this suggestion.

Transition Time

Transition time refers to literacy events that took place between students' out-of-class experiences and activities that were the focus of the morning or the afternoon, or in the spaces between these focussed activities. It occurred when students entered class in the morning, after recess and lunch break, and between other activities. This was an important literacy event because of the role it played in helping students become independent and responsible learners. The event was either student-led or teacher-led.

Student-led transition time

Student-led transition time refers to times when children worked and played without the direct guidance of an adult. They engaged in optional enrichment activities or housekeeping chores and usually socialized as they carried out these tasks. In the classroom Bea took care of housekeeping activities during this time, such as taking attendance, collecting money for book orders, or meeting with students for monitored literacy events. Sometimes this meant that she interacted informally with children as they unpacked their bags, read together or played. However, whether she used this time for brief meetings with students, parents or other teachers, or for other tasks that cropped up at the last minute, the students carried on smoothly without her.

Often children would choose reading as an optional enrichment activity. Sometimes students selected books from the home reading bins. They also selected reading material that was on display, especially the books that Bea had read recently to the class, or that the class had published together. An example of a book published by the class was one written in September entitled, "I like...". Students had each drawn something they liked on a page. Then, with Bea scribing if necessary, they wrote the accompanying text and their names. Bea explained to me that she initially let children take turns bringing these books home after they were published. However, when she noticed how popular they were during this free time in class, she stopped this practice so they would be more available to the students (Informal interview/September 29, 2001). This is just one more example of the extent to which Bea was attuned to the children and what was transpiring in her class.

Writing was a popular enrichment activity too. If students chose to write, they used their writing folders that were kept in a large bin beside the teacher's desk. Sometimes Bea left out fancy gel pens and writing paper for novelty, although students came up with interesting variations on their own. For example, occasionally they wrote messages with the magnetized letters on a cookie sheet that Bea used for certain monitored literacy events. Another time, two boys who had been reluctant writers most of the year, spelled out "You are a nice teacher" for Bea with sugar cubes she had brought to school with another activity in mind. The following discussion about this demonstrates how students benefited from the latitude that they had in their writing activities:

(Formal interview/April 23, 2001)

B: One of my glows of this year is a kid that I really worked hard with... Barry.

M: Um-hum.

B: Worked, he and another boy were... I had the cubes, sugar cubes out...

M: Right.

B: ...because we were going to do some math things later that day. It was wintertime and he and this other guy spelled out "You are a nice teacher."

M: Oh!

B: With the sugar cubes.

M: Oh!

B: Totally, and you want to talk whole lang-

M: Who was the other person?

B: Cameron, Cameron. Josh helped.

M: Oh, cute.

B: Anyway, and I took a picture of them.

M: Okay.

B: And I have that up at home because that was one of... because his face. Like to, to do this, "You are a nice teacher," to do this, spelled out, it took a long time with these cubes.

M: And not to eat them?

B: And not to eat them. And the...

M: Oh. Yeah.

B: ...look of his face. I thought, okay, I think he's finally

M: -Yeah.

B: ...made a connection.

M: Yeah.

B: So there's lots. Every day, there is a glow.

M: Yeah.

Students also selected to play with toys and games during these times. Some of the available materials in the classroom were commercially made, such as an oversized checkerboard, a Junior Scrabble game, and Leggo building blocks. Bea invented a lot of her own activities too, however, and students turned to these as often, if not more frequently, than the others. An example was the sentence-matching game. Bea had cut a dozen or so meter-long sentence strips in two, laminated them and placed them in a plastic container. The object was to find the corresponding pieces. To do this the students had to place all the pieces on the carpet, read them alone or in a group, and then match them up with the help of picture clues. This helped students read for meaning using context cues.

At times students engaged in dramatic play. For example, on one occasion a doctor visited the class in conjunction with a project on the body. After her presentation, the doctor left plastic gloves, tongue depressors and masks for the children. Bea decided to set up an examination area on one side of the room and contributed a stethoscope, clipboard, and doctor's chart for recording patient information. This gave students an opportunity to use and extend their knowledge about the body in imaginative ways. At the same time, these activities contributed to their literacy.

Sometimes students participated in optional enrichment activities for as little as five or ten minutes. Often, this occurred after student housekeeping chores had been completed, and before Bea formally began the day. On other occasions more time was allotted. For example, Bea sometimes blocked out a longer period for station work, without increasing the time needed to complete each task, so that students had more time to choose their own activities. Students also engaged in optional enrichment activities outside of formal class time, such as during indoor recess breaks or on the weekends. They read and wrote stories, and many of these were shared later with the class. They also took turns bringing home literacy and mathematical games. The alphabet soup game was one such activity. It required students to make as many words as possible from a small tub full of uncooked alphabet soup letters. After creating the words, students had to record them in a booklet. In addition to reinforcing literacy concepts and skills, these games had another feature. When a student finished with a game, he/she picked who was to have it next. The selected student, always quite excited, would place the game in its colourful cloth bag and leave

the room to put it in his/her schoolbag. This ritual made taking turns a special occasion. The children worked enthusiastically to complete these tasks at home and then to show their work to Bea. This made homework fun rather than a burden.

A particularly interesting optional enrichment event took place in October. Bea had completed the morning housekeeping and, as she did routinely, was about to gather her students on the carpet. Instead, however, she picked up a book and read quietly as her students continued at their various activities. No explanation was necessary. I sensed the magic in the air and understood Bea's decision. Everybody--every last student--was deeply engrossed in reading some sort of text. And even though a number of children were talking quietly amongst themselves, there was a hush in the room. I made an attempt to document the moment by recording the range of activities taking place, but this did not represent adequately what was happening. The following description is my attempt to give a sense to what transpired:

> (Observational notes/October 11, 2000)
> Two boys are reading together on the loft. Three students (two boys and a girl) are on the floor just outside of the carpeted area. They are studying the world map that Bea has placed very low on the wall next to the globe. I hear them talk about the four arrows that Bea has attached to the map. I pick up the words Olympics, Montreal and something about where they live. Another four girls are on the carpet pulling apart and changing the sequence of a laminated book that Bea had created for that purpose. Four students have pulled the long yellow "I like" sentence strips

> from the wicker basket and are trying to read them. Paul is on the rocker next to the carpet reading the class authored, "I am good at" book. Dennis climbs up beside him.

Later I noted:

> During gym/music time, Bea and I talked about the "magic moment" and how rewarding it was to see students opting into literacy like that. (She seemed really pleased that I had picked up on it.)

This event was a very poignant reminder that, with appropriate support, children happily incorporate reading into independent activities. It also attests further to the attentiveness and flexibility that were part of Bea's teaching.

Optional enrichment activities gave students the opportunity to work with the skills and concepts they learned in teacher-directed situations. Although this was also possible during other times of the day, such as during station work, optional enrichment activities gave students much greater independence. Children were free to work in social groupings of their own choosing, and to determine their own pace and direction with a wide range of literacy activities. Students benefited in an obvious academic sense by having the opportunity to play and learn in ways that suited them at the time. Just as important, this process enabled them to develop an independence and self-confidence in literacy that could progress only so far under more direct teacher supervision. So although these activities were not as noticeably pre-structured as other events, their role was as significant.

Housekeeping time gave students practice in various organizational aspects of literacy learning. This event occurred first thing in the morning and at different times throughout the day. It included unpacking bags in the morning, repacking them incrementally throughout the day, sorting and organizing folders, cleaning and tidying up the classroom, and carrying out a variety of other simple routines. I included these activities as part of student-led transitional time because adult guidance was not required for the event to unfold smoothly. Housekeeping activities required less student initiative and independence than enrichment activities because they were based on predictable routines. The following excerpt is illustrative:

> (Observational notes/November 6, 2000)
> 7:55: Students come in from the hallway in small groups over a period of five minutes. As usual, they find their laminated name tags on the round table nearest the door and place them in the nearby plastic bin. This way Bea will know who is absent. Later she will ask that child's assigned buddy if he or she received a phone call at home explaining the absence. If not, Bea would follow this up pretty quickly.
>
> Then students sort the contents of their navy folders into one of two bins on a shelf on the nearest side wall. The home reading bags go in one, the yellow homework duo-tang in the other. Some students have notes for Bea that would normally stay in the navy folders for the time being. Since Melissa (the aide) is free she removes the notes, puts them in a separate pile (there are a lot today for some reason) and

> arranges the folders in their cardboard holder. At this point Bea is crossing the room with a stack of papers in her arms. Anne (a student) taps her leg and calls her name. When Bea greets her, she tells her that her mother is going to order Chickadee magazine. Bea says "Great going" ! and comments to Anne that she was glad that she sent the sheet home.

As this excerpt shows, housekeeping routines were so predictable that Bea's constant supervision was not required. This freed her to chat with students, or attend to other tasks.

Although housekeeping duties were characterized by routine, students took pride in these activities, particularly with the responsibilities that rotated among the students each week. One boy who had been assigned the task of sweeping up at the end of the day was so enthusiastic about his job that, even when the responsibility was passed onto another, he was always first to reach for the broom at other times of the day. Student housekeeping served a number of purposes then. In addition to facilitating the smooth running of the classroom, it also instilled a sense of belonging and pride in students.

Teacher-led transition time

I defined teacher-led transition events as the times when students moved from one activity to another under Bea's direct guidance. The process occurred two general ways: through "connecting" and "grouting" activities. I defined connecting activities as times when Bea helped students understand experiences by encouraging them to make

connections among events in the classroom, or between classroom events and life outside of school. Although connecting events took place in the context of other classroom activities, the word "transition" does not refer to the tangible movement of students from one classroom event to another. Rather, it refers to the cognitive processes that Bea facilitated and observed through conversations that took place during these activities. Sometimes it was difficult to categorize connecting events because often they served more than one purpose. Nevertheless, over time, I identified three types of activities: bridging events, framing activities, and story telling.

Bridging events served to narrow the gap between home and school by helping to make the classroom and activities within it more familiar and meaningful to students. This occurred frequently in both structured and more casual ways. For example, time was routinely planned for group discussions about weekend activities and family news. I noticed, too, that Bea paid particular attention to the excitement that arose when children brought their belongings to class. Initially I was quite surprised she allowed students to hold on to these items all day; I thought they would be a distraction. Although it was true that certain toys were banned because of their violent nature, or the loud noises they made, I seldom saw personal belongings interfering with learning. Instead, the process mirrored the practice of allowing children to bring something familiar with them to a hospital or summer camp. Acknowledging and welcoming items that often made no obvious contribution to the day, such as locks and keys, small trinkets and even hairpieces, appeared to stimulate conversations among the children, and helped make the classroom more comfortable and homey to the students. It seemed because Bea allowed the students to choose what and when they

brought something to school, and because they were able to hold onto their treasures throughout the day, the conversations these items sparked played a more authentic, and thus significant, role. These interactions contrasted sharply with the typical "show and tell" events characterized by stilted dialogue that occurs in many early childhood classrooms.

Often Bea bridged the gap between home and school by weaving familiar events from home into reading, writing, or mathematical activities. The following excerpt from my field notes shows how Bea introduced the concept of sorting by connecting it to familiar household chores, as well as to student clothing:

> (Observational notes/September 11, 2000)
>
> Students are sitting on the carpet. Bea is facing them on the rocker. She begins the lesson by asking students why we need to sort things. After a few seconds and no response, she tells them that someone has just done the laundry and goes up to the bedroom and throws things in.
>
> B: Is that a good thing?
> S's: (in unison) No....oh
> B: Why not?...Nora?
> N: Too messy.
> B: It's too messy. Right.
>
> Next, Bea uses a grocery store example to show students how sorting can extend to there also. After, she illustrates with an example from the kitchen drawer. Then...

B: O.K. What's a way I can sort you guys. How can I sort you?

M: By girls and boys.

Bea does this, then says that she will sort the group a different way, and that students are to try to find a rule. The six students she has selected are now standing side by side in a line just off the carpet.

B: Is it anything to do with shorts?

D: They all have the same colour of arms?

B: No, that would put all of us in that group....(After no other takers) We need a lifeline here (referring to the T.V. show). Who wants to be a millionaire?

Eventually, someone realizes that all six selected students have black in their shoes. Bea continues by sorting a different way (wearing pants). Someone selects similar hair colour as the rule. Bea applauds this, saying that it's correct, but not what she had chosen. The game continues after students guess "pants as the rule."

The last rule is that Bea and the rest of the group were wearing sleeveless shirts. Bea explains by contrasting T-shirts with sleeveless shirts and points this out by saying that hers is "sleeveless." One boy says that he has a muscle shirt like hers at home. Bea laughs and turns to me as she says to him:

B: I don't call it a muscle shirt though.

By exploring the concept of sorting with examples that were familiar to students, Bea helped them understand and appreciate the connection between this mathematical concept and everyday living. It is also worth noting that in the above example, Bea playfully makes reference to a popular television show. This is another way that she drew in the familiar to make the classroom a comfortable and meaningful place for her students.

Bea also bridged the gap between home and school by making an extra effort to integrate experiences that had special meaning to children. She and the class published books to mark the occurrence of lost teeth, bodily injuries, and the purchase of new running shoes--all high priority events to six year-olds. The students knew, too, that there were other opportunities to share personal stories and experiences. Throughout the day there were always informal times for students to have a word with Bea or their friends.

Framing events refers to a second kind of connecting activity that I identified. Framing events occurred frequently, with forty-one incidences recorded in my classroom notes in twenty-two days. These events felt like a coach's pep talk before a game, or the meeting that takes place in the changing room immediately afterward. Bea usually stood at the easel and made brief notations on the easel paper as she spoke with the students who were seated at tables or on the carpet. Her notations, sometimes in writing, and sometimes in pictorial form, helped reinforce their discussion and the links between language and writing. Together

they discussed and mentally walked through work they would be doing, or reflected on events that had already taken place.

Framing activities helped students to work more independently during the planned activities of the day. This was partly because Bea made the organizational procedures explicit to everyone. She was able in this way to anticipate and deal with questions or confusion before problems arose. Also, and perhaps more importantly, framing activities were often the time when students shared their individual approaches to their work with the group. For example, strategies that a student had used, or might use, to generate writing ideas were shared with the class. This meta-cognitive (The New London Group, 1996), or "thinking about thinking" activity, helped to provide students with a means for more independent work, and expose them to a variety of approaches and perspectives.

The following two excerpts are from different station planning sessions held on the carpet. Both examples show the organizational and meta-cognitive characteristics inherent in what transpires:

> (Observational notes/October 11, 2000)
>
> Students come in from recess. (They had had music and gym before recess.) They sit on the carpet. Some are tying shoes and chatting. I hear two boys reading the poem "I can see a rainbow."
>
> B: We have a lot to do between now and the end of the day. You've had a good play outside so now you're ready to rock-and-roll and write.

She shows a stencil to the students with five pictures on it. She explains that each represents a station and that students must go to all of them, checking off the pictures as they go.

B: You are going to be just like high school students travelling with your own paper. I want to remind you of one thing though. Graeme's mom and I are both doing home reading, but you only need to come to one of us.

Then she begins to list the various stations on the easel. After "home reading" she writes "dot stories." Bea says to the children that Melissa will help them remember the words that they want to say to go with their dot story. The class is compiling a book with individual drawings from each child that have integrated round stickers into the picture. She reaches for the stack of newsprint with the drawings and takes a few minutes so that every child can say what they will later write. One boy informs Bea that she has held his microwave upside down. After being corrected, she says that she will make sure to keep the controls on the right. Then, referring to all the drawings...

B: We won't tell people how many dots there are. They will have to count. (As Bea lists the three remaining stations, she walks the students through each of them.)

In the above example, students learned how the stations were set up for the day. They also attended to the activity in a meta-cognitive sense (The New London Group, 1996), by mentally and orally rehearsing what they would later write or have scribed. In the second example there is greater emphasis on this meta-cognitive aspect. Even though this student was absent, his writing ideas were shared along with other strategies so that the children were better prepared for the upcoming work, and exposed to an approach that might have been different from their own.

(Observational notes/March 26, 2001)

Bea has explained to students that one station after lunch will be for writing. As a preparation she takes out some stories written a few days before and has a few students read them to the class. There are comments and questions from students after each reading. Then Bea explains that she will read Mark's story even though he is absent. She reminds the children again that they will be writing in the afternoon and that they might want to think about using the same Green Eggs and Ham format that Mark used, or one from a different book.

Then Bea asked students other ways that they could get ideas. When one student said that they could write about their science experiments Bea went over to the potato words on the wall and read over the list with the students, reminding them that they could look around the room at other word walls too.

Storytelling was the third connecting activity that emerged. I defined this category as the times when Bea used literature in a setting that facilitated a sense of fellowship within the group to help students make connections among classroom activities, or between classroom events and their lives outside of school. Storytelling took place once or twice a day. Bea, the teacher's aide, or a volunteer sat on a small student chair or in the rocker and faced children on the carpet while reading non-fiction, fiction, or poetry aloud to them. Usually Bea read, but when the others did, Bea had a chance to observe the children closely, or attend to something else that was needed. Frequently, stories were used as a way to end the morning or afternoon.

Storytelling was similar to framing events because the stories read often stimulated interest in a topic and/or introduced students to other planned activities of the day. Furthermore, when storytelling occurred as a follow-up to other activities, it prompted the class to reflect on their activities and extend what they had learned. Storytelling was similar to other activities that bridged home and school because, as children listened to and interacted with books, often they reached understandings by making connections to events in their own lives. However, what differentiated this event in an important way was the additional role it played in developing a sense of belonging within the group. The children knew storytelling was an especially warm and pleasurable time when they could snuggle into the pillows under the windows as they listened. If they were seated next to Bea, and leaned into her as she read, this was all right too. Sometimes the mood was more playful than serene, but regardless of what was being read, there was always a special tone to these moments. It was hard to pinpoint but I sensed that the students were aware of it too. One afternoon, at the

end of a story, a student said wishfully to Bea "I want to read like this all the time" (Observational notes/October 23, 2001). This made an impression on me because she said this just as I was noticing the close, almost familial feel in the classroom. It seemed that, in addition to the more obvious pedagogical benefits of storytelling (Cazden, 1992), sharing literature on the carpet played an important role in contributing to literacy learning by knitting the group together, and establishing a classroom tone that made school pleasurable for everyone.

Activities that bridged home and school, framing events, and storytelling, were all times when Bea helped students make connections within the classroom, or between activities in the classroom and their lives outside of it. Much like family table talk, connecting events were an important time for group members to make sense of the day's events through stories and conversation. The result was that these activities provided a cohesiveness and sense of purpose to literacy events that otherwise might have been more isolated activities with considerably less value.

Another way Bea helped students move among literacy events was through grouting activities. (As I explained earlier, when students moved between literacy events under Bea's direct guidance I called this teacher-led transition time. It occurred in two ways: through connecting and grouting activities.) Grouting activities were teacher-led games or songs that occurred during small spaces in the daily schedule. Through repetition that she made fun, she helped students strengthen concepts and skills she had taught at an earlier time. I chose the term "grouting" to represent these events because I felt the metaphor depicted the supportive and important complementary role that these activities

played in the classroom. The image of two brick walls--one built with grouting and the other without--illustrates the significant role that grouting activities played in helping students to consolidate the learning that had occurred during other instructional times.

Grouting activities took place after planned activities had been completed, and when small bits of time were left before the next formal juncture of the day such as recess, lunch hour, or gym class. Often these events were tied to a theme the class was studying and provided a time of heightened excitement. The following example, which took place late in the afternoon after station work, typifies this event. The excerpt is taken from my researcher's notebook, and includes my observations as the event unfolded, as well as bracketed reflections that were recorded several days later:

> (Observational notes/September 11, 2000)
> Students are gathering on the carpet and placing their yellow "I like..." headbands around Bea's outstretched arm. The headbands were written with Melissa's (the aide's) help at one of the stations. Using a black marker she had scribed as students dictated. All the headbands were a bit different. Charles' said, "I like playing on my computer." Sarah had written "I like visiting my sister in Ottawa." Bea puts the gathered headbands down on the loft and moves towards the easel.
>
> B: Okay, it's time ...what do you know about the game "Wheel of Fortune"?
>
> S: You win money.

