"What I'm doing is really working in the language arts with the kids:"

Teacher Knowledge, Teacher Change, and the Construction of Teaching Practice for Reading and Writing

By

Laura Elizabeth Atkinson

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Teaching Practice for Reading and Writing

BY

Laura Elizabeth Atkinson

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of

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Abstract

The educational change that makes the most difference to student outcomes is the instructional change that occurs in the practice of the classroom teacher. New ideas in education influence innovative practice and new curricular methods before they are implemented in classrooms. This study examined how such curricular changes have made their way into the teaching of reading and writing in upper elementary classrooms—grades three to six—by a retrospective examination of the teaching histories, the thinking, and reflections on change, of twelve long-service teachers (and one first-year teacher) and their current responses to demands for change. Two eras of instructional change in the language arts in Manitoba were of interest: the move to whole language instruction in reading from the late 1970's to the late 1980's; and the move to process writing methods from the late 1980's to the mid 1990's. Teacher interviews were audiotaped and the transcripts of interviews analyzed for several themes: the nature of teacher knowledge and its acquisition; the influence of personal reading and writing experiences on teachers' practice; underlying theories of literacy acquisition; beliefs about literacy learning and instruction; and the testing and adoption of new instructional ideas. Analysis of the interview data yielded the following conclusions:

1. The teachers' valued practical methods over theory in relation to their practice in teaching reading and writing.
2. The teachers valued practical knowledge that they had gained through classroom teaching experience.
3. These teachers' own, widely varying experiences as readers and writers were the greatest influences in shaping their teaching practices in reading and writing.
4. The teachers' beliefs about reading and writing acquisition were approaching current ideas in the field. They have adopted some but not all of the essential practices in whole language and process writing instruction.
5. The teachers did not describe recent changes in theories of language and literacy and relate them to reading and writing instruction. They described changes that they have implemented in methods of instruction.
6. They have made changes where they have been able to make practical trials of new methods that they thought likely to succeed.
7. Their preferred source of ideas for change was their own experience and some practical trials in collaboration with colleagues and students.

Implications for teacher education and professional development are also explored.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the foundational theories of education instigate innovations in curriculum and instruction and these changes eventually become part of teachers' everyday practice in the classroom. It is only through the changed thinking and behaviour of the individual teacher, however, that these changes ever emerge in classroom practice. In the course of many hours planning and preparing, instructing and working with students in their classrooms, and reflecting on their efforts and achievements, all teachers develop their own personal practical theories of teaching. Although very few would be able to articulate them, their theories are implicit in their beliefs about teaching practice and the processes of teacher change. The influence of policy makers and outside experts are important, but the ideas valued by the teachers are those they develop as they work and interact in teaching environments with administrators, fellow teachers, parents of their students, their own children, and, not least, the students whom they teach.

The pace of change in education has never been rapid. Time and again commentators on the long-range results of periods of educational reform have concluded that little in the way of real change has been accomplished (Cremin, 1961; Dow, 1991; Hoffman, 1998; Meyer, 1994; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974). To a great extent though,

education mirrors the society in which it is situated and the society that it serves. Goodlad (1997) has noted that "the purpose of the public part of the educational infrastructure in a democracy is to ensure civicism in everyone so as to create, in turn, a *civitas* not unduly strained by unbridled individualism" (p. 34). In his view "education and democracy are inextricably woven together . . . each is instrumental to the other" (p. 32). Consequently, while educational institutions seem largely static, a long view of educational practice within those institutions in the period of the twentieth century, shows that teaching practice has evolved in response to philosophical and ideological changes in the larger society (Fenstermacher, 1986; Goodlad, 1997). This is certainly true in the teaching of English Language arts where we see, at the end of the twentieth century, instruction that is more child-centred, humane, and responsive to the developmental stages, learning styles and developmental needs of individual students in their language and literacy (Britton & Chorny, 1991; Dyson & Freedman, 1991; Farrell, 1991).

Educational Reform and Instructional Innovation

Reform has been the operative word in the educational policy literature since the early decades of this century. Successive waves of reform (e.g., progressivism, back-to-basics, whole language) have repeatedly sought to change the educational landscape (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1992; Elmore, 1991; Throne, 1994; Tyack & Cuban 1995). For many years, changes in educational approaches have been touted, in addition, as the only way to remedy many of the ills of society such as intolerance, violence, and

substance abuse. Most recently. education is being viewed as a crucial way to leverage a nation's position in a difficult and challenging global marketplace (OECD. 1997). Pressures on educators. especially teachers. to upgrade. to move with the times. and to remain current have become constant and more extreme. One current vehicle of this pressure is curriculum reform and increased pressure on teachers to be accountable for what they teach though increased scrutiny and more system driven assessment of student learning (Alberta Education. 1997; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994; 1995; Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1996).

Although the larger, system-driven movements have concentrated on administrative reforms such as structural change, standards-setting, external assessment. or changes in required teacher qualifications or compensation structures. there have also frequently been recommendations for change in teaching practices. Whatever is mandated by policy or decision-makers for educational systems. the key to curricular. and therefore educational. change is the behaviour of teachers in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1996; McLaughlin, 1987). The mandates of policy makers cannot will changes into existence. What makes a difference in the implementation of new ideas in educational practice has always been teachers' current and changing knowledge of their subject matter, their knowledge and beliefs about teaching their subject, their willingness to develop new capabilities and to adopt new methods and approaches, and their evaluations and reflections on these efforts.

Educational Change and Teacher Beliefs

The question of how teachers themselves make changes in their own practice—what helps them to do it and what gets in the way—is important to any process of educational reform. It has never seemed possible to influence teachers to make sudden changes or changes that they have not chosen for themselves. The nature of the teaching profession is such that teachers build their expertise slowly over a lifetime in the profession. This process begins with their personal experience in education and the choice to pursue the profession and continues through preservice teacher education and through years of practice and ongoing formal and informal learning and reflection (Fessler & Christenson, 1992). The practices that teachers choose, and the concepts that support those practices, guide them professionally in their approaches to curriculum, their interactions with students, their collegial relationships, and their understanding of their place in the wider community. Such long-nurtured and strongly-held ideas about the nature of learning, about the course of child and adolescent development, and about the requirements of schooling are not easily moved or deliberately influenced. These concepts are encompassed within the teacher's developed notions of her own role within the complex institution of human relations, occupational and life courses, customs and traditions that is education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985).

Teachers respond in their own ways personally and professionally even when change is mandated. Any program of change or reform must take account of how teachers deal with change if it is to be successful. Not a great deal of research has been

conducted, however, on how teachers individually respond to reform initiatives, particularly in the area of curriculum and instruction. It has been shown that teachers modify their practice according to their foundational beliefs about teaching and learning and about their subject area and that they modify foundational beliefs because of their experience in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Richardson, 1994). Making a change in teaching practice is not a simple mechanical process of collecting, evaluating, and testing new ideas, although many people outside the field of education might envision it this way. The relationship between beliefs and practices in the language arts has been shown to be a complex one that is not yet delineated (Deford, 1985; Duffy, 1981; Harste & Burke, 1977; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; O'Brien & Norton, 1991). For all teachers, curricular change can only come about as part of a complex cognitive process in which new ideas are harmonized and integrated with their customary ways of understanding, their practices, and their beliefs about their subject area, their students, and their role (Hargreaves, 1994).

The important part of teachers' beliefs is what they believe about the pedagogy of their subject not necessarily about the subject or discipline itself. Shulman (1986) called this *pedagogical content knowledge* and distinguished it from simple content knowledge. This is the knowledge gained from experience about how students learn the subject material, ways of presenting that make learning easier and more enjoyable, common errors that students make, the pace, the timing and sequence of activities that is most effective. In teachers' own terms this is often referred to as "what works." It is a set of beliefs that is expressed in practical concrete terms. It is gained primarily through personal trial and error using suggested curriculum and instruction practices. Teachers do

not adopt ideas that are recommended by experts or research-tested. Teachers are influenced, though in a roundabout way, by the prevailing zeitgeist. They hear about recommended curricular changes, they test them, and perhaps integrate them into their teaching practice.

New Language Theory and Curriculum Change in English Language Arts

There have been enormous changes in the field of English Language arts, the teaching of reading and writing, and the study of literature in the last fifty years. Changes in the theory of language, language development, language use in society, and theories of literacy development and uses have had sweeping implications for education. Research findings have prompted new reading theory, theories about emergent literacy, theories about oral language use, theories of the social basis of language development. Each of these new theories has prompted the development of, and advocacy for, methods of instruction that implement the new understanding of language learning processes that are entailed in these theories (Farrell, 1991). In short, new theory development has highlighted practices that are consonant with it, new approaches have been deliberately crafted to implement new theory, and educators are under increasing pressure to adopt these new methods.

Recent theoretical change in the Language arts has come about during two major

eras (Kozulin. 1994): the first was in the late seventies and early eighties. when the

nativist/cognitive approach in educational psychology. with an emphasis on the learning

processes of the individual student. created major changes particularly to the teaching of

reading (Smith. 1982). This change is often referred to simply as Whole Language. The

second era of change is the more recent move of the late eighties and early nineties to a

social-constructionist approach and its effect in particular on the teaching of writing.

often referred to simply as The Writing Process (Dyson & Freedman. 1991).

Adult Learning, Teacher Knowledge, and Diffusion of Change

This study examines how a group of long-service elementary English Language

arts teachers have built their knowledge of teaching in the context of an era of change in

the teaching of reading and writing that has prevailed during their teaching careers. In a

focussed interview they were invited to recall and reflect on their first years of teaching.

their ideas about their teaching and their responses to change. The study used an

interpretive method. defined by Erickson (1986) as having a "central research interest in

human meaning in social life and in its elucidation and exposition by the researcher" (p.

119). to examine the teachers' self-concept as teachers of the language arts. their journeys

of change in their classrooms as they transformed new ideas into their own personal

practical knowledge. and the roles they played in the change processes in their schools.

With regard to the change processes in their schools. the ideas of Rogers (1995) about the diffusion of change have been utilized. A pattern in the diffusion of change was first noted by social anthropologists who examined the adoption of innovative ideas in agriculture in rural communities. Rogers who was primarily interested in technological innovations. has looked at change processes in several social communities and found similar patterns. In every change process a few individuals will be *innovators*. followed by a small group of *early adopters*. Only later in the process will two larger groups. an *early majority* and a *late majority* complete the adoption of an innovation. A small group of *laggards* will most likely never make the change. Each of these groups has slightly different characteristics but for all except the innovators the change is facilitated by interpersonal connections and influence.

Traditional theories about adult learning (andragogy) focus on the characteristics of adult learners. their self-direction and need for relevance (Knowles. 1980). To understand teacher learning and change it is also necessary to take account of the social contexts and relationships of the educational workplace and the essentially social nature of learning (Thomas. 1991).

The design of this study of teacher learning was influenced by recent changes in theoretical approaches to the study of teaching and learning in general. In a pervasive shift from cognitive to social models. learning is now more likely to be studied in the context of how it is influenced by both the social environment of the learning setting and by the emotions. desires and needs of the learner (Schallert. 1991). The process-product approach to identifying effective teaching methods has given way to an interest in teachers' thought processes and their concern for contextual considerations such as

student responses (Clark & Peterson. 1986). In another example of new perspectives on teaching. Doyle (1983) has re-defined teaching in terms of the construct of *academic work*—activities that are the unit for consideration by teachers. This formulation allows the process and content of teaching to be considered together as "curriculum in action" (Doyle. 1989). Another currently influential social learning theory is *scaffolding*. the support provided by an adult or knowledgeable peer. that allows a task to be accomplished with help and then independently (Vygotsky. 1978). Similarly studies that show the importance of human goals. motivations and intentionality in the success of learning endeavours. emphasize the place of context. social factors and group influence on learning (Ames & Archer. 1988; Dweck & Leggett. 1988; Young & Schallert. 1989).

These shifts and re-alignments in the field of educational psychology suggested some of the following approaches to the analysis of the results. In the interviews teachers were asked how they had changed their teaching practices in response to the Whole Language "revolution" (a question that none of them had any difficulty responding to). Areas of interest included: their apprehension and adoption of new ideas and methods: elements in their experience in the school setting that aided or impeded their progress: how they integrated new ideas and practices with the old: how they struggled with the problems raised: what changes they found necessary as the new bumped up against the customary: how they made the new their own and a part of their hard-won expertise. Teachers' intentions and actions were examined through the various lenses of their self-perceptions as change agents and as innovators: their justifications for their actions: the responses of peers and students; and the shifting concepts and personal theories that they developed as they tested their ideas in action in the classroom and the school. Even

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though teachers may not have been prepared to outline her own theories, each one had, in effect, developed her own theories of teacher knowledge and teacher change and, furthermore, had implemented new ideas according to these personal practical theories of knowledge.

Teachers were asked about their expectations and objectives for their current students in reading and writing. In this context they were asked about methods used, their rationales for these methods, and their evaluations/reflections on the effectiveness of these methods. If they did not volunteer currently recommended innovative approaches, they were specifically asked what they thought of them and whether they planned to use them. In the discussion of these issues, key areas of concern were pursued. In these discussions teachers' beliefs about learning and instruction were implicit.

Significance/Importance

The study deals with questions about how change occurs in education at the classroom level, specifically about how individual teachers work to implement change in their classrooms. Using the example of language theory and curricular and instructional change in the English Language arts, a process of teacher change is delineated in which teachers transformed theoretical knowledge (embodied in curricular and instructional innovations) into their classroom practice through the formation of personal practical knowledge. Theories of teacher change (Fullan, 1985; Guskey, 1986) theories of

diffusion of change (Rogers, 1995) and theories of personal practical knowledge formation (Connelley & Clandinin, 1985) guided this study and were tested by it.

The study was conducted during times and in circumstances when, for these teachers, fundamental understandings about their subject area were changing and necessitating changes in their practice. The teachers were under considerable pressure to make changes in many other aspects of their teaching, as well, in particular in science and mathematics and in technology and were always aware that their work was being scrutinized by fellow teachers, by school and system administrators, by parents, and often most acutely by their own students.

The results of this study can be generalized to circumstances where educational change of various kinds is mandated or expected. The findings about these teachers' intentions and actions in this situation may provide a map of how teachers implement curricular and instructional change, the roles that they play, how they influence others, how they are influenced, and the mechanism of influence. The importance of teacher support when change is mandated will be underlined. Information about the human and material supports that are necessary, and at what level materials and assistance can be provided to teachers may also be useful at the school and system level.

The study demonstrates the complexity of the teaching enterprise in the way that understandings about a discipline and how the discipline is learned are integrated into the teacher's daily practise. The ways that teachers were able to accomplish this complex . task has implications for teachers' initial preparatory education, their professional development needs, and the kind of instructional leadership that enables them to work to the height of their capacity in teaching.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature will explore four main bodies of work that support and inform the present study. First, the place of instructional change within the larger context of reform in education in the twentieth century will be examined. Second, the ways that education in general and teachers in particular have responded to educational change as it has impacted curriculum and instruction will be looked at. Particular attention will be paid to the importance of teachers' beliefs about language and learning in shaping this response and the nature of the changes that have come about because of teacher action. The third focus of this review will be on the changes that have taken place in the second half of the twentieth century in theories of language and learning—first the change from behaviourist theory to nativist/cognitive theory and then the on-going change from nativist/cognitive theory to constructionist theory—and how these changes have affected curriculum and instruction in reading and writing. Finally, the various theories of teacher knowledge and change will be reviewed as well as theories about the diffusion of change in social institutions.

Education Reform and Instructional Innovation

In the history of education in North America in the 20th century there have been several cycles or swings or alternations of reform during which different themes have been stressed (Darling-Hammond & Wise. 1992: Elmore. 1991: Throne. 1994). Tyack and Cuban (1995) refer to these as cycles of policy talk. Policy trends in education seem to be polarized and alternate in patterns that are difficult to tease out at the time but become clearer at the distance of a couple of decades. even if it is still difficult to say what drives such an innovation cycle (Alexander, Murphy, & Woods. 1996).

Innovations within the process of educational reform may be thought of as attempted or prescribed applications of technologies to solve some problem or difficulty in an educational process (Tushman & Anderson. 1986). Technology in this sense is any theory, knowledge. or practice that mediates between inputs in a system and the outcomes of a system. Administrative innovations propose the redesign of organizational structures or cultures and may apply to any organization or business (Abrahamson. 1991). These are commonly found in educational reform movements. Examples are school-based management. standards testing, school councils. merit pay for teachers. etc. The innovations that are particular to education. though. are those in instructional technologies that affect the core enterprise of education which is teaching and learning. These are the innovations that promise to make a difference in education by affecting learning processes and outcomes. Good teachers will respond to promising instructional innovations while most innovations in administration are outside of the realm that teachers have an interest in or influence on.

Despite decades of scientific attention, any directly discernible relationship between the structure of educational organizations and the educational outcomes of those organizations remains uncertain. This may be because of the complexity of the educational enterprise itself or of the complexity of the relationship between schools and society. Systems analysts who examine institutional systems have noted that educational authorities seem compelled by the ambiguity of educational objectives and outcomes to conform to the expectations of society as to the form that educational institutions should take (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987). Schools have to look like schools and function the way that schools are thought to function in order to retain legitimacy and maintain the right to draw on the resources of society. Prestigious models such as private schools or well-publicized programs in other districts or divisions are therefore used as exemplars in the reform process to ensure that instructional environments retain an appropriate look. This restricts creativity in instructional methods and ensures that even innovative instruction will not be radically different from instruction in the past. At the same time taking on innovative administrative ideas, such as Total Quality Management, the management ideas of Japanese business, or other current fads in business management, puts forward the image of an organization that is flexible and up-to-date (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Feldman & March, 1981).

Reform periods in education have been characterized by many issues but two common ones are the administrative question of centralization vs. decentralization, and the instructional question of skills-based vs. experience-based learning. Many reform periods and innovations in education are couched in terms of these kind of opposites that fall in and out of favour (Alexander, Murphy, & Woods, 1996). Debates between the

proponents of these positions are maintained by the absence of conclusive proof for the superiority of one or the other. The issues interconnect, however, and create clusters of ideas. Administrators tend to favour centralized controls and stricter standards while educational professionals often favour decentralized controls and progressive education (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987). The pattern is made more complex, however, when administrative innovations are imported, when some innovations linger after a reform period has ended, and when descriptions of educational methods are vague and change over time.

Despite the attention paid to administrative reforms, the educational innovations that have the potential to change outcomes are instructional innovations that emerge from large-scale movements in the intellectual history of a society. The question that remains then, is how instructional innovations are implemented in an educational system. If teachers in implementing instructional change are also constrained to conform to societal expectations about education, what are the mechanisms of this constraint?

Educational Change and Teacher Beliefs

Educational reformers have repeatedly expressed frustration with their inability to promote and achieve the adoption of new ideas and practices in educational systems. A retrospective examination of the effects of the progressive movement in the first half of the twentieth century (Cremin, 1961) concluded that projected reforms had not been successful in transforming education for several reasons. The reforms were too radical in

the changes they demanded of educational systems. The underlying ideas were highly abstract and teachers of the day were not prepared by their training to teach in such complex ways. Beginning teachers changed themselves and their practice to fit the system as they entered it and veteran teachers defined their practice as successful and felt no need of change.

Efforts to implement educational change in the sixties and seventies concentrated on teacher education as Normal Schools gave way to Faculties of Education in universities and colleges. In the meantime widespread concern about the quality of education in the United States, in the face of Russian advances in space technology, had prompted an influx of government money into education that fuelled changes in curriculum and teaching materials. Curriculum innovations were first seen in science and mathematics but soon spread to all subject areas. It was assumed that the provision of new materials that embodied ideas from the new cognitive psychology about the constructive nature of learning would be sufficient to change the way that teachers taught.

Looking back at this period, researchers interested in educational change in the second half of the twentieth century have concluded that reforms were too abstract and represented too dramatic a demand for change. The programs were never as widely implemented as was hoped and their results were not outstanding at least as measured by test results (Dow, 1991). These conclusions are very similar to earlier observations on the effects of reform in a specific time period.

In the late seventies a reform effort that accompanied the back-to-the-basics movement attempted to make innovations explicit in their features and procedures, and ensure success with intensive training, carefully monitored implementation, and clear

accountability. The best known example was DISTAR, the Direct Instructional System of Teaching Arithmetic and Reading (Englemann & Carnine. 1982). In this system teachers were trained to work intensively with small groups of children drilling them and reinforcing them for behaviours that were later measured as signs of successful learning. Evaluations predictably showed some initial success but these innovations were not sustained. They were probably impossible to sustain in teacher practice over longer time periods and with larger groups of students without constant monitoring. This method subsequently did not spread (Meyer, 1994; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974). Whether long term results would have been favourable is not known.