T: You have to solve clues.

Bea says that the class is going to play Wheel of Fortune. She writes blank spaces on the easel similar to the hangman game and says that she always uses someone's name in the string of words. Students raise their hands and take turns picking letters until one guesses the complete sentence. "I like Robert" and "I see Nora" are two examples. Students are really into this. Some of them even have trouble staying seated as they wait for their hand to be answered.

(This game seems to do two things. It uses familiar sentences to draw student attention to parts of words and to how the entire text is made up of individual words. But, in addition to phonics practice, it sets the mood in the classroom. The second role was particularly helpful on this day. Because of the rain students had spent recess and lunch hour indoors. Things were getting a bit hairy and Bea had had to speak firmly with a few students. The game ensured that the classroom didn't take on a negative tone. Instead, it turned the mood into fun and excitement.)

Although grouting activities entertained the students, they were not just fun-filled activities of questionable pedagogical value. They were integrated with other events in the classroom, and addressed student needs by providing a good deal of the repetition and practice necessary at this level that, if not provided for during these moments, would have needed to be scheduled elsewhere. Grouting activities were more than

"filler activities," or enriching "add-ons." They were essential literacy events.

Group Exploring

I called the second type of open-ended literacy events groups exploring. Usually it took place after transition time in the morning and before students left for gym class. When other events took longer, group exploring occurred after recess or, if stations were already planned for that time, sometime in the afternoon. Because of Bea's physical position in relation to her students, and the obvious way she led the group, this type of activity reflected characteristics often attributed to traditional (teacher-oriented) teaching time. She directed the activity from a chair facing students as they sat cross-legged on the carpeted area, or she addressed students as she stood beside a tall easel. The easel held an oversized pad of paper and was placed strategically so that she could use it when the children were with her on the carpet or when they were at the tables. What distinguished group exploring from more traditional teaching time was the degree and quality of student participation. As each event unfolded, Bea shared information and posed questions that facilitated student sharing and questions of their own. Group exploring was comprised of two dimensions: theme study, and skill and concept lessons.

Theme study

I defined theme study as whole-class inquiry into a topic of mutual interest. It lasted between two and four weeks. The activity was a time when students were introduced to new information and ideas, as well as the research process itself. Although they did not guide their own

research during these times other than to identify particular areas of interest, the knowledge and enthusiasm that students gained left them well prepared for engagement in subsequent "hands on" activities. A parent who volunteered quite regularly in the class explained her understanding of how themes were chosen:

(Interview/April 23, 2001)

M: When you mentioned the hands-on themes, can you just describe that a little bit more? Is this something that the kids come up with, that she comes up with? That they come up with together?

A: It's a combination, actually.

M: Okay...

A: She sort of, she sort of asks them what they're interested in..

M: Okay.

A: And, you know, she has an idea what their interests are too. So, I think... I think she comes at it the two ways.

At the very beginning of the year, Bea initiated a theme study of the Olympics to coincide with the Olympics taking place in Australia at the time. She shared general information from a variety of sources. Students also participated in a number of activities on the topic constructing their own Olympic rings and following the progress of several athletes. Within a few days, however, specific student interests emerged and guided the direction of the study in more specific ways. Bea learned that students were particularly interested in the habitats of Australian animals, especially koalas. As a result, she researched this topic via the internet and library, shared her findings with the group during conversations on

the carpet, and tailored further activities on this student generated topic.

This process of integrating her own ideas about what topics were important with those of her students was characteristic of how theme studies were initiated and evolved throughout the year. Also, it is interesting to also note how often theme topics emerged out of previous ones. For example, strength became a topic of interest during the Olympic theme. This led to a more intense study of the skeleton, the body in general, and then the eye.

Theme study shaped a number of other literacy events within and outside the classroom. Many station activities were planned around each topic being researched, and these themes had a noticeable effect on formal and informal conversations, reading choices, and home activities. For example, when students were studying the Olympics and Australian animals, many children selected to browse through related literature during their free time. Also, throughout this theme students regularly brought in related artefacts from home, such as gold medals awarded for playing soccer or hockey, as well as koala and kangaroo toy animals. Because Bea sent home a newsletter that included relevant Olympic web-sites for students to access with their parents, a number of children came to school with interesting information to share. By encouraging students to access a range of texts during theme study, as she did, Bea helped to ensure students were developing multiple literacies (Anderson, 2000; The New London Group, 1996).

Themes were sometimes cross-curricular. (As I explained in Chapter One, this term is now incorporated in the Québec Education Plan. It

refers to study in more than one subject area.) The following example shows how a study on the differences between rabbits and hares was intertwined with a mathematics challenge that students and Bea solved together another day. (Bea never used the term mathematics problem.)

(Observational notes, April 9, 2001)
Bea begins writing on the easel. She writes the word "rabbits" on one side of the page and "hares" on the other side.

B: What do you know about rabbits and hares?
N: Hares are longer and skinnier that rabbits.

Bea writes "bigger" under the word hares. There is discussion about how students can get information about rabbits and hares (computers, encyclopedias, books). Bea shares her information from the internet, paraphrasing differences she has found.

B: Rabbit babies are blind when they are born and have hardly any fur. But when hares are born they have fur and can see. Now rabbits like to go underground whereas hares like to have their babies above the ground. (She reaches for a book that shows rabbits in burrows.) Groups of burrows are called warrens. (She says that she hopes to get a book about this later in the week. Then she introduces a challenge.) I read that the longer the legs the farther a person can jump. (There is discussion about this. Then...)

N: I think I know what we can do to solve your challenge. We get people to jump and if we measure their legs then we know if they can jump far.

B: I think you are on the right track, but there is some information missing.

She stands beside Anne. She asks the group who is going to go farther. The class responds that Bea would jump farther. There is more discussion. Finally, Anthony says that we need to measure their knees. Bea uses this response as an indication that we need to measure the length of their legs. Bea says that on Friday the class will measure to see if this is true.

B: And maybe we will find that someone with short legs will jump far. Stay tuned for this on Friday...

Bea approached theme study differently from how inquiry is frequently articulated in the literature. In these descriptions it is not unusual to see even very young students conducting inquiry themselves. The teacher acts as a guide, but does not take a direct role in the process (Edelsky, 1991). In fact, in my experience, this seems to be the ideal to which many teachers aspire. Inquiry in Bea's class was different. Although she took student interests into account, her approach was more one of "modeling" the inquiry process. By modeling I do not mean that she showed students how to do something by simply presenting a sequence of activities. Rather, she continually adapted the inquiry process to respond to the cues she was receiving from her students. For example, if a student or the class as a group showed a

particular interest in, or confusion about, some facet of the research, she would pursue it by spending more time on it, either at that moment or in the following days. This more responsive model of instruction (Wertsch and Givens, 1992) enabled Bea to efficiently teach her group of students how to conduct research, while also engaging them in activities that responded to their interests.

Skill and concept lessons

In my introduction to this study, I briefly touched on the misconceptions that exist about skill instruction. I alluded to the tendency for student teachers to associate creativity and fun with holistic or "whole language" classrooms, but to associate skill instruction with more teacher-oriented forms of teaching. In my review of the literature I discussed how a number of parents and more experienced educators have been prone to this way of thinking as well (Church, 1996).

Contrary to an "either/or" interpretation of instruction, this study revealed that skill and concept lessons were an integral part of Bea's overall student-oriented classroom. They were an important part of group exploring. Skill and concept lessons tended to be ten to twenty-five minute periods of whole class instruction at the easel, in one or sometimes two of the following curricular areas: phonics (sound-to-print relationships), poetry writing, handwriting, mathematics, and reading and writing.

At times, skill and concept lessons were integrated with theme study. For example, when Bea listed the characteristics of rabbits and hares on the easel to examine their differences, students were studying a concept

(similarities and differences) that related to a broader theme (rabbits and hares). Skill and concept lessons blended into other activities, too, in that often they reviewed or prepared students for other events such as station work or whole group work. What follows is an excerpt of this preparation occurring at the easel. Bea reviews the previous week's spelling list and introduces students to their new one.

(Observational notes, January 29, 2001)

B: Are you ready to play a really neat game?

Bea writes the date on the oversized lined pad of paper and then writes a number of "short i" words that had been on the students' spelling list that week. She starts with the word "did" then crosses out the d and writes another word hid.

B: (looking up excitedly) I just chopped and changed.

She uses this expression as she "chops and changes" the rest of the words on the old spelling list. She progressively changes the word hid to lid to lad to lap and lip by giving students clues to what the new word might be and then solicits their ideas. As she does this she leaves a descending trail of words with a crossed out letter on the page. Then she introduces this week's spelling list in the same manner (his to hid to had to hat to ham to him).

B: We'll chop the t and replace it with something that makes a type of meat...Jacob, do you want to give it a

try?

J: (confidently) Ham.

B: Great going. You are amazing today. It must be something you're eating for breakfast. Now watch this (to the class). I am chopping the a and I am replacing it with an i. It doesn't belong to her. It belongs to (voice rising) _____? Barry?

B: Him.

While she introduced new spelling words, Bea used the opportunity to study word patterns as well, specifically how beginning, medial and end sounds map onto three-letter words that include the letter "a" or "i" as the second letter. So, when Bea led students through skill and concept lessons, the thinking she encouraged through word play made these experiences much more explorative and fun for students than teacher-led instruction associated with more traditional (teacher-oriented) forms of teaching. Like theme study, there was an appropriate balance of firm guidance with the freedom for children to explore and respond to instruction according to individual needs.

Summary

Almost all events in Bea's class, and many outside of it, were opportunities for students to acquire literacy in ways that included, but extended beyond, traditional notions of literacy learning. Along with learning basic skills and information, students routinely engaged in a wide range of activities and contexts that helped them control their own learning, and make sense of their world. Students read, wrote, experimented, talked, sang, played and created. As well, they worked

alone, individually with the teacher, in small groups with friends, in small groups with other students and an adult, and as a whole group.

There were two kinds of literacy events in B's class: formatted events and open-ended events. Formatted activities required students to participate by producing a product or offering a response so that Bea could assess each child's progress. Open-ended events did not require this. Within reason, students were free to engage in these activities in ways that suited them, and to the extent that they wished. These two general types of events complemented each other in the classroom by enabling Bea to follow and support student development more attentively and sensitively than if she had relied on one type or the other.

Formatted events included three types of activities: monitored literacy, station work, and gentle group assessment. Monitored literacy was a time for intense observation and instruction of individual students or small groups of students by Bea or other adults. Students had the opportunity in station work to practice what had been introduced during earlier events, or to extend these concepts in new ways. In the course of an hour or so they visited several stations. Students relied on help from friends, adults or physical cues provided by the material at each station, but it was not as intense or personalized as the support Bea provided during monitored literacy sessions. At first glance, gentle group assessment appeared to be evaluative sessions that did not offer support of any kind. On closer examination, however, it was evident that subtle forms of help were available here as well. Thus, even in the activities where students were required to produce a tangible product on their

own without the help of peers or an adult, there was always some kind of support available.

Roughly sixty percent of class time was spent in open-ended events, which consisted of transition time and group exploring. Transition time was quite varied. It occurred in activities that took place either before, between, or after work that was the focus of the day. It consisted of student-led transition time and teacher-led transition time. Student-led transition time was when students took care of housekeeping chores or engaged in enrichment activities without direct teacher supervision. Teacher-led transition time occurred in two ways as well: through connecting or grouting events. Connecting activities were times when Bea and the children engaged in literacy events in ways that helped students make connections among them. Grouting activities referred to small bits of time that were used for repetition and drill in the form of games or song.

Group exploring appeared at first to be traditional (teacher-oriented) whole-group teaching time. However, consistent with other literacy events in this class, it was actually more tailored to individual needs. Students learned information, skills and concepts as Bea taught to the whole group from, or near the easel. Students were encouraged to contribute when called upon, but they were also free to make sense of the event more passively if they wished. Group exploring often provided the basis for other literacy events.

What differentiated literacy events in Bea's class from literacy events in other student-oriented settings was not the general nature of activities themselves. Although different names are used in different

contexts, many classrooms incorporate activities that, at least at first glance, appear very similar to the three formatted activities (monitored literacy, station work and gentle group assessment) and two open-ended activities (transition time and group exploring) described in this research. What was special about Bea's class, was how these activities unfolded in rich and complementary ways.

There was something unique about all the activities. For example, in the space of one day, Bea was able to see meet with all the children in her class at least once for monitored literacy. In my experience, it is unusual for a teacher to see everyone on an individual basis so frequently. This subtle difference, that only came to my attention after carefully documenting and analyzing classroom events, helped Bea to stay connected to the lives of her students, and keep abreast of individual progress. In this way she was able to provide very effective individualized instruction that would not have been possible with less frequent contact with her students.

Station work was another activity that occurs in many school settings but seemed to unfold in richer ways in Bea's class. The effort that Bea put into planning ensured that the various stations tapped into different student strengths and interests (for example, some were quite physically active while others tapped into artistic strengths), and that stations tied into an overall theme. Further, Bea's efforts ensured that this activity was routinely a festive celebration in the classroom. The imaginative props Bea incorporated heightened the atmosphere and the engagement of the students. By instructing students in these special ways, Bea ensured that school remained an inviting and stimulating place for them.

Gentle group assessment was unique because of the way Bea subtly helped individual students during what appeared to be whole-group testing times. Her support enabled all students to experience success in contexts that, otherwise, might have threatened their confidence. At the same time, Bea was able to maximize the efficiency that a whole-group format provided.

The contrast between firm direction and freedom is the characteristic that distinguished open-ended activities (transition time and group exploring) from similar types of instruction noted in the literature. Freedom was built into the instruction Bea offered during open-ended events in the sense that students could choose to participate or not. The way Bea led students through activities enabled them to then use their free time confidently, independently, responsibly and often creatively. For example, because Bea modelled inquiry in a way that continually responded to their needs and interests, students acquired the knowledge and skills they needed to take full advantage of subsequent optional enrichment activities. As a result, Bea was able to offer free-time activities more frequently than she might have if students had been less prepared to work without her direct guidance. To summarize, unlike teacher-led instruction in many settings, Bea's direct approaches actually facilitated self-directed (student-oriented) learning in students.

Chapter Five: Creating the Instructional Context

Chapter Four showed the range of events in Bea's class, the general role that each event played in literacy learning, and how the events integrated with others in complementary ways. Chapter Five builds on this understanding by focusing more directly on the role of instruction. Earlier in this paper, I defined literacy instruction as any intervention or support from a teacher or more capable peer that helps students to engage more skilfully with a range of texts in purposeful and socially responsible ways (p.1). I continue to examine it here with this broad definition in mind. For example, in addition to researching the role of the teacher, I explore how others contributed to student development. In doing so, however, I examine the role of students and parents indirectly.

As the study in Bea's class evolved, I found myself increasingly impressed with and curious about the way Bea created and implemented all that took place in her classroom. Although I researched the roles the parents and students played in literacy learning in Bea's class, my focus was to understand exactly what Bea did. I have organized this chapter by incorporating the role of parents and students in instruction into a broader analysis of how Bea facilitated learning. The reason for doing this remains consistent with my goal for this chapter--to portray in great detail how Bea fostered student learning in a variety of ways.

Calkins (1994) indicated that many teachers are proficient at initiating and sustaining projects with students in the classroom. However, she compared the role some of these teachers play in these

instances to spinning plates. She was referring to teachers who simply keep the plates spinning by asking students to add more lines to stories, or read more books, teachers who are missing the essential point of instruction. Calkins suggested that instead of spinning plates, teachers should be trying to launch ships. The important difference, she explained, is that ships have an overall purpose or destination. In a similar way, everything that occurs in the classroom should be directed toward a meaningful goal.

Although I learned very quickly that Bea was a master at developing and implementing a number of stimulating and varied activities at any one time, I never got the impression that she was spinning plates with her students. Her exuberant personality meant that the classroom had an entertaining quality to it, and certainly children were always busy at one activity or another. Whether it was obvious or more subtle, however, everything Bea did with her students was meaningful for the children, and served one of her major goals, that is, to help them become more self-directed and independent learners as the year unfolded. She accomplished this by incorporating many of the strategies other proficient teachers use such as teaching sound-symbol relationships, reading with them individually on a regular basis, and encouraging them to engage in meaningful writing. Yet, she did all this in a very unique manner. In this chapter I will explore how Bea "launched ships" in three different but inter-related ways to maximize literacy learning and the independence and responsibility of the students. She did this by anticipating instruction, targeting instruction, and augmenting instruction. I will also examine two of Bea's underlying beliefs that guided these instructional roles.

Anticipating Instruction

The term "anticipating instruction" refers to how Bea determined appropriate instruction by observing students and planning instruction based on her observations. More specifically, she consciously noted student activity and documented this in writing, planned instruction, and drew on wider past experiences. Anticipating instruction was a notable facet of Bea's teaching because of its ongoing, intense nature, and the fact that she relied on a variety of complementary approaches that incorporated parents, volunteers, support teaching staff, and students. As a result, she gained deep insights about suitable and subtle ways to support students. In this section I will explore how Bea anticipated instruction in greater detail.

Bea documented (recorded in writing) when she watched and reflected on student activity, or had others record observations for her. This strategy included making notes about student progress, keeping "post-it" notes from parent volunteers about student reading or their progress during station work, keeping notes written by parents or resource teachers about students, writing report cards, as well as keeping records of quizzes or other completed work. Documenting was an effective way to fine-tune planning. The act of writing down observations of student activity pushed Bea and others to pay closer attention to what was actually happening during a literacy event. Because Bea was basing instruction on daily, careful and detailed information about how each student performed, she was able to build a deep understanding of student progress over time. As a result, she was able to plan instruction more precisely and appropriately than if she had conducted periodic assessments only.

A good example of how Bea documented in the classroom was her process of keeping what she referred to as "doctor notes." Doctor notes were three by five inch file cards that Bea layered and taped onto a hard-backed folder in such a way that a section of all twenty four cards (one for each student) was visible to her at a glance. Each card held the name of a student and a dated record of what Bea had observed about that child's progress during home reading or other monitored literacy sessions since the beginning of the year. Maintaining these records was an efficient way to keep track of her observations of students. As Bea made each new entry, she could see very quickly what had been noted earlier, and orient herself to what support might be needed that day. This shorthand way of recording, for example, "needs practice with 'ed' endings" (Observational notes/May 1, 2001) was efficient and effective. The task was completed quickly and did not detract from the time she was spending with a particular child. Further, Bea was able to easily integrate others' observations into her records. For example, in order to benefit from the observations of parent volunteers who occasionally did home reading with students, she asked them to record short memos about each student on individual post-it notes. Later that day, Bea would read through the memos and add anything new to her doctor records. Not only did this practice ensure that all students were followed closely, and that Bea took advantage of the fresh insights of parent volunteers, but it gave the message to parents that their interpretations contributed in important ways to student development. This strengthened the bond between home and school, and served as additional support for student learning.

Another way that Bea anticipated instruction was by consciously reflecting on recent events. A ritual Bea often shared with student

teachers, called "Glow and Grow," illustrates one way she did this, and, like documenting, points to the ongoing nature of this instructional role.

After the children had gone home, Bea would take stock of one event that worked particularly well that day (a "glow"), and another one that she could improve upon (a "grow"). She did this by "playing back a chronology of the day in her head" (Formal interview/April 7, 2002), and reflecting on the parts of it that stood out. Further, as she implemented this reflective process, she would note the students with whom she had spoken on an individual basis, and any students she missed. Then she made a point to chat with those she missed the following day. Finally, Bea would ask herself, "Have the children left thinking that school is as good as it can get--that it's where they want to be"? Bea's process of glow and grow was her particular way of reflecting on her practice. It was consistent with notions of reflective practice well documented in the literature, and touted as critical tools for helping practitioners to understand their own teaching and become more effective as a result (Schön, 1996).

Sometimes Bea used her broader and more general knowledge of students to plan instruction rather than what she had gleaned from day-to-day activities. She used the knowledge she had accumulated in many years of teaching, parenting and just plain living. Bea drew on past classroom experiences, but she relied on thoughts about previous students, her own children, or other related events. On these occasions she incorporated memories into her decision making because they seemed to resonate or "fit" the present situation (Conle, 1996). For example, Bea told me that being a parent has shaped the way she presently teaches (Formal interview/ May 8, 2001). She explained that,

despite being a well adjusted child, her daughter often cried in grade one, frustrated because she was not able to implement immediately everything she was taught. Bea added that all the time she spent reassuring her daughter has resulted in her being more sensitive to student anxiety, and careful about how she presents work to students today. Our discussion highlighted the potential richness that can be gained by attending to the long-term experiences of teachers, and the wisdom of acknowledging these wider influences on our profession.

Others also noticed the multiple ways that Bea anticipated instruction. Although I had recorded numerous examples of anticipating instruction in my notes, it was Melissa, Bea's aide in the classroom, who made me examine this dimension of Bea's teaching more carefully. In our interview she had spoken of Bea's persevering, innovative nature and had shared how this was reflected in Bea's use of ideas from workshops to meet the needs of individual students. Earlier (p. 97), I used Melissa's words in poetic form (Richardson, 1997), to represent my conversation with her. The poignancy of Melissa's description of Bea seemed best represented this way and made me see the uniqueness of what Bea did.

Melissa's proximity to Bea and the classroom situation allowed her to recognize the tenaciousness of Bea's practice long before I did. She made me understand that it was not just the regularity and multi-faceted dimensions that made the way Bea anticipated instruction so effective, but it was also her determination to really understand what transpired in the classroom.

Another aspect of the way Bea anticipated instruction, that is how she planned reflectively in specific ways, was her approach to her overall planning. She incorporated many of the ongoing strategies just described, and I found it helpful to keep these in mind when attempting to understand her overall planning process.

Bea explained that when she planned for the year she kept in mind the guidelines in the Quebec Educational Plan that outlined general student competencies. As explained on page 14, student competencies are areas of proficiency that students are expected to have at the end of each cycle. Since Bea's students were in the first year of cycle one, the general competencies outlined for this cycle provided Bea with a general direction for her planning. For example, one of the competencies is that students learn to read literary, popular and information-based books. Bea explained to me that she uses the competencies as a starting point, and then plans with a more specific time frame in mind. Past experience has shown her some students will need more time. Her goal for the first term is that her students will be able to share some form of reading with others by January, even though she is aware that some students will take longer to do this. Once she establishes her goals and the timeline for developing these, she then plans the projects and other related classroom activities to meet these goals. It is in this phase that Bea relies most heavily on anticipating instruction to guide her. How the activities unfold specifically each week and each day depend on her observations of the interests and abilities of her students. Further, as I have discussed earlier, subsequent theme study projects and related work develop from and build on her observations of these earlier activities.

Anticipating instruction, then, was at the core of instruction because it determined the support that Bea directly or indirectly offered to students. Bea incorporated and adapted a range of reflective strategies consistently and with unfaltering resolve. As a result, students benefited from instruction that focussed precisely on their current needs and interests.

Targeting Instruction

The category "targeting instruction" refers to the fine-tuned, precise nature of instruction that Bea was able to offer as a result of the strong link she made between observing and planning described in the previous section. In her targeting role she offered support to students while they were engaged in activities, and also prepared them for future events. Bea did this by providing instruction in skills or concepts that students needed to perform an activity independently, as well as by promoting development of attitudes that facilitated this progress.

As I will show in more detail throughout this section, Bea targeted instruction by incorporating a number of varied strategies: direct teaching, modeling, connecting events to the familiar, encouraging affective development and encouraging peer collaboration. She selected and adapted these tactics to provide enough support so that learners could engage in activities successfully. As students developed, either Bea gradually withdrew support, or students relied on it less until such time that they were able to work independently. Wertsch and Givens (1992), as well as others, have noted that this kind of support, that is, support within the students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), best occurs when the teacher engages in a continuous cycle of establishing a purpose of an activity, planning appropriate intervention

and then reflecting on the process. Because Bea planned instruction based on careful and multiple observations of student activity, her targeted instruction was more individualized and complex than simply modeling an activity or explaining how to do it in a de-contextualized fashion. Bea continually reflected on her students and incorporated the results of her reflections into her interaction with them. Even in a large group setting, her teaching approaches were more likely to address the needs of individuals.

When Bea targeted instruction through direct teaching (one of the five ways she targeted instruction), she either explained or demonstrated to students how to do something by explicitly telling them how to do it or walking them through the appropriate steps. Bea tended to do this in two kinds of circumstances: when she doubted a more inductive approach would be sufficient, or that it would be too time consuming. For example, Bea explained the meaning of an exclamation mark to Drew during a home reading session, only after determining a less direct approach, such as questioning and clues, were insufficient. Another time, Bea used a direct approach because it was in the interests of the group as a whole to move on with the lesson, even though a few students were having difficulty with the mathematical concept of triangle. Perhaps Bea returned to this topic in greater depth with these students afterwards, but in the whole group setting, direct teaching enabled the class, most of whom already had a grasp of the concept, to move on with the work at hand.

In addition to using direct teaching for developing certain concepts and skills, Bea used this approach in promoting attitudes. Earlier, I had called this kind of occurrence "giving the message." It was when Bea

interjected and indicated in a very direct and explicit way what was expected. Instances of this occurred frequently. Bea reminded children to stick to the topic of the group discussion and taught her students, in that particular context, it was not appropriate to wander off into accounts of unrelated events. For example, when in the middle of a conversation about rabbits and hares Brian mentioned that he owned four computers, Bea said to him, "We are not going off on computers right now. Let's stick to the topic and get back to rabbits and hares" (Observational notes/April 9, 2001). Although Bea passed along expectations and values to students in other more subtle ways, "giving the message" was an important aspect of teaching them attitudes and behaviours that were valued in the classroom.

Earlier in this paper I discussed research by Wertsch (1991). He identified four qualities of school discourse that students must acquire to succeed in school (p. 24). One of the qualities--boundedness--is the ability of students to include only sequentially organized and relevant information in their school discourse. As illustrated above, "giving the message" enabled Bea to introduce students to this important, but subtle convention of mainstream literacy that they might not acquire incidentally at home, or in less direct ways in the classroom. On the other hand, Bea remained very sensitive to individuals and would not risk giving a reprimand that might harm a student's confidence. For example, one boy seldom received the same amount of parental help with homework as many other children in the class. When he came to school without his reading done, instead of "giving the message" that students had the responsibility to do home reading each night, she would take him aside and talk quietly with him. One time I overheard

Bea say sympathetically to the student, "Too busy a guy? Try to get it done tonight." She chose her moments carefully.

Modeling was the second instructional strategy Bea used. It differed from direct teaching in several important ways. It was behaviour Bea interspersed in the ongoing activity of the classroom without calling attention to it. At times she modelled practices such as reading the school newspaper, hoping the children would emulate this, and they did. She also modelled how to respond to others in a supportive way such as saying, "Let's help her out," before providing a clue when the child did not have an answer. Thus, she indirectly showed the children how to help each other by giving "thinking space" rather than treading over a child to get the answer from someone else. She used very positive terms for encouraging the work of the children, such as, "We are too clever"! I heard a student use this same comment when he offered a correct answer while working with his peers. He had incorporated Bea's way of saying, "Good work!" and clearly illustrated the impact of the subtle modeling she practiced.

Bea also targeted instruction by helping students make connections between different classroom events or between classroom events and their lives outside of school. In Chapter Four I focused primarily on literacy events, not the roles Bea played in instruction. I did explain, however, how certain activities helped to connect the children with familiar events in their out-of-school lives. As I explained then, connecting events were as much defined by the skills and concepts that Bea encouraged as the nature of interaction. In what follows, I share how Bea connected events to the familiar by incorporating parents into the teaching community.

Bea welcomed parent's participation in the classroom by inviting them to help out at stations and by occasionally inviting them as special guests. She reached out to them beyond the classroom by encouraging their involvement in their children's literacy at home. For example, it was not unusual for her to lend her professional books to parents, or to have short pedagogical conversations with them when books changed hands. Bea also contributed a lot of time and energy to three parent literacy evenings she organized during the year. These were entertaining and well-attended workshops that focused on how parents could facilitate their children's literacy development. The sessions were open to all parents in the school and began with a humorous and energetic whole-group presentation where Bea shared how children acquired literacy. They ended in individual classrooms where teachers addressed parents' concerns and questions more specifically. These initiatives helped parents understand literacy teaching and learning, and encouraged communication between home and school.

Bea's commitment to literacy was impressive and went well beyond her own students, as evidenced by the sessions she offered to everyone. When I spoke to Bea about her leadership in this regard, and the implications it had for literacy instruction, she explained by offering, "It takes a village to raise a child," and indicated she believes this applies to literacy instruction as well as other aspects of child rearing. She added that teachers and parents should feel a responsibility for teaching literacy to all children, not just their own, and to accomplish this goal there needs to be a regular exchange of ideas. The following comments show her genuine concern and vision for this topic:

> (Formal interview/April 7, 2002)
> My dream is to have one literacy evening a month so that we could tackle a topic every month with parents. We could use one just on picture books--what to do with them. And then they [parents] could each take one home....If we had an exchange of ideas of all of this...we would be in much better shape.

By reaching out to parents in ways I have shown, Bea worked to connect the home and school lives of students so that literacy learning would be more meaningful to them.

The fourth broad category of targeting instruction had to do with the way Bea encouraged the affective development of students, specifically their self-confidence and ability to empathize with others. Bea helped students feel part of a literate community by reassuring them that they were capable learners who could use literacy for a purpose. She did this in an obvious way when she explicitly motivated them in the course of daily activities. For example, I often heard her remind students to, "write where you are" during free writing. She explained that, just as they communicated in short phrases as babies, they could write important messages now by writing at their own level (Observational notes/ October 23, 2001). Bea also built up student confidence in fairly obvious ways when she reassured them of their different strengths and interests by having them create class books with titles such as "I am good at..." or " I can..." One regular volunteer commented on how Bea built their self-confidence by fostering an accepting climate in the classroom:

(Formal interview/ April 23rd, 2001)

P: She's ah..., you know, promotes ah..., you know, experimenting.

M: Okay.

P: And ah..., and also not afraid to make a mistake. I find that the way she answers them back, it's a positive experience.

M: Okay. So, what kind of an example? Can you give me an example of what?

P: Oh! Just anything. When she's talking to them about, say, a math question.

M: Okay.

P: If you get it wrong. She doesn't, she doesn't make a big deal about it.

M: Yeah. Okay.

P: You just move on.

M: Yeah.

P: Where as other teachers like...I've seen, you know, it can be a humiliation.

Bea helped to develop empathy in her students by encouraging her students to think critically about social issues, or "read against the grain" (Temple, 1993), in ways that seemed particularly suitable to their age. For example, books she shared during story time were often springboards to discussions about social issues such as bullying, fair play, or differences among them. Yet Bea tried to move her students beyond critical reflection to actions that reflected a respect for others and the world around them. This praxis of literacy (Shannon, 2002) was evidenced in a classroom research project on garbage that culminated with an extensive playground cleanup. It also extended to more delicate

areas. When Bea learned that one of her students, Paul, was legally blind, she helped the class become more knowledgeable about vision, assisting devices, and broader issues by engaging in an in-depth study of sight with them. Bea and the class shared relevant literature, invited in a guest speaker to demonstrate and talk about Braille, explored sight through a number of hands-on activities, and wrote about their experiences throughout the work. By the end of the six-week project, students had a deeper understanding of vision and, as a result, were more sensitive to Paul's experiences with limited eyesight. When two boys asked if they could join him on the days he learned Braille outside of the classroom, Bea arranged for this. She was helping them use the knowledge and increased sensitivity they had gained to make a positive difference in the way they interacted with Paul.

The above example shows how Bea built on experiences that were real, immediate and important to six and seven year olds to encourage an appreciation of and sensitivity to others. Bea was aware that the study about sight would fulfill a number of other pedagogical requirements; however, her main reason for exploring this particular topic with students was because it had potential for developing important understanding and action among her students. I named this approach to social justice, one that worked for change in gentle yet genuinely meaningful ways for students, "soft critical literacy." Paul's improved social integration and the interest students showed in Braille and other assisting devices demonstrated that students benefited immediately from this approach to critical literacy. It is difficult to predict what the long term effects might be, but I would surmise at least some of the children gained in profound ways from this experience. This sensible and sensitive approach deepened my respect for Bea, and I

think was largely responsible for the accepting and purposeful tone that characterized her classroom throughout the year.

As students became more skilled over the course of the year, this undoubtedly contributed to their self-confidence as well. Although Bea continued to provide support in a number of ways, over time students became motivated by their own past successes and developed an inner confidence that seemed to require less deliberate and sensitive interventions on her part.

Students also played a role in instruction. Encouraging peer collaboration was the fifth strategy Bea used to target instruction. To provide a richer account of how Bea incorporated peer instruction than I have so far I will temporarily move the spotlight from Bea to the students to illustrate more closely the various ways that they helped each other learn in class. (Of course, Bea provided the time and permission for this to occur.) These were by peer modeling, direct teaching, and collaborating.

Students constantly modeled attitudes and behaviours through conversation and by sharing their work. A good example of this was the time a student brought in a book that he had written at home to share with the class. The format was based on a class book entitled "I can..." Early in the year, with Bea's help scribing when necessary, the students had written about and illustrated something they could do. Each contribution was then incorporated into a class book. Bea had shown students how they could write their own books using this or other similar formats. Although some students had used this idea to help them generate writing before this particular sharing session, many had

not. Yet, after the student read his book to the class, a handful of others started their own versions of "I can" books that very day. Some took the idea one step further and used other familiar predictable formats. Even though students were unaware of their instructional role, this example shows the importance of peer modeling in literacy development. Further, it shows how Bea encouraged this by creating non-threatening situations in which the students could share and experience each other's work.

Often students helped each other in very explicit ways. That is, rather than modeling by sharing their work or ideas, they helped each other along very deliberately by showing or telling each other how to do something. At times I wondered if the occasional, almost bossy, manner of this kind of support would be gracefully accepted by peers. What I found was that the students were very appreciative of any guidance that was given. A few students relied on peer help extensively, and sometimes Bea had to remind small groups of students to do more of their own work. On the whole, however, students gave timely explanations in ways that were clearly understood and well received by their friends. The following example illustrates a typical way that students offered direct instruction to each other.

Neil and Aiden were reading two different books while sitting together. They each wore a plastic witch's finger on the index finger of their dominant hand. Earlier that morning, Bea had shown students how they could use the fingers to help them guide their eye along the lines of print in a written text. Both boys were practicing this as they read. Neil noticed that what Aiden was saying did not match where he was pointing. He immediately whispered "No Aiden" across the table,

and showed how it should be done using his own reading as an example. Aiden then returned to his own book. He still had difficulty matching sound to print, but thanks to Neil, he began to see the correspondence between the sounds of the words and the printed text (Observational notes/ October 14, 2001).

Frequently the manner in which students helped each other's learning was more complex than the example above. Often they used both modeling and direct instruction as they collaborated in small or large groups. But these helping behaviours were interspersed with short bursts of seemingly unrelated discussion, as well as times when students drifted off and worked on their own for a bit. The following example shows the nature of these times:

> (Observational notes/February 21st, 2001)
> I sit at the "write anything" table. Kathy had listed the word, "red" down on the page several times. (I assume she had the idea to write about the red poem, or to build on that idea.) Then she erases it and, getting her idea from Casey writes, "A long, long time ago I went."
>
> C: (to Kathy) You're copying.
> K: Nooo.
> C: Well, sorta. (in a friendly tone)
>
> Casey is farther along in her story. Kathy looks over to Casey's work and the wall for ideas.
>
> K: (A few minutes later). Read it to me.

C: I don't have to.

K: Please.

C: Read me yours. I'm down to here.

K: O.K. A long, long time ago I went to Disney World and Epcot. (After reading this she adds Animal World and says it aloud.)

C: I've been to Animal World and it's really COOL. I went with my Gramma.

K: (goes back to writing). Did we have lunch yet?

C: I don't know. (She asks a mother volunteer who says no.) No we didn't.

K: Good cause I'm hungry. (She continues writing while reads aloud simultaneously. Then she starts a picture on the next page).

C: There. I'm done. Do you want me to read it?

K: Yeah. (She keeps drawing).

C: I went on a horse...

Although in this example Casey and Kathy worked alongside each other on separate tasks, they provided help to each other by modeling ideas, showing interest, and being a comfortable friend. The benefits of working together in this special way over an extended period of time seemed to have the effect of nudging each other's writing along. The back-and-forth conversations that permeated their work provided them with ideas, motivation and a degree of comfort. They benefited from their exchanges, but did not have to negotiate or reach a consensus, those more complex skills that are required in creating a collaborative product.

As the year unfolded, examples of collaborating while working alongside another remained frequent, but also there were more occasions where student activity focused on a common goal. I had observed students working together toward a common goal throughout the year (building a car together, for example), but it was only in the month of March that I began to see such collaboration occur during writing activities. This did not surprise me. In order to produce a collaborative piece of writing, they needed a greater conscious awareness of literacy skills and concepts than when they collaborated while producing individual pieces of writing. For example, to discuss punctuation or an appropriate ending to a story they were co-writing, they needed to name and understand the functions of these features of writing.

In summary, to target instruction, Bea turned to adults as well as students and incorporated and promoted a wide range of instructional strategies that included direct teaching, modeling, connecting events to the familiar, encouraging affective development, and encouraging peer collaboration. Because Bea used a range of approaches, and they were established in tandem with anticipating instruction, she was able to respond appropriately and continuously to various classroom contexts and needs of individual students. As a result, targeting instruction enabled Bea to teach with fine-tuned precision.

Augmenting Instruction

Whereas anticipating and targeting instruction provided Bea with an ongoing precise understanding of children's needs, and ensured that activities were neither too challenging nor too easy for students, augmenting instruction added to the richness of classroom life.

Augmenting instruction refers to how Bea incorporated a wide variety of activities and fostered a high level of interest while maintaining an appropriate level of difficulty.

It should be stressed that all dimensions of instruction worked together simultaneously. For example, augmenting instruction complemented the role anticipating and targeting instruction played by providing Bea with more varied and unique activities to observe. As a result, she had an opportunity to see a side of students that otherwise she might not have. Thus she was able to address interests, abilities and learning styles more precisely. This will become more obvious as I explore the two ways Bea augmented instruction: by providing a rich physical environment, and by incorporating fun and playfulness into activities.

Providing a Rich Physical Environment

> (Observational notes/October 23rd, 2000)
> Toward the back of a low round table are a small dark green table lamp, a koala stuffed toy, a clear glass vase filled with eucalyptus leaves, and a tall book titled "Autumn Leaves." The book cover is mostly glossy white, but small patches of autumn colours tie in with the koala's green shirt and other items, giving the display a crisply co-ordinated "IKEA" look. Closer to the front of the table Bea has placed a wicker basket filled with pens, markers, rulers, gel pens and gel notes. Off to the side stands a copy of Mark's published book.