During the same decade various disciplinary groups were funded to examine and report on change processes and progress in their areas of interest. The Social Science Education consortium produced a study of the characteristics of innovations. the systems receiving them. the processes of development and implementation (Carlson, Fox & Stevens. 1975) to determine why innovations were not adopted in their field.

In the same decade. the Rand study of change also looked at the characteristics of innovations and found that if the new system was adaptable to the teaching environment it would have a greater chance of being adopted (Berman & McLaughlin. 1978). This was an early acknowledgement that the benefits of innovation were not so self-evident that they could simply be imposed on teachers or offered to them in the confident assumption that they would be implemented.

A consideration of the importance of teacher beliefs in the adoption of innovative practices in their teaching, represents an understanding of the complexity of the teaching process. A simplistic view sees teaching as a series of behaviours that will result in

desirable or undesirable student behaviours. This is the orientation of much of the process-product educational research of the seventies and early eighties. This view is now giving way to an interest in how teachers think about teaching (Duffy, 1994). In recent years more attention has been paid to the teacher as the thinking practitioner and researchers who are interested in the process of educational change recognize that the teacher and her thoughts and reflections on her practice are the keys to the implementation of changed practice (Clark & Peterson, 1986). New ideas will not be implemented if they are just talked about, delivered to the teacher in new materials, or in methods that are designed to bypass the teacher as agent. Change has to take place in the teacher herself.

With this recognition a good deal of frustration has centred on the behaviour of teachers and their resistance to new ideas. Researchers interested in seeing the adoption of particular methods and approaches have been frustrated in their observations of teacher practices in specific disciplines. Anders and Richardson (1994) found that rather than adopt new methods in reading instruction that had been tested and were recommended in the literature, teachers tended to rely on their own beliefs about learning based on their past experiences. They planned their teaching for short periods of time and so concentrated on very small units of time when viewing student learning. They also used their own trial and error to develop practices rather than looking to other teachers or experts for guidance. These tendencies of practice have been noted as part of the culture of teaching in other studies of teacher behaviour (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986) and were labelled *conservatism, presentism,* and *individualism* by Lortie (1975).

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In spite of all this pessimism about long term change. it is obvious to any observer with a personal perspective of several decades that education has changed. although the change may not be as dramatic or as definitive as was expected. With the images and experiences of memory to refer to and without specific practices to look for in vain. the changes in education are obvious. The bare classrooms of the 1950's have become print-rich environments and display a relative wealth of learning materials that are accessible to students in format and arrangement. Students engage in a wider range of activities that are themselves less atomistic. There is less rote learning and more project work. Room arrangements and student groupings are more flexible. Students have more autonomy. Teachers pay more attention to what students need. are more willing to follow student lead or initiative in activities. topics and approaches. These changes are consistent with general changes in the philosophy of education that have gradually entered educational theory since the fifties. They have come about in classrooms because of changes in teachers˙ thinking about the nature of teaching and learning. They are what teachers have made of change. what they have been able to make of change given the constraints that they work under.

Unfortunately at the same time that teacher beliefs are being examined for their importance in the change process, the reform of education has already taken a new tack and the focus has shifted again to administrative changes. In the late eighties and early nineties reform has concentrated on changing the educational system in the belief that accountability and decision-making structures have a bigger effect on outcomes than either curriculum or instruction. Early response to these reform efforts have found little effect on teaching at the classroom level (Vinovskis, 1996) except for the implementation

of testing at a state-wide level. In the context of this current preoccupation with accountability there is less concern at least in the administrative structures of education for how teachers implement educational change.

Research that looks at educational change recognizes the importance of teacher beliefs (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992) but there are several versions of the interplay between teacher beliefs and teacher change. When Fullan (1985) looked at the process of change in the practices of elementary teachers he found that teachers first made changes in their teaching practices as innovative methods and approaches were recommended to them in the professional literature, in professional development sessions, or were mandated in provincial curriculum reform. Once they had seen the positive effects that the new methods produced in their classrooms and had reflected on this, they began to make changes in their thinking about teaching, at least in relation to the particular subjects where the new methods had been implemented. Shortly after, work by Guskey (1986) came to similar conclusions about the relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher change. He also concluded that teachers first make changes in their classrooms and later change their thinking presumably once they have seen the operation and the results of the new methods.

In specific subject areas such as Language arts the results are not so clear-cut. The relationship between beliefs and practices depends on how beliefs are defined and measured. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) suggest that change occurs in the other direction, at least in reading instruction, with teachers acquiring new theory about reading and then proceeding to make changes in instruction on their classrooms. Richardson (1994) suggests that the relationship may be different depending on the types

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of beliefs and on the characteristics of the teachers, and that the relationship may be interactive rather than linear. There is no clear agreement on the definition of teacher beliefs, whether distinct from teacher knowledge and/or from pedagogical theory, nor is there agreement on how teacher beliefs should be measured. Furthermore, Language arts as a subject area has had enormous changes in its foundational theories in the latter half of the twentieth century. Theories about the nature of language, its purposes, acquisition, and development have all changed and because these theories involve not only content issues in language but also instructional issues they have had an unprecedented impact on curriculum and instruction at all levels.

New Language Theory and Curriculum Change in Language Arts

The coherence in the instructional innovations in the field of Language arts can be seen when they are related not to the needs of the system but to the changes in the theoretical foundations of the field of language and literacy. An overview of these changes yields a succession of theoretical shifts that are then reflected in curricular theory and instructional practices in the Language arts.

The study of language development has been affected by large shifts in intellectual history, by the paradigm shifts currently found in many fields. The new epistemology suggests that inter-subjectivity or shared beliefs about the nature of reality is the way that truth is arrived at. The result has been the loss of former foundational

certainties in all disciplines and the substitution for them of post-structural and post-modern theories and ideas.

In the area of linguistics, new theory suggests answers to questions about: the nature and purposes of language and what that implies about human nature: the processes and mechanisms, both within the individual and in human society, through which language is acquired: the nature of linguistic competence of the native speaker: the functions of language in relation to human cognition and learning; the nature, acquisition, and effects of literacy; the origins, nature and uses of literature: and finally, the nature of language differences and change over time. Even in a time of uncertainty new ideas promote consensus in groups of influential thinkers that has the force to promote changes in practice. Education has been and is susceptible to these pressures for change.

In the case of the Language arts, different theories about language and about child language acquisition have a profound effect on emerging theories of reading and writing which in turn affect curriculum development. On the other hand, teachers may and often do adopt curricular approaches without understanding their theoretical implications. Their understanding of the new theory may be totally in terms of its practical application and use.

A great deal of important intellectual and language development occurs in children during the school years. To most people, and especially to those with a Behaviourist theory of language development, this development is not very noticeable or seems to be no more than refinements of a language system that at school entry age seems already quite well-developed. At this stage all of the basic language structures are in place and children are able to carry on conversations and use language in apparently

adult-like ways. The changes that do take place during the school years. whether syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic, or in the area of literacy learning, all reflect and involve conceptual or cognitive development. Those with a Nativist/Cognitive view of language recognize the importance of this intellectual development for the child's academic success. In fact, modern Social Constructionist views of language place language and literacy learning at the heart of the educational enterprise at all levels but especially in the elementary school years. We know that the oral language development of children can be enhanced by educational experience in the early years, and that it seems to provide the basis for literacy development. As teachers plan and structure their programs explicitly in the Language arts, as in other curricular areas, even when they implement new curricular ideas, they do so implicitly according to their ideas about what language is, how it is acquired and related to literacy and learning in general and how it is developing and requiring support in their students. These three basic questions: *What is language? How is language acquired?* and. *What are the implications for learning and curriculum?* will be considered in relation to the three most prominent theories of language.

There are three basic theories about the nature of language, its uses and development: these are the Behaviourist, the Nativist/Cognitive, and the Social Constructionist theories. The progress and growth of these ideas forms a kind of historical taxonomy of linguistics and thus of the understanding of language in the twentieth century. I will present a brief overview of these theories and how they have developed and influenced our ideas about education, specifically the influence on theories of reading and writing in the Language arts.

Behaviourist Theories of Language

There was an intellectual revolution in ideas about language that coalesced around the work of Noam Chomsky at the end of the fifties. Until then and throughout the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the field of Linguistics, along with all of psychology, including Educational Psychology, in North America, had been dominated by behaviourist ideas and in this case by a behaviourist theory of language acquisition (Bohannon & Warren-Leubecker, 1989).

In the Behaviourist theory, language was seen as a verbal behaviour utilizing complex strings of words that are related to each other by association. Speech was thought of as a complex but describable set of skills acquired by each child through the operation of the rules of reinforcement. It was assumed that children imitated language models in their environment, driven by the necessity to express and satisfy their needs and desires, and were rewarded, primarily by parents, for their correct attempts. Gradually their utterances were shaped to resemble more and more closely the adult models (Skinner, 1957).

This theory of language and its acquisition implies a definite view of language and its function in cognition, in learning, and in society. Its function in learning is to communicate thoughts and thus allow knowledge to be fixed or pinned down so that it may be transmitted to others.

Read ing (and Writing) Theory and Curriculum Based on Behaviourism

The curricular approach that is derived from this view of language and learning would break down material to be learned through task analysis, would sequence discrete

pieces in drill and practice routines. and reinforce correct performance. This would result in an exclusively phonics/decoding or bottom-up approach to reading instruction. and also. in the current/traditional approach to instruction in composition.

The conceptual model of reading that is associated with the long dominance of behaviourist notions of language in North America (from around 1890 to the end of the 1950's) is the *translation* model in which meaning is thought to reside in the text and the reader is seen as the translator of the text (Straw & Sadowy, 1990). In the earlier classical model of reading the reader was seen as simply the passive recipient of the meaning that was transmitted by the author via the text. In the Translation model the reader has to be skilled in order to sort out the various puzzles that the text presents. The idea of skills came to dominate thinking about reading and reading instruction. Researchers devised ways to measure the characteristics of text, and the skills of readers (Venezky, 1984) and educators worked out instructional routines for teaching skills (Huey, 1908).

Conclusions reached about reading were summarized in the early skills model of Davis (1944) who clustered nine groupings of skills for analysis: word meaning, contextual analysis, ability to understand passage organization, main idea selection, literal comprehension, paraphasing ability, ability to infer meaning, knowledge of literary devices, and recognition of author's purpose. Later Holmes (1953) developed the first of many flow-chart style models of reading that clustered thirty-seven different skills and sub-skills into five areas: mental ability, linguistic ability, small-motor skills, eye movements. and personality factors. Singer (1965) worked on a developmental model that sought to track the development of the underlying skills that support and enable reading.

All of these models assume that reading is a language process that is made up of numerous skills, all of which can be measured, taught, and tested. The skill-based models of reading were the driving force behind reading instruction well into the second half of the twentieth century with the development of basal readers, workbooks, reading tests, skill lists, and skill teaching and testing materials (Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988).

At the same time the teaching of writing was dominated by a similar concern for skills at the word and sentence level i.e., correctness of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Instruction in composition consisted of the provision of models, and the correction and evaluation of performance, with little direct instruction of drafting or revising skills. This method of instruction in composition has been referred to as the Current-Traditional method (an objectivist rhetoric) by Berlin (1987) and as the Presentational mode by Hillocks (1986).

Further refinements of the translation models of reading have substituted information processing *processes* for skills (Gough, 1972), made skill sets hierarchical so that higher order skills can override lower level skills (Laberge & Samuels, 1974), and have made physical/psychometric measurements that are more precise (Just & Carpenter, 1980). In spite of these and other refinements the translation models of reading continue to assume that meaning is determinable and measurable, that it resides in the text, and that the reader has only to apprehend the meaning through the use of skills and processes and translate it into simple comprehension.

Nativist/Cognitive Theories of Language

The domination of the field of language in education by Behaviourist theories was broken with the assertion of a new way of looking at language by the philosopher, Noam Chomsky (1957). He speculated that the only way to account for language universals and the similar species-wide development of language in all cultures, was to posit an inborn or innate ability to construct language, present at birth in the brain of each person. He called this ability or set of predispositions the LAD or language acquisition device (Chomsky, 1957; 1965). The whole question of the innateness of language became the focal question in much of the ensuing debate. Larger questions about language universals across cultures, however, and speculations about whether language is species-specific, were important elements in the impetus for the change (Lenneberg, 1967).

Chomsky (1957; 1965) suggested that language acquisition could be seen as the development of linguistic competence as the result of an innate force. This force drove the individual to actualize, in the surface structures of the particular language he/she was exposed to as a model, the inherent deep structures of a universal human language. Chomsky suggested that the knowledge of the categories and structures of this universal grammar were somehow hard-wired in the brain. The investigation of this transformational process of developing surface structures to express innate deep structures, became the research paradigm for the next two decades. Researchers attempted to map the course of language development with an emphasis on syntactic development, based on hypothesized pathways of language development.

What was found partly bore out Chomsky's hypotheses, that the syntactic structures of language were acquired in similar sequence by all children in all cultures. It

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also seemed that the rapidity and relative uniformity of this development did suggest that some form of innate ability was involved (Slobin, 1978). But the picture that emerged of language development in children also paralleled the assumptions of the cognitive movement in psychology. In child development this appears as the Piagetian theory of cognitive development. This theory suggests that knowledge is constructed by the individual in invariant processes and that developmentally, the child, in interaction with objects and events in the environment, is the active constructor of this knowledge (Piaget, 1952; 1954). What the researchers in child language found was that language has a strongly developmental course and that it seemed to proceed in ways that supported the cognitive view. The theory of language is therefore referred to as the Nativist/Cognitive theory of language because in relation to language it encompasses the views of Piaget and Chomsky.

In this Nativist/Cognitive view of language, language is defined as a symbolic system constructed on cognitive principles that uses words and structures to stand for and convey thought. The child constructs language through interaction with others in the presence of models of language using innate cognitive/linguistic abilities. Another argument for the nativist portion of this model is that this process goes on in some completely unconscious part of the mind. In young children it is somehow possible, before they have reached the age of full self-consciousness, for them to learn this way. They are somehow able to analyze, hypothesize, test, evaluate, and synthesize abstract elements of language that they could not begin to consciously understand, let alone manipulate constructively (Lindfors, 1987).

The child seems to build and operate on a series of hypotheses about how language is "done". The child intuits the structures that underlie the language heard in the environment and forms hypotheses about how language works. These ideas are then somehow tested out in interaction with others and the child gradually builds a working model of language that approximates adult models (deVilliers & deVilliers, 1978). The clearest evidence of this creative constructive activity is the appearance of developmental forms or systematic "mistakes" that are characteristic of child language as the child applies and sometimes over-applies a structural rule in his/her language. These errors occur in all areas of language. There are frequent over-regularizations of structural rules such as "two foots" and "he goed" in syntax and over-generalizations, such as referring to all hairy animals as "doggie", in the area of semantics. These errors demonstrate the active nature of the construction of language because they show the child putting together, in a rule-governed way, a possible construction that he/she has never heard used and that would be unacceptable as proper usage. Moreover, the child continues to develop and use more complex forms of structure even when simpler forms are prominently available in the environment (Brown, 1973). Something is driving this language acquisition agenda and it is not solely imitation, nor the communication of needs, nor is it reinforcing feedback.

Reading and Writing Theory and Curriculum based on Nativist/Cognitive Theories

The Nativist/Cognitive view of the language learning child as a constructor of knowledge has led to the design and use of curricular approaches and methods such as activity-based learning in which children learn by doing, in active engagement with the

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environment. In reading. language experience and Whole Language are suggested and in

writing. the process writing curriculum is developed. emphasizing the processes of

prewriting. drafting and revising. The teaching of specific and conscious learning

strategies and other metacognitive approaches are also implicated in this view of

language and learning.

New models of reading theory that were developed in response to Chomsky's re-

conceptualization of language have been called *interactive* because they assume that the

meaning that is constructed by the reader is dependent on the reader's own background

and knowledge (Straw & Sadowy, 1990). The reader brings something essential to the

consideration of meaning in the text. In a sense the reader shares the meaning making

with the author via the text because the reader shares with the author the same language

knowledge and world knowledge that went into the making of the text. The reader is able

to understand the text because reading activates organized knowledge sets called *schema*

or scripts that the reader already possesses (Anderson & Pearson. 1984: Shank &

Adelson. 1977). This suggests that the meaning is not resident in the text but that

concepts and relationships are recalled by the reader when cued by the presentation and

organization of the text (Adams & Collins.1985).

The holistic view of reading and the whole language method of reading

instruction that grew out of this rethinking of the reading act are most often associated

with Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971). Goodman (1970) first pointed out the

redundancies of text and the way that a skilled reader uses linguistic (syntactic and

semantic) knowledge to hypothesize about meanings in texts and relies on knowledge of

graphophonic elements of text only when there are ambiguities or difficulties in

understanding. The efficiency of the reader's performance can be judged by the miscues or mistakes that occur during reading (Goodman & Burke. 1972) and whether they indicate impaired meaning-making. In all of this new attention is paid and importance attributed to the knowledge and experiences of the reader. and the strategies that the reader employs in making meaning from the interaction with the text.

Further refinements of the interactive model have been developed by Rumelhart (1977) who shows that understanding at each level of analysis in reading is determined by higher levels of analysis. moving up a hierarchical scale from graphic to syntactic to semantic to contextual perception. analysis. and interpretation. Ruddell and Speaker's interactive model (1985) adds a consideration of the *reader environment* and the *products of reading* to the reader's *declarative and procedural knowledge* and *knowledge utilization and control* (p. 773). The resulting model adds several components but still makes essentially the same assumptions about the interactive nature of the reading act.

In compositional (or rhetorical) theory the parallel model was the Subjective Rhetoric in which the individual discovers some truth through a private act of intuition and attempts to share this with others by means of the language of metaphor. Since this is not considered a process that can be directly taught. the teacher must be content to create the environment in which this creation is possible. Common methods of instruction that arise from this model are referred to as Expressivist pedagogy: the cultivation of original and personal metaphorical language: the use of personal journals to explore personal reactions to and interpretations of experience and to develop personal voice: and the use of peer editing groups to foster authentic voice (Berlin. 1987).

A cognitive developmental approach to the study of writing processes was very productive. The complex relationships between the writer and the reader, the writing task, the subject, and the context was explored in a British study of the growth of composing ability (Britton, Burgess, McLeod & Rosen, 1975). Flower and Hayes (1981) developed theoretical models of the writing process in beginning and experienced writers that hypothesized a systematic but recursive sequence of processes. This prompted researchers to examine the writing processes of professional writers (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Meade & Ellis, 1970; Sommers, 1980) to delineate the writing processes of student writers (Emig, 1971) and to investigate the early writing behaviour of young children (Clay, 1975; Ferriero & Teberosky, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). This work in addition to ethnographies of emergent literacy in very young children (Bissex, 1980), revealed the developmental nature of early writing and thinking about writing in very young writers. These insights led educators to develop ways to structure learning programs and environments to coincide with the developmental direction of children's explorations (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983) in literacy learning.

New curriculum and methods of teaching the Language arts came from this research and theory about the reading process and from research and theory about writing processes: reading and writing are holistic, not the product (except incidentally) of a set of skills and sub-skills. Reading and writing are integrated with the other language processes of speaking and listening and emerge naturally in a developmental process. The cognitive skills that are involved with reading and writing are similar or related to the skills used in other language processes that come easily and naturally to humans in social environments. Reading and writing are constructive processes that link knowledge and

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experience. Language processes and their social use are the essence of being human (Calkins. 1983: 1986: Eco. 1979: Graves. 83: Goodman. 1967: 1984: Murray. 1987: Rosenblatt. 1978: Shanklin. 1981: Smith. 1982).

Methods have been derived from or built up from these theoretical bases and developed through the observation of emerging literacy (Clay. 1982: Goodman & Goodman. 1979: Harste. Burke. & Woodward. 1984) and the creation of activities like "shared reading" (Holdaway. 1979).

In the whole language classroom, instruction in reading and writing emphasizes making meaning. In reading instruction teachers pay more attention to students' background knowledge. They expose students to predictable text patterns and use students' knowledge of their own language patterns in the language experience approach. Students read and respond to engaging but age-appropriate children's literature that they select themselves. They write for real audiences with real purposes. In the language arts classroom and in the content subject areas, language processes are used to make meaning, to think critically, and to analyze and solve problems. Students exchange views about what they have written and read in processes that integrate the modes of language use (Butler & Turbill. 1984: Goodman, 1986; Goodman. Smith, Meredith. & Goodman. (1987): Hansen, 1985; Newkirk & Atwell. 1988: Newman. 1985).

Methods of working with different groups and needs of students have been worked out in innovative classrooms programs and collaborations. In reading. assessment is integrated with supportive practices (Goodman. Watson. & Burke. 1987). Comprehension is developed and supported through the modelling and use of reading strategies (Goodman & Burke, 1980). Methods are adapted for special needs (Rhodes &

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Dudley-Marling, 1988). Similarly in writing, methods are developed and adapted (Calkins, 1986; Hansen, 1987; Romano, 1987; Rosen, 1987).

Ken Goodman (1989) sums up the impact of all of these changes in the theory on practices in the language arts, in an article he wrote in answer to one of the many critical or dismissive writings about whole language.

> But whole language is much more than an alternative to basals. It is not a reading methodology at all; it is a philosophy of curriculum, of learning, of teaching and of language. Whole language redefines reading and writing as processes for making sense out of and through written language. It redefines the teacher as a professional decision maker, the curriculum leader in the classroom. It redefines the learner as someone who is strong, active and already launched on the road to literacy before school begins. It redefines the relationship between teacher and learner as one of supporting development rather than controlling it. And whole language redefines the curriculum. Whole language unifies and integrates oral and written language development with development of thinking and building knowledge. Students learn to read and write *while* they read and write to learn and solve problems (p. 69).

Social Constructionist Theories of Language

The next development in language theory was presaged by the important realization that the process of language building takes place only in a social environment. The child in the earliest stages of language learning seems to develop language best in active interaction situations, usually with adults. The emphasis on this aspect of language

began with investigations of the previously unknown progress of pre-linguistic development in infancy. Researchers uncovered a network of social influences in the child's environment that support and enable all language development. An important question addressed here was when language really begins. The cognitivists would have said that you do not have language until the symbolization of mental images that occurs with the development of symbolic play, dreams, fears, and deferred imitation, in the latter half of the child's second year. The so-called pragmatics revolution, by contrast, would accept as language the much earlier communicative behaviours engaged in by young children in interaction with important caregivers, usually mothers (Furrow, Nelson & Benedict, 1979; Nelson, 1977; Snow, 1972; 1977). Changes in the view of what constituted language continued with work on speech functions and speech acts in very young children (Dore, 1975) and a growing interest in the development of communicative competence. Obviously syntactic and semantic construction were part of language development but they and other aspects of language acquisition seemed to be initiated, and to occur within a social interactive environment. It was this social context that provided the needed experiences and supports for the child to develop, not just a working model of language to express desires and articulate thought, but also the communicative skills needed to negotiate complex relationships in the social environments of his/her culture.

This interest in the communicative contexts in which language develops was further stimulated by the growing recent interest in the theories of the brilliant Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky died in the early thirties but his work has only recently been translated and found an audience in North America. Vygotskyan notions of

language conveniently unite the observations of early social supports for language acquisition with the cognitivists' concern for the relationship between thought and language. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that initially language and thought develop separately as presymbolic language (vocalizing, cooing, babbling, and echolalic babbling) and prelinguistic thought (sensorimotor exploration and simple trial and error problem-solving similar to the kinds of intelligent behaviour seen in the higher primates). Later, language begins to affect thought and vice versa, at the age when symbolization first occurs and communicative power is given to thought, while intellectual power can begin to drive communication. He emphasized that it was the social origins of speech, the child learning in the social environment to use language as a psychological tool to mediate experience, that differentiated humans from animals.

Vygotsky's demonstration of how the communicative language of the young child, learned in the interpersonal arena, later became inner thought and thus the origin of higher mental functions, was accomplished principally through an analysis of the phenomenon of private speech (Vygotsky, 1986). This language behaviour which consists of the child talking to himself/herself as an accompaniment to play or other activity, is first observed in young children around the age of three, peaks around the fifth year, and usually all but disappears by the time the child is seven. It was previously thought to be chiefly an indicator of the child's immature use of language and was referred to by Piaget (1959) as egocentric speech. Vygotsky pointed out that it closely resembled communicative speech in the very young child, that it was used by the preoperational child to monitor, comment on, and think through, activities and problems in play situations, and that it became more abbreviated and idiosyncratic in older children

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before it finally disappeared. He suggested that this was the process of the child gradually internalizing communicative speech for use as inner thought. For Vygotsky this example typified the way that socially mediated ability to use language became an internalized ability to function independently in the intellectual sphere.

Another important aspect of Vygotskyan theory was his study of the ways that language was used systematically to guide the development of conceptual knowledge in middle childhood and adolescence. The most influential part of this in North America has been the description of how learning takes place. in what Vygotsky (1978) calls. the zone of proximal development. This is the area of functioning for the child where it is possible to accomplish things with the help and support of an adult or knowledgeable peer that could not be accomplished independently. This has been related to the notion of "scaffolding". particularly in the work of Bruner (1978) in which adults. usually parents. support the language learning (or other learning) of the young child by doing most of the work of maintaining a conversation or interaction. This scaffolding supports the early efforts of the child to initiate. maintain, and manage conversation or to solve problems. The adult supports the child's performance in the event by providing only what is needed for performance and by expecting that the child will perform adequately to meet the demand of the situation. These ideas have supported many observations of interactive language used for learning in the young child. There are many related curricular ideas at all levels. that build on or justify these hypotheses about supported learning. such as peer tutoring. cooperative and collaborative learning. peer editing or conferencing. dialogue journals. mentoring and so on.

This general movement in language theory away from an emphasis on the individual as the constructor of language and towards an emphasis on social origins, forces us to ask questions about the influence of various social environments and institutions and about how knowledge and language are socially constructed. Vygotsky's theories about language and learning coincide with an epistemological view of the nature of knowledge that suggests that many elements of intellectual knowledge such as facts, theories, ideas, are not reflections of an objective reality but constructed and maintained by communities of like-minded individuals. In other words what we know is socially constructed. This perspective may lead us to examine more closely the ways that knowledge building through language, is stimulated, made to progress and constrained by the social environment of the child.

This social constructionist view of language shows us the power of language to mediate experience and shape knowledge both of reality and of the self. Knowledge is found in the language used to speak it, as language is developed socially then used to press knowledge into precise statement, to make clearer vague thoughts, and to impress ideas and images on the memory for later recall. Understanding grows through its expression in language form and is fixed with the power of words and structures to embody meaning and relations.

Reading and Writing Theories and Curriculum Based on Social Constructionist Theories

Social constructionist theory places language and the uses of language at the centre of all curriculum. The learner is only able to master the knowledge that she

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actively engages with, processes, and manipulates linguistically. The learning

environment must function to link the learner with knowledge through the medium of

language activity in social interactions. The instructor, in designing the activities

required in the learning environment of the classroom, needs an understanding of this

essential way that learning works, to ensure that the curriculum functions to provide the

discourse opportunities for learning. We have come some way in understanding the oral

discourse requirements of young children but we still have only begun to use written

discourse in ways that maximize its potential in the learning of adolescents and adults.

The use of electronic media to set up and utilize bulletin boards and e-mail conversations

for this purpose are just a few examples of what might be done in this area.

In a constructionist model, reading and writing are seen as subsets of the larger

process or construct of literacy. The reader is the place where meaning is made (Straw,

1990) but the reader and the constructed meaning reside in an interpretive community

that defines and builds the constructs of knowledge (Bleich, 1988: Fish, 1980). In the

classroom interpretive communities are built using social learning methods such as

literature circles. An epistemic theory of rhetoric dictates that writing programs are set

up so that classroom physical and social environments support students' enactments of

literacy activities. The teacher and eventually the entire group model the development of

strategies for invention, for drafting, for revision, and for editing and publishing.

Innovative teachers of the Language arts have adopted writing instruction approaches

such as peer response groups and have developed and worked out in joint practice,

innovative classroom structures such as the author's chair, multiple versions of peer

conferencing, sharing, responding and combinations of these methods in writer's

workshops. These artificial classroom constructs mimic the support for literacy development in various communities (Heath. 1983) and the ways that communities support early literacy—rather than just oral language development (Wells. 1986).

Teachers' Response to Change in the Language Arts

The challenge for teachers, as these new theories of language and learning become new methods and approaches to the teaching of the language arts, is to integrate new methods into their practice. Teachers who entered the profession in the mid- to late seventies began to teach in the midst of the change from a skills based to a whole language based system of teaching reading. Teachers who accommodated to that change in different ways are now in the midst of another time of change that comes out of similar developments in the teaching of writing (often referred to as process writing) and the recognition of the importance of the social basis of literacy learning. That this second change was inevitable because it was implied in the first change. has not made it any easier to integrate it into the practice of teaching the language arts. Teachers have been expected to comprehend these changes in thinking about reading and writing and begin to integrate different methods of instruction and assessment into their classroom practice without any formal re-education or upgrading in methods and ideas. Investigation of these expected changes in teacher practice raises questions about the whole area of teacher knowledge and teacher change.

Theories of Adult Learning, Teacher Change, and Teacher Knowledge

Most thinking about adult learning refers at some point to the theory of *andragogy* as coined and developed by Knowles (1980). Although this theory is no longer adequate to describe teacher change it does provide a good starting place. Knowles describes the adult learner in terms designed to differentiate him/her from the needs and characteristics of children as learners. When planning an adult learning event the educator is enjoined to keep in mind a set of basic assumptions about the adult learner: the adult learner defines himself/herself as self-directed rather than dependent; the adult learner has a continuously growing store of experience that he/she uses as a resource in learning situations; the adult learner wants to learn in relation to the developmental requirements of his/her social roles; adult learners want to learn things that are immediately applicable in their lives and will therefore focus on performance concerns rather than subject area concerns (1980).

These characteristics of the adult learner require that in order to be effective learning opportunities and conditions for adults should always provide: a physically and psychologically comfortable and non-threatening environment; an opportunity to assess present levels of competence against an ideal level to provide the motivation for learning; an opportunity for the adults to be involved in the planning of their own learning; a shared responsibility for a successful learning experience (the teacher facilitates the learning and the learner also assumes responsibility for success); the opportunity for the learner to assess his/her own learning (Knowles, 1980).

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It is interesting that a child-centred, experience-based, and developmentally appropriate view of learning environments for children (basically the cognitive developmental approach) would define the child learner in much the same way. It is only recently that the claim that children are (or should be allowed to be) self-directed and motivated by their own development in their learning has been asserted for children by adult educators. It has never been possible for children to assert their own needs and desires but the most recent pedagogical recommendations for approaches and methods with young children would have a lot in common with the above. Recent pedagogy though would also take into account the social requirements of the learning situation, and the social nature of learning, a social constructionist view, which is not accounted for in Knowles' theories.

Adult learning theory has progressed in this direction through various critiques of its individual cognition perspective to an appreciation of a constructionist view. Tennant (1989) suggests that adults are not exclusively self-directed and that this assumption sets up impossible goals for the majority of learners. Moreover, not all development is toward higher goals and adults are not essentially different learners than children.

Adult learning looked at in the context of large institutions and systems requires a broader field of inquiry. Adult motivations for learning are complex and varied, centering on goals, activities, learning for its own sake, or a complex and shifting combination of these at different times in a career or life or for different purposes.

Another model for adult learning is the transformative. Cranton (1996) identifies a number of roles related to the transformation-in-learning of an adult. One of the most important of these is the mentor relationship which underlines the importance of social

relationships to change or learning. He also emphasizes the necessity of institutional change to recognize, support and extend individual change.

All of these theories have a bearing on the social nature of learning but do not define learning as primarily a social process. Even when undertaken individually, learning almost always has social goals: to learn required roles, to become a member of a group, to gain acceptance, to develop a socially acceptable self-definition. Learning may be required institutionally: to gain legitimacy, to gain credentials, to gain access to resources. Events in society or an institution or organization may require learning and change. Typically people are required to learn new knowledge, skills, and attitudes on entry to a profession or at times of personal, career, or societal change (Thomas, 1991). None of these situations is adequately accounted for or explained by the Knowles model of adult learning or its modifications.

An approach to teacher learning should be shaped by recent changes in theoretical approaches to the study of teaching and learning in general. In a pervasive shift from cognitive to social models, learning is now more likely to be studied in the context of how it is influenced by both the social environment of the learning setting and by the emotions, desires and needs of the learner (Schallert, 1991). The process-product approach to identifying effective teaching methods has given way to an interest in teachers' thought processes and specifically their concern for contextual considerations such as student responses (Clark & Peterson, 1986). In another example of new perspectives on teaching, Doyle (1983) has re-defined teaching in terms of the construct of *academic work*—activities that are the unit for consideration by teachers. This formulation allows both the process and content of teaching to be considered together as

"curriculum in action" (Doyle. 1989). Another currently influential social learning theory is *scaffolding*. the support provided by an adult or knowledgeable peer. that allows a task to be accomplished with help and then independently (Vygotsky. 1978). Similarly studies that show the importance of human goals. motivations and intentionality in the success of learning endeavours. emphasize the place of context. social factors and group influence on learning (Ames & Archer. 1988; Dweck & Leggett. 1988; Young & Schallert. 1989).

Ideas about the professional development of teachers and the processes through which teachers develop their abilities and the mastery of their profession trace the changes in theories of teacher knowledge. In the different theories of teacher knowledge there has been a progression from a skills approach to transactional ideas and finally to social constructionist ideas not only about how teachers develop but also about what it is that is developing (Durkin. 1987). A theory of teacher knowledge would explain the kind of knowledge that is used and developed in teaching, the processes in which that knowledge is developed. and the relationship between theory and practice. This view of what is involved in teacher knowledge stands opposed to the subject knowledge/pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman. 1986) professional decision-making model that is commonly assumed to inform teaching practice. It is not a right/wrong opposition but an opposition that implies a different concept of knowledge and its development.

Throughout the century efforts have been made to get teachers to teach differently. With the sweeping changes in psychology and other foundations of educational theory at about mid-century the changes required of teachers were

increasingly in the beliefs that affected practice. The assumption of many teacher educators was that teachers would go out and teach as they were taught and to some extent this was true but often when practices were supposed to change teachers stubbornly clung to the fruits of that outmoded training. The process product movement tried to persuade teachers to adopt the practices that had been shown to be associated with positive results but however persuasive these arguments were to educational researchers they found little favour with teacher practitioners.

For a while now teacher beliefs have been considered to be the key to making teachers make changes. Teachers are thought to be recalcitrant and stubborn in the face of reform and imposed or demanded change. But over time they do change things in their classrooms but only in tune with their own beliefs and needs. Teachers have always domesticated and adapted ideas to their own uses.

Teacher beliefs have been thought of as evidential. Researchers have wanted to look at a coherent set of beliefs about the content of language arts and the learning of the content, beliefs about the nature of language, its relationship to learning, and the learning processes in reading and writing and to look at this as a study of teacher beliefs in the language arts. But teacher knowledge is not so much based on beliefs as on practice. In this study the idea of teacher belief or knowledge is similar to the idea of teachers personal practical knowledge. It is what the teacher knows so well that she puts it into practice every minute that she is in her classroom. This is not the evidential knowledge that belongs to the experts. It is the practical teacher sense of what works, a combination of what she has learned through study and observation and everyday trial and error investigation.

In what might be called the everyday common knowledge of teachers, they all believe that what the experts recommend may work in the laboratory or in some ideal classroom but won't necessarily work in their classroom with their kids. They have worked out what is possible there and they have acted on this knowledge but they cannot generally articulate the underlying theory. They think that other teachers always understand this. These ideas are shared and alluded to in the social environments of teachers, primarily the school workplace but also in meetings, classes, conferences, and associations.

Researchers who study the way that teachers work to develop and change their ideas about teaching have called this set of ideas "personal practical knowledge." Teacher knowledge is primarily experiential and is not expressed explicitly but held by the individual as tacit professional knowledge. This individual construct of personal practical knowledge is more strongly held than formal knowledge or ideas that are prescribed for teachers by educational institutions. Researchers have examined the relationship between teachers' tacit knowledge and the professional contexts in which they work—classrooms, schools, teacher education settings and also informal personal/professional settings in schools, conferences, and associations. These professional life constructions have their own languages and stories, cover stories, rationales, explanations, transmutations of pieces of professional language, jokes, and excuses. Researchers have asked how teachers' professional knowledge landscapes are formed and sustained. How are they shaped by the professional identities of other teachers and other professionals in the field/landscape? These and other questions continue to influence the research in these areas (Leithwood, 1982).

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The idea of teacher knowledge as enacted in teaching (similar to activity theory) was first described by Elbaz (1983) and developed as a notion of teachers' personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and as teachers' professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). There is a relationship to Dewey's (1938) idea of individual intellectual development in the context of educative experience.

> As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue (p. 44).

The particular application to education and teaching practice follows the emergence of new ideas about the nature of individual personal knowledge and its development. The first element is the idea of knowledge as personal. Polanyi (1958) in his work on personal knowledge claims that all knowledge has a subjective, ultimately personal nature, that operates tacitly, even in science and other supposedly objective fields. Knowledge is not solely objective, neither is it totally subjective (a stance that leads to a sterile relativism). It is personal. It has both an individual and a cultural origin.

Other work on theories of knowing underlies the application to educational theory. This other work includes: *narrative knowing, embodied knowing,* and *relational knowing.* Narrative as a way of organizing knowledge of experience is a concept that has emerged in several fields (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1990). The idea is that narrative is a structure that a culture uses to make sense out of random events and experience and that individuals routinely use narrative as a

meaning making tool to organize their perceptions of their experience. Educational

researchers have used this organizing idea to produce accounts of teachers' experiences

(Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Coles, 1989; Paley, 1979) that show the ways that

narrative can illuminate the meaning of those experiences. Johnson (1987) describes

knowledge as linked to bodily experience. This theory sees knowledge as it is embodied

and expressed socially as folk knowledge.

The Diffusion of Change

Theories of the diffusion of change in social institutions provide a theoretical map

of how change occurs in education. Everett M. Rogers (1995) has researched the

characteristics of individuals who adopt innovations, the timetable of such adoptions, and

the conditions under which they occur. He has found that interpersonal communication is

the key to whether a newly introduced idea will be adopted and utilized within a social

structure. People seem to make decisions to adopt and use new tools based on who

introduces them to the innovation. This interpersonal connection is far more important

even than the usefulness of the tool.

When teachers come into a system in which profound changes are taking place,

they are not just faced with changing a few of their teaching methods. They are tasked

with re-thinking their views of teaching and learning reading and writing.

Teachers in Canada have responded to movements in the field of Language arts

that have sometimes been reflected in but have not been mandated by government policy

or tied to administrative innovations the way they have often been in the United States. Tyack and Cuban (1995) recommend that instructional innovations should be presented to teachers who are then allowed to modify and adopt them into their practice. In a sense this is what has happened over the last three decades in the Language arts. Canadian teachers of Language arts have attended inservices and conferences, read about instructional innovations in local and national publications, and been encouraged to modify their practices by local professional associations and leaders in the field. Some but not all of these innovative practices have been written into provincial curriculum documents but until recently teachers have generally considered such documents as guidelines for the profession rather than directives to be followed to the letter.

The suggestion that innovations should be presented to teachers as a set of principles, general aims to be modified in the light of experience, and embodied in practices that vary by school or even by classroom (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 83) is in fact a partial description of how the process of instructional innovation in the Language arts has operated in Canada. Change in educational systems comes slowly because institutionalized systems function on the basis of rules, routines, and scripts. Tyack and Cuban (1995) call these the grammar of schooling. For their approach to work teachers must work collaboratively with each other and with policy advocates, sharing goals and tactics, supporting each other in assessing progress and surmounting obstacles (p. 83). In effect, teachers must create within their group a new set of routines and scripts rather than attempting to work individually in isolation from the group in making use of innovative instructional methods.

This study will look at the ways that teachers have implemented new ideas in their practice of teaching the Language arts in the past and how they are dealing with present pressures to again make radical changes in their practice. New ideas are linked to new practices but it is clear that teachers sometimes introduce new practices in their teaching while their own grasp of theory and rationale is still developing. The first phase of this study is an attempt to look at a group of teachers to see to what extent they have implemented the new practices that have been current in their early years of teaching (the period during which whole language was coming into use). To the extent that they have implemented new practices, how completely has their thinking changed to match their new practices?