This excerpt from my field notes describes an Olympic theme that was the focus of the writing centre. Bea created the centre for when students had free time and wanted to work quietly, away from the main activity of the room. This centre typifies how she encouraged and facilitated student involvement in activities by introducing variety in books, decorations, displays, station work, free work/play areas, and in the props she used in her direct teaching. The Olympic theme, described earlier, lasted until late autumn when other interests arose and Bea changed the focus. This was typical of Bea's classroom. She changed the physical features of the room with regularity. For example, although she left many books on display for long periods of time so that students could revisit old favourites, others were changed every two weeks. This was possible because Bea visited the town library every two weeks and borrowed as many as eighty books at a time.

Bea also frequently changed the exhibits of student work. Bulletin boards were filled with recent writing, and new artwork was always on display. She made a habit of posting student-generated lists of words or ideas she had scribed at the easel. She would rewrite them neatly so students could use them easily as cues for later independent work. Another way Bea incorporated student-generated work into the classroom surroundings was by displaying photographs of activities that she took regularly. Apart from being interesting for visitors to view, and students to revisit, the photographs served two purposes. First, they gave students the message that what they did in class was important. Second, drawing the students' attention to activities through the photographs was a gentle form of reflection. Without explicitly walking students through daily events, as Bea often did with students on the carpet during framing activities, photographs enabled students to

become more consciously aware of activities in which they participated, and I suspect this increased awareness contributed to their development (The New London Group, 1996).

There were also more permanent aspects of this rich physical environment. Bins of small objects such as counting tokens, building blocks, and magnetic letters filled cubby holes on the side wall and were available all year to help students with their work, to use to help with assigned work, or to use for play during optional enrichment activities. Laminated posters of number lines, the alphabet and counting songs were reference points to which students could turn for help. Not all of the permanent features of the room played such an obvious instructional role. Some things were displayed simply to contribute to the stimulating, inviting, and familiar tone of the classroom, such as articles arranged above the built-in cupboards. One early morning I documented this arrangement of articles.

> (Observational notes/October 11, 2000)
> Moving from left to right, my eyes first land on Paddington Bear, who is standing on a suitcase. Beside him is a red and black Dr. Suess top hat made of felt and a Dr. Suess book titled "I Read with my Eyes." Another Paddington Bear sits to the right of these items, framing them. Behind, artistically angled to the right, is a black magician's hat. Three Clifford puppies of different sizes and a Clifford book make up the next cluster of items. To the right of them are three weigh scales in bright primary colours and an egg timer. At the extreme end of the cupboard are seven stacked boxes that look like Christmas packages--three large white ones with

gold sparkles and four smaller gold ones. The overall effect is a toy store window in December.

Because of the particularly extensive and imaginative way that Bea incorporated articles into the classroom I referred to them as props, and defined them as objects that supported learning directly or indirectly by engaging students more deeply through fun and imagination. Sometimes they provided a tangible aid so students could complete an activity successfully. (Counting tokens would be an example.) Other times, their contribution was more subtle such as the articles displayed above the built-in cupboards. The props also helped make the necessary repetitive work such as counting and blending sounds seem new and exciting to children. For example, Bea used a glove with little Snoopy heads on each finger to help students practice counting by twos. Showing a different number of fingers each time she would ask, "How many Snoopy ears am I holding up"? or "How many eyes"? Bea incorporated props everywhere, it seemed, and obviously enjoyed doing so. She regularly selected her earrings to fit in with some aspect of the day. When it rained, she wore umbrellas. When the class read a book about a mouse and a cookie, she wore her chunky cookie earrings. She was so well known for her theme earrings that former students regularly gave them to her as gifts.

Bea's enthusiasm about using props was catching for others. Parents brought in an aquarium full of tadpoles just in time for them to hatch while Bea's class was doing a project on eggs. Another family provided colourful, hand-sewn, cloth book bags for the entire class. Even Bea's husband became involved. He constructed two models of the heart using tennis balls, and cut up pieces of curved plumbing pipe to help students

monitor their own reading. By placing an end of the pipe at one ear and reading softly into the other, they could hear themselves without disturbing others. It seemed everyone was excited about providing props. In addition to increasing motivation for learning, the props demonstrated to the children that classroom activities were worthy of extra time and attention.

Bea made sure that students knew how to access the stimulating physical features of the classroom. This made a strong impression on me because my own experience as a student, teacher and parent over the years has taught me that, although impressive at first glance, sometimes classrooms resemble overly stimulating theme parks where catchy posters and other visual materials decorate the room, but are not necessarily relevant to students. Bea's classroom was very different. Because she gradually introduced these physical features to the classroom, explicitly showed students how to take advantage of them, and consistently incorporated them into classroom events, the students knew where to go, and when to turn to them as effective learning tools.

Incorporating Fun

Incorporating fun refers to all the things Bea did that led to an upbeat, engaged tone in her class. For example, it included times when she was playful with those around her in lighthearted and spontaneous ways that appeared to be "just for fun." Although these instances contributed to literacy learning in important ways, the connection between fun and purposeful literacy was not made explicit to the students. An example of this was a classroom activity that incorporated props from the popular television series "Survivor." The following interview excerpt describes

this activity, but begins with a preamble that helps to show how and why fun was so highly profiled by Bea:

(Observational notes/May 8, 2001)

B: ...they talk about their grade one experience. It's amazing what some kids remember. And of course, the crazy earrings are usually...the number one item. I always wanted them to come out with something wonderfully academic, like she taught me what reading means or something...

M: Yes.

B: But they, "Oh she wore crazy earrings." Um..., see, I don't think I'm that crazy but I guess I am when I look around.

M: Yeah, you're definitely a lot of fun...I have this image of you standing in your black tights, shorts, and the long tailored jacket that I've seen you wear and I'm thinking, okay, there's your court jester outfit.

B: (Laughing)

M: No one else could wear that and pull it off, but you can. And then, when I was looking at data this morning...I see the Ya-hoo Switcher-roo (game).

B: Yeah. Yeah.

M: And Switch and Swab...

B: Yeah.

M: or something..., and, like, everything's a big game?

B: Well, that's because I think that's how I probably learned.

M: Yeah. You bring yourself into your teaching.

B: I don't know. I think a lot of it is, is...I mean, I also want it to be... If I'm not having fun um... These kids are in this room from eight o'clock in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon. They have lunch in here. They're out of there for recess and to go to the bathroom. I mean, like imagine. I mean. I don't know, I just..., enjoy being...And actually, I'm not as silly now as I used to be. I mean I always used to wear crazy slippers. I would wear a costume at the drop of a hat. You wouldn't know what I would walk into the school with, you know. So, actually...

M: This is the serious side?

B: ...I've toned down...Oh the serious side, yeah. The serious side. Plus I'm getting bigger, gaining weight so I can't find too many clothes that are crazy. But, no. I do. I give them some gimmicks sometimes. Like this whole Survivor thing. Once I realized that the kids were...

M: Can you explain that again for me?

B: Well, I couldn't believe the number of kids that were watching Survivor. Their parents were watching it. Their parents were taping Survivor. So, three quarters of the students knew about who was on it. And what sort of things were happening. So, the last episode... The next day I found out that they all knew Tina had won the challenge. And they knew what the immunity necklace was. I mean there were some key words I threw out. So, my first thing was... when the tadpoles died and we had one left, we called it Tina, the sole survivor. And we gave her an immunity necklace. So, they cracked up about

that.

M: Now how did you, you just put it beside the...?

B: Yeah. We put it beside..., Well, we've got Tina floating in a beaker right now by herself. And we put the immunity necklace around her. But, what I did, because I thought, okay now, once I realized I've got something I can play with...

M: Yes.

B: ...and can capitalize on. So I went to the store. I went through all my jewellery. Couldn't find anything big and chunky. Surprise! So I went to the store and bought three funny looking necklaces."

M: Okay. From the dollar store?

B: From the dollar store. Well, actually..., yeah sort of. Anyway so...What I've done the last couple of days is if a child is..., if one of the kids is really been working and whatever, I'll say, "'You know what? I think you've won the immunity challenge.' And I put the necklace around their neck. And I'm surprised, like right away. I put it on Michael and he went, "Oh. I feel like Colby." Colby was the guy on survivor that won all the time. Anyway, he goes, "I wanted Colby to win." He was incredible with his necklace on. I mean, it was like I had given him a million dollars.

As this conversation indicates, it was natural for Bea to play up opportunities for fun. She also had sound reasons for doing so. Her comment in the above interview, "If I'm not having fun..." suggested a belief that teachers need to be fully engaged in the classroom if they expect students to be as well. From Bea's perspective, the time she

spent planning and carrying on "just for fun" times also had clear pedagogical benefits.

The inclusion of fun also referred to times when the connection to purposeful activities was clear to students, but where the promise of fun was nevertheless responsible for drawing in the students. For example, Bea invented a number of literacy-oriented games that incorporated appealing props. Some were built on the ideas of television game shows or popular board games. Others she invented from scratch. However, in all cases typical aspects of early literacy learning--work with letters, sounds, words or sentences--were the focus of the activities.

There was a third way that Bea incorporated fun, where she set up conditions that encouraged children to engage in optional activities in a more self-directed, purposeful sort of way. Such was the case when Bea arranged the classroom environment in a manner that led students to choose to read a newspaper in their spare time to learn more about the Olympics. Or when Bea set up a doctor's corner that resulted in students spending their free time examining, diagnosing and writing up prescriptions for each other. "I adore work," Nora would say. This comment demonstrated the heightened enjoyment of her interaction with literacy activities. Students may have referred to these activities as work because they had a goal in mind; however, it was clear that the borders between work, play, and fun were often indistinguishable in Bea's class.

When Bea set up favourable conditions that resulted in students opting to engage in activities that they "adored" during their free time, the role of fun was different from the first two contexts I described. Instead of "adding fun" or "being fun" in a specific, charismatic sort of

way, fun was more a result or outcome of all the other ways that Bea had already supported her students. It was something for which students took some responsibility. Undoubtedly, what preceded or was part of these activities included fun dimensions that Bea choreographed. Yet, because this aspect of fun was partly a result of student initiation, it was closer to self-oriented inquiry than the fun I described earlier. Fun in these settings was more complex and mature than in other contexts.

The example that most readily comes to mind to illustrate this type of fun was when students asked to stay in to work during recess time, as they often did. I was present for several of these indoor recess sessions, and they pointed out a number of lessons I was learning in Bea's classroom. First, these times showed me that young children are very capable of sustaining quiet concentration around traditional pencil and paper literacy activities when they consider their work to be intrinsically satisfying, that is, when the borders between work and play become blurred to them. Further, students will often opt for these activities over others; they are not naturally drawn to more boisterous events, as we are often led to believe. Bea did not provide camaraderie during these times, or even overall guidance; she was usually busy organizing the rest of the morning. Students knew that if they stayed in they would be "working" solidly for twenty minutes, yet it was obvious they found this arrangement rewarding. Third, most students enjoyed staying in from time to time. It was not only the quieter students, the girls, or the students who excelled at reading and writing activities who chose to do this. Since children had to do work quietly (Bea did not consider board games, drama activities or group floor games to be quiet work in this case), they were limited to reading, writing or drawing. And yet students

who might be described as struggling in other classroom contexts eagerly and routinely chose to work. My experiences during these times showed me very powerfully how students want to and do progress solidly when activities are meaningful and engaging from their perspectives.

Over the course of the school year the tendency in Bea's class was for students to become less dependent on the specific kinds of fun she provided and more reliant on the indirect way it propelled them to the kinds of self-directed activities as I have just described. Together, with the support that Bea provided in all other ways, students gradually transformed the skills, concepts and magical atmosphere embedded in playful times to purposeful activities of their own, where fun was more of a reward than a criteria for engagement. Fun then, served as a kind of bridge to purposeful literacy. Bea used fun at first in a very specific way to motivate the children in their literacy learning. Over time, and as students matured, the motivation it provided became more intrinsic.

Fun played another important role in Bea's class. Because people were drawn to her charismatic nature she was able to use the help offered by parents as well as community members. One day the bus driver stuck his head in the classroom door to ask Bea if she needed him to read to the students again this year. She said that she would get back to him, but before he left the two of them joked and laughed about her golf game. This example is very typical of the warm and playful interaction I saw between Bea and others.

I think part of the reason people were drawn to Bea is that her fun-loving nature was not at the expense of sensitivity. Often she joked in a

mildly self-effacing way that put others at ease. For example, when she thought aloud (something she did often), she revealed to parents in some comical way that she was not entirely sure how her plans for the day were going to turn out. This seemed to level the playing field between Bea and those who did not have the same professional experience, and helped them feel that they belonged in the class. Melissa, Bea's aide, touched on this quality:

> (Formal interview/May 1, 2001)
> Mel: She's human. She's approachable.
> Ma: Yeah.
> Mel: She would say, I'm disorganized today.
> Ma: Yeah.
> Mel: I don't know what I doing.
> Ma: That's true. Well, she does tend to do that with herself.
> Mel: She is. She's absolutely human to them. That's it.

Finally, Bea's playfulness contributed to student learning in the sense that she allowed herself time to "mess around" with teaching ideas, instead of limiting herself to linear ways of thinking and planning. As a result, she created a number of sound instructional approaches that, otherwise, she might not have. For example, it was typical for her to spend time in toy stores, libraries and other venues with student needs in mind, but with no preconceived idea of what might come out of the venture. The witches' fingers were bought on a whim this way around Hallowe'en. It was only after playing with them in the classroom that their particular use for tracking words became clear. By recognizing and allowing for teaching ideas to emerge through her own play, Bea built on another dimension of sound instruction.

In summary, fun helped students become more self-directed as the year unfolded by serving to draw them into activities. This occurred quite specifically when Bea acted in fun ways during activities in the classroom. It occurred more implicitly when she played with teaching ideas behind the scenes, attracted volunteers because of her personality, or set up conditions that led students to consider their work to be fun.

Guiding Beliefs

As I progressed with the analysis of events and instruction in Bea's classroom, I became increasingly aware that the various literacy events (formatted and open-ended events), as well as Bea's instructional roles (anticipating, targeting, and augmenting instruction), were predicated on a number of underlying beliefs that Bea held about teaching and learning. By examining two key beliefs that emerged during this phase of the study, I share how my interpretations evolved over time and prepare the reader for a broader and more interpretive discussion of literacy instruction in this cycle one class.

As my work in Bea's class progressed, it became apparent that Bea was committed to the idea that all classroom interaction should focus on learning. It was reflected in how she dealt with managerial aspects of classroom life (classroom routines and discipline), as well as how she implemented instructional time.

Bea was able to keep classroom routines and discipline in the background by ensuring the operating rules of the classroom were simple, consistent, and clearly understood. Not only was relatively little

spent on these matters, but the enthusiastic momentum of activities was not threatened by having to stop and deal with unrelated issues. Her approach to discipline is an example. In contrast to her encouragement and acceptance of all attempts and approximations children made in their work, Bea expected her students to know and be able to follow her explicit classroom rules. Usually they did, but especially early in the year, there were times when she had to intervene. Most often Bea did this by dealing with discipline matters quickly and matter of factly as they occurred and where they occurred, rather than interrupting an activity to take a student off to the side. Much like a family setting, she let others witness the short episode and learn from it. Specifically, when Bea needed to speak to a student about behaviour, she used a firm but calm voice. A minute or so later, after the student had time to reflect, Bea would warmly invite the child back into the group conversation. This signalled to the student that the matter had been sufficiently dealt with and was now over.

I hardly ever noticed any evidence of lasting frustration or ill feeling on the part of the students or teacher around the occasional times when discipline was warranted. The one exception was a time in September when a student called Paul a name. As Bea explained to me later, because Paul had had difficulty fitting in socially the previous year, and had additional challenges with eyesight, she was particularly intent on nipping this teasing in the bud. That day she was particularly upset, not in a blatantly angry way, but in the sense that she looked as though she was hurting for Paul. Rather than turning to her usual approach she spoke to the offending student privately, and also discussed name calling with the entire class later. It seemed to pay off. Not only did the

teasing disappear immediately but the offending student's overall behaviour improved noticeably throughout the year.

When I shared with Bea near the end of the year my interpretations of how she dealt with matters of discipline she found it interesting, but was somewhat concerned. She wondered if her firm rules about discipline contrasted with her more gentle rules around literacy learning, and might be giving mixed messages to children about appropriate expectations (Formal interview/May 8, 2002). Although I understood this concern, I do not feel it was grounded in what transpired in her classroom. My interpretation was that students clearly responded to and accepted her firm rules for behaviour because her expectations were fair and appropriate, and consistent with the expectations she had about their learning.

In addition to a commitment to keeping managerial aspects of classroom life in the background, Bea made sure all classroom interaction focused on learning by ensuring that instructional time was used efficiently. One way she did this was by regularly incorporating a number of multi-purpose literacy activities into daily routines. These activities supported the individual needs of different students, or supported a number of different needs in the same learner.

Morning message, which took place at the easel most days, is a good example of this type of activity. Bea used this event to teach the days of the week, writing conventions, vocabulary, and reading skills through short messages that she wrote. In addition to teaching skills and concepts, it was a chance for students to learn what was going to happen that day, or to reflect on events that had recently taken place.

The following example shows how one morning message supported learners in multiple ways by serving as a framing activity (one that prepared students for an upcoming event), an exercise that promoted the use of context cues to decode text, and an opportunity to introduce a new vocabulary word (library). First Bea encouraged students to read the message aloud as a group by guiding her hand from left to right across the page. Then she discussed any new vocabulary words, the content of the message, and prompted students to reflect on their use of context clues by asking them to explain how they knew what to read.

> (Observational notes/September 29th, 2000)
> Good _orning. What a nice _unny day. This morning we have library. Did you remember to bring your __ooks?
> Mrs. Bea

Another way that Bea ensured that instructional time was used efficiently was by instructing in the gaps. This refers to the habit of using small bits of time between formal junctures of the day for grouting activities (songs and games that often incorporated props and repetition) or individual work with students such as home reading sessions. Bea's knowledge of what short activities were appropriate enabled her to transform what could have been empty transitional times into needed instruction. It is important to note that, although this augmented instruction considerably, the classroom never seemed overly structured or teacher-oriented as there were always a number of times throughout the day when students could chose their own activities.

As mentioned, there was a second underlying belief that guided Bea's actions in the classroom. This was a conviction that credibility and trust

are built through consistency. The particular ways that Bea earned the trust of her students were by following up regularly on conversations, instruction, and activities.

People knew that they could trust Bea and this contributed to the secure atmosphere that was apparent in her classroom. For example, students knew from experience that if they did not have a chance to cuddle chicks one day they would have a turn the next. I would posit that this trust created a sense of security in her class, and permitted her to implement a large variety of instructional elements because she did not have to interject on a regular basis to calm, reassure, or restate classroom rules.

Bea encouraged students to behave credibly as well by encouraging them to follow up on claims they made. An example of this was when she told a student that she was going to take a picture of him wearing a marshall badge that he had promised to bring to school the next day. When he failed to do so, Bea told him in a humorous tone that her husband was expecting to see the picture and would probably be upset if she came home without it. Not only did the boy proudly wear the badge to school the following day, but in the process, he also learned that commitments must be fulfilled. In this way Bea encouraged students to substantiate claims they made.

In this section I have closely examined two beliefs of Bea's practice that emerged while analyzing classroom events and Bea's instructional roles. They were a conviction that all classroom interaction should focus primarily on literacy learning, and credibility and trust are built through consistency. These beliefs point to the emphasis Bea placed on academic

rigor as well as more embodied, relational aspects of learning. The remaining chapters will build on these facets of the instructional context by exploring how literacy instruction was implemented from a range of other perspectives.

Summary

This chapter focussed on how Bea created an instructional context in the classroom. It incorporated how she enabled students and parents to participate in the instructional process. I described Bea's three instructional roles: anticipating instruction, targeting instruction, and augmenting instruction. I also explored two underlying beliefs Bea held that guided these roles, and also seemed to guide how activities unfolded in the classroom.