The findings of this study will have implications for teachers' professional education and development and for proponents of various instructional innovations and system changes. The importance of early support for beginning teachers is emphasized. The roles that teachers can play in change processes also merit attention. The dynamic nature of teachers' processes in developing teacher knowledge and constructing their practice is best nourished by supportive policies in educational institutions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The present study is conceived of as a qualitative, thematic, or "emerging themes" study of the beliefs of long-service teachers of the language arts in grades three to six, about teacher knowledge, teacher change and the construction of teaching practice for reading and writing. The procedures for analysis were based on the Glaser and Strauss (1967) method and refinements (Glaser, 1978) of the method for the discovery of grounded theory. The elements of theory that are generated are conceptual categories and their properties and hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 35). The method is further refined by the use of theoretical coding to generate hypotheses from properties of categories (Glaser, 1978).

The areas of concern of the research on teachers' beliefs are examined in the context of two periods of major change in curricular and instructional theories in the language arts. The first is the move to Nativist/Cognitive theories of language development and the effect on the theory and practice of the teaching of reading (and to some extent, writing) in the late seventies and early eighties. The second period of change is the more recent move toward a Social Constructionist theory of language in the late eighties and early nineties and the effects of this change on the theory and practice of

teaching writing (and to some extent, reading). Long-service teachers were needed for the study so that their careers spanned the periods of change that were of interest. The focus of the study was on the teachers' formation of practical knowledge and practised knowledge in their professional practice as teachers in the context of these eras of change.

Nursery/Kindergarten and grades one and two teachers were excluded because Early Years teachers and their adoption of innovative methods had been the subject of intense interest by parents, by university researchers, and other educational institutions in the past. Such interest and pressure makes teaching language arts, and especially the teaching of reading in these years, almost a separate case. Attention is, necessarily, focussed on the acquisition of reading skills rather than the development of reading ability. In grades three to six, the years when *learning to read* with all its attendant anxieties gives way to *reading to learn* and *writing to learn*, teachers have remained much freer to adopt or ignore innovative methods in the language arts.

The Research Subjects

A group of teachers teaching grades three to six in the two elementary schools of a small, private, Jewish school system were known to the researcher. These teachers were all experienced and competent and had taught successfully in a system that was demanding and dynamic. In other words, they had been exposed to curricular and instructional innovations and would, in the course of their teaching, have weighed the

merits of various new ideas and approaches in the teaching of reading and writing. As a result of this exposure and experience, they were interesting subjects in a study of how teachers thought about teaching and learning in the language arts and how their practices had been affected by that thinking during the two periods of change that were of interest. The periods of historical change (nativist/cognitive theory) and the recent and on-going changes (social constructionist theory) were explored in a semi-structured interview and some classroom observations.

With the permission of the system and school administration, these teachers were approached and thirteen agreed to participate in the project. These thirteen were the subjects of the taped interview. Eleven were classroom teachers and two were resource teachers. One teacher was in her first year of teaching but all of the other teachers had many years of experience.

Other characteristics of the thirteen teachers—their teacher preparation, years of teaching experience, years in the present system, grades they had taught, their upgrading of qualifications, etc.—will be presented as part of the Results and Discussion in Chapter four.

These teachers were not selected randomly from a larger population of teachers and were therefore not a representative sample of teachers. There is no reason to assume that their ideas and practices are typical of all teachers. The findings about their characteristics are therefore not generalizable to the larger population. However, the present study was intended to be exploratory and to look for broad characteristics and themes in the experience of these teachers. These findings can yield some conclusions about this group of teachers and their needs. Some of the themes could then be evaluated

by comparison to other research findings and together used to reach further tentative conclusions about the general characteristics and needs of teachers as a group. These further tentative ideas would be appropriate material for further research and study on teacher knowledge and the processes of teacher change.

The Research Project

At the beginning of the project, the researcher contacted the teachers and explained the purpose of the study. The study was described as an investigation of grade three to six teachers' adoption of innovative practices in the language arts. Teachers were told that they were not required to do any particular activity but would be able to explore various options. They were told that the focus of interest for the researcher was the thought processes of teachers as they considered new educational ideas and that in order to access this information the researcher required one or more, one-hour interviews and access to the teacher's class for an observation of teaching and learning conditions.

The researcher met with all of the eligible teachers to discuss the project. The teachers were asked to fill out a form if they were interested in the project, about the areas of language arts that they would like to develop more knowledge or skills in and about the kinds of professional development activities they would like to have made available.

Seven teachers were interested in activities related to reading instruction. Six were interested in activities related to writing instruction. All thirteen of the teachers

selected the option of visiting teachers and programs in other systems and schools to learn more about these instructional methods. Six were interested in having materials recommended or receiving materials to read and study. Three teachers indicated their intention of sharing information with same grade teachers or other teaching peers. Four teachers indicated some interest in attending a workshop, seminar or inservice but none were interested in working with large groups. A decision was made to concentrate efforts on arranging site visits to teachers and programs where innovations were being tried and where teachers were amenable to having visitors and discussing their methods with them. Teachers who visited programs could then share their observations with fellow teachers. The researcher also undertook to provide lists of recommended resources for some topics of interest in reading and writing curriculum and instruction.

In exchange for the subject teachers' participation in the study the researcher undertook to make arrangements for site visits. The names of innovative teachers of the language arts were solicited from knowledgeable experts in the field, such as university professors and educational consultants. The nominated teachers were contacted and twenty-one of them agreed to have project teachers visit and observe in their classrooms. Arrangements were made for project teachers to be released from classroom duties so that these visits could be made. Some of the project teachers were reluctant to leave their classrooms even though the administration allowed for it and approved. For these teachers, the visits could be made on their own time since many of them worked on a schedule where they taught two-thirds of the customary teaching day. In addition, holiday days in their system were often different from the public system and this also added to their flexibility. The researcher also provided a list of recommended materials

and resources for the teachers' particular areas of interest and offered to provide copies of these materials to interested teachers.

These site visits and study and information-sharing activities were not the focus of the present study however. The researcher was primarily interested in these teachers' reflections on the development of their teaching practice in the context of the changes that had taken place in the teaching of the language arts over the course of their careers. It was decided that the best way to pursue these inquiries about teachers' ideas and reflections was the individual interview. In the interview the researcher is able to develop a rapport with the subject and encourage the subject to recall experiences and reflect on them. In this way it is possible to investigate the kind of material that cannot be directly observed (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

The Interviews

The schedule for the interviews was arranged at the convenience of the teachers. All but one of the teachers elected to be interviewed at the school, during a "prep" period combined with before-school time, recess time, or lunch time to make up the required hour. Six of these interviews took place in a small school office in the one school or in an interview/resource room in the other school. In each case the use of these rooms was arranged ahead of time to minimize interruptions. Two interviews took place in a school resource room, two in regular classrooms, one in the school library, and one in a school

staff room. Only one teacher arranged for the researcher to come to her home to conduct the interview.

The one-hour interviews were audio-taped on micro-cassette using a small, dictaphone-type recorder. The end of the hour was signalled by the tape shutting off and end notes were taken, if necessary, about topics that were cut off by the ending of the interview. The researcher also made notes before and after each interview of any unusual or significant events that might have affected the interview.

The interview was semi-structured with a standard protocol of questions that could be followed up or probed in various ways (see Appendix I for Interview Protocol A). Each interview began with identifying information and a review of the teacher's preparation and teaching history. Questions were then asked about theories and practices for teaching the language arts and how these had changed during the first change period of interest. The major part of the interview was retrospective and asked for the teacher's reflections on changes in the field and on past experiences and professional practice. Further questions were asked about foundational beliefs about reading and writing and the teacher's self concept in these areas and as a teacher of the language arts.

Classroom Observations

Eight teachers agreed to have the researcher observe in their classrooms (see Appendix II for Classroom Observation Form). Of the five who did not, the two resource

teachers did not have a classroom, one teacher had left the school after the time period of the interview. The two remaining teachers were not able to have the researcher observe in their classrooms, both citing present and anticipated time constraints.

At the beginning of the classroom observation, the observer noted key elements of the teaching environment such as size and layout of the classroom, books and materials available and in use, number of students, grade level etc. During the class the observer took rapid but brief notes of events as they unfolded, recording as much of teacher's actual speech as possible. The researcher also noted timing and duration of activities and behaviour as well as various context features such as sequencing of activities, and type and size of grouping. This style of observation is preferred to video-taping because it is less cumbersome and yields useful information but seems non-threatening, even informal, to the teacher being observed. In fact, a similar style of observing is often used when teacher performance is being assessed (Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980).

During teacher-directed, large-group activities and otherwise periodically, the researcher also surveyed the group to note number of students on-task, the behaviour of unoccupied students, management issues, and/or sizes and activities of groups. This combination of narrative running record and visual sweep has been employed in other studies of reading instruction (Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, & Dishner, 1985; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Mecklenburge, & Graden, 1984).

Brief impressions of teacher style, approaches and methods, and classroom management were recorded by the observer at the end of the class time. Observation notes were transcribed, and events described in more detail by the observer immediately after leaving the school. These longer and more detailed descriptions of classroom events

could then be analyzed for customary patterns such as teachers' presentation style, use of specific methods, responses to student questions, use of grouping and the like.

This method and style of observation was chosen because it allows for the inclusion of unexpected events, teacher practices, and insights. Teacher practices are so varied and embedded in particular situations that the alternative style where the researcher imagines all of the elements of all possible approaches in advance and prepares a checklist, would not have been possible (Evertson & Green, 1986).

Classroom observations were arranged for half of the morning or half of the afternoon when these times were being devoted to language arts and/or to content subjects using language arts objectives. The researcher was introduced as a visitor and either observed the lessons and/or participated as a helper during the class. The observations enabled the researcher to confirm the teacher's style and methods, established clear definitions of terms related to teaching and learning activities, and enabled the researcher to observe specific language arts objectives or methods. The observations also gave the researcher some insight into the material and social culture of the schools as educational institutions. In these and other ways the observations served as a method of triangulating or grounding the research. The observations served to illustrate and verify the discussions of methods, events, and situations in the interviews and as such do not appear by themselves in the Results.

Compilation and Transcription

Field notes were written up for the eight classroom observations, the circumstances of the interviews, and for several other related visits to the school. The total of field notes was forty-one, hand written pages.

The thirteen interviews were transcribed. Technical quality varied somewhat because of the different locations and in some cases the background or ambient noise and interruptions but all tapes were complete and audible records of the interviews. Average length of the transcribed interviews was twenty-three single-spaced pages but transcriptions ranged from thirteen to twenty-nine pages. The total number of transcribed pages was 302.

Analysis of the Data

Information in the interview transcripts was analyzed by the principal researcher, first for characteristics of interviewees—history of teaching, dates and places of teacher training, early experience, grades taught, breaks in career, retraining or upgrading, and professional development. Then, in the main part of the analysis, for answers to planned protocol questions in the interviews and in relation to observations. Following are the major questions of the interview and the areas probed:

- Teachers theories of knowledge—beliefs about language and learning—customary thinking—metaphors for knowledge and change

- Teachers' understandings or characterizations of new methods and ideas in the language arts—specific beliefs about teaching reading, methods used, reflections on past changes, and plans for future changes

- Similarly, beliefs, methods, reflections and plans about writing instruction

- Their theories of teacher change—role of personal contact, personal creativity, trial and error methods, student responses

- Their place in the change process.

The focus for analysis was teachers' beliefs and practices as teachers of the language arts in the context of the change to whole language and process writing methods. The material for analysis was the set of thirteen transcribed teacher interviews. The protocol for the interview contained five sets of questions or major areas of inquiry. These asked about: teacher education and early attitudes and self-concept in early teaching history; the teacher's experience of change in the teaching of the language arts; the teacher's assessment of the essential difference created by the change; teacher's personal beliefs about how children learn to read and write; and the teacher's response to current change forces. A sub-question in the first area of inquiry about the teacher's personal practices and self-concept as a reader and as a writer became a sixth area of inquiry.

Each of the thirteen interviews were coded for these six areas: TLA for Training to teach Language Arts; PCP for Personal Change Process; EC for Essential Change;

TRW for Theories about learning to Read and Write; P&R for Pressures to change and teachers' Responses; and the added area PPRW for Personal Practices in Reading and Writing. This was not open coding as delineated by Strauss (1978) in the discovery of grounded theory. since the categories had already been established as the areas of interest in the semi-structured interview protocol. The general method followed Glaser and Strauss (1967) after the emergence of the categories. Even so. some change and reordering in the categories that had not been anticipated still occurred. This tends to confirm the validity of the Glaser and Strauss (1967) method for the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained and analyzed in social research. In general the conceptual categories and their properties are derived from the evidence (data) and then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept (p. 23).

Some of these categories/areas needed sub codes for properties of the categories: TH for Teaching History and A&S for Attitudes and Self Concept were added in the TLA area; under the PCP general area—M for Methods of Change. CM for Changes Made. PR for Personal Response. and PC Plans for further Change were added. It also became clear that in all areas there was information about teachers' beliefs about Teacher Knowledge and about Teacher Change (hypotheses or generalized relations in Glaser and Strauss (1967) terms (p. 35). What also seemed clear was that as each area was explored the specific findings could be drawn out and the more general findings about these beliefs could be summarized and discussed as substantive theory. In the course of the coding as patterns and relationships among the data emerged. notes and handwritten memos on these relationships were recorded and collected.

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Teaching History was an area that needed to be treated separately because it was partly statistical and covered the whole teaching career of each teacher. Since the information also could serve as an introduction to the group of teachers. the information under that sub-code was tabulated. summarized and written up in a brief introductory section of the Results chapter.

In the next stage of analysis, extracts from each of the interviews for each of the categories/areas of inquiry were compiled into separate documents. All of the extracts that had been coded EC were copied into one document and all of the extracts for TRW were copied into another and so on. Then the material in each of the resulting six documents was examined for characteristics or theoretical codes (Glaser. 1978, pp. 72-81) such as, conditions. processes. degrees or dimensions. temporal aspect. etc. and patterns were discovered in the content of the extracted passages. The information from each extract was tabulated on these characteristics. Themes. patterns. useful examples. extensions or modifications of ideas. and relationships that emerged in this process were also recorded in memos or as notes within the document.

As this process was completed for each compiled document, the findings were written out including the edited extracts as evidence. This process yielded many insights into overall findings and relationships among the areas of inquiry and were recorded as memos directed to the appropriate sections. These were incorporated into the documents and/or recorded for use in other sections of the paper.

The Results chapter then consisted of the following sections: an introduction: (TH) Teaching Histories; (TLA including A&S) Training to Teach Reading and Writing: (EC including CM) Essential Changes in Practice: (TRW) Beliefs about Children

Learning to Read and Write: (PPRW) Personal Practices in Reading and Writing and Their Influence: (PCP including MC, PR, & PC) Personal Change Processes in Times of Change: P&R was also ultimately included in PCP.

Relationships noted between the areas and the conclusions led to changes in ordering, in headings, and in the structure of introductory and concluding sections for each section and the overall chapter. In this way, the overall organization of the findings in the chapter was made consistent and coherent.

The resulting theory does meet the tests that Glaser and Strauss (1967) would apply by enabling the prediction and explanation of behaviour, by being usable in practical applications, and by providing a perspective on related data and a guide for further research (p.3).

Notes on the Handling and Use of Data

Each of the subjects was assigned a pseudonym early in the analysis. All references to their names or initials were removed as soon as extracts were removed from the interview transcripts. In the course of handling the data, I soon came to think of them by these assigned names.

In quoting from the interviews, I have removed or in some cases slightly altered pieces of information that would tend to identify teachers to those who might be familiar with some of this small group of teachers. This information included the names of

schools they had attended and names of teachers that they recalled, the names of school divisions or schools that they had taught in, names of fellow teachers (except for pseudonyms of other teachers in the study), and names and ages of their children. It was necessary to do this because although there were a large number of subjects for a study of this kind, these teachers represented a majority of the elementary teachers in this small private system. Even without this specific identifying data, I think the teachers still come across as individuals in terms of their ideas, their philosophy, and teaching practice, although some of the richness of contextual detail is inevitably lost.

I have also removed anything specific that was imperfectly re-called by a teacher. Throughout the extracts, I have edited out the voice of the interviewer. It is clear what questions the teachers are responding to. When I have inserted words to clarify meaning, they are placed in square brackets. I have used the ellipsis or series of three dots universally wherever text is omitted. Most omissions were of repetitions, false starts, or extra expressions that are common in spoken language such as, "you know" or "as I said." This is spoken text and in order to preserve its charm as well as to be faithful to its truth I have not corrected the occasional errors in usage, such as subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, run-ons etc. I have not deleted slang expressions or colloquialisms as they occur. I have attempted to reduce any confusion of meaning by careful punctuation and to some extent selection of text, always being careful to indicate where text is omitted.

I have tended to use longer rather than shorter extracts from the interviews in order to retain the flavour of the teachers' remarks and as much of the context as possible. I have also tried to comment before and after the extract rather than breaking up the

quoted remarks with my comments. The more I worked with the material the more impressed I became with the quality and coherence of the thoughts and ideas expressed in the interviews. I have sought to preserve some of the flavour of that by offering generous pieces of text.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction: The Pattern of Findings about

Teacher Knowledge and Change

In the practice of teaching, teachers have to draw on their knowledge and their skills in order to use the tools that are available to them. Teacher knowledge begins to develop in teacher education programs and is immediately put into practice in the first years of teaching. The beginning teacher's first methods actualize the teacher's ideas and beliefs about the nature of learning and about the nature of the enterprise of teaching. The new teacher is probably more open to new ideas at this point in her career than she will be at any other point. However, to put her ideas and beliefs into practice she will tend to draw on the past, her own past experience in school, the input of seasoned professionals who teach or advise in teacher education programs, and, not least, the advice and guidance of teaching colleagues in her first school. There is a tendency for teachers to be conservative in teaching practices because of these patterns of influence.

On the other hand, because education always looks forward and works on the edge of new possibilities or, in other words, is imperfect, a work in progress, there will

always be forces for change that will sweep through the institutions of education and influence teachers to make changes. In educational institutions. teachers are at the front lines. They are at the place where curricular and instructional change must take place if it is to happen at all. Teachers are therefore under constant pressure to implement change.

Teachers do make changes in their teaching practices in the course of their careers but these changes do not occur in ways that are predictable or easy. Many erstwhile reformers have been frustrated by the caution and care with which teachers discharge their trust. Teachers have always clung to customary ways of teaching and been reluctant to introduce new ideas into their practice. By the same token, many recommendations for change are based on ideas about what learning ought to look like in idealized settings. rather than on careful observations of what real children do in real learning situations. Often teachers are justified in their caution. This study was designed to look at ways that a group of long-service teachers of grades three to six had developed their knowledge of teaching in the Language Arts over the course of their careers and the ways in which they had responded to change forces in this subject area.

The focus of the interviews was teachers' reflections on their development of teacher knowledge through their careers and their responses to changed practices in Language Arts instruction. The complete text of the interview protocol may be found in Appendix I. The thirteen teacher subjects were asked sets of questions and their initial answers were probed in the following areas:

1. Teaching history; initial training; early attitudes and self-concept as a teacher of Language Arts; self-concept as a reader and writer and influence on teaching; changes in teaching of Language Arts over time.

2. Times of change in Language Arts: preparation received in training: perceived pressure: help and assistance available: resistance.

3. Essence of the change: differences between new ways and old: classroom changes: effect on teacher: changes in thinking as well as methods.

4. Beliefs/theories about how children learn to read and write: changes in ideas about this; involvement of own practices.

5. Assessment of current pressures to change and responses to the pressure: current change pressures; hopes, fears, concerns: involvement of own practices.

In the course of talking about these topics and issues in relation to their own teaching history and practice, the thirteen teachers revealed much of what they believe about teacher knowledge and their beliefs about teacher change. They talked about the experience of teacher training and the joys and difficulties of their early teaching years. In the process they demonstrated what they believed about the nature of teacher knowledge and how teachers acquire knowledge. As they talked about their own reading and writing practices and the influence these had on their teaching, they revealed the way that personal experience shapes teachers' practices and the extent of their reliance on personal experience. As they talked about their ideas about how children learn to read and write, they showed some of the relationships in teachers' ideas between knowledge. beliefs and theories in this area. They talked about what they thought the essential changes had been in the practice of teaching the Language Arts, and revealed their beliefs about language and literacy in the classroom. Throughout the interview process they talked about the ways that their own ideas had developed in the times of change, the changes that they had made throughout their careers and the avenues that they had taken

in making change. In the process they showed their beliefs about where change comes from for teachers and how it is put into practice. As they talked about their responses to change pressures. they showed their criteria for change and the ways that they continued to construct their practice.

A careful analysis of the teachers' responses to these questions revealed that the teachers as a group had similar views about teacher knowledge and teacher change. These included ideas about the nature of teacher knowledge and how it develops. beliefs about changes in teacher practice and how they come about, and beliefs about students' learning and how teachers work with them to create learning situations. Moreover. for each teacher. practices were clearly based on a coherent set of beliefs. When viewed as a whole the ideas of each teacher were internally consistent and coherent overall. Themes could be traced through each interview. The teachers sometimes used the interview questions as a vehicle for the expression of their strongly held views. Sometimes their views emerged in spite of the direction of the particular questions that were being asked.

This chapter contains the results of the analysis of the interview data for the thirteen teachers. The results have been organized into the following sections:

- Teaching Histories: Time for Reflection and Change

- Training to Teach Reading and Writing: The Nature of Teacher Knowledge and Its Acquisition

- Personal Reading and Writing Practices and Influence on Teaching: The Extent of Teachers' Reliance on Personal Experience

- Teachers' Beliefs about Children Learning to Read and Write: The Relationships between Beliefs and Practices

- Teachers' Assessment of the Essence of the Change in New Methods of Instruction: Beliefs about Language and Learning

- Personal Change Processes in Teaching Reading and Writing in Times of Change: Teacher Change and the Construction of Practice

For each of these sections the teachers' responses to several related questions were coded for categories and themes and analyzed for answers to certain key research questions. Common themes and exceptions were then traced through the answers of all the teachers and conclusions reached on the issues of teacher knowledge. teacher change. and the construction of practice.

Teaching Histories: Time for Reflection and Change

The teachers were asked to describe their teaching histories. These consisted of the stories about where and when they had received their teacher education. where they had started teaching, and the grades and locations of their teaching jobs since. The thirteen teachers had had varied careers. All had been trained as elementary school teachers. Three had been trained as teachers in the nineteen sixties when teacher training usually consisted of a one year certificate program. All three of these teachers had subsequently completed at least one degree. Six of the teachers had completed Bachelor of Education programs in the nineteen seventies—three of them after-degree programs and three four-year B. Ed. programs. The three teachers who had graduated from teacher education programs in the eighties had all completed Bachelors of Education. The one

first-year teacher in the group had completed a two-year after-degree program in the mid nineties.

Nine teachers in the group had taught in other urban school divisions after graduating from teacher training. This experience ranged from a brief one year for one of the teachers to longer stints of 12 years in total for two of the teachers. One of these had her twelve years experience in one division. The other teacher had taught in a variety of places, all urban, for her twelve years. The average number of years of experience teaching in other school divisions for the nine who had this experience was 6.7 years. The average for the thirteen (including in the calculation the four who had worked only in the private system) was 4.7 years.

All but two of the teachers had taken some unofficial family time at home with their children and/or more formal Maternity Leave. The two teachers who took the most years of this kind of leave, periods of 8 years for one teacher and 10 years for the other, had also volunteered in early education settings or worked as substitute and term teachers during this time. Another three teachers worked small-portion teaching assignments (e.g., a 0.2 portion of a full-time job) or short, term assignments during their time on family leave. The average number of years of family leave for the thirteen teachers was 2.3 years.

The teachers' years of teaching experience in this small private system varied from one year to 23 years. Seven of the teachers had started with this board in the nineteen seventies or the early nineteen eighties. The remaining five had started in this system in the late nineteen eighties or early nineteen nineties. The teachers' average

number of years of teaching experience in the small private system was 13.5 years. The median for experience in the private system was 15 years.

Overall years of teaching experience for this group (including both their experience in other divisions and their experience in this small private system) ranged from one year to 26 years. Their average number of years of teaching experience overall was 18.2 years. A typical career for this group consisted of graduation from a teacher education program in the early nineteen seventies, five years of teaching in one or more urban school divisions, two years of maternity or family leave, and then 14 years in the small private school system. While one teacher had spent most of her career in classroom support positions and a few teachers had had assignments as art, computer, French or resource teachers, most of these teachers had been in grade three to six classrooms for long stretches of time. They had been teaching for most of the years of the last twenty-five years of the century, during the two decades from 1975 to 1995 when enormous changes were taking place in the foundational theories of curriculum and instruction in the Language Arts. Many of them were teaching when the transition from behavioural to cognitive psychology led educators to move to more child-centred and experiential learning and instruction. Almost all were teaching when whole language methods and process writing methods began to be adopted in the teaching of the Language Arts. They are still teaching now that social constructionist ideas and methods are beginning to be influential in the subject area. Their experience and their reflections on it are valuable sources of information about how teachers have developed their expertise and practice in concert with and in reaction to these changes.

Training to Teach Reading and Writing:

The Nature of Teacher Knowledge and its Acquisition

For most of these teachers it was a real effort to look back on events of their teacher education courses and their early teaching experience. For many of them the view into the past was twenty-five years or more. Many, including the most recently trained, remembered very little of their teacher education programs, and even less of the portion of it that was supposed to prepare them for teaching children to read and write. However, in the course of these discussions it became clear that they did not remember much, partly because they did not think that their teacher education programs had very much to do with the knowledge and skills that enabled them to teach. In most other professions it is recognized that technical knowledge and skill underly the practice of the profession. In teaching, knowledge is often not recognized as technical. Most teachers seem to believe that teacher knowledge is mostly common sense and derived from their own experience. To these teachers the face of teacher knowledge is the experience that masks the more technical and theoretical knowledge of teaching and learning.

The ways that these teachers wanted to work when they started their careers were as much a reaction to teacher training as anything else. Teacher knowledge was not to be found in teacher education. What counted was specific knowledge of children's learning processes and the ability to evaluate the quality of a child's performance. This knowledge was to be gained through specific classroom experience, through skill practice and through role enactments as teachers.

"I don't ever remember taking Language Arts"

Barbara searches through all of her memories of teacher training and finds

nothing of her training for teaching Language Arts.

> *I can't say that I received much training in Language Arts which prepared me for*
> *teaching. I think what I learned actually was just on-the-job training, because we*
> *took smatterings of Social Studies or whatever. It was just sort of—just a course*
> *during the year.*
>
> *I don't remember anything. I don't remember anything. I remember taking*
> *administration courses. I remember taking social, doing math cards. I remember*
> *all of that, but I don't remember taking a Language Arts. I don't even know if I*
> *did. I don't remember taking it. Psych courses and different learning styles and*
> *that, and I don't ever remember taking Language Arts.*
> (Barbara p. 1)

Likewise Tanya was unable to remember any details and felt bad about it.

"That's terrible. Like I remember my science, I remember my art but somehow language

arts . . . " (Tanya p. 4). Toni spoke for many when she dismissed the influence of that

brief one-year program. *"I think I learned more through my years of teaching than I did*

going through that one year anyway. "(Toni p. 3).

Even when the teachers do recall some experiences they are not remembered with

fondness. Donna believes that teachers do not learn how to teach in their teacher training

courses. She describes what was offered to her as training for teaching the language

arts—basically lessons in handwriting—with disdain. Her assertion is that her ability to

teach was based on common sense and experience with her own children and she

assumes that this is true of all teachers.

> *Of course your training didn't prepare you for teaching anything . . . No, it never*
> *did. I mean, we had not one lesson on how to teach phonics, on how to teach*
> *reading. The first time I ever got anything on how to teach, that language arts*
> *component was useless. They were worried about how we personally wrote, like*
> *how we formed the letters . . . But other than that, and that I flunked because I*

have horrible handwriting. That was the only C I got in that whole year. was on the language arts component. and it was because it was based on copying out a poem or something. It was ridiculous. There was no training. I just used commonsense and what I had done with my own kids. you know.
(Donna p. 2)

Where did that common sense come from? Donna does not explain but she probably means what she had herself picked up about school learning through her own experience in school as a student. her reflections on teaching. and from her later experiences as a parent.

Even when they were taught something, for many student teachers. the material and the way they were being taught was not very palatable. Perhaps based on their own experiences in school and their reactions to them. they wanted to be able to teach in a different way. Doris describes this clearly.

I can remember some of my courses and some of my teachers. and some I can't. It was very much along the lines of the way I had been taught. the regimen—how to keep a register. that kind of stuff. There was a whole course on how to keep a register . . .

It was very much. pretty much the way we had gone through school— regimentation—and I realized at the end of that year I learned a lot about what not to do. Like your instinct sort of tells you things that . . . Even before I started teaching. I knew that those were things that I would not ever do. because those are the things that I went through school with and hated them then.
(Doris pp. 2-3)

Doris' aspirations for her own practice were being formed already in opposition to her instruction in the teacher education program.

Estelle remembers being taught the basics of the type of reading program that was common to schools in those days.

You're talking to somebody who is [almost] fifty . . . I went to teacher's college. I taught without a degree for a number of years. My initial training. I don't

remember very much. I do remember [a few people who were] there at the time.
We were taught the basics, the phonics, the sight.
(Estelle p.6)

These basic approaches to teaching reading were no doubt the content of most of the

training that these teachers would have received in their training in the sixties, seventies

and early eighties. There was little attention paid to teaching writing beyond the

expectation to teach spelling, punctuation, and correct usage.

More recent graduates had clearer memories of some of the activities of their

program but even they did not seem to recognize those experiences as valuable in

building the kind of teaching knowledge or ability that was needed. Nora describes being

trained to run an early literacy program but is unable to see the relevance of these skills in

working with children who are only slightly older.

I don't remember a formal language arts training to be honest with you. I took
the early childhood program . . . so I don't remember a specific language arts
training that's helped me as an adult, as a teacher . . . We were talking about
sight words and 'Brown bear, brown bear' and modeling, and listening to
different books and chanting and things like that, and what [the professor] liked
and what she didn't like and what she thought was really good and she'd send us
to these schools where we'd watch what she liked. She'd also send us to schools
where teachers wouldn't know that she was sending us because she didn't like
what was happening . . . and then we would have to critique, and she was really—
it really opened my eyes a lot with her, she was wonderful . . . She was great. But
in terms of preparing me for grade three—no, not, to be honest with you it didn't.
(Nora pp. 2-3)

It's rather puzzling because here Nora is describing an active and interactive

program with lots of models of teaching practice and lots of discussion of good and bad

practices, but she does not feel that it gave her that elusive knowledge of how to teach.

In a similar way, Suzanne, the most recent graduate, describes her student

experiences of making lesson plans, studying reading theory, working with concrete

materials. constructing learning centres. and choosing and sharing children's literature. In her consideration of all of this training in learning and instruction theory. she concludes that all of these experiences are lacking in usefulness for beginning teachers. It is not just that she considers it insufficient. All of the learning and experience that she outlines in her teacher education program. despite the ways that it must have shaped her thinking and expectations about children's learning. was of no obvious usefulness to her when she entered the classroom. This long extract from her interview is presented here to show how much she learned or was exposed to in her program and how little she valued these experiences when she measured them against what she seemed to feel that she had needed.

> *I really did not get a lot out of . . . the education program . . . University sciences was great. but there was not a lot that I felt I could take with me into the classroom. I was very disappointed with the whole program. and that's part of the reason I didn't even apply for a teaching job the first year out. I ended up being a teacher's aide—not saying that I could have gotten the job. but because I felt that I did not have near enough experience and. like I said. I was very disappointed with the program . . .*

> *As for lesson inquiries. it's valuable to know how to do it. so that you know when you're—but how many people really sit down and make a lesson plan? It's good to know in your mind as you're thinking that this is my goal. You know. you kind of think through this stuff . . .*

> *A lot of time was also spent. because it was in early years. on hands-on. like sand and blocks and stuff that I'm not going to use. A lot of time was spent on learning centres which you rarely have time for . . . I enjoyed it as I went through. We got to go through each other's centres and they kept it interesting. but I was very disappointed in the whole program.*

> *I took reading in the early, in the elementary classroom . . . I felt a lot of the time was spent on things that a lot of teachers don't end up using . . . I mean it's great to be prepared because you should be prepared for anything. Who knows if you may have to? You may not be fortunate enough to have a resource teacher in your school to do those things but I really felt a lot of time was spent . . .*

We read a lot of books together, how to choose books . . . you touch on
everything, but I'd actually like to go back and take some more courses that focus
on—I'm not exactly sure yet what I want to—but there are things that—there's a
lot I feel I could get out of it . . . The reading and writing process I think should
have been—I mean I can't believe that it wasn't dealt with . . .
(Suzanne pp. 3-4)

It was not just the beginning teacher in the study who seemed unable to recognize

the usefulness or to appreciate the transferability of her training to the classroom. Kelly

also mentioned that she had taken *Reading in the Elementary Schools*, a course centred

on reading-to-learn or reading comprehension in the upper elementary grades. She said

that it had not helped her and that it had specifically not helped her understand reading

comprehension. All they had done, she said, was to learn to read a textbook (Kelly p. 5).

She had missed the point of the reading strategies that she was taught in the course. She

had not realized that she was supposed to learn, by doing them herself, comprehension

strategies that she could in turn teach to her students.

If teachers are unwilling or unable to recognize the material of their teacher

education programs as useful, what is it exactly that they think they need to inform their

teaching practice? Suzanne suggests in these further comments what was missing and

what this elusive knowledge might look like.

But focusing, especially on the writing process, like I came into grade 4 saying
where should my kids be at? Should I have been taught this in university? The
entire process of where someone should be at and which years . . . That's
something that they should have in university. I mean throughout the grades this
is what you should expect. This is where your kids should be at. This is what they
should be writing. They should be able to write paragraphs at the middle, the
beginning, the end. I mean, we're teaching it but some of the kids know it already.
Some of the kids are [writing well] and some can't even write full sentences, you
know. And I was very frustrated . . . Like I said, the other teachers in the grade
have been wonderful. But what if I didn't have that? . . .

But you'd think that there would be a full guide, this big book . . . This is where
your kid should be at. Not just the curriculum guide though, because that's, that

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can be confusing at times and it doesn't tell their output. It's what you want . . . I am sure it is because there is such a wide range, but there is also—and the average student . . . I'm saying to myself, okay, this sounds good but I'm also coming from a grade 2 classroom last year. So does this sound good to me compared to my grade 2 students? Well, sure. But where should this be at? Where should I be at and how can I help them to take that even further?

. . . I am very down on the program and I'd like to go back. I wish I could . . . help them make it better. I suppose I could go talk to the dean or something, but my experience in the classroom has been the absolute best thing for me . . . My experience student teaching and as an aide in the classroom and overall it was wonderful. That's where I—anything I know, I attribute to that—not to university.
(Suzanne pp. 4-6)

This long diatribe suggests that the beginning teacher wants a particular kind of knowledge and it is not the background knowledge of reading theory, diagnosis and remediation, nor is it hands-on experience in a learning environment. Suzanne has a hard time articulating what this knowledge is exactly but she does identify one aspect of it and that is the knowledge of "where the student is at." This seems to be a very specific kind of knowledge of what the students in the particular grade are capable of doing and the knowledge of what level of performance would be good, or acceptable or not acceptable. What she seems to be talking about here is the ability to assess student work and to recognize the level of achievement that it displays for a particular student. This intimate knowledge of student performance at each grade level she rightly concludes can only be gained by experience in the particular classroom. It is therefore knowledge of the activity of teaching rather than the theory of teaching.

Two of the teachers mentioned this elusive knowledge and both referred to it as a knowledge of "where the children are at." Suzanne as a beginning teacher was concerned that she had not been given this knowledge. She had been very disappointed at the preparation for teaching that she got in teacher training. She says they wasted her time

teaching her all sorts of skills and knowledge that she doesn't really use. What she feels they should have given her is access to *"a full guide, this big book . . . this is where your kid should be at"* (Suzanne p.5). This hypothetical big book would show for each grade what the children can do, what constitutes good performance, and what is poor performance for that grade that needs improvement. It sounds as if she might be satisfied with a collection of exemplars of, for example, grade three writing but actually she wants knowledge that is specific to the children she teaches or at least to children in her school. A collection of exemplars will not be specific enough for her purposes. What she actually wants is the kind of knowledge an experienced teacher has. An experienced teacher is able to look at her students' work and know immediately whether the students are working to the full extent of their ability or whether they could have done better. She knows what to expect from students at that grade level and, moreover, she knows from her experience, how to work with students to improve that performance.

Nora also mentions knowing "where the children are at" not as something she wants but to explain the particular knowledge that she is aware that she has and that she considers most valuable. Although she has been a full-time classroom teacher for only a few years, she spent many years previous to that, while her children were small, as a substitute and term teacher in the school. As a result of this specific and extensive experience she knows what the kids are capable of at every grade level. *"Where they are and what they're having trouble with and what they're not"* (Nora p.4). This knowledge is specific to these kids since all of her substitute and term work has been in this very school. She boasts about this knowledge. *"I know where they're at in grade four and I know where they're at in grade five"* (Nora p. 4).

Suzanne and Nora are not alone in considering this kind of knowledge valuable. Estelle also alludes to this kind of knowledge although she does not use the same words as Suzanne and Nora. Estelle was a volunteer and ran the art program in the school for many years. She proudly told me that when she came to the school as a classroom teacher, the principal expressed confidence in her ability, gained through this extensive experience as a volunteer teacher, to teach any grade in the school (Estelle p. 3).

Suzanne reinforced her views by offering the opinions of her fellow graduates and by suggesting again that the only valuable knowledge came from actual practice in the schools, doing the work of teaching. A student learns, she seems to be saying, how to be a teacher, only through enacting the teacher role.

> *I think there's so many more valuable things that they could have taught us . . . we were playing with block and the sand. That's wonderful, but I guess I didn't realize that's what I was getting into when I went into early years. Maybe I wouldn't have done that . . . Perhaps if I was teaching in another area, maybe I wouldn't be so down on the university program. Maybe I would have gotten more out of it . . . It just amazes me, it really does, it amazes me what I didn't get . . . And I stopped, when we were talking to another graduate saying, 'Is this just me, did I miss something through the program or do you feel the same way?' Other students have said, 'Absolutely!' I mean, there's nothing more valuable than being in the schools. It's true, it was the best experience but I think it should be a full year.*
> (Suzanne pp. 21-22)

Suzanne is not alone in her assertion that teacher knowledge is to be gained only from the actual experience of teaching. All of the teachers seem to believe that teacher knowledge is practical in nature and gained through specific and personal experience.

There were some teachers who remembered positive experiences in teacher education programs that did give them some preparation for teaching. Nancy's only

positive memory is of a Faculty of Education advisor who watched her student teaching

practice and gave her feedback on it, in her words, acting as her "mirror."

> *I didn't really learn anything new from university in terms of language arts. I had fabulous—I loved . . . my advisor and he would come in and watch me student teach and sit down and go over it with me—and be my mirror—that was tremendous!*

> *He would sit and be my mirror. And give me the feedback and I learned a tremendous amount . . . Oh! A little 'touchy-feely' but wonderful. Really fitting beautifully with that spirit of the times now in education. You know, with just the non-judgmental self-discovery. "*
> (Nancy p. 4)

Nancy also believes that her most useful experience was practice teaching and

presumably being able to watch and be observed by a good cooperating teacher. She

again suggests that it is necessary to inhabit the role of the teacher in order to really learn

how to do it.

> *I didn't get much to be honest with you . . . Can I even remember it? I took a reading course with this older woman. What was her name? She had a reputation [for] being excellent . . . Yeah. To be honest with you I didn't get much. I picked up most of what I know, and I'm not saying I know about much—I mean I know enough but what I know I picked up from student teaching with excellent student teachers.*
> (Nancy p. 3)

Kim agreed with Donna about learning most of her teaching ability from common

sense but also remembers some practical training in how to do something that was

valuable later. It's interesting that this was training in a real sense to do something not to

teach it. Kim considered the actual skill the best preparation for teaching it.

> *I don't really think your first degree teaches you how to teach. I think common sense teaches you how to teach. I—one of the best courses I ever took was a handwriting course that taught me the Palmer handwriting style so at least I knew how to teach handwriting when I had to teach cursive writing.*
> (Kim p. 6)

She also said that the best learning she got in teaching research skills was from watching a reading clinician teach the KWL strategy to her class (Kim p. 14). The implication is that you could be shown a useful skill or you could learn how to do it yourself but you could not be told how to do the particular things that a teacher needs to know how to do.