Supporting instruction was the process of determining what instruction was appropriate. Bea did this by observing students and planning instruction based on these observations. Specifically, she documented student activity, made a mental note of what she observed (but chose not to document), and drew on her wider life experiences. Because of its ongoing, intense nature, and the fact that she relied on a variety of complementary approaches that included incorporating parents, students and other adults into classroom work, Bea was able to gain particularly valuable insights about suitable instruction.

Targeting instruction refers to the fine-tuned, precise aspect of Bea's teaching. It was the process of continuously offering differentiated support, based on the various ways Bea observed students. To target instruction, again, Bea used the help of adults as well as students, and incorporated a number of instructional strategies that included direct

teaching, modeling connecting to the familiar, encouraging affective development, and encouraging collaboration.

Augmenting instruction was how Bea enriched, or "fleshed out" activities in ways that made them more stimulating and varied, while still maintaining an appropriate level of difficulty. Bea accomplished this by providing a rich physical environment and incorporating fun into activities. Like targeting instruction, augmenting instruction played an important role in helping students become more self-directed learners.

The two underlying beliefs that seemed to guide how Bea interacted with students and activities in the classroom were a conviction that all classroom interaction should focus on literacy learning, and credibility and trust are built through consistency. It was this credibility and trust that built the sense of connection and relationship in her classroom (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) to which I now turn.

Chapter Six: Student and Parent Perceptions of Instruction

In Chapter Five I explored the instructional context of Bea's class. In addition to an in-depth analysis of Bea's specific roles, I examined the various ways that she incorporated students and parents into this process, and described two underlying beliefs that guided her actions. In this chapter I look at students and parents through a different lens. Instead of examining their participation in instruction, I explore their perceptions of it, first by attending to insights that I gleaned from students, and then by sharing what parents told me.

Student Perceptions of Instruction

When I selected and interviewed three students and subsequently analyzed the data using the constant comparison method, it became clear that as a group, the children recognized many of the same dimensions of instruction that I had identified throughout my year of observation. Although their vocabulary was somewhat different than mine, they understood, as I did, that their learning was supported in a number of varied ways. For example, they spoke of communication between home and school as being an important part of Bea's planning, and they mentioned that puzzles and games were important ways Bea helped them learn. I thought it was important to show this because it triangulated, and thus strengthened, my own interpretations. It also showed that students had a meta-cognitive awareness of literacy learning. Barry's interview was particularly interesting in this sense. He seemed to have instructional dimensions at his fingertips and enumerated--in a grocery list fashion--the ways that he learned at school and home. I decided that a grid would provide an overall picture

of the students' perspectives about literacy, and so I placed their names on one axis and the various ways they talked about instruction on the other. (See below.)

Table 2. What counts as literacy instruction: Student perspectives

Chunks from interview data	Lia	Nora	Barry
Bea plans with other teachers and parents	x	x	x
parents and siblings help us to read by reading with us	x	x	x
parents help us to read by giving us books	x		
Instruction in Bea's class (is):			
fun and work	x	x	x
giving puzzles and challenges	x	x	x
teaching sounds so we can read	x	x	x
giving power words so we can read and write	x	x	x
helping each other read and write words	x	x	
giving spelling sheets	x	x	x
separating books in order for students (using leveled texts)	x		x
having books and magazines	x		x
making games		x	x
Bea's decorating			x
Bea's organizing			x
repeating often			x
teaching sounds to help us write			x
teaching information			x
teaching us how to act	x	x	
having "comfy" times together		x	

To contextualize this table, I have included an excerpt from the summary of the interview I had with Barry. I adapted the individual case synopsis approach (see page 95 for a summary of this approach) and included my own voice in the synopsis to provide more context. I

reduced thirty-one transcribed pages to four by cutting out aspects of the interview that did not refer directly to learning or instruction. For example, I cut out a large section from the beginning of the interview where Barry talked about his family in general terms. I think this excerpt provides a good sense of Barry's overall understanding of instruction.

M: Can you tell me how you learned to read?

B: I don't really know how to read but I'm starting to read 'cause my teacher tells the sounds of the letters. So I sound it out ...Ah..., she repeats a lot of times...And she does, like, AT words. Um...and she makes power words. Like THE and WENT.

M: What are power words?

B: If I don't know how to read that word and you can read it... If she doesn't say it that much... It gots mixed up letters in it. 'cause CAT is always with A and AT. The power words, we don't learn in order."

M: I see. What else helps you become a strong reader?"

B: Um.... We have to have these sheets and we write down the words and the letters. We start with... You spell them on a sheet....And..um... she brings out books. Like, she has certain books in order 'cause we have easy books to medium to hard. And ah..., a library wall. And ones that show us information."

M: Okay. Now, what about learning to write? When did that happen?

B: Um..., in grade one.

M: Can you explain how?

B: 'Cause we know just like writing. If you read you could see those words and you could sound them out to write. I try to sound it out.

M: So that's what you do... Are there any other important ways you learn?

B: You have to know what the names are like...What's the names of stuff. Because if they don't know something, they don't know the name of it, I'll just teach them.

M: You mean, for example, I think I remember Bea doing something about the body and teaching the parts of the eye and the iris and different things like that. Is that what you mean?

B: They did the whole body.

M: ...Are there any other things about her class that help you learn?

B: How she decorates.

M: How she decorates.

B: Yeah. I mean like she put our drawings on the wall and she puts up different stuff around. And she has these little boxes and things on the wall and on the ceiling. And we have ABC's and what they stand for. ...And on the top of the cupboards she has apples and the Dr...

M: Suess? You mean "The Cat in the Hat" hat?

B: Yeah, and she made these, we have these telephone things (two small plumbing pipes fitted together to resemble telephones). There's no chord. You bring it out so everybody else won't hear you. Instead of talking out loud, like we don't have to scream when we are reading. Uh..., she made it up.

When I completed the synopsis I still felt more analysis was needed. Part of my dissatisfaction had to do with a hunch I had about the student interviews that had prompted me to scribble the word "comfy"

on a post-it note and attach it to the wall beside my computer. The message was to remind me to explore something Nora had addressed. She had mentioned reading with Bea on the loft (the high captain's bed) twice in the interview, and at one point explained that working like this with Bea helped her learn to read. The other students did not connect the role of physical or emotional comfort to learning explicitly, but alluded to it in other ways. When I ended the interviews by asking them what they liked best and least about school, their comments showed an aspect of learning that was not represented in my grid or synopsis. I also had the feeling that what they said contributed to insights about teaching in a way that did more than simply confirm what I discovered.

"Meeting and building on basic needs" was an aspect of the broad theme "connecting events to the familiar" that emerged when I was coding classroom data. This referred to the various ways Bea taught that built on the more embodied needs of children, such as their need for fun, comfort or security. Although students did not explicitly refer to this as an instructional dimension when I interviewed them, I found that by listening to them tell about their best and least favourite parts of school, I was able to understand this dimension in a new way. Being open to the language that students were using to talk about schooling helped me get closer to what seemed to matter most to them, and was a poignant reminder of the need to attend to embodied needs in the classroom.

There were key lines in each of the interviews that portrayed the thoughts of individual children as well as echoed the feelings of other children. Nora's comment about being "comfy," for example, resonated with things students had said during different times of the year. Many

times I had noticed her classmates enjoying their time with Bea as she read with them in casual, family-like ways. Further, I had heard Melissa, the teacher's aide, remark on how much students enjoyed spending time on the loft with Bea. The student interviews nudged me to revisit this idea of comfort, but my decision to explore this notion more fully was also linked to my more intuitive and emerging grasp of what was happening.

Once again, I decided to build on the concept of an individual case synopsis, this time adapting it to represent various perspectives instead of just one. My idea was to distil the "hot spots" from the interviews (Anne McCrary Sullivan, personal communication, 2002), that is, sections that portrayed perspectives of comfort most strongly, and then merge these into a "polyvocal summary" that integrated the voices of many children from across the interviews. I also included part of a conversation with Bea, since her comments felt relevant and important, and incorporated some of my own words to show how I shaped our conversation. My hope was that the final product would represent a more complete portrayal of how the children and Bea felt about learning. and provide a different lens for thinking about literacy instruction.

B: The best thing is...ah... when she teaches you to read. And you have to figure out stuff...like the puzzles and games. 'Cause I like working. But I don't like the small chairs cause when I sit down, I'm the biggest guy in the class. And it doesn't feel comfortable at all.

L: I don't like homeschool work. I mean, I go downstairs to do it. That's where it is. But it's really cold. The heater's not working...The best part of school? Friends!

N: ...when I'm in the loft with Mrs. B and we read. It's comfy cozy.

B: Well the downside of grade one is that you do, you have to have a lot of energy. And I'm not, I'm not quite as... it's like I get down on the floor but I'm not as fast getting up, you know?"

M: So... you need a bigger chair?

B: (laughing) I need a bigger chair...

M: It all comes down...

B: Need a bigger...

M: To-

B: Yeah, the physical side of things. But, no, the best part, it's definitely, I always say that it's the magic...You know, when you look at the changes they've undergone in June, there's nothing like it in the world... it's almost like giving birth.

This process was a helpful one, but the resulting text felt static, too linear and quite removed from the tone and essence of what transpired during these "comfy" moments. Still restricting myself to participants' words, I tried a more poetic approach by allowing myself more freedom with the text. I eliminated words, and played with line breaks and spacing to sharpen the feeling I was trying to portray (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Richardson, 1996). After many drafts I created the following representation of participant voices. It approximated much more closely the essence of both Bea's and the children's voices and the feelings they had expressed.

Cycle One

Bea

You have to have a lot of
Energy
And I'm not...
I get down on the floor but
I'm not as fast getting up

It all
comes
down to
The physical
side of things
...the best part
Definitely the magic
you know...when you
Look at the changes
In June, there's
nothing like it
...it's almost
like giving birth

Students

The best thing is...ah...when
she teaches you to read
and you have to figure out stuff
...like puzzles and games
I don't like the small chairs
It doesn't feel comfortable at all

When I'm in the loft
with Bea and we read
It's comfy cozy

I don't like home schoolwork... I
go downstairs to do it
but the heater's not working
School... the best part is
Friends

Summary

My analysis of student interviews using the constant comparison method and an interview summary showed student perceptions of instruction corroborated with what I had gleaned from classroom visits and other interviews. The students, like I did, identified a range of instructional approaches that Bea used to support their learning. In various parts of the interviews, however, students and Bea also tacitly suggested the importance of attending to physical and emotional dimensions of learning in the classroom. To represent these voices, my own, and their inter-relatedness in the research study, I created a more artful representational form.

Parents Perceptions of Instruction

In interviews with parents I explored how they thought about the teaching and learning in their child's cycle one class, as well as how their perceptions fit in with their expectations of what early schooling should be. Two themes emerged from these interviews that characterized how learning was encouraged, that is, through the stimulating environment and the manner in which Bea established strong connections between home and school.

Parents felt that one way Bea provided a stimulating environment was by surrounding students with a range of activities and materials that appealed to the different senses, and by encouraging students to manipulate and experiment with them in the classroom. All the parents connected the increased stimulation Bea provided to stronger learning. Mrs. Phin's and Mrs. Harding's specific comments follow:

(Formal interview/March 19, 2001)

H: If I home school Mat, I'm going to use a lot of her ideas...

M: Okay.

H: ...that she's done. I find that... it should be in Grade one that they use a lot of learning tools and, you know...

M: Um-hum.

H: ...things they can understand and manipulate.

M: Um-hum.

H: ...and I think that's very important.

(Formal interview/March 19, 2001)

P: I don't find [my other daughter] got as much hands-on...a lot of things that Nora, at least, is touching on.

M: Okay.

P: Like the money, the rulers...

M: Yeah.

P: ...the different ways to measure things, differently, to count, like there's a lot of..., I like the hands-on thing because they can try it out and feel it.

M: Yes.

P: And it's much more visual.

M: Yes.

P: They can touch it. And I think it's got more meaning, especially at that age. It's not just some number out there.

M: Yes.

P: There's a lot of sensory input...

M: Yes.

P: And so that's what the children must be....

M: Yes.

P: ...picking up on, all that stuff. And then they can experiment with whatever they're comfortable with.

M: Okay.

P: Because not all children learn the same way.

Parents also felt that Bea provided a stimulating environment by changing books, decorations and other aspects of the physical environment regularly. Several noted that the hallway bulletin board changed often, and also that Bea also incorporated recent photos of classroom events into this public display.

The third way parents perceived the classroom to be stimulating was in the way that Bea's enthusiasm and love of learning contributed to the overall positive tone of the class. As one parent remarked, "Her huge interest in learning comes through...everywhere. You can see it in the decorating, the way she talks to them, even the Friday Flashbacks [the weekly newsletter sent home]. And I think it projects to students" (Formal interview/March 19, 2001). Another parent was more succinct. "The kids get into it because she is so into it" (Informal interview/May 10, 2001).

As mentioned, parents also spoke of instruction in terms of communication between home and school. Several spoke of appreciating the weekly newsletter. Others mentioned they liked the prompt and sensitive way Bea handled questions and issues that arose. One parent,

referring to a misunderstanding her son experienced at school, reported on Bea's timely phone call home and tied this into her characteristic way of "nipping problems in the bud."

> (Informal interview/Monday, November 5, 2000).
>
> O: She doesn't let it get out of hand. She called me at noon and when he went back to school in the afternoon, everything was fine. My sense is that she nips things in the bud.

For the most part, parent's perceptions of instruction did not surprise me. The way they spoke of Bea's approach corroborated my understandings, and was derived from their experiences when they helped out in the classroom. Their other comments also reflected aspects of instruction to which they had access. Stimulating classroom materials, Bea's exuberant personality, letters home--these are all things that are relatively easy for parents to notice even if they are not in the classroom regularly. When I analyzed how these perceptions fit in with what they expected for their children, however, I realized that their views were more complex than I had originally thought, and required closer analysis.

The six parents I interviewed were very satisfied with the education their children were receiving. However, they expressed two areas of concern. Parents who had children experiencing difficulty in the bilingual program at Borden School (not necessarily in Bea's class) felt frustrated they could not choose an English option for their children. The other concern that arose was whether students in Bea's class were getting enough of "the basics." The basics was a term two parents used, but others alluded to it as well by questioning whether Bea included enough

phonics instruction, grammar, and/or repetitive homework exercises. The following comments are typical of what parents said:

> (Informal interview/February 5, 2001)
> L: I think she's doing the best she can, but if she had them for more time I would like to see her do more of the basics...phonics workbooks and that.
> M: Would you?
> L: Absolutely.
> M: Anything else?
> L: Grammar. I think they can... to introduce grammar. More of the English language. Period.

The parents expressed their concern about the lack of an English option in a very straightforward manner. They were unhappy that, if they wanted to register their children in an English school program, their only choice was to transport them to a school half an hour's drive outside of the community. They felt that the town should offer an English language stream in at least one of its three elementary schools. Both parents who brought this up thought their children would be progressing faster if they had access to more English instruction each day.

The remarks about the need for more of "the basics" tended to be contradictory because they came from parents who, in the same conversation, excitedly told me about Bea's hands-on approach, one that enabled students to learn in diverse ways by manipulating and experimenting with ideas. Further, parents who expressed this concern did so immediately before, or after, going on about how well their children were progressing in Bea's class.

I felt it was important to examine these aspects of the interviews in greater depth in order to explore the contradictions I was hearing. I selected one interview that was particularly puzzling and decided to use a narrative analysis (Mishler, 1992). It seemed promising for untangling the two contradictory stories I was hearing and helping me to understand how my participant's interpretations were different from my own.

This parent, in this particular interview, spoke positively about her daughter's experiences in Bea's class, but also kept mentioning that she home-schooled her child. I had trouble making sense of the interview at the onset because the mother's zealousness for home-schooling seemed completely incongruent with sending her daughter to public school. I realized that, to get at the deeper contradictions that were embedded in our conversation, first I needed to understand the interview at a surface level.

Using Mishler's approach of separating the coherent structural frame of a narrative from its supporting features to understand it better (Mishler, 1992), I separated the principal story (home-schooling) from the supporting one (classroom life) and studied each one separately. I adapted the next two steps from Fischer and Wertz's individual case synopses (see page 95). Working with the idea that people tend to construct stories of their lives in a chronological and coherent fashion to explain their current situation, I first reintegrated the narratives in temporal order. This process clarified the relationship between home-schooling and the classroom, and also helped me to begin to understand how my participant's interpretations evolved differently from my own. Next, to focus on the essential meaning of my participant's surface level

comments, I summarized the home-schooling narrative as well as the narrative that explained how the classroom experience related to home-schooling.

Then I turned to more intricate connections that I sensed were under the surface structure of the narrative. I speculated that by looking closely at more detailed stories within the larger narrative, I might be able to hear a less "careful" voice of my participant, and better understand her thoughts about teaching and learning. To do this, I returned to the interview transcripts and lifted out sections that focused on accounts of teaching and learning at home or at school. I condensed the text in places to help bring the meaning of these sections into focus. For example, I removed my own prompts as well as asides that did not seem pertinent to my goal. Although I only included text that did not seem compromised by this decision, I recognize that by doing this I forfeited some of the context (Butler-Kisber, 2002). Then, restricting myself to words and phrases from the condensed transcripts to stay close to my participant, I began to create a poetic representation of the interview. I allowed myself to rearrange the order of phrases while trying to maintain the essence of what I felt was being expressed. Otherwise I simply played with words and lines while simultaneously thinking intuitively about the entire interview. I based the selection of the words and phrases on what spoke to me most as I read over the data. The following excerpt from the transcript shows how I selected phrases (highlighted in bold) to initiate this process:

> I'm really pleased with the way she [referring to the grade one teacher] is doing it. I'm not trying to suggest otherwise. I don't... I find they lose a lot of time in school... **there should be a bit more**

> **structure. Because that's what life is**. I mean, when you move on, it's fine in elementary school, but eventually the schools are getting so overcrowded that you have to be able to be independent. **And grade one is a good time to start.** I think that writing in phonics workbooks is a good idea...**I think it's an okay thing to have. "Here's your workbook. Take out your workbook. We're going to do some phonics here."**

The theme on structure emerged first; over time and after many drafts it took the form of the third poem (see below). The others started out as part of one long poem and slowly broke into smaller ones as various themes became apparent. This happened by reworking the poetry--playing with it, leaving it, thinking about it, and returning to it numerous times.

The various approaches I used helped to uncover voices at and below the surface of the interview, and resulted in insights that, although potentially delicate, I felt comfortable sharing with my participant. The first two methods helped me to tease out her rationale for home-schooling her daughter while simultaneously having her in school. This narrative was at the surface of the interview but difficult to discern at times. Next, poetic representation enabled me to address the contradictions that were below the surface, as well as my own inner dialogue surrounding them. Although it suggests contradictions, and allows for reflection about them, it does not necessarily upset the principal narrative. That is, my participant was free to consider the poems together or separately, which may have suggested contradiction or not. This approach enabled me to bring back my interpretations to

her without feeling that I had either challenged what she had chosen to tell, or suppressed my voice and her less public one for the sake of a coherent narrative.

She was a wee kid

She sat beside me
Watching Aiden
And one day
She just started to read
Every word, a little bit
And she's just
Building it and
Building it, and
Even from when
They were babies
It's the feeling
That's why they touch
Everything
It's essential
In the early ages
That's how they learn

Hands on Learning

She brings it
Back to something
They can understand
...and relate to
And that to me
In the first,
Formative years
is the foundation
How to touch the children
Connect with them

Structure

I think
It's a good thing
Here's your workbook
Take out your workbook
We're going to do some phonics here
Because that's what life is
A bit more structure
and grade one is
a good time
to start

Two Experiences

You see the thing is
I'm talking from
Two experiences
I'm talking
about...I'm talking about
the social
aspect of school and the
Educational
aspect of school
I'm very happy
With the social
aspect of school

When I showed the poetic piece to my participant she responded cheerfully and said that I had represented the conversation we had shared. Although we did not discuss my representation at length, or the contradictions within it, my sense was that she was pleased with how I had portrayed her thoughts.

I was satisfied with the analytic steps I had taken because of the insights I gained in the process. The various steps helped me see that expectations of what constitute appropriate schooling can be deeply ingrained and resistant to change, even when alternative ways of thinking about learning are appropriate, or already part of one's thinking. Although Bea provided the kinds of instruction that parents liked on one level, some parents expected and would have felt more comfortable with a transmission model of instruction where the teacher "dispenses" information to students (Freire, 1993). Ironically, Bea promoted a naturalistic style of learning that built on the home experiences of students, while parents, at least in certain ways, advocated a more distanced and teacher-oriented "schooled literacy" (Street, 1995).

This narrative approach to analysis also helped me "feel with" my participant in a way that I had not done before by prompting me to remember similar concerns I had experienced about the education of children in my own family. I came to understand just how important the links are between the home and school. And I appreciated more fully the potential that lies in narrative approaches.

Summary

Parent perceptions of how Bea enhanced instruction focused on the stimulating classroom environment she created, and the positive way that she established connections between home and school. This was consistent with interpretations that emerged from my observational data. Parent expectations of instruction were more complex and contradictory. Although they applauded Bea's naturalistic teaching style, and acknowledged their children's strong progress in this setting, they expressed desire for more English language instruction in the

school as a whole, and more of "the basics" in Bea's cycle one classroom. To analyze this phenomenon in greater depth, I turned to a series of narrative approaches, culminating in poetic form. This process enabled me to understand the contradictions of one interview in particular more deeply, and to represent it in a way that neither ignored these contradictions, nor challenged the beliefs my participant chose to share.

Chapter Seven: Bea's Literacy Practice

In this chapter I explore literacy through a different lens. I begin by focusing on literacy instruction in Bea's classroom, stressing the dynamic, inter-related nature of all instructional dimensions. Then I briefly review two recent trends in literacy research to help situate my study within the field. First I view the nature of literacy at a more macro level to show how particular literacy events are connected to wider societal structures. By juxtaposing instruction in Bea's class with this broader, cultural analysis I intend to show that how Bea taught was consistent with current understandings of literacy, and further, how an in-depth analysis of instruction in her classroom is helpful in moving the most recent literacy research forward. Then I explore an approach known as balanced literacy that is gaining momentum. I show how Bea's practice, while balanced, differs substantially from this approach.

A Useful Lens: Deepening and Thickening Instruction

As the insights emerged about literacy learning in Bea's classroom and the roles she played in planning, organizing, and implementing instruction, two broad, conceptual themes became apparent that helped me to understand the nature, extent, and complexity of all that she did to support her students. These themes--deepening and thickening instruction--emerged from an ongoing, iterative process of analysis of both the tangible and more tacit dimensions of Bea's teaching (Ely, 1991). Viewing instruction through the lens of deepening and thickening has provided me with a way to represent the meaning of instruction in Bea's classroom without oversimplifying it.

Deepening Instruction

Deepening instruction refers to the fine-tuned nature of teaching in Bea's class. This broad term includes all the elements that enabled Bea to teach with precision, and to ensure that activities were neither too easy nor difficult for students. It encompasses the wide range of instructional strategies she used, and the planning and reflection that were required to implement these strategies. As well, it includes how she selected, organized, and differentiated various literacy events in the classroom.

As I have shown throughout the study, Bea was exceptionally strong at deepening instruction. I have shared how this was so by exploring the many, particular and interconnected ways she taught with precision. However, I have not yet stood back and explored the nature of her exceptional and unique teaching approach in a more general way. By examining instruction more abstractly I hope to tease out the broader, underlying features of Bea's teaching that enabled her to implement the particular strategies discussed so far.

Bea had a very direct approach with students. By this, I do not mean that she subscribed to an autonomous model of instruction (Street, 1995; 1999), where knowledge is understood as something transmitted to students, or that she drew from competing models to provide an eclectic mix of approaches as a way of meeting perceived needs in the classroom. She never resorted to workbooks, decontextualized drills, or other teacher-oriented practices that some teachers maintain are necessary in certain contexts (Tompkins, 1997). Bea's direct approach was always connected to, and supportive of, purposeful activities.

An example of Bea's direct approach is the way she and the students embarked on research projects together. Although students had considerable input into the themes they studied, and this increased as projects unfolded, Bea definitely took the lead in the planning and initial implementation of inquiries. She determined the general topic and organized relevant and interesting experiments and activities. Further, although she tailored individual and subsequent projects to meet evolving interests and needs, Bea's overall style of teaching would not be characterized as "leading from behind"--an expression often associated with student-oriented teaching (Holdaway, 1980). She did support students in less obvious ways when they engaged in theme-related activities at stations, and when they opted to participate in other activities during their free time. However, the core of inquiry took place on the carpet in a group setting, and was led by Bea. This gave student-oriented teaching in her classroom a very unique look.

The benefit of this strong, directness in the classroom was that Bea was better able to target instruction in precise, timely, and efficient ways. For example, when I spoke to Bea about the research projects she initiated with her students, and the fact that she took greater control throughout the project than some other teachers might, she explained to me that "students at this age often don't know what they don't know" (Informal interview/April 9, 2001). She went on about the way the media has misinterpreted student-oriented learning and given the impression students should be making most of the choices in the classroom. Although Bea did make sure that students had ample opportunity to choose, wonder, and discover on their own, her approach ensured that they also used their time together richly and efficiently.

Bea's direct approach seemed to benefit her students. However, I suspect what might prevent other teachers from readily adopting such an approach themselves is the concern that such a direct style might overpower student voices, or risk sliding into a teacher-oriented model of instruction. How then, did Bea ensure students truly made sense of information, and how did she know that her comments would lead to confident, and ultimately, more independent learners?

I would suggest that one of the reasons Bea's direct instructional style was so successful is in how she structured literacy events, as well as in the way she enabled individuals to interact within these events. This gave students the space they needed to try things out on their own and also ensured that the tone of the class never felt rigid or overly controlled. Although Bea's instruction was frequently direct in nature, she complimented this with a great deal of flexibility and freedom that maintained her student-oriented underpinnings.

Freedom and flexibility were present within literacy events themselves, through the way events complemented each other, and by how events were organized within the larger overall structure of the school timetable. As discussed in detail in Chapter Four, there was a great deal of scope within individual events in Bea's class; very few activities required students to participate in a rigid, pre-determined manner. In fact, the majority (60%), of literacy events were open-ended, where students were not required to produce any tangible product that could be assessed. Instead, they were free to take in and contribute as much as their needs and interests dictated at the time. Even events that required students to produce something--a product or response of some

sort--were adapted to fit individual needs through the various choices available, or the range of support that was provided in each activity. In other words, the basic organizational structure of open-ended and formatted events catered to different educational needs because there was so much latitude built into each activity. This gave children time every day to play and experiment or, in the case of direct instruction in whole group settings, freedom to determine the extent and type of their participation. As a result, students moved through each day with a comfortable and appropriate balance of structure, freedom, and confidence. I would speculate that more attention needs to be paid to the benefits of peripheral participation (Wenger and Lave, 1991), that is the value of being exposed to concept and skills in group settings when there is latitude permitted in terms of mandated participation, and where students can learn from others without being singled out (Butler-Kisber, 1988; 1997).

It is also important to stress the relationship between direct instruction in Bea's class and student independence. Students were able to use the freedom that Bea gave them profitably because more direct instructional times prepared them with the motivation, strategies, and knowledge base that they needed to adapt to their own purposes when they worked away from her direct guidance. When Bea walked students through a research study on koalas, or reminded them to stick to the topic of rabbits, she modelled skills, concepts, and attitudes that helped them transform teacher-led activities into student-initiated ones during more flexible times. The initiative and responsibility students demonstrated throughout the school year suggested they made this important transition.

Another way that Bea made sure students had the freedom to engage in meaningful activities was by building flexibility into the larger daily schedule. The schedule began with transition time, and from there moved to group exploring and whole group assessment. Station work followed with monitored literacy occurring at the same time. Transition time ended the day. This general organization ensured that students engaged in a wide variety of literacy events, and provided a consistent framework with which students and Bea became comfortable. However, Bea adapted this generic structure as needed. Most days did not actually include all of the events mentioned above or necessarily unfold in the same order. For example, station work sometimes occurred in the morning and the afternoon. As well, certain activities were sometimes tapered or omitted altogether so that other activities could take up more attention on that particular day. The process worked in reverse at other times. Like a water-filled balloon being squeezed in different places, activities in Bea's class adjusted easily to meet the requirements of the day. This meant that, rather than being limited by unnecessary constraints, Bea and her students were free to pursue their evolving interests and needs.

Another dimension of the schedule, the blocking of time, enabled this as well. Even though students studied in French for half of the week, and left the classroom for physical education and music on Monday's and Wednesdays, the remaining areas of study with Bea were grouped together so that she and her students could spend large blocks of uninterrupted time together. This, and the fact that she organized subjects to be cross-curricular in nature to begin with, (addressed more than one subject area), further enabled the class to focus on pedagogical, rather than organizational, aspects of learning.

The freedom that characterized the structure of literacy events was also present in the informal and unspoken rules of the classroom. Although there was always a line that, if crossed, she would intervene, ordinarily Bea gave students and parents a great deal of latitude with respect to how they interacted within literacy events. For example, Bea allowed students to wear costumes all day if this pleased them, and to carry around small items from home that other teachers might ban from the classroom. This attitude was also apparent in how she dealt with parents. It was quite typical for parents to initiate conversations with Bea at the classroom doorway during moments that were officially teaching times of the day. Bea accepted this and managed to turn what could be disruptive moments into profitable ones. In areas of homework she also listened to parents and integrated their ideas into assignments. For example, when they asked for spelling homework lists she complied without compromising her underlying beliefs about literacy teaching and learning.

As in all other areas of her teaching, however, freedom and firmness worked hand-in-hand. When Bea agreed to assign spelling homework and the more extensive assignments parents also eventually requested, she made sure that they met real, rather than perceived needs. Spelling lists were mostly short playful exercises in phonological awareness that would not "weigh down" students. Other assignments were meaningful research projects.

As I have shown, Bea complemented her forthright teaching approach with a great deal of flexibility in the classroom. Although not always obvious at first glance, the internal structure of literacy events,

the way they inter-related, and the classroom schedule provided room to manoeuvre so that students could routinely engage in imaginative and meaningful activities. The tacit rules of the classroom were consistent with this pattern. Bea enabled students and parents to have a strong voice in the particular ways that day-to-day events unfolded, yet did so in a way that never sacrificed her strong convictions about teaching and learning.

Thickening Instruction

Thickening instruction worked in tandem with deepening instruction. This theme refers to all the ways Bea "fleshed out" the precise support she provided. It includes the specific ways she created and maintained a dynamic classroom environment, such as by incorporating fun and providing a rich physical environment, as well as personal qualities that influenced her actions. For example, thickening instruction addresses Bea's commitment to keeping things fresh, creative and motivating, as well as how she was able to maintain this over time.

In our most recent interview Bea and I spoke of how she attended to the broader needs in students. She told me that when children left to return home at the end of the day she hoped that they would think of the classroom as the one place where they wanted to be--that they would reflect on their day together as being "as good as it gets." These are high expectations and yet, judging by the ongoing enthusiasm of students and their regular requests to stay in to work at recess and lunchtime, she was able to meet this goal.

Bea did not subscribe to the idea that cycle one students needed to or should defer satisfaction in order to progress in literacy learning. By

this I do not mean that she successfully culminated every activity in a matter of minutes, or that she failed to encourage students to develop patience. Rather, Bea taught every day as if students had the option of returning the following morning. She did this in the many ways she drew students in to the work at hand and in the future. Bea knew exactly where students were in their learning, and consistently provided the appropriate degree of challenge to support individual student development. Yet, there is a qualitative difference between teaching by ascertaining where children are, and teaching as if the students could choose whether or not to return. In Bea's classroom this difference was in the way she addressed needs for comfort, security, and playful times.

By attending to these needs students engaged in literacy events with a level of enthusiasm and comfort that enabled Bea to use instructional strategies that might have been less successful in other settings. For example, it was not unusual for students to sit on the carpet for half an hour as Bea shared and discussed information with them that they would not use more actively until later in the day. A short visit to another class across the hall one morning revealed that this same group of students were only able to remain attentive for ten minutes before losing interest and beginning to fidget. Bea's instruction contrasted with what went on in the other class. She prepared differently using props and interesting anecdotes that she had enthusiastically created and incorporated responsively as needed, and she exuded a sense of purpose and playful energy that helped engage her students.

In addition to addressing broad student needs, Bea had the wisdom and confidence to integrate her own natural talents and inclinations into her practice. She very consciously taught in ways that made use of

these strengths, and recognized that by doing so students would benefit in tangible as well as subtle, but very important ways. As I have shown throughout this study, Bea supported student development with her charisma, humour and a range of rich, fun-filled activities that built on her dynamic strengths. In addition to the obvious benefits to students, Bea was aware that a good deal of the help she offered was indirectly a result of teaching in ways that were engaging and natural to her. Her short comment, "If I'm not into it..." (Informal interview/March 19, 2001) demonstrates that she understood the important relationship between her natural strengths, engagement in the classroom and student learning (Butler-Kisber et al., 1998). This is a relationship that is often overlooked in discussions about sound instructional practices. Although Bea's abilities translated into gregarious activities in the classroom, I believe that, had she been less extroverted, she would have provided the same fundamental kinds of instruction. Put another way, it was not necessary for Bea to wear costumes or sing into a microphone, but it was essential for her to attend to, and maximize her own strengths and interests in order to fully support her students. Bea was consciously aware of this.

Bea incorporated her dynamic personality into classroom life, and integrated other more embodied qualities of herself into her teaching. There was a relaxed family like intimacy in the class that resulted from a natural integration of serious lessons, playful excitement and "comfy" times. When students leaned into Bea as she read with them on the carpet, she reminded me of a mother bear with her young--protective yet gentle. This was a strong example of how teachers can effectively resist interpretations of instruction that distance teachers from students in unnatural ways (Grumet, 1988).

Attending to her natural inclinations was evident in the authentic, sensitive way events unfolded and related to student's lives. Although Bea went to great lengths to plan her lessons, nothing was contrived or mechanical about them. Reflecting on events with students took place in the context of meaningful dialogue. It was never a routenized, "checklist" type of exchange. As I will show, working for social justice was equally natural, contextualized and appropriate.

When I began this research I wondered how critical literacy could be integrated into the curriculum with six and seven year-olds. I envisioned Bea using children's literature as a springboard to discussions about wider social issues. However, beyond that, I was not sure what to expect. Now I have a deeper understanding of the role an emergent literacy teacher plays in promoting social justice. As in other aspects of instruction, Bea very naturally wove critical literacy through a range of ongoing activities, and so there was never an obvious "critical literacy agenda" that rose to the surface. Yet it was precisely because of this that I now realize she had a very authentic praxis of literacy, that is, a literacy practice deeply committed to social justice, yet attuned to the precise needs of her students.

Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002) state that many teachers have difficulty moving from discussions about social justice to action. This did not apply to Bea. She and her students did talk critically about a range of issues, but there were also many occasions when students took action. Sometimes this was a result of explicit discussion about what needed to be done such as the time the class cleaned up the playground after studying the environment. Yet, more often social action naturally

evolved from Bea's "soft critical approach" of modeling and engaging students in inclusive behaviours and activities. What was particularly notable about this type of critical literacy was the fact that it was the students themselves who sometimes initiated social action, such as the time two boys asked to be included in Paul's Braille lessons outside of the classroom. This showed me that they had truly internalized the sensitive and inclusive attitudes modelled by Bea, and underlined the strength of her very natural praxis.

As I have discussed, Bea's strong role in promoting social justice extended to work beyond the classroom. Her leadership in school wide literacy evenings, workshops for teachers, and school committees demonstrated that, in addition to the concern she had for students in her class, she cared about and took measures to support other students and families. One way this was evident was in her commitment to working with parents, including ways that sometimes counteracted the conflicting messages they received about sound instruction.

I believe that conceptualizing instruction as a process of deepening and thickening provides a lens for examining instruction without buying into the dichotomous notions that have been so prevalent and continue to exist in literacy literature. Further, it is useful because studies that acknowledge the complexity and complementary nature of teaching still tend to focus on one of two things. Either they attempt to represent the breadth of instruction through de-contextualized conceptual models, or they explore one or several dimensions of instruction in greater depth. In neither case is instruction researched in its entirety. Models do not show how all the instructional dimensions interconnect and unfold in dynamic classroom settings. Studies of particular aspects of classroom

instruction, such as research on community building or code instruction (sound to print relationships), are more helpful in this respect, but still they fail show the dynamic interplay of instructional strands, simply because they do not focus on them all simultaneously. I believe my work in Bea's classroom suggests the need to examine the breadth and depth of instruction simultaneously, and provides a vehicle for doing this.

Recent Trends in Literacy Research

The position of recent research is that literacy is simultaneously situated as an individual, social and cultural practice (Hamilton, 2000). In earlier chapters, I discussed the social constructedness of literacy learning, that is how literacy learning is understood to be a social as well as cognitive process, and I contrasted this to earlier views that proposed literacy is a collection of isolated skills. I also explained how, in the last several years, literacy studies have built on a social constructivist body of research by exploring the cultural dimension in relation to the individual and social. Here I will briefly review this most recent turn in research, and discuss how my own study is positioned to show how instruction in Bea's class was consistent with current understandings of literacy.

A comparison of the terms "literacy events" and "literacy practices" helps to explicate the beliefs put forward by the most current research. "Literacy events" is a term reflecting an understanding that activities surrounding written texts are an important part of what counts as literacy. In other words, literacy is more than the written text itself; it also includes meanings that are made through other discourses and in social contexts. Drawing or listening to music before writing a poem, for

example, would be considered part of a literacy event; so would a conversation with a friend that was related to what was transpiring. "Literacy practices," however, is a term used to describe a view of literacy situated more broadly. It acknowledges how literacy is mediated by surrounding social activity, but it takes the idea one step further. Although it incorporates specific events, it also includes "values, attitudes and understandings about them" (Maybin, 2000, p.197).

In addition to a broader conception of literacy than in the past, theorists engaged in studies that attend to literacy at three levels--the individual, social, and cultural--refute a static concept of literacy. They assert that the contextually dependent nature of literacy is best understood by an ongoing, interactive process of articulating links between levels. Exploring connections among beliefs about comic books at an individual, school, and broader societal level, for example, can help to clarify how values about reading are formed, and what may need changing, as well as ways go about it. Another value stressed by researchers adhering to the notion of situated literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) is that an important step in making meaning, and having the power to change how literacy is valued and used, is by researching one's own teaching (Barton, 2000). Finally, a situated literacy is understood as one in which literacy practices are purposeful, that is, situated in broader social goals (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

The incorporation of a macro level of analysis into literacy research is important because it helps individuals and society value diverse, local and vernacular literacy practices that have often been marginalized by dominant society. The process of researching and articulating how particular literacy practices mediate and are mediated by larger cultural

factors encourages individuals and communities to become more critically aware of the meaning of different literacies in their lives, and what needs to change so that diverse cultural practices can thrive. It can position individuals to advocate for increased recognition of certain literacy practices, and to resist others that may currently interrupt learning in their own lives and in society more broadly.