Rose had some vaguely positive memories of teacher training but going further back in her memory to her high school days she found some vivid memories of experiences that she felt were the source of some of her own abilities for teaching.

All the people we had. yeah I can remember some of them. They were very interesting people but, you know what. again, it was one period a day . . . they did a lot of handwriting on the board . . .

That [the ability to read effectively to the class] goes back to my education . . . grade eleven and twelve . . . I had a Mrs. Dyer who taught us. We had diction classes. I think she—I can remember going down to the auditorium which was in the dungeon part of the school . . . But anyhow. we used to go down and we used to stand up and do breathing exercises and we'd have to go: "Good ahftahnoon. Missus Dyer"—practice our diction. And part of that is building confidence and giving you, sort of feeling good about yourself being able to stand there.

The confidence—it didn't come from teacher training . . . I don't think so. Not that one year.
(Rose p.12)

The lack of enthusiasm that the teachers felt for their teacher training is in sharp contrast with their reports of the optimism with which. as beginning teachers. they entered difficult teaching situations. Estelle speaks for many of them. "*I was eighteen when I had my first teaching job—and full of energy. I have energy now too. but I think it was probably one of my strengths that I had energy and I have a love of children. I loved what I was doing*" (Estelle p. 6). Doris provides a description of the optimism and enthusiasm of her first year.

My first teaching job was . . . It was a little four-room school. I spent two years there. It was wonderful. It was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. I learned more there of course than I learned in Education, but I'm sure every teacher who comes out says exactly that . . .

So as unqualified as I was—and I discovered how unqualified I was when I taught grade 1 that year . . . I guess there's some—you know, ignorance is bliss. There was some advantage to my being young and completely open to whatever needed to happen . . . I think about it now and I think the anxieties I would have had, the worries. I had no anxieties. I had no worries. It was just great fun. We just trudged along . . .

We seemed to manage. I guess it was part of youth. It was part of youth and everything was an adventure and I was game to try anything, anything at all. I remember using the parents. I had not been given any direction on volunteers or parent volunteers . . . so the parents who came in, if one could knit, we did some knitting. If one did this, we did some of this. We just put it all together. As I say it was wonderful. It was wonderful. I sort of became part of the community . . . We did some gardening. I remember doing some gardening with the kids. I don't know—I don't know where that all fit in, but it was great.
(Doris pp. 3-6)

In talking about her early attitudes to teaching Kim tells about the joy of being a

teacher and also about some of the mystery of being the person who is closest to the

amazing advances of children's learning in the early years of school.

I never thought I'd ever want to teach anything but grade one . . . Because that was the year you taught them to read! You like, took that key and you opened their door. And that was the neatest thing to me. The neatest thing to me was, something happened over Christmas holidays, a miracle happened! They came back and everything you tried to do worked! You know, it was like a miracle! Like I really used to love Christmas holidays because I figured that—I really, as a teacher I think kids learn in spite of us and we're just there to show them the ways to help them because they are doing it.
(Kim p. 7)

Many teachers seem to take these changes for granted but Kim has observed the

mysterious flowering of reading ability at this age. Perhaps if she knew more about

reading acquisition theory she would still have the joy but would have more insight into

what is happening when children learn to read.

Rose talks about the response that she got from her students in her early years of teaching as the source of much of her continuing enthusiasm for teaching.

And they were keen, they were, you know at that age they're so keen too. Like, they probably didn't watch as much television as they did today as they did then, so maybe the written word—I don't know—little kids love to be read to. At any age, you know.
(Rose p. 13)

Tanya remembers the exhilaration of being a beginning teacher but also has clear memories of some of the difficulties.

I absolutely loved teaching. I loved teaching everything. Seriously, when I think back to how enthusiastic I was—I would get to school at 7:30 in the morning. I would come home six o'clock, suppertime, literally . . . I did lots of extracurricular. I was there on weekends . . .

I remember being overwhelmed by the marking because they did have workbooks, now that I think about it. Lots of workbooks, lots of marking and feeling frustrated that the only way to ease my load . . . I let the kids mark their own work? But that was hard because I had so many groups. You couldn't do it as a class. It was so time consuming. I'd be dragging lots of stuff home and marking, and really wondering at times . . .
(Tanya p. 5)

In a way Toni sums up the comments of her fellows when she says, "*I guess it was mixed. I was worried. I was excited*"(Toni p. 4). In order to cope with their new situations as teachers they had to learn quickly those mysterious teaching skills. They did learn quickly from the experiences that were available to them. Some early ideas were based on what the kids could do. Donna confesses that her earliest conclusions were a little skewed. "*In grade 2 I had kids who liked to write, so I just assumed that everybody could do that . . . so I just continued with writing*" (Donna p. 2). Doris worked closely with the children and responded to what they liked and seemed to need.

I really took my cues from the kids. I kept my stuff for years and years . . . As I looked back on it years later I thought, "Oh, my God! Did I really give my kids this to do?" But I did, and they all learned to read. They were deliriously happy. We had the best time. It was an extraordinary experience.
(Doris p. 4)

As teachers newly in classrooms, they looked about them. As Donna says, *"There were basals in the room. Basically we used basals . . ."* (Donna p. 1). And the materials all had directions, however rudimentary, that could serve as a beginning point. Barbara remembers some of it and surmises the rest. *"I remember using their basal readers I guess, and just teaching individual little stories. I don't even remember what. I somehow remember that I had to ask questions. You know—I don't know, I guess I did some prediction"* (Barbara p. 4).

Like beginning teachers everywhere they used the available materials and modeled their actions on what the other teachers were doing. Sarah watched closely and then tried it out on the children. She felt that she did it her own way and that she did it well.

What I found that helped me the most was the practical experience of watching another teacher and then just "doing." And it was trial-and-error. When I first started to teach language arts there was no such thing as using novels. Nor did we ever think of it. We used . . . a reading series. Exactly, and I spent a long time and I would discuss with the children and there were workbooks. It was your typical . . . Basal reading program . . . And then I would try and plan field trips. I was always one for breaking into discussions on things and I found that I tried to choose the stories that were the most interesting.
(Sarah p. 3)

Donna's early experience was similarly based on available materials. *"It was all readers and answering comprehension questions and workbooks and stuff like that . . . writing was still done as, you know, an assignment, given a sentence starter and then . . . write a paragraph"* (Donna p. 3). Later when she worked as a resource teacher she also

had to match her methods to what the teachers she worked with were using. *"I banked on doing reading from different Basals or from different . . . reading texts or corrective reading texts. still a lot of phonics and a lot of breaking words into syllables and stuff like that. because that's what the teacher required"* (Donna p. 3).

The definition of teacher knowledge at that point was simply the ability to carry out the programs. Kim describes it graphically.

> *Lots of sheets. We did the Ginn program. we did sheets. we did the Ginn basal reader . . . I think we also did the other one that was . . . but it was still a basal reader. with the basal workbook . . . And it was a definite sight-word approach. and then into phonetics. Nothing in between. And that was pretty much it. Didn't do real writing, I mean. because I might make a mistake! (Laughs)*
> (Kim p. 7)

Tanya remembers slightly different materials and requirements and the h uge classes of the time.

> *There were programs I remember. SRA was very big at that time. We had spelling books. They didn't actually—what was expected was a lot of individualization and a lot of grouping. That was the big sort of buzz in when . . . I must have had six. seven groups. I had like thirty-six, thirty-eight students and I had six or seven groups. I'd have sometimes all of them working on different things. That was the thing they were looking for.*
> (Tanya p. 5)

You just had to follow directions. All of the programs had teacher's guides that went along with them that instructed the teacher in what methods to use. how to conduct the class. and direct the children's work. One of the teachers who got her initial teacher training in the United States mentions this kind of programmed instruction as a big feature of her teacher education.

> *But it wasn't teaching because it was this guide. this teacher's guide that told you. "Ask the question. Make children raise their hands." I mean, you didn't need to go to university to be able to read it. That's how I learned. And that was my*

whole problem . . . I aced my student teaching experience but I didn't really feel . . . that it was teaching at all.
(Kim p. 6)

At the beginning I didn't think about it. I did what I was told and I took this teacher's guide, that was my bible. and if you lost it you were dead meat. and you wondered why. Like at the beginning of my teaching I wondered why I had to stick to this. Like. I remember student teaching and doing something without it and the teacher telling me, "It wasn't in the guide." So then you just went back to this guide. And I wondered why you had to go to university because you could just buy these books, they told you when to raise the hand. Told what to do. and you didn't even get to choose.
(Kim p. 18)

But even teachers who did not encounter this particular approach in their teacher education were always expected to use the materials that were provided for them and consult the teacher's guide that accompanied the reading series or program. These teachers did what was required of them but even then. the knowledge that they acquired was defined by them as uniquely their own. They considered their knowledge hard-won because they had put the ideas to practical trial.

Perhaps because of this notion that their knowledge was personally acquired they seem to have felt confident in spite of their inexperience. Barbara remembers somewhat ruefully that early confidence.

I guess, you know you're a beginning teacher. I was very truly confident. so confident. I think you stick to things which are. right or wrong, in a way . . . Like when I started teaching, no one ever said to me kids can have opinions. That didn't count. Like I was the teacher. Hey. I knew what's right . . .
(Barbara p.10)

Donna remembers how she had lots of confidence based on the success she thought she had had in her second year of teaching. *"I thought I was pretty good"* (Donna p. 3). She had been put into a teaching situation and had managed to learn on the job. Now when she thinks back on it she sees more clearly.

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It was a scary year . . . What had I done? Absolutely nothing. I was dumped into—I think the first year I was here, but certainly by the second year they had all these immigrant children. Here I am, I'm the ESL specialist. That's based on having one kid in my class in my first or second year . . . I mean, I had nothing. You muddle through.
(Donna p. 5)

But she also realizes that the teaching that was being done wasn't really very complicated anyway. *"Well, we didn't really teach writing. You have to realize, we never taught writing. I mean, what did you teach? . . . We taught spelling"* (Donna p.6).

In hindsight it is easy to see now that the teachers' early success was based more on student ability and shear enthusiasm coupled with not a lot of outside scrutiny. Sarah's description of her first year reveals all three of these factors.

I was never worried. As a matter of fact my first year, when I look back on it, should have been my most disastrous year but, you know what? It was my best year. I had an extremely bright group of children and I was so young and so eager and so naïve . . .

Well I always wanted to teach . . . And all I wanted to do was get in there and do it. You know, my formal training was over, I wanted the practical. And it was my classroom, I could decorate it the way I wanted and then just go ahead and do it. No, I was never really worried about anything.

The only thing I remember that when I look back on I'm horrified is how I wound up doing report cards because my marking system at that time—no one taught me how to do that. And my sense of evaluation was always innate. I instinctively always knew what the children were capable of doing. But when it came to actually recording things it was my recording method that was really very primitive . . .

At that time I used to sit with notebooks and workbooks on my bed and page through it to see what my comments were, and then write down the mark. And although it was accurate in the long run, the hours that I had to put in! And the stress that I was under was really ridiculous, but again—no one really talked about this. And no one told you how to do it or gave you any suggestions and that's the one thing I never even was taught in university . . . I learned it on my own—that's your 'trial-and-error.'
(Sarah pp. 4-5)

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Some beginning teachers did get some help and reassurance from their new

colleagues. *"I was concerned. I spoke to the other teachers and my aide. They*

reassured me. That's my insecurities. I needed the reassurance anyway" (Suzanne p.7).

A very few were fortunate to get all the help they needed from the other teachers in their

school who were generous enough to take the time to help a struggling but willing

newcomer.

> *Because we were so isolated and because we had such a diversity in experience of*
> *the four teachers that were there, we really all worked together. Talk about a*
> *true family and that's really what we were there. It was wonderful.*
> (Doris p. 3)

> *That was it. When I think of those two years, they were wonderful. They were*
> *absolutely wonderful. I had no direction other than the four of us, and we just*
> *sort of all worked together with what do you do, how do you do, and everybody*
> *shared their knowledge and experience.*
> (Doris p. 5)

The thirteen teachers in the study all agreed that in their first years of teaching

they were unprepared by their teacher education programs to teach. They did not get

from their university training the teacher knowledge that they craved and envisioned for

themselves. What would the knowledge of how to teach have consisted of? It would

certainly not have been made up of theories of curriculum and instruction, theories of

child development, or content knowledge in their subject areas. The teachers were

almost contemptuous of theory and of the attempts that had been made to teach it to

them. The teacher knowledge that they hoped for would have been intensely practical

and not just practical but completely specific to the grade and situation that they found

themselves in. Their notion of how to teach would have been the knowledge of how to

act in the teaching role, the knowledge of what it would feel like to actually teach, the

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procedures of teaching, the actual moves, the planning, the deciding and the carrying out of intentions.

As a group of teachers they seemed to believe that a teacher could be shown these things, that a teacher could pick them up from other teachers, and/or derive them from her experience. She could try the methods out and she would see immediately what it was that was going to work with her students. A teacher could get comfortable with these methods and make them her own but she could not gain this knowledge by being told about the methods. And above all, theory about teaching and learning was useless because it was removed from the reality of the teaching situation. There was no security in knowing something. The only certainty was in doing. Essentially these teachers held a constructionist theory of teaching. Teaching knowledge was particular to the individual teacher and particular to her teaching situation. One could only learn to be a teacher by being a teacher and by teaching.

Personal Reading and Writing Practices and Influence on Teaching:

The Extent of Teachers' Reliance on Personal Experience

The teachers were asked about their personal practices in reading and writing, how they thought of themselves as a reader and as a writer, and the influence that these factors might or might not have on their teaching of the language arts. Their answers to these questions revealed that there was a strong influence of teachers' personal experiences and practices on their teaching in the language arts. They did not articulate this influence themselves in the interviews but the relationship was clear from their accounts of their experiences and their accounts of their teaching practices. It was also clear that their personal practices in reading and writing were generally unexamined and therefore the effects were not mediated in any way in their impact on teaching. When asked about this influence, they supposed that any effect that their own experience had had on their teaching practice was wholly positive.

Nearly all of the teachers claimed to be, or to have been in their younger days, avid readers and felt that this had influenced their teaching. When considering their own reading behaviour, most of the teachers talked exclusively about reading fiction for pleasure. A few of the teachers also included in their discussion their non-fiction reading, their reading for information, and/or their reading of more literary works. A few others distinguished between reading for pleasure and the reading that they had been required to do in school or the reading that they might now do for professional purposes. Generally the teachers seemed to consider the latter two kinds of reading, required reading or professional reading, to be of less interest and reason for comment than reading for

pleasure. Most of the teachers seemed to feel that the reading that they did for pleasure had been the stronger and more important influence on their teaching.

With regard to writing, almost all of the teachers were critical or unsure of their writing abilities and yet most felt that this lack of skill or confidence had little effect on their teaching of writing. Despite this, their comments about their personal experience of writing clearly did show a pattern of influence on their teaching. Two teachers, Nancy and Sarah, claimed to be good writers and felt that this had influenced their methods of instruction in writing, although in totally different directions. Some of the teachers also distinguished between the writing they did for pleasure and the writing they had done for school but they tended to disregard the writing that they did for pleasure. Several of the teachers found in the course of the interview that, on reflection, their personal difficulties or lack of confidence in their own writing when they were in school, or more recently in adult experience, had influenced them to teach writing in a particular way. Three teachers (Barbara, Estelle, and Toni) also specifically mentioned a reverse effect. They felt that their writing skills and confidence in their writing had improved as a result of teaching writing or other academic activities more recently in their careers.

In most of their answers to questions about their personal reading and writing, the teachers drew on experiences in childhood and in school, in addition to talking about current experience. When talking about reading, they did mention some past experiences but almost all of them talked about current reading habits and practices. This was probably because they all assumed that the topic was "reading for pleasure" and because they nearly all do read for pleasure. In contrast, when talking about writing, they were much more likely to talk about past experiences. In this case they nearly all assumed that

the topic was academic or literary writing and very few of them do that kind of writing. In a sense too, writing for pleasure is an unaccustomed idea for all but a few of these teachers.

In general teachers do have a tendency to look back on their own past learning experiences and draw from these in forming their ideas about being a teacher. This is only to be expected because for many teachers the desire to teach, to be a teacher, comes out of childhood experience. Although this is common, it was not something that was talked about by the teachers in these interviews. There was only one comment by Sarah about wanting to be a teacher and playing at teaching her younger siblings.

The teachers also seemed to treat their early school experiences alongside of their adult experiences as if they were somehow parallel in time. They did not differentiate in importance between experiences that they had as a child and those they had as an adult, as if their perceptions in the two circumstances were equally valid. This is probably an effect of unexamined experience. It was most noticeable in the comments of Suzanne but was also present in the comments of several other teachers.

The teachers' responses to the questions about their personal practices in reading and writing and the influence of these factors on their teaching did show a pattern of considerable influence, although this was not something that the teachers had thought about very much. The connection between their personal reading and their teaching of reading was the connection that they found most obvious. Doris and Estelle had given the question some thought previously but none of the other teachers gave an indication that they had thought about this in a deliberate way before the question was asked.

With regard to their personal writing and its influence on their teaching there seemed to have been less previous awareness. Only one of the teachers, Nancy, had given this question some thought, had thought of herself as a role model, and had discussed her writing practices with her students in the course of teaching the writing process. Several teachers said there was no influence. Several others in the course of discussing the question in the interview were able to find some connections.

Whether the teachers were able to see them or not, there were patterns of influence from their reading and writing experiences in school, their personal reading practices, and their reactions to both of these, on their teaching practices. Teachers have not generally had the opportunity to consider their own experiences and the effect that they have on their teaching. There is potentially a powerful vehicle here for teachers to develop their thinking and their practice of teaching in the language arts that has not been generally developed in teacher education programs.

"If you're not a reader, how can you expect kids to read?" Personal Practices in Reading and Influence on Teaching

There was a range of responses to the questions about reading practices and their influence on teaching but the teachers all tended to reach similar conclusions. Their personal reading practices varied somewhat but they nearly all said that they loved to read and read a lot for personal pleasure and they all felt either as a matter of customary thinking or on reflection that these personal habits and practices had some influence on their teaching of reading.

"I can't imagine a child having a life without a book." Three of the teachers

(Estelle. Kim, and Toni) gave a relatively straightforward answer to the question about

their personal reading practices and the influence of these practices on their teaching of

reading. Estelle had already talked about her own immersion in literature and her

promotion of literature with her children and her students, in the part of the interview that

explored the question about how children learn to read and write. This topic was,

therefore, only briefly alluded to and reinforced in this part of the interview. When Kim

was asked the question about her reading practices, she described herself as an avid

reader, one for whom reading was a major part of life. She concluded that her biggest

goal with her students was to induce them to love reading as well.

> *I've always loved it, okay? That to me—if I could spend my whole day just teaching language arts with the writing component that would be my day. My kid is an English major . . . just because it was a part—it's a major part of our life . .*
> .

> *That's my hobby. That's what I enjoy to do. I like the fantasy of reading. I like the realistic reading. I mean, if I'm hungry, I'll read anything that anybody has. It doesn't matter. You know, if someone has a book I'll read it. I mean, I happen to love it. And I like the excitement. I can't imagine a child having a life without a book. So that's my main thing. As a teacher, probably in grade three my biggest goal . . . is to teach them to love it . . . And that's an easy goal . . . They love it. My kids love to read. If I say, "Let's silent read," they cheer . . .*
> (Kim p. 8)

Toni's response to the question was similar, if somewhat less effusive. She loves

to read and is always open to new and different things to read. When asked about a

connection to her teaching, she conceded that she uses practices that she hopes will

encourage her students to read as well.

> *I love to read . . . I try to read as much as I can . . . There's times that I do and some periods that I don't. But usually before I go to bed is the time . . . I'm now reading The English Patient and having difficulty with it but . . . I guess I read*

different—I'm always looking for something different, unusual . . . Or I go to the library or go to the bookstore and I look at the bestseller list . . .

I think [a love of reading] helps. I think that it helps . . . because I like to read I encourage the children to read a lot. We'll do a lot of silent reading, we'll work with workbooks. And I guess that's because I enjoy it . . .
(Toni pp. 7-8)

These three teachers have a fairly non-analytic approach to the question. They assume that reading a great deal would be a major benefit to their students and they make a simple connection between their own recreational reading and their promotion of reading in the classroom. They also seem to assume, in common with all of the teachers in the study. that. in grades three to six, promoting reading is the same as teaching reading.

"They are so bombarded, way more than us." Tanya reflects that she doesn't read as much as she used to and when asked if this has had an effect on her teaching. says that she used her own children as references when she first started teaching. A little later. when asked about writing, she reverts to talking about her own experience and says. *"You always use yourself."* Now, as she thinks about her children's reading, she sees. with some sadness, that there is also the same trend of less reading in school children as they get older.

I've seen myself go down as a reader. I used to read a lot. I don't anymore. And I'm not going to use the excuse I don't have time. I just choose to do other things a lot of the times . . .

Sometimes when you first start teaching you don't have children. You compare a lot of what's happening and how the kids are to how you were then. But once you have your own children, then you start comparing to your own kids and you don't think about yourself, sort of. I used my kids, and I noticed even with my kids, my kids in elementary school were—they loved reading. Couldn't get—grade five. grade six, they were just—Now I mean [they are both] in university . . . They read

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what they have to read. Very little reading for pleasure . . . very little, almost none . . . I can't [worry about that]. I can't take on any more concerns.
(Tanya p. 6)

Even though. half-joking. Tanya says that she can't worry about this trend. she does wonder about it and the topic emerges again later in the interview. In the midst of talking about how teachers have had to change in response to changes in students. she once again is led to ask the question.

What makes some kids—? You can't give them enough reading. They're just swallowing the novels in this day and age. Not twenty years ago but today— where a university student very rarely reads for pleasure. They don't have the time. High school kids, very few, and I'm involved with a lot of my kids' friends. Very few unless they have no social life. But if they want to achieve in school and try to have that balance of social life and all of them are now worried about resumes and volunteer work. They are so bombarded, way more than us. There just isn't time . . . When they are doing the novels in high school, they like them for the most part. They've got interesting work that they're doing, but it's enough. They are not doing any more.
(Tanya pp.16-17)

Her thoughts about the way that her own reading has declined are leading her to notice the same tendency in school children, even those who are enthusiastic readers. to have less interest in reading later. It is interesting the way that her thinking moves from herself. to her own children. to school children in general, then to her children's friends. Tanya's comments. partly because they are a little out of the ordinary, show, almost as it happens. how personal experience does have an effect on a teacher's thinking about issues in the language arts.

"I was a reader, that's all there was to say."   Donna tells a familiar story about herself as a child reader but she also comments on the relationship between teachers' attitudes to specific curriculum and how their students learn in those subject

areas. When asked about her self-concept as a reader. like many of the teachers. Donna had a narrative of her own reading history. The fact that this was so common suggests that it may be possible to pick out future teachers by seeing who are the "readers" in a class of school children. Donna was a voracious and confident reader.

> *I've read since I can—well, no I wasn't reading when I went to school. I didn't read when I went to school. By November I was reading the newspaper. I know that. I had to walk home past St. John's library and I went every single day and changed my books. There was no television. I was a voracious reader. I would read two or three books a night . . . I know that when I was in the eighth grade.* · *they were very strict. I was allowed into the adult section because they knew that I had read every book. I was a reader, that's all there was to say.*
> (Donna pp. 5-6)

When asked what effect her reading history had had on her teaching. she distinguished between just reading and being a "reader" and talked about the impact of that difference on students' reading. If the teacher doesn't love reading, the students won't either. A teacher who is not a reader will cover what is required but won't give the students enough time to read on their own. If a teacher is uncomfortable or feels inadequate with something. that something will tend to disappear from the curriculum.

> *If you're not a reader, how can you expect kids to read? The teachers who aren't readers. their kids don't read very much . . . If you never read anything . . . I mean, everybody reads something. They read a newspaper. I have teachers tell me they don't read the newspaper . . . They read what they have to read but they don't read . . . Oh yeah, they go on vacation, they might take a book with them . . . I don't think they spend, I don't think they ever give kids the same amount of time to read on their own. Yes, they'll do what's required. If in the school you're reader B in grade 4, those kids will do reader B. Or if, now that we do seven different novels during the year, they'll cover the seven novels that you do. But the kids don't read. Like those kids aren't reading in school all the time. They're too busy with paper . . .*
>
> *I think that [loving it] makes you good at it. I don't say you can't do it. A teacher who is terrified of science doesn't teach science. They might teach something else*

*but they're not teaching science. What you don't like, you don't teach. You
eliminate it. It becomes eliminated from your curriculum.*
(Donna pp. 24-25)

Donna talks as if being a reader were a happy contagion that you hope can be passed to

the children in the care of the lucky sufferer. This idea coincides though with the ideas of

the other teachers who thought that inducing the children to read a lot through stimulating

their interest would solve the problem of poor or reluctant readers.

"I know what it's like to have to read a book that you didn't want to read."

Suzanne's approach to the question was also similar but she adds another element of the

teacher's identification with her students' situation. Even when discussing her reading

interests she displays a close identification between her own reading and her students'

reading choices. The students seem to her to have endless choices of books to read while

she has a hard time finding a book that stimulates her interest.

> *I love reading. I was one of those children who rarely watched TV and would
> rather sit with a book and absolutely love reading. Now I still love reading.
> When I'm on holidays—I usually don't find the time or take the time when I'm
> working—when I'm on holidays—over winter break I ended up reading five or six
> novels . . . Mostly fiction, although I do enjoy nonfiction. I have trouble finding a
> good book. When you were younger—I look at the kids and I'm so envious
> because we have a class library and there's books beyond books, and books and
> books, and they can read forever, and when you're an adult, it just doesn't seem
> that you have that type of selection. The books are out there but . . . I do enjoy
> reading some nonfiction. Though, I find, I need to hear first that the book is
> unbelievable and I should try it, or if someone recommends it to me and that I've
> heard about it . . .*

> *[Last holiday] I read, let's see what I read. I think I read a Danielle Steele book
> and James Patterson . . . not too trashy . . . I can't read very trashy . . . In
> between. The upper class trash novels . . . I kind of bounce back and forth. I'll
> read—for example, Danielle Steele—I don't really enjoy a lot of her books,
> because they're so repetitive, if you've ever read her . . . But she is one of the
> better authors . . . So I'll end up reading them anyway just because I enjoy
> reading and it's out there, and because I am not familiar with enough of . . . I*

*would like to find—like I'm thirsty for it really. I love reading. I just haven't
found anything, any author or type of book I'm really, really interested in . . . Like
I remember one of her books had something about the Titanic, so afterwards I
went and researched the Titanic because I was very interested . . . I'm not a
historical reader, or never was as a student, so I would just flip through and kind
of find pieces . . .*
(Suzanne pp. 8-10)

Suzanne describes her program as one designed to have the students do a lot of

reading. In another instance of her identification with her students, because she still

remembers the negative effects of being required to read a particular book, she does not

want to prescribe their choices. She keeps some books in the room of a type that other

teachers disapprove of because she does not want to affect her students' love of reading

by restricting the choices available to them.

*Because I loved reading so much, I really encourage them to read. I encourage
them to read whatever they're interested in reading and as long as they're
reading. So I think that that is valuable. I know a lot of teachers say, "I don't
want you reading this Sweet Valley High and Goosebumps. If they're reading, I
think that's more important, because I know what it's like and I am sure you do, to
have to read a book that you didn't want to read . . . And I'd rather them love
reading like I did, and just pick up a book and read . . . To love it, yes, because I
just love it, and I still do . . .*

*We have USSR almost every day . . . and we have a home reading program that
my aide started that's wonderful . . . The first one was for every seven nights they
read fifteen minutes, and the parent signed, they added an inch on their inchworm
. . . it's still for every seven nights that they've read, they get to add a book into
their library, just a cutout book, and they get a ballot with a lotto ticket that goes
into a jar. At the end of every month we have a couple draws for little prizes . . .
They just love the lotto. The kids that weren't reading as much or having it signed
. . . are now and that's great. They're interested in it. It's wonderful, and that's
what I want.*

*I don't keep a lot of the "smutty" books in my classes—some teachers call them—
the Sweet Valley High, but I do have some because I want the kids reading . . .
You know, you learn things from every book . . . I just remember so many books,
mostly in junior high, that we had to read that I was just, you know, I couldn't get
through. There were other books I can't put them down and I'm up all night*

reading them, and that's a great feeling. I love reading and enjoying a book like that and I want them to as well . . .
(Suzanne pp. 10–11)

Again, Suzanne assumes that all of her students are like she was as a student. She is certain that if they can be induced to read a lot that they will have no problems dealing with or understanding what they are reading. She believes that her encouragement is the most important support for their reading and that they will, in due course, move on to more challenging texts as they are able.

"I look for the imagery in literature." In contrast, there was a group of teachers (Nancy, Rose, and Sarah) whose love of good literature rather than just "easy reading" has influenced them to use different strategies in trying to impart this love to their students. Nancy, who also reads widely for pleasure, wants to move her children away from a reliance on reading the "chocolate bars" of children's literature towards an understanding of the difference and into a taste for better quality choices.

As a reader? I've been reading since I've been five—I'm a fantastic reader . . . It's made me—I have just a richer background to offer in terms of—I guess it's an attitude towards reading. I always have contests going on to encourage the "bulk" reading. I spend a lot of time teaching them the difference between literature and common "chocolate bars" like that R. L. Stine [Goosebumps] crap. I eat chocolate bars too, but it's not the mainstay of my diet because I like to be healthy. Yeah, I think my kids get a richer reading experience from me because I love to read . . .
(Nancy p. 8)

In the earlier discussion of how children learn to read Rose had outlined some of her ideas about her students' need to experience the descriptive power and understand the narrative structures of literature. In response to the questions about her own reading

practices, she reiterates her love for the aesthetic and intellectual power of good

literature. She also talks about the effort that she makes to use literature in her

presentation of social studies for her students, even though she recognizes that there is a

trade-off in terms of literary quality.

> *I loved language arts because I—you know, I like reading and a perfect example
> is I sat the other day and watched Gulliver's Travels for two nights and I never
> watch serials. But that made such an impression on me in high school when I
> studied it. And I sat and cried at the end because I was so moved by his depiction
> of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. I haven't read Swift since then but it came
> back to me and it was so—I wasn't even looking forward to . . . but how could
> they do anything wrong to it? I mean, it was such a masterpiece of writing! . . .
> when I went back and got my degree . . . I had my teaching certificate . . . So I
> worked on . . . a double major in English and History. So those are my fields, and
> I've always had a love—but I've always enjoyed combining the two, too . . .*
> (Rose p. 9)

> *And just even that approach to social studies, for example. We're going to do all
> of Pierre Berton's Canada series—I've saved them and actually one of the books
> . . . I was just looking at . . . in our Network series is Kidnapped in the Yukon.
> Now, I haven't read it with my class yet. It's just a short little novel. But I
> thought that would be the next one. We're doing Bridge to Terabitha and
> Sounder we did already . . . But I don't think this Kidnapped in the Yukon could
> compare in literary value, just from what I've looked at. It's one of these Network
> Series novels but I don't put it in the same class of writing . . . I mean, I look for
> the imagery in literature and I'm always trying to show this to the kids.*
> (Rose p. 10)

Both Nancy and Rose are sure of the differences between good literature and the majority

of the easy reading books that make up most of the book choices of their students. They

are intent on making the distinction clear to their students, as well, by providing good

choices and pointing out the differences. This part of their personal practice, the

appreciation of good literature, is part of their teaching philosophy.

Sarah also is a person who loves good literature but for her this love has led her to

teach in a more traditional fashion. Her reading program includes considerable emphasis

on both a rather old-fashioned program of oral reading and a more current program of

presentation public speaking.

> *I am a voracious reader . . . the best present anyone could give me as a child was*
> *a book. I treasure books. I'm a fanatic about books. I don't join a library. I buy*
> *my books. I want to own them absolutely . . . I have a thing about books. I can't*
> *be without one. As soon as I finish one I have to have another one to read . . .*
>
> *I don't just limit it to reading. Reading and oracy, to me, go hand in hand. To be*
> *able to read orally is very important . . . it gives me an indication of their ability*
> *to speak . . . No matter what grade I was in, I did oral reading with them . . . And*
> *I gave them guidelines to improve on their reading. And the criteria would be:*
> *voice, projection, posture, how you hold the book, eye contact . . . I don't know*
> *how much of it was supposed to be taught in the curriculum. Oral reading just*
> *said "oral reading." It didn't give criteria so I made up my own criteria. And I*
> *do it religiously no matter what grade I teach . . .*
>
> *We had oral speaking as well, where they—it could have been joke-telling, simple*
> *story-telling, an event in their life that they found particularly humorous because*
> *those are the easiest to tell . . . They didn't realize it was oral speaking and they*
> *told their jokes. And then I remember one year, to make it easier on them I did*
> *hobbies. And so it was presentation, but not only presentation—they also had to*
> *explain. And so that was teaching them sequential speaking and thought process.*
> *And of course I knew what they were supposed to do, they did not . . . I would go*
> *through the criteria with them before and after so that there were no surprises . . .*
> *I always stress the importance of this to them but to them it was fun . . .*
> (Sarah pp. 5-6)

Sarah's approach to reading, particularly in this outline of her oral reading program, sees

it primarily as a performance that reproduces the text as it is written. Comprehension is

assumed to be immediate in the transfer of meaning from the page to the reader. How the

student builds an understanding of the meaning of the passage is not part of her concern.

A current approach to reading would have students read and respond to literature

in an active process of building understanding, constructing meaning (Peterson & Eeds,

1990). In contrast is Sarah's program for the study of literature. She has decided, on the

basis of her own experiences, to teach the study of literature in a very traditional fashion,

either a traditional historical method in interpreting poetry or the tracing of character.

plot. and setting in the analysis of novels. Her own unhappy experiences with free responses to poetry in high school and her later training in university have convinced her that there is one correct way to interpret poetry, that the correct answers can be arrived at through study. and that she is able to provide her students with the correct answers.

I remember very well. when it came to grade—I'm sure it was ten—everything was sight prose. There was no background on the author or the poet. You had to take a look at the poem and interpret and answer questions and I have a very vivid imagination. I answered as I thought it should be answered and I was always wrong . . . But I've learned a lot over the years . . . it was really my university English that brought out more of the . . . talent or the ability to interpret works. And I think I'm fairly good at it now . . . when you take poetry— let's say John Donne, or Keats, or Yeats—there's a reason for what they wrote. Now. if you don't know the background you're going to misinterpret the poem entirely . . . a lot of them are written because of a longing for something or a lack of something in their own life, or something . . . you need to know the background of why that poem was written. Then when you read the words you can more instinctively and actually educationally . . . Build an understanding. And not guess at it because there's no guesswork involved. You should be able to see, with studying, clearly, what that message was . . .

Anything I teach. I give the—we read about the author first. And we discuss the experience that they may or may not have gone through and then usually the novels that I choose to teach are self-explanatory as we go along. We talk about theme. we talk about setting—I do all the traditional things that I know they're going to need as they age . . . I don't think you could just give them the novel and say. guess where it took place, and what do you think they're going through? Initially you might want that kind of response but this is not "guess and check" . . . To me. I take literature in its ultimate form very seriously. And for anyone to appreciate, especially the classics, and even modern literature, you still need to know and appreciate why the author built such a story.

I taught Jacob Two-Two meets the Hooded Fang, which is a fantasy. It's hysterical. It's really wonderful. And really, in Mordecai Richler's life there may have been a deep, dark meaning when he was a child that was actually based on his family experience, but there's more leeway with that kind of novel . . . Where you don't really have to rip it apart from stem to stern, there are so many other things—the imagery, the—we do a lot of character analysis—and you choose different novels to accentuate different things in the program that you would like to teach. This novel was great for character analysis. And another novel might be for setting, plot, etc. Because it's laid out more succinctly that way. And so you bring to the novel the kind of things you'd like the children to get out of it.

according to what you can take out of it the best. Not every novel suits your purposes in everything . . .

[Language arts has changed.] I find that in many ways I've stayed the same, though. And I can't figure out if that's good or bad but it works . . .
(Sarah pp. 7-10)

Sarah is a clear example of a teacher whose experiences and predispositions and her personal reflections on these, have led her to develop a particular way of teaching. She knows what she wants the students to see in the literature. There is one right way and she will direct them to find that way. Even in the study of enjoyable children's novels that have been written for fun, she will choose the aspect that she thinks is most appropriate

for study and direct the novel study in that direction. The students' ideas and perceptions will have no role in shaping the interpretation. The pattern for her seems to have been set very early and it is a pattern that at this time seems impervious to change.

"Everybody should be able to . . . say that reading has a real purpose for them." Doris and Nora both love reading but somewhat reluctantly give a nod to the idea that students need to understand the purposes as well as the pleasures of reading. Doris has a lot of pleasure in the experience of reading and this is what she would like to communicate to her students. She deliberately sets aside the experience of doing professional reading when thinking about working with the children. She doesn't even think of it as reading. Reading doesn't have to be hard work if you can find the pleasure in it, and see it as a "movie in the hand." Even when a student tells her that he doesn't like the stories he is given to read, she assumes that the real reason is that he finds reading hard and she goes about convincing him that he can have fun with it.

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I read in spurts. What kind of a reader am I? I don't know how to answer that. I read a little bit of everything but I sort of go off, if that's where my head is now. I sort of go in that direction. I read everything I can and then I just sort of leave it . . . This break, cabin fever set in and I went to the library a whole bunch of times. I just read the equivalent of what easy listening music is, that kind of reading . . . My son was doing a project on . . . genealogy . . . so we went to the library and . . . . I picked up some of that and really was quite intrigued with that, so I started on that as well . . . I sort of go off on something and I will read that for a while because I just want to grab it all. Then life kicks in and I find that I haven't got the time . . . Just try to do some professional reading as that comes along. That's sort of ongoing. I guess I don't even count, I don't even think about that as reading . . .

I guess I've never, I've never taught reading or thought [of] reading as work. So I guess that's how I present it as well. In fact I told one of the little ones this morning when he said to me that he doesn't like reading . . . We talked a little bit about that and I said, "Do you not like reading because reading is hard or that you don't like the stories you're reading?" . . . Of course his answer was reading is hard. [But] He said, "Sometimes I don't like the story."

So I told him about—actually it was my son who told me—that was my other education, my children! . . . said to me as I grounded him from TV . . . he had to go to his room . . . for whatever it was. So he said, "Well, that's okay. I'll just go and watch a movie in my room." I said to him, "Try that again." I thought he was going to sneak out of his room and watch it in our bedroom. "What is this that you mean?" So he said, "Well, I'll just read my book and I have a movie in my hand."

And that's how I guess I always saw reading, that reading wasn't work, it was just pleasure because where you sort of withdraw . . . And this is what I told this little guy . . . I said a child had told me that . . . I said, "When you read do you see pictures in your mind?" . . .
(Doris pp. 20-22)

Doris has been forced to realize though, through her experiences with some students, that *"you can't make people like things."* Some students can't seem to find the pleasure in reading. Her back-up position is to try to help them see some purpose in their reading but she still finds it hard to comprehend that a student might not like reading.

I'm thinking of students that I see now in grade 5 and grade 6 who are nonreaders, and they will tell you they are nonreaders. They tell you they do not

like to read. They do not choose to read. They do not want to read because there is nothing interesting . . . fun about reading, period . . . Ideally everybody should be able to, at some point, say that reading has a real purpose for them, whether it be to learn, to find—We talk about all these purposes of reading, but they have not yet found this. It makes me very sad when I see . . . children doing that. I guess part of my learning has been that you can't make people like things. I can't make her like reading. I'm thinking of a little girl in grade 5. I am working with her sister in grade 3 and she said that her sister gave her all of these books because she doesn't want to read any of them. I said, "Did your sister read them all?" She said, "No." You know how, when you have a child who is a nonreader you try everything . . . Obviously her parents have tried everything. Everything. She said, "She gave me all her books," and here is this little one in grade 3 saying, "Can't understand that. How could she not like reading? Reading is like breathing."
(Doris pp. 22-23)

Like the little girl in grade three, Doris says, *"How can anyone not like reading?"* Based on her own experience and that of her family, she does not really have an answer to this. Her strategy to deal with the needs of children for whom reading is not and has not been pleasurable is to talk about purposes for reading.

Nora reads a lot too and attributes her success in school to having been well-read. She demonstrates to her students that her knowledge comes from reading but again her strategy to get the kids reading is to get them enthusiastic about reading by having fun with it. Even poetry that she does not have a history of enjoying can be presented in a way that is accessible and fun for her students.