A portrayal of Bea's classroom as a simultaneous and interrelated process of deepening and thickening, set alongside a discussion of a situated analysis of literacy, reveals that what Bea did to support her students is consistent with the term "literacy practice" as defined above (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). As I analyzed the meaning of instruction in Bea's class, it became increasingly apparent she recognized and incorporated dimensions of instruction that reflected an understanding of literacy as a social and cultural practice, that is, as a fluid process existing within a community rather than solely within individuals. Bea attended to her own interests, beliefs and historical background as well as those of her students and their families. She was also consciously aware of larger social influences, and accommodated or resisted them according to what she felt was most helpful to her students at the time. For example, Bea knew the importance of welcoming and building on the many literacies students brought with them to the classroom, but also felt strongly that her students needed to develop fluency with a middle-class discourse so that they would have the tools to communicate with, and be respected by, dominant society (Delpit,1986). She was also aware of how parent's understood literacy instruction. Bea's instructional practices reflected her convictions and were evidenced in how she made sense of and responded to this larger, and sometimes conflicting, social reality.

In addition to studies that interpret literacy as a socially situated practice, there is another body of research that addresses the issue of classroom instruction by advocating for a "balanced literacy" approach (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Tompkins, 2001). An underlying belief of proponents of balanced literacy instruction is that an intense and systematic approach is needed to ensure students acquire the necessary skills, strategies and affective knowledge they need to succeed in school and beyond (Tompkins, 2001). Further, this should combine holistic and skill instruction. Although there are various ways to implement a balanced literacy program, a common approach is to divide literacy instruction into four daily, half-hour "blocks" (guided reading, self-selected reading, writing and word study) to ensure that students consistently receive responsive instruction in all key areas (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998). Ongoing training of teachers and commercially packaged materials are also commonly associated with the notion of balanced literacy.

It would be appropriate to say Bea implemented a balanced literacy approach in the sense that she provided consistent, varied, and responsive instruction in a large number of areas. Bea's balance to her literacy instruction, however, was far removed from the segmented and rather formulaic instruction that is currently gaining ground among educators. Although Bea was very direct, instruction always adhered to the goal that students should develop independence and responsibility through activities deemed purposeful from their own perspectives. Bea always provided students with regular and varied opportunities to transform the skills, concepts, and attitudes she taught into self-directed, creative activities of their own, as evident in the freedom she gave them to determine the kind and extent of their participation in so

many activities. This important characteristic distinguished her practice from more common interpretations of balanced literacy instruction (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998).

To summarize, literacy instruction in Bea's class incorporated dimensions of instruction that are currently being explored and considered fundamental in literacy research. First, she had a direct approach that enabled her to consistently identify and meet the needs of her students with ongoing precision and intensity. Second, this facet of instruction, as well as all others, was part of a broader literacy practice that attended to the interests, backgrounds, and values of individuals and society in socially responsible ways. This deeper meaning of instruction was evidenced in how Bea used her precise knowledge of where students were in their learning to work with them for social justice in a gentle and engaging manner. Third, Bea's literacy practice was very different from the concept of balanced literacy that is gaining ground in educational circles. In contrast to rigid, segmented methods that tend to characterize such programs, Bea's form of balanced instruction was consistent with the underlying goal that students become responsible, independent learners.

This study shows, rather than tells, how literacy instruction can be balanced and direct, while still remaining consistent with the concept of literacy as a student-oriented and socially situated practice. Although there is an increasing body of research that explores the nature of literacy from an individual, social and cultural perspective, few in-depth studies show how it is possible to provide instruction with such a view in mind.

I hope this study will be useful to teachers as they reflect on their own practices. It may be especially relevant to educators in the process of implementing reforms consistent with a socially situated view of literacy. As well, it may contribute to teacher education research by helping students make connections between theory and practice (Borko et al., 2000). In-depth studies like this can also be especially helpful when considered along with other work. Although not generalizable in the traditional sense (Donmoyer, 1990), individual studies, taken together, can offer a range of accessible and imaginative teaching possibilities to which educators may not have access otherwise (Bolster, 1983). However teachers may connect with this particular study, I anticipate Bea's example will make a meaningful contribution to their understanding of sound literacy instruction.

Review of Insights

I have summarized a number of key insights that emerged from this particular research, and then posed a number of more specific questions. These are offered to spark the reflective process, with the realization that readers will necessarily interpret my study in individual and unique ways.

1. Direct instruction can and should occur in the context of meaningful activities

I hope this study has been persuasive in making the point that teachers can offer direct forms of instruction in the context of meaningful activities. After a year of research in Bea's class, and never once witnessing isolated activities or dull skill practice, I am convinced that teachers should continue to make every effort to avoid

decontextualized forms of instruction. As I have shown throughout the study, skill instruction, repetition, and instances where students are told how to do something were regular features of classroom life. However, direct instruction in Bea's class was never a necessary pill that students swallowed for their own good. Skill instruction was integrated into meaningful activities, repetition was varied and fun, and any direct messages given to students were so they could get on with exciting literacy events in independent and responsible ways.

I am convinced, too, that if Bea were to teach in any other setting, her approach to instruction would essentially remain the same. I would expect her to adapt strategies to meet particular needs of her students, but that these would remain consistent with her philosophy of teaching and learning. It is worth noting that, although Bea taught in a middle class neighbourhood, students had their share of challenges. One was legally blind; another was autistic. Several showed quite significant behavioural difficulties outside of the classroom, and a number had other learning challenges. In addition to this, Bea only saw these students half time. Yet, by the end of the school year all children were self-initiated literacy learners, and most were well prepared with needed skills for the upcoming school year. Given the challenges of this group and the success of her students, I am sure that, in any other setting, Bea would continue to teach in the fundamental ways I have described in this study.

2. *Teachers need to carefully balance and integrate direct and less direct forms of literacy instruction*

This study has also shown very explicitly how various forms of instruction--direct and less direct--can be implemented in the classroom in skilled ways that take best advantage of time and resources. Bea organized and balanced the daily schedule to allow for ongoing individual and group activities, rigorously reflected on and documented student progress, incorporated parents and students in the process, and integrated all of these strategies wisely. This ensured that Bea was both keenly aware of the kinds of support students needed, and was able to provide for them. I have tried to show these strategies in a very transparent way and set them within a classroom context, so that teachers may draw from this study and adapt ideas to their own practices. For example, in the interest of efficiency and often more strongly targeted support, teachers may wish to integrate more whole group instructional times into their classrooms. I have tried to show how Bea did this in ways that addressed individual needs of diverse learners by subtly providing students with a lot more choice and flexibility than was apparent at first glance.

I have described a number of literacy events in detail and shown how Bea creatively and efficiently integrated these events into the curriculum in an attempt to help educators who may wish to adopt a cross-curricular approach to instruction that resists the teaching of isolated subjects. Particularly for educators of bilingual programs, who often have significantly less instructional time with each group of students than English stream teachers, the integrated strategies presented in this study show how to take fullest advantage of classroom teaching time.

3. Consistent and varied observation and reflection of student activity is crucial for implementing effective and appropriate instruction

Bea had a solid understanding of what instruction was needed for each child, when it was needed, and how best to provide for it. This was because she consistently observed her students in the classroom, and used a wide range of strategies to do so. Although all strong teaching is characterized by student observation and teacher reflection, the rigour and consistency of Bea's strategies translated into a particularly precise and deep understanding of student needs. For example, Bea documented student activity on a daily basis or had others do it for her. Rather than relying on what she thought students were able to do and planning accordingly, the process of making written notes helped her to see what students were actually doing. As a result, she was in a stronger position to plan appropriately. Similarly, small rituals such as "glow and grow", where Bea routinely thought back to the stronger and weaker points of her teaching day, were a consistent way for her to think about and fine-tune instruction in the classroom.

4. Instruction is a process that simultaneously incorporates a wide range of dimensions of equal importance and is built on connectedness and relationship

I have shown how thickening and deepening instruction characterized Bea's teaching. In doing so, I hope it has become clear that all facets of instruction worked together simultaneously and played an equally important role in ensuring that cycle one was an enriching experience for all students. Thickening instruction, for example, was not something "added on" to deepening instruction when Bea had enough time, energy or resources. Nor did Bea pass over her own needs for

connection and growth when scheduling was tight. Not only were all facets of instruction in her classroom so closely intertwined that this would have been difficult to do, it was also counter to Bea's beliefs about classroom instruction.

5. A strong praxis of literacy is internalized by students andextends to actions beyond the classroom walls.

This study has shown how a praxis of literacy in a class of young children was characterized by a very gentle, natural and integrated way of building on events in student's lives. Bea's approach resulted in social action that was truly internalized by students, as evidenced by the times they initiated projects themselves. This suggests that critical literacy is most meaningful when considered along with, and woven through, all other dimensions of instruction, and extends to continuous efforts that include parents, other teachers, and the wider community.

Questions Literacy Educators Might Ask Themselves

I have posed the following questions to serve as a helpful reflective tool for educators:

1. Do I build in regular and varied opportunities for ongoing observation and reflection of events into my teaching?
2. Do I balance a direct approach with freedom and flexibility in individual activities as well as the structure of the larger daily schedule?
3. Is direct instruction in my class always part of, or at least connected to, meaningful activities?
4. Do I address the broader social, emotional and embodied needs of my students?

5. Am I equally committed to the concept of deepening and thickening instruction?

6. Do I understand deepening and thickening instruction as a simultaneous and complementary process?

7. In addition to building on my student's abilities and interests, do I fully incorporate my own strengths and unique qualities into my teaching life?

8. Do I welcome parents as instructional partners and work with them in ways that help to "level the playing field"?

9. Does my literacy practice build gently and naturally on experiences in student's lives so that social action is meaningful from their perspectives?

10. Do I extend my teaching efforts beyond the classroom to include parents, teachers, and the wider community?

Future Research

This research project has been very satisfying. I have gained a much deeper understanding of the nature and dynamics of literacy instruction in a cycle one classroom, and I sense that I have shared this in useful ways with others. Nevertheless, as with any research, there are areas that could be explored in greater depth if time and circumstances allowed.

From a methodological perspective, I would be interested in incorporating artful analytic approaches more extensively into future research. Poetic and narrative methods have been very helpful in teasing out subtle, but important nuances of instruction, and their use has allowed me to work more ethically and comfortably with research participants, maintaining their voices and mine within the work. I feel this has resulted in different and deeper insights about instruction than

what would have emerged had I restricted myself to more traditional analytic methods (Butler-Kisber et al., in press). Further, these insights have the potential for contributing in important ways to how we think about and implement instruction. Working with data in artful ways has shown me, very powerfully, that this approach to research merits greater attention.

As the study evolved, it also became clear to me that the role of parents in literacy instruction is complex and deserving of more attention than I have been able to give it in this project. The tendency for parents to want a more transmission, or "schooled," model of instruction while simultaneously applauding Bea's more natural way of working with children is a phenomenon that warrants attention in future research. Also, although I collected documents and artefacts and examined them indirectly through my analysis of field notes and reflections, a more focused and systematic approach to analysis of this facet of classroom life would likely allow richer insights to emerge. Finally, in addition to more in-depth interviews with parents, it would be promising to interview more students, and in a variety of ways. The use of a range of methods would give students more options for expressing themselves on their own terms, and would help to uncover their voices more easily and fully.

Summary

I presented instruction in Bea's classroom as a dynamic, simultaneous, and inter-related process of deepening and thickening. This is consistent with current understandings of literacy as a broad social and cultural practice. It acknowledges and incorporates the numerous tangible as

well as more tacit dimensions of instruction, and presents them in a way that is useful for educators wanting guidance in how to work for social justice in their own classrooms.

Deepening instruction refers to the fine-tuned precision that characterized the instruction Bea offered, and ensured that activities were neither too easy nor too difficult for students. This appeared to be due to how she balanced and integrated a very direct approach in the classroom with freedom and flexibility around participation in literacy events, and prepared student to be independent and responsible learners. Thickening instruction worked jointly with deepening instruction. It refers to how Bea enriched teaching by attending to variety and interest around activities and appealing to broader social, emotional and embodied needs. This seemed to contribute to learning by keeping alive a spirit of excitement and purpose in students, parents and Bea. Like deepening instruction, it incorporated a wide range of ongoing reflective strategies as well as underlying beliefs that guided her practice.

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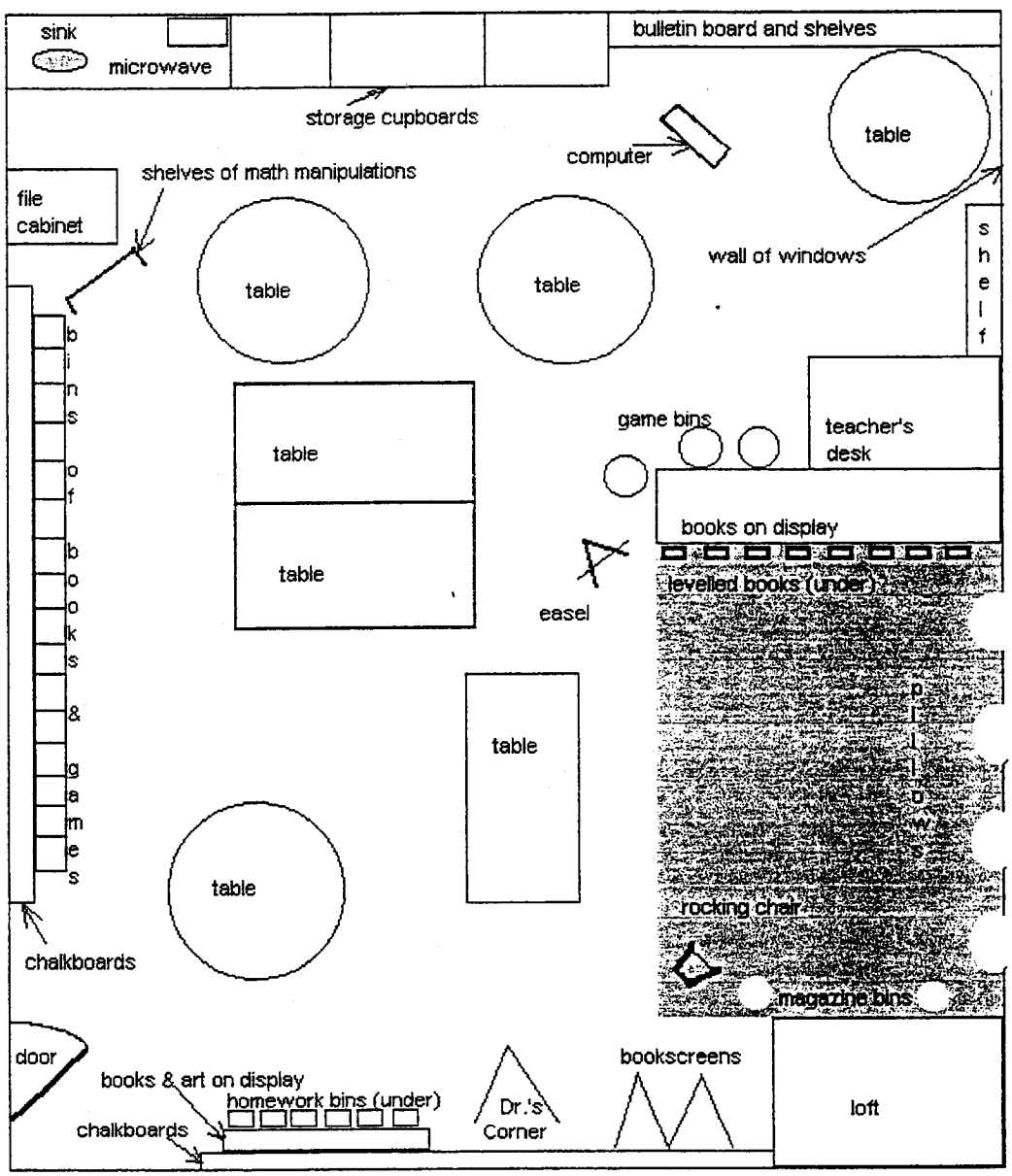
Appendices

Appendix A

Physical Organization of the Classroom


sink
microwave
bulletin board and shelves
storage cupboards
computer
table
file cabinet
shelves of math manipulations
wall of windows
shelf
table
table
table
table
game bins
teacher's desk
books on display
levelled books (under)
easel
table
table
rocking chair
magazine bins
chalkboards
bins of books & games
door
books & art on display
homework bins (under)
chalkboards
Dr.'s Corner
bookscreens
loft

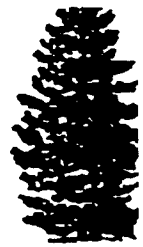
Appendix B

Weekly Schedule

TEACHER _____

EVERGREEN SCHOOL TIMETABLE

GRADE (S) 1 and 2



		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 1	Grade 2	
	TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
SUPERVISION	7:50-8:00					
PERIOD 1	8:00-8:30	Lang Arts	Lang. Arts	Lang	Lang	Grade 1 & 2 Lang arts
PERIOD 2	8:30-9:00	music	↓	Arts	Arts	Library
PERIOD 3	9:00-9:30	Gym	↓	Gym	Gym	Math
RECESS	9:30-9:48	~	~	~	~	
PERIOD 4	9:48-10:24	Lang	Math ↓	Lang Arts	Lang Arts	Gr 1 & 2 Lang arts
PERIOD 5	10:24-11:00	Arts	↓	Centers (volunteers)	Centers (volunteers)	Gr 1 & 2 and Math
LUNCH	11:00-12:00	~	~	~	~	
PERIOD 6	12:00-12:30	Math	music	math	Math	Religion
PERIOD 7	12:30-1:00	and	Lang Arts	Centers	Centers	Gr 1 + 2 mix
PERIOD 8	1:00-1:30	Lang Arts	+ Math	↓	and computer	Lang
PERIOD 9	1:30-2:00	↓	↓	(volunteers)	(volunteers)	Arts Gr 1 or 2
SUPERVISION	2:00-2:08					

Appendix C

Classification of Literature on Instruction

CLASSIFICATION OF LITERATURE ON INSTRUCTION:

This table classifies the literature on instruction in a general descriptive way.

Focus / Perspective	Specific	Cultural	Political
	Literature on specific aspects of instruction	*Literature on the cultural locatedness of instruction*	*Literature on political dimensions of instruction*
Cognitive Psychology	Chomsky (1965) Piaget (1962)	Cole & Wertsch (2000) Vygotsky (1978) Wertsch (1984) Cole (1990) Clermont, Perret & Bell (1991) Donaldson (1979) Wertsch (1991) Wertsch & Givens (1992) Mezirow (1990) Gardner (1983) Bomer (1998)	
Curriculum Theory			Dewey (1916) Whitehead (1929) Friere (1993) Walzer (1983) Belenky et. al (1986) Gilligan (1982) Grumet (1988) Schubert et. al (1986) Noddings (1984) Daloz (1999) Eisner (1997) Greene (1991) Rug (1995) Sullivan (2000) Delpit (1988) Cochran-Smith (2000) bell hooks (1994)
Literacy Studies	Moustafa & Maldonado-Colon (1999) Price (1998) Dahl et. al (1999) McGee & Tompkins (1995) Flood & Lapp (1998) Graves (1994) Calkins (1994)		Street (1995) The New London Group (1996) Cazden (1992) Willinsky (1990) Raphael & Heibert (1998) Heath (1983) Church (1996) Dyson (1993) Finders (1997) Phinney (1998) Gallas et. al (1996) Griffin (1993) Evans (1996) Galda et. al (1995) Fitzgerald, Spiegal & Cunningham (1991) Sigel, Stinson & Flaughter (1991) Stahl, McKenna & Pagnucco (1994) Turner (1995) Stahl, Suttles & Pagnucco (1994) Duffy & Hoffman (1999)

Appendix D

Dimension of Instruction

DIMENSIONS OF INSTRUCTION

This table summarises the five dimensions of instruction that emerge from a critical analysis of the literature. It shows the emphasis that researchers place on the various dimensions and demonstrates that few studies look at the entire range of instruction.

Researcher	Immersion in Nurturing Relationships	Immersion in Meaningful Activities	Direct Instruction or Assisted Performance	Reflective Assessment	Critical Political Reflection with Action
BELENKY et. al (1986)	*	*			*
BELL HOOKS (1992)	*				
BOMER (1998)			*	*	
CALKINS (1994)	*	*	*	*	*
CAZDEN (1992)	*	*	*	*	*
CHOMSKY (1965)					
CHURCH (1996)					*
CLERMONT, PERRET & BELL (1991)		*	*	*	
COCHRAN-SMITH (2000)					*
COLE (1990)		*	*	*	
COLE & WERTSCH (2000)	*	*			
DAHL et. al (1999)			*	*	
DALOZ (1999)	*				
DELPIT (1988)			*	*	*
DEWEY (1910)		*	*	*	*
DONALDSON (1979)		*	*	*	

DYSON (1993)	*	*			*
EISNER (1997)		*			
EVANS (1996)					*
FINDERS (1997)	*	*			*
FITZGERALD, SPIEGAL & CUNNINGHAM (1991)			*	*	*
FLOOD AND LAPP (1998)		*	*	*	
FRIERE (1993)		*	*	*	*
GALDA ET. AL (1995)	*	*	*	*	*
GALLAS ET. AL (1996)	*				
GARDNER (1983)		*			
GILLIGAN (1982)	*				
GRAVES (1994)		*	*	*	*
GREENE (1991)		*			*
GRIFFEN (1993)	*	*			*
GRUMET (1988)	*				*
HEATH (1983)	*	*	*	*	*
HOLDAWAY (1979)	*	*	*	*	*
MOUSTAFA & MALDONADO (1999)			*	*	
MCGEE & TOMPKINS (1995)		*	*	*	
MEZIROW (1990)				*	*
NEW LONDON GROUP (1996)		*	*	*	*
NODDINGS					

(1984)	*				
PIAGET (1962)		*		*	
PHINNEY (1998)	*	*			
PRICE (1998)		*	*	*	
RAPHAEL & HEIBERT (1998)		*	*	*	
RUG (1995)		*			
SCHUBERT, SCHUBERT & SCHUBERT (1986)	*				
SIGEL, STINSON & FLAUGHTER (1991)			*	*	
STAHL, MCKENNA & PAGNUCCO (1994)	*	*	*	*	*
STAHL, SUTTLES & PAGNUCCO (1994)					*
STREET (1995)		*			*
SULLIVAN (2000)		*			
VYGOTSKY (1978)		*	*	*	
WALTZER(1983)					*
WERTSCH & GIVENS (1992)		*	*	*	
WERTSCH (1984)		*	*	*	
WERTSCH (1991)		*	*	*	
WHITEHEAD (1929)		*			
WILLINSKY (1990)		*	*	*	*

Appendix E

McGill Certificate of Ethical Acceptability

Appendix F

Letter of Consent to Teacher

McGill Universitv

Dear _____(teacher),

As you know, I am a student at McGill University interested in learning more about the role of instruction in dynamic cycle One settings. I am also optimistic that data from this study will form the basis of my doctoral thesis. The purpose of this letter is to obtain consent to research this topic in your classroom at various times throughout the school year.

As we have discussed, the kind of research I am particularly interested in is qualitative. This type of research is descriptive and does not set out to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Nothing or no one will in any way be tested throughout the study. Instead, I will be spending a great deal of time watching and taking notes of what is happening in the classroom. At various times I also hope to videotape or audio-tape classroom events and interviews with you and some children. Rather than trying to answer a specific research question I will attempt to explain what is happening by examining patterns that emerge in this data over time. These findings will then be discussed with participants so that final interpretations reflect more than a single viewpoint. Qualitative researchers believe that in-depth research of particular settings can contribute to enriched educational practices in ways not possible through the testing of hypotheses.

Naturally, we will be working together closely. With your guidance I also intend to keep parents informed of relevant progress. For example, before interviewing any children I will update them briefly and send additional consent forms home. As well, I am hoping to interview several parents whom I will contact at the appropriate time. I expect interviews will be beneficial to all participants because they will provide an opportunity to reflect on and contribute to research on instruction.

I can assure you that I am committed to protecting the rights of all involved. Anonymity will be strictly guarded throughout the study;

pseudonyms will be used and audio or videotaping (for those who are comfortable with that) will be for data collection only. Also, if at any point in the research anyone wishes to withdraw from participating, he or she will not be pressured to continue.

Thank you again for accepting me into your classroom. If you have any questions or concerns, now or later, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Please sign the consent form below.

I agree to participate in the qualitative study as outlined above. I understand that this will involve classroom observation, note taking, audio-taping, and videotaping events in my classroom at various times during the 2000-2001 school year. I also agree to be interviewed (and audio-taped) as part of this project.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix G

Letter of Consent to Parents

McGill University

Dear Parents:

In accordance with the guidelines of the _____School Board I am writing to introduce myself and inform you of a classroom research project that will take place in collaboration with _____.

I am a teacher presently studying at McGill University. At various times throughout the school year I will be visiting _____. As you know, she is an excellent teacher. By researching her classroom I hope to come to a richer understanding of the role of instruction in cycle one settings. I am optimistic that data from this project will also form the basis of my doctoral thesis at McGill.

The kind of research I am particularly interested in is qualitative. This type of research is descriptive and does not set out to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Nothing or nobody will in any way be tested. Instead, I will be spending a great deal of time watching and taking notes of what is happening in the classroom. At various times I also hope to videotape or audio-tape classroom events and interviews with the teacher and some children. Rather than trying to answer a specific research question I will attempt to explain what is happening by examining patterns that emerge in this data over time. These findings will then be discussed with participants so that final interpretations reflect more than a single viewpoint. Qualitative researchers believe that in depth research of particular settings can contribute to enriched educational practices in ways not possible through the testing of hypotheses.

Naturally, I will be working closely with _____ and will keep you informed of the study as it progresses. For example, before interviewing any children I will update you on the project and send additional consent forms home for you and your child to sign. I am also hoping to interview several parents and will contact you about this at a further date. I expect these interviews will be beneficial to all participants because they will provide an opportunity to reflect on and contribute to research on instruction.

I can assure you that I am committed to protecting the rights of all involved. Anonymity will be strictly guarded throughout the study; pseudonyms will be used and audio or videotaping (for those who are comfortable with that) will be for data collection only. Also, if at any point in the study anyone wishes to withdraw from participating, there will be no pressure in any way to continue.

I also feel it is important that children are informed about the nature of this project in a manner appropriate to their age. For this reason, I have discussed the research with them at school. In addition, I ask that you review this letter with your child before either of you sign the consent form below.

If you have any questions about this project I am very willing to answer them. If you have any objections at all please contact _____.

I am looking forward to sharing my work with you at some future date.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Please sign, detach, and return the consent form to _____.

I am willing to (have my child) participate in this project which will involve observation, audio and videotaping of instruction during regular classroom events.

_____ _____

Signature of child Date

_____

Signature of parent

Appendix H

Letter of Consent to Students

McGill University

Dear Parents:

As you know, over the last several months I have been visiting your child's classroom once a week or so to study instruction in this setting. This research has included observing, note taking and videotaping general class events. I am learning a great deal and will be happy to share my findings with you at some future date.

At this stage I feel it would be helpful to interview a handful of children as well so that interpretations in the study reflect a variety of viewpoints about instruction. Your child has shown an interest in participating this way. I am asking you and your child to sign the attached consent form if you are in agreement to having your child interviewed and audio-taped or videotaped throughout the interview. I want to remind you that at any point throughout the interview process your child may freely withdraw, and that she/he will be reminded of this. As well, I would like to underline that data from these interviews (as with the rest of the study) will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time with this matter. Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Please sign and return this consent form to Mrs._____

I agree (for my child) to be interviewed as part of a research project on classroom instruction. This may include audio or videotaping the interview.

_____ _____

Student signature Date

_____

Parent signature

Appendix I

Letter of Consent to Selected Parents

McGill University

Dear Parents:

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of the research project on instruction in _____'s classroom and to ask if you would be interested in being interviewed as part of this study.

As you know I have been visiting your child's classroom throughout the school year in an attempt to come to a deeper understanding of the role of instruction in such settings. My time has been spent observing, taking notes, and videotaping general classroom events. With their consent, I have also interviewed _____ as well as several students. The opportunity to include their perspectives in the study is greatly appreciated as it leads to richer interpretations than what would otherwise be possible.

For this reason I am also asking if you would be interested in participating. I feel that parents' voices are an important dimension in studies like this and need to be included. Interviewing would provide an opportunity to share your ideas and stories in ways that can potentially enrich instructional practices.

From the responses returned to me I will contact several parents. I want to assure you that, as with the other participants, protecting your rights is of utmost importance. The following procedures will be followed:

- anonymity will be strictly guarded; pseudonyms will be used and audio-taping (if you are comfortable with this) will be for data collection only.
- if at any point you wish to end the interview you will in no way be pressured to continue
- only material that you are comfortable with will contribute to the final research study
- any questions you may have will be answered in as straightforward a manner as possible, while still protecting the rights of other participants

Thank you for taking the time to consider this, and for returning the consent form if you are interested in being interviewed at a mutually convenient time. I hope to share more about this study at a later date.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Please sign and return to _____

I agree to be interviewed as part of a research project on instruction in cycle one settings.

_____ _____

Name Signature

_____

Date

Appendix J

Visiting Dates

Visiting dates

Monday, August 30

Monday, September 11

Wednesday, September 18 (Governing Board meeting)

Wednesday, September 25

Friday, September 29 (1/2 day)

Wednesday, October 11

Monday, October 23

Monday, November 5

Wednesday, November 22

Monday, December 11

Monday, January 9

Monday, January 15

Monday, January 29

Monday, February 5

Wednesday, February 25

Monday, March 12

Monday, March 19

Monday, March 26

Monday, April 9

Monday, April 23

Tuesday, May 1

Thursday, May10

Appendix K

Initial Research Proposal

Governing Board Meeting
_____School
September 18, 2000

Topic: Classroom research

At various times throughout this academic year I hope to visit _____ cycle one class to learn more about the meaning of instruction in dynamic classrooms. This research will contribute to my doctoral studies at McGill University.

_____ has kindly agreed to my visits. We will be sending consent forms home to families shortly explaining the nature of the study. Briefly, I will be observing instruction in the classroom over time and taking a great deal of notes. I will not focus on any particular students or be testing anything or anyone. Instead, I will be looking for patterns of instruction that emerge as the year unfolds. This type or research may also include videotaping classroom events and interviewing several students and parents. Naturally, all involved parties will be consulted in this event and anonymity will be strictly guarded.

I can assure you that protecting the rights of everyone is of utmost importance throughout this research. Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me or _____.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Appendix L

Interim Report

Date: 2001-03-18

To: Governing board
Subject: research project update

Research in _____classroom is progressing smoothly. Until recently this has included observing, note taking and videotaping general classroom events. With _____ collaboration I am learning a great deal about instruction that I will be happy to share with you at some future date.

Now the project is moving into a second phase. A number of students are presently being interviewed so that it will be possible to understand the process of literacy learning and instruction from their perspectives. I also hope to interview several parents within a few weeks so that their voices can also be included in my study.

At this point I would like to thank you for making me feel so welcome in the school during my weekly visits. Also, should you have any questions or concerns about this research project I will be happy to address them.

Sincerely,

Mary Stewart

Appendix M

Student Interview Questions

Student interview questions

How do students understand the process of becoming literate? What role do they think teachers/parents/others play? What role do their home experiences have in these perceptions? How do they understand the experience of a bilingual program?

Thank students for agreeing to participate. Restate why I am interviewing students (to find out what it's like to learn in grade one so that we can learn more and better ways about teaching students)

Part one-background information

1) Can you tell me a little bit about yourself (age, previous school experiences, family size, place in family, parent's occupations, hobbies, vacations)?

Part two-classroom experiences

1) general impression of grade one- What is grade one like? What kinds of things do you do with Bea? (prompt- If there was a child that moved in down the street what would you tell him/her about the class she was about to join?)

2) student perceptions of literacy learning- I notice that your reading/writing is really coming along. When did you learn to read / write? (prompt- Who helped/helps you learn to read and write? What does that person do to help you?)

3) student preferences re literate activities- What do you choose to do during free time in class? (prompt- I notice the grade one/grade one book is very popular with this class. Is it something that you would turn to during free time? Why?)

4) strategies for overcoming difficulties- What is easy/hard for you? When you have difficulty with_____ what do you do? (What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?)

5) understanding of explicit/ tacit rules- What are the rules in the classroom (polite rules/ rules to help you learn more easily)? How did you learn those rules? Why do you think Bea has those rules?

6) continuity between home and school- When you are at home do you do any of the same kinds of things that you do at school? What kinds of things? Who with? When did you start doing these things?

7) student's understanding of Bea's class in the context of other school contexts- I notice that you spend part of your week studying in French? Can you tell me what it's like having two classrooms like that? What's the difference between Bea's class and the French class? Between Bea's class and recess?

8) student's understanding of appropriate instruction /student's understanding of their parents view of appropriate instruction - Bea's job is a teacher, as you know. What are the most important things she has to do? If your job was to be a teacher how what would you do? What kind of homework would you give? What do you think your parents would say to this kind of teacher?

9) final impressions- What do you like most/least about grade one?

Appendix N

Parent Interview Questions

Parent Interview Questions

The reason for interviewing parents is to explore their understanding of how teaching and learning occur in Bea's class, how this understanding relates to their expectations of what literacy instruction should be, and how all this relates to the teacher's and students' own interpretations of learning and instruction.

A) Introduction

Thank parent for helping me come to a better understanding of the meaning of instruction in a grade one setting. Review the idea that examining instruction from several viewpoints (classroom observation, interviews with students, parents and teacher) helps to build a broader understanding of instruction than would be possible if it was examined from a single lens. Remind parent that she is free to share as much or as little as she wishes.

B) Background questions

Before we get into instruction (teaching and learning) in Bea's class I was wondering if you would be willing to share a bit of yourself.

1. Can you talk a bit about your family? (careers, interests, hobbies) .
2. Can you tell me something about your own memories of schooling? (how do you remember your early classrooms, teachers, learning to read and write, homework)
3. How do you remember communication between home and school when you were a child? (parent involvement in the schools, authority)

C) Present experiences

1. How would you describe your son/daughter's experience in Bea's classroom? (what is Bea's approach to teaching and learning, how is he learning to read/write/select books/do homework etc.)
2. How would you describe the communication between home and school in Bea's class? (report cards, opportunities/expectations to be involved in your daughter's education?)
3. How are these experiences fitting in with your expectations of what early schooling should be? (what are the responsibilities of a grade one teacher?)

D) Closing

1. Are there any things that you would like to ask me or talk about that you haven't had a chance to mention yet?
2. Thank parent for participating and say that I will contact him/her again, probably by telephone, to make sure that I am interpreting the interview in a way that makes sense to him/her.

Appendix O

Bea's Interview Questions

Bea's Interview Questions

Introduction
Thank her for extending herself and her classroom for the whole year, as well as agreeing to participate in this interview. Explain that as a follow up to this interview I will be contacting her, probably by telephone, to discuss my emerging interpretations with her.

Background
Ask Bea to talk a bit about herself so that her teaching can be set against a background of experiences.

1. Can you talk for a bit about your own background? (family, childhood memories of school, teaching history, anything else from the past that may have an influence on how you teach now eg. memories of certain students, the influence of husband in same profession)

The present
1. Before getting into specific aspects of teaching can you briefly talk about your philosophy of teaching/learning/instruction?
2. What approaches do you use with your students that are guided by this philosophy? (PROMPTS: role of direct instruction, props, fun, phonics, planning, differentiating instruction, guided reading, discipline, cross curricular instruction, humor)
3. You've mentioned that there should be a partnership with parents. Can you talk a bit more about that ?
4.You have talked about the importance of teachers reflecting on their teaching (glow and grow) Can you give an example of this from your own teaching?
5. How do you and Melissa work together in the classroom?
6. What's it like working with so many parent volunteers?
7. You've talked some about issues surrounding bilingual instruction in this school. Can you talk a bit more about that?
8. What is the job of a grade one teacher?
9. Can you talk about some of the less obvious responsibilities that come with teaching literacy to grade one students?

Conclusion
1. Is there anything else worth mentioning that we haven't talked about yet?
2. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

Thank teacher for interview.

Appendix P

Formatted and Open-Ended Activities

A COMPARISON OF FORMATTED AND OPEN-ENDED LITERACY EVENTS

This table shows the time Bea spent on formatted and open-ended events during a typical day (Wednesday, February 21st, 2001).

TIME OF DAY	GENERAL TYPE OF EVENT	SPECIFIC TYPE OF EVENT	DURATION OF EVENT IN MINUTES
7:50-8:14	OPEN-ENDED	TRANSITION TIME	24
8:14-8:36*	OPEN-ENDED	SKILL AND CONCEPT LESSON	22
8:36-8:55	OPEN-ENDED	THEME STUDY	19
8:55-9:00	OPEN-ENDED	FRAMING EVENT	5
9:00-9:48	PHYSICAL EDUCATION/ RECESS		
9:48-10:03	OPEN-ENDED	TRANSITION TIME	15
10:03-10:43	FORMATTED	STATION WORK**	40
10:43-11:00	OPEN-ENDED	TRANSITION TIME	17
11:00-12:00	LUNCH		
12:00-12:05	OPEN-ENDED	TRANSITION TIME	5
12:05-12:25	OPEN-ENDED	THEME STUDY	20
12:25-1:30	FORMATTED	STATION WORK**	65
1:30-2:00	OPEN-ENDED	TRANSITION TIME	30

* Time of day in some instances is approximate. I did not always take precise note of time in my researcher's journal and videotaped segments included only parts of days.
** During station work students met with Bea for monitored literacy. The total percentage of time that each student spent at formatted events was therefore slightly more than this table indicates.

Total minutes students engaged in all literacy events: 262
Total minutes students engaged in formatted events: 105 **(40%)**
Total minutes students engaged in open-ended events: 157 **(60%)**

Appendix Q

Home Reading Sheet and Literature

_____ Home Reading Record form #

Title of Book	Parent Comments	by child	Read to child	with child	Date

HMcBride

Helping Your Child With Home Reading

1. **Keep sessions short and easy: 10 to 15 minutes maximum**
   Provide as much adult help as is needed to make your child feel successful. If books are continually too hard, let me know with a quick note.

2. **Early readers need to check pictures.**
   This is one of the many cues your child will use as a beginning reader. Encourage the child to look at the picture. Point out specific things. The picture along with the initial consonant of an unknown word is usually enough information to make accurate word predictions.

3. **When your child gets stuck and needs help, or when an error is made, read the whole phrase or sentence and not just the unknown word.**
   This allows your child to focus on reading for meaning and encourages the use of context clues. Respond to errors with, "Does that make sense?"

4. **When your child bogs down, read a few words or lines to him, or read a bit together.**
   When a child struggles word by word, he loses the sense of what is being read and he may get discouraged. Reading together allows the child to hear himself read fluently.

5. **Prompt your child to skip a word and read on.**
   When a child is struggling with a word you can encourage them to read on and then come back and try it. The rest of the sentence will provide enough meaning to allow a good guess. Remember to ask, "Does that make sense?"

6. **Use "Sound it out" only as an occasional prompt.**
   Beginning readers do not have efficient decoding skills. Most beginning readers need more specific cues. For example: say the sound of the initial consonant, the main vowel, or a key part. Phonics is only one of the many strategies a child must learn to use in the complex process of reading.

7. **Use lots of encouragement along with adult guidance.**
   Beginners need practice and repetition. "Rote reading"(memorizing sentence patterns), wanting to reread favorite or easy books or forgetting previously recognized words are typical for beginning readers.