I read a lot . . . I was a good student in high school and university, and I think a lot of it had to do with being well-read. I'm very interested in reading . . . I show the kids all the time that—they'll say to me, "How do you know this?" and I'll say, "Because I read it." . . . About trumpet swans or whatever we're talking about . . . I don't sit down to watch TV, I read a book . . .

I'm not a big, big fan of poetry . . . I just finished a poetry unit with my kids because I thought that maybe with exposure to the right material that they would change and they [would] feel a love of it . . . to me poetry was something that was very stiff in high school and that was required reading. So now we're doing stuff that's fun and I really like it. And then I just used . . . a poem about a boy trading

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in a dollar bill for two quarters because two is more than one. So we did that in our math unit . . . because we had just finished a poetry unit on "friendships." I wanted to show them that we could use it in different ways . . .
(Nora pp. 5-6)

When asked how her love of reading has affected her teaching, her answer was

that she was able to motivate her students to love reading. She also mentions making

sure that her students know that you can find out anything you want to know in a book

but most of her time and energy is directed at motivating the students to read for an

experience that is exciting and pleasurable.

> *I'm sure that everybody says this, but I feel that if I could teach kids to love reading and I can get somebody to love reading, or I could get the kids to understand that if you want to find out something about something, all you have to do is pick up a book—then I'll feel I've been successful. And last year I taught a couple of novel studies . . . and I went into McNally-Robinson and there was a run on E. B. White books and they said, "I don't know what's going on but all of a sudden he's hot!" And I did the same thing with James and the Giant Peach . . . and when I see that I've turned a kid on to an author and they're buying every book that that author has turned out, or they're going to the library . . . I feel that I've done something right. And I feel I have a lot to offer because I myself love books . . .*

> *I love good books. I know what turned me on. I know what I read that really got me reading and I consider myself a very enthusiastic person and I can get excited and I can get the kids excited and I guess I feel that one of my strengths as a teacher is I can take something that . . . could be pretty boring and make it very exciting . . . if I can transfer that . . . enthusiasm to their work and to the kids being the best that they can be and to really want to read—and to me, the best compliment is when they go to the store or go to the library and they buy or take out other books by that same author. Then to me, I don't need a report card. I've got them going to the library because they can't get enough of this particular author and I feel I've done a great job. And I'm proud of that . . .*
(Nora pp. 8-9)

Nora uses herself, her experiences, her enthusiasms as a sort of template for her work

with her students. This is not only Nora's attitude. She is sure that *"everybody says this'*

as well. Her methods seem to be effective with her students but she has not entertained the possibility that other approaches may be necessary as well.

"There are other issues which are at different levels." Barbara is the one teacher who says that she is not now and never has been an avid reader. Perhaps because of that, she works with her students to understand what we can get out of reading and understanding what we read—the process of literary analysis. What she says is that she is not personally someone who reads a good deal and therefore cannot share a love of reading. She does feel, however, that she shares with her students an enthusiasm for what is read. What she actually describes is that she is able to help students to understand the process of insight into literature, to recognize that all genuine insight has validity, and to feel confident in their own insight. She feels that her students have learned these lessons and that they have learned to be better writers because she has pushed them to do better rather than mark them down for a poor performance.

> *I'm not an avid reader, because I personally don't find reading—I'm a very active person and I don't sit still for very long. So . . . I don't think my love of reading is being shared. I think my enthusiasm about what we are reading, I do share. I think I'm an enthusiastic person . . .*

> *Like, I've told the kids how we see things at different levels. Sometimes they bring plays into the school, and they're very basic plays, and they bring the kindergartens and grade ones in . . . I prepare them for the play. I tell them that there are other issues which are at different levels, at their level. And it's wonderful that they are looking at it now.*

> *I think even in a movie, I tell them . . . a kid can go to a movie and see something from Beauty and The Beast or whatever. And they see something. There's different things that they can pick out . . . So I think they've sort of—they've developed that. I think they're developing that, which is great . . .*

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After we finish novel we'll do a character sketch . . . If they do a lousy job on something like that, I won't ever give them—if something is lower than a C. I don't mark it. I just tell them where they can improve. They take it and they redraft. and they bring it back. So, to me, the absolute mark is not that important as the final product . . .

All of them, I can say, can sit there and write . . . But when we go into the computer room, that's part of our writing class . . . We did a sequel to [one of the novels] or else sometimes we just do journal on the computer, or just any issue, but we do it. They keep, they have a writing folder and they're proud of their work. None of them are afraid to express themselves in language. I think it's fabulous.
(Barbara pp. 6-8)

For Barbara too. the reading and the pleasure to be found in reading were not ends in themselves. She talks about the reading that students do in connection with what they were going to write. In that sense. for her, the reading was purposeful. It provided insight, ideas, and information.

Most of the teachers feel that their love of reading is something that they can somehow transfer to their students. They seem to assume that if the students would only read they would reap all of the benefits automatically. The teachers combined all the kinds of reading. for pleasure. for literary enjoyment. for information and for professional learning and assumed that. if only students could be induced to read enough, all of these purposes would somehow be met. The lack of reflection on the different purposes for reading may not in itself be a problem but it is obvious that for many of the teachers. these somewhat over-simplified ideas about the growth of reading comprehension did have a definite influence on their teaching practices.

Very few of the teachers even mention the importance of the motivation of reading for information, even though this can be. for some students. as strong a motivator as reading narrative (Pappas, 1991). In addition. none of the teachers talk about teaching

self-monitoring strategies or other strategies for aiding comprehension of written material. Some of the teachers may in fact do this kind of teaching but even when talking about students who did not like to read, they did not mention this but said that it was interest that was lacking and that pleasure would be the greatest aid to learning. This had been the case for almost all of these teachers themselves and for most students it is an adequate approach. That is probably why the teachers did not see the necessity for any other route in teaching reading. Personal experience, especially if it is unexamined, is a good guide only for dealing with people who are very similar to yourself, people with similar abilities, experiences, and tastes, similar responses to things, and similar purposes for reading.

"You know what? You always use yourself:" Personal Writing Practices and their Influence on Teaching

With regard to the teachers' personal writing practices and the influence of these experiences on their teaching, the situation was somewhat different. The majority of the teachers were very critical of their own writing abilities. The most common self-assessments were lack of ease, poor skills, inordinate effort required, insecurities, and anxiety. Some of these self-critical teachers marveled that they had done well in school in spite of their lack of ability in writing. They were perhaps acknowledging that what they were most lacking was a realistic sense of what they were capable of—or perhaps the simple confidence to say that they were good writers. A couple of teachers admitted that they enjoyed writing letters and diaries simply for the pleasure of self-expression. They hastened to add that they did not consider these as serious writing tasks so they

didn't count them when they considered their own writing. Three teachers talked about recent improvements in their writing abilities. Two of these, Barbara and Toni, attributed the change to teaching and the third, Estelle, attributed her improvements in writing to her recent use of a computer for work-related e-mail and for writing for university course work. Finally there were only two teachers, Nancy and Sarah, who thought they were good writers and were willing to admit it. Nancy was the only one of the group who talked about enjoying writing.

"I am not a good writer. I'm an adequate writer." Donna had no hesitation in branding herself as a poor writer. She says that as a writer she is only adequate, although her only concrete examples are her difficulties with spelling. This suggests that her self-assessment of writing skill has mostly to do with the mechanics and conventions of actually putting something down on paper, a rather narrow and outmoded conception of writing. She does rectify the bad impression by mentioning that she has obtained several degrees so her writing couldn't have been that bad.

> *My writing, I'm an adequate writer. I'm not great. I'm a horrible speller. I'm an absolutely horrendous speller. I use a dictionary all the time. I desperately need one . . . I don't notice that I've made a mistake. I can spell the word i-b-l-e or a-b-l-e. Terrible! And I could spell the same word three times on a page, three different ways. I just don't see it . . . No. I'm an adequate writer. I am not a great writer. I'm a concise writer . . . I had to write reports. But, no, no. Look, I've taken three degrees at the university . . . You know, I am adequate. I am not—I am not a good writer. I'm an adequate writer.*
> (Donna p. 6)

When asked how this may have influenced her teaching of writing she dismissed the importance of a teacher's writing ability in teaching writing. Teaching writing was not at all complicated. There was nothing to it.

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Well. we didn't really teach writing. You have to realize. we never taught writing. I mean, what did you teach? You gave them a thing. You did writing every week or something, but you didn't really—you know, "Today I am an eraser." I mean, grade 2's, what did you write?
(Donna pp. 6-7)

She suggests that at least for the early years there was no need for a teacher to be a good writer or to think that she was. The writing that a teacher might have her students do would be so simple that it required little skill. Donna does not articulate a notion of the skills of writing, the rhetorical skills, that are required for even the relatively simple writing performances of Early Years students. As a result she has not formulated ideas about the particular knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required to teach writing. This is in contrast to her comments about reading when she suggested that if a teacher didn't like a subject that she would not teach it effectively.

"When I was taught you learned to read and writing was just there." Kim also denigrates her own writing skills and says that she does not find pleasure in writing. She compares her skills with those of her daughter and finds her own wanting but, agreeing with Donna, concludes that her skills are adequate for teaching. She is pleased to see that, with the opportunities for learning that children now have, they readily develop writing skills and enjoy the exercise of their skills. It is now possible to teach so that the children love to write as much as they love to read.

As [for] my personal writing I'm not good. My daughter's emphasis is on creative writing in this major, and she's good. So when I look at—how her writing skills are—I think they're excellent. When I think of my own personal skills, they aren't. As my teaching skills they're fine . . .

I just don't—I won't sit and write poetry, where like, my daughter will. That's something that's a pleasure to her, while I'll sit and read a book. She'll get pleasure out of writing. Like my kids . . . One of the things I like about the new

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way of teaching, it is such an interactive way that they like to write. They like writing their stories. They like writing creatively. They also like to look at a book and do research skills and put it into a paper. They feel good about that kind of a skill . . .

Probably the way I was taught. I think a big part of it, as a kid when I was taught you learned to read and writing was just there. I remember when writing, you had to take your sentence and you made the diagrams and the preposition went here and the predicate went here, and this and this and there was this whole road map . . . Right? And I really wasn't good at it . . . I worked really hard and learned it. But I didn't like it. And nobody should . . .

I remember doing those maps. Those are the things I remember. I don't remember doing creative writing, I don't think we did do creative writing. (Kim pp. 8-9)

Kim realizes that her skills were not well developed because writing was never really taught when she was in school. Her experience diagramming sentences did nothing to help her enjoy the activity. This realization certainly reinforces her dedication to a strongly literacy-based program in her class. In this sense she is inspired by her own experience and difficulties to teach the way she does.

"It was so hard. I couldn't—it just overwhelmed me." Rose reports that she feels comfortable writing factual accounts but in the past she has felt overwhelmed by reluctance or pressure and has been unable to perform in situations that required her to do more expressive or imaginative writing.

I took a course once at Red River and it was so hard. I couldn't—it just overwhelmed me. We were doing all these—I loved the readings that we did but then when he asked us to sit down and write—and yet, you know it's interesting because . . . Estelle always says to me, "Rose, you do the writing," when we have to do a report or something. "You write it up. You do it. It comes so easily to you." And it isn't a problem for me. I guess maybe where there is a problem is the fantasy side. Like, if I had to do an actual account of something, I might do all right. I remember I went on a trip when I was living in the States . . . We took

this car from New York right across to California for this elderly couple. It was a wonderful trip and I sat and I wrote this little thing, and I should get it out and read it over again. But, just as sort of a diary it was just humorous. It was very interesting. And I would love to someday just sit down and maybe publish it or whatever . . . I wish I could. It's like I wish I could be a singer. I mean, those are the things I think about. But I've never sat down and taken the time to try to do it. But I bet maybe someday if I have the time . . .

And I think I try to show the kids too that . . . But you know, whatever they do I say to them. you know. one of the hardest things about writing is that, when you're young you really haven't had many years of experience to be able to write about. And that's why it is hard for you. But I said you should always try to write about what you know because I said I think that's the easiest way to do any writing. At least that's how I perceive how writers write, it's about what they know.
(Rose pp. 9-10)

Although Rose is able to talk about her difficulties with creative writing and her ease with expository writing, she does not have much to offer her students who may have the same difficulties that she has. In fact, the effect that her experience has had on her teaching is that she does not require students in her class to do much creative writing. Furthermore, her advice to them *"to write about what you know"* may be useful in factual writing situations but gives little guidance to a student who may in the future be required to write imaginatively. Rose does not say what she would suggest to a student who wanted or needed to write creative prose.

"I feel that I am learning with them." Suzanne also feels that she is an inadequate writer. Like Rose she can handle the factual writing situations but feels unable to handle creative writing. Unlike Rose, however, she assumes that it is creative writing that she needs to teach to her students. In this task, she feels she is in a difficult situation. She would like to be able to help her students learn to write creatively so they do not have the same difficulties that she had. She would like them to develop into

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skilled and confident creative writers but she is not sure how to do this. In the meantime

she is reduced to learning alongside her students. In a strange sort of identification with

her students, she tries the assignments out on herself. She mentally works through her

own assignments to the students, assuming that if she can handle them and write as well

as her students that she is on the right track.

> *Myself as a writer? I've never thought of myself as a very good writer. Yet I*
> *would do well in my essays. I was the type of student—I'd hand in an essay and*
> *think, "This is just awful," and get it back stamped with a B or an A and it was*
> *just like, "Did the teacher not know what he or she was marking or reading?" . . .*
> *So I surprised myself that way. I am a factual person and a science person, so*
> *when I would write, if I wrote about something factual . . . I was able to express*
> *myself better. I don't think I'm a very good creative writer. Like I said I'm a*
> *factual . . .*
>
> *I guess I value creative writing. I wish I was a better creative writer and that's*
> *what's really important for me, and I was really excited when you came to us with*
> *your project because I want to observe some other teachers and learn more about*
> *the writing process, because I want to help my kids to become the better writers*
> *that I wish I could have been. But because I don't feel I am that writer, I feel that*
> *I am going to have trouble helping them to get that . . .*
> (Suzanne pp. 11-12)

Almost as an aside, Suzanne admits that she likes to write letters and that she

liked writing stories as a child. She suggests that she lost that enjoyment because she set

high standards for herself and was too self-critical. She wants to keep that critical stance

or that sense of inadequacy out of her classroom but cannot help but measure each

assignment by her own imagined response. Inspired by her own difficulties, she is

attempting, in effect, to be a participant with her students in their learning.

> *I do enjoy writing. I love writing letters . . . more so than a story or essay. It's*
> *not something I ever enjoyed doing . . . When I was younger I loved writing*
> *stories . . . I've just always been very hard on myself and maybe that's why . . .*

I try not to let that come through in the classroom. I try to learn from my students and watch them. It's funny because I'll give them a creative writing assignment . . . For example, I gave them the topic of "winter." That they could take winter wherever they wanted to. I don't like to limit them too much. It's the same thing with reading. It's like reading a book you don't want to read about. It's writing about something you don't want to write about. I think, "Where would I go with this?" And we had the story web where they had to write other characters. I stopped and I'd think, "What would I do with this?" Then I'd think, "Well, I can write as good a story as theirs . . ."
(Suzanne pp. 12-13)

Suzanne does not offer her students any direct instruction on how to do the writing assignment, no structures to help them put together their "story." In fact her directions to them are deliberately wide-open. She does not want to limit their choices, in the same way that she does not want to restrict their choices of what to read. She seems to think that the "ideas" for stories, along with the necessary structures, are within the students and that these will emerge naturally in their writing performance. That is why she wants to watch the students as they do their writing so she can learn creative writing herself by doing the task, at least in her mind, and comparing her performance to theirs.

Suzanne may be more willing to admit this kind of vicarious learning because she is a beginning teacher but something like it may be at the root of a great deal of practice in the teaching of writing. Her teaching methods and her thinking about it are similar to the expressivist theory of writing instruction (Elbow, 1973). More current theories of writing would also include explicit teaching of the elements of the writing process and more rhetorical concern for genre, audience and purpose (Hairstone, 1982).

"I go out of my way to make sure the kids feel great about the way they write." Nora has a lot of doubts about her own writing based on comparisons with her

siblings who she considers gifted writers. In spite of doing well in school she has never

felt confident about her writing ability. Her writing requires a lot of effort and she seems

to think that it comes easily to others.

> *I'm a terrible writer! I'm actually very bad—I don't like—it takes me a very long*
> *time to write something that I consider really good. As I say, I did very well in*
> *university and I wrote some really good papers and I look now and I can't believe*
> *that I wrote it! . . . I guess I compare myself to my older brothers . . . they write*
> *beautifully . . . But, yeah, I can turn out an "okay" thing if I really put my mind to*
> *it . . .*

> *I had A's in English all through high school . . . I guess I'm hard on myself*
> *because I look at my brothers—it's sibling rivalry, I guess! And I look at what*
> *they can write and I don't feel that I can write. I mean I did very well in*
> *university. I worked hard. But it didn't come easily to me. I worked hard at it.*
> *But if I had to say I'm a good writer I would say no, I'm not a particularly good*
> *writer. I guess compared to somebody else, but . . .*
> (Nora pp. 6-7)

Nora realizes on reflection that she has always made a particular effort to help her

students feel good about their writing because she has always had such doubts about her

own. It goes beyond just writing though. She wants them to feel that they have good

ideas and that their interpretations are just as good as those of anyone else. This

emphasis suggests that the lack of confidence in the writing is combined with a lack of

confidence in the ideas. Students are often reluctant to have their writing judged because

writing so nakedly shows one's ideas. Nora reasons that feeling good about your writing

gives you confidence and that when children feel confident about their ideas they will

work hard to perfect the piece of writing that contains and conveys them.

> *I go out of my way to make the kids feel very good about themselves because I*
> *don't feel particularly good about the way I write. So I'm very big on praise . . .*
> *You know, "You go for it. Good, you're doing well. Take it!" And I really*
> *encourage them. And I probably overcompensate because of my own insecurities*
> *about writing . . . I'd want them to feel that they can—that they have a good idea*
> *and that their idea isn't any worse than the next person's and their interpretation*

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*of something isn't any more right or wrong than someone else's . . . It's a
confidence issue I think. And you have to feel that you have something to offer
and I guess—I never really thought about it. You're making me think of things
but I guess because I don't feel great about the way I write I go out of my way to
make sure the kids feel great about the way they write . . . I never really thought
about it but I guess I do do that—I praise them. We write. We read. We do the
drafts. "This is a good idea. I really like the way you did this or that," and they
walk away feeling really good about it . . .*

*It's different when you teach writing to grade six or grade five than you do to
grade three—you look at the character development and they're not there yet. I
mean, they're into the plot and some of them, they don't go to a setting . . . they
just go "zoom" right into the plot and all of a sudden these characters, left, right
and centre, and no one has any kind of character definition and character
sketches and things like that. So they're a little young for that. I do my best.
Yesterday I took their pictures (their school pictures) and I went through a
magazine and I cut out bizarre policemen, hockey players, whatever, and I pasted
their face on the different characters . . . Then their writing assignment was to
pretend that they were that particular character. And then to make up a story to
go along with that. So we have fun and I try to make it fun. I try not to say, "This
is what you have to do. Blah, blah," and I try to make it something that they can
draw on or something that they're interested in because I think they write better
when it's—and direct openings and closings. But right now we're working on
paragraph formation and getting their ideas in one paragraph and punctuating it
properly. There's so many mechanics that we're working on that—sometimes I
see a kid who's got fabulous ideas and they're just all over the place. It's just a
matter of organizing . . . But we do a lot of writing. We do a lot of drafts. We do
a lot of reworking the ideas and the kids—I make the kids edit. I don't edit it until
they've brought it up to me and they've said okay. I often ask them to read it to
somebody. Read it out loud. And if they read it out loud they realize that they've
left out a sentence here or there or that they've left out something important. All
of a sudden the person's in Africa when in the sentence before they were still in
Canada . . . they realize that they're missing something and then they'll go back,
and they'll edit it before I look at it. Or I have them check-off little circles to say,
"I checked capitals. I checked misspelled words," and things like that. So I try to
get them to do it before they give it to me . . .*
(Nora pp. 7-9)

Nora has lots of ideas to get drafts written and re-worked and re-organized as necessary

but her basic method is to treat the children and their ideas with respect and help them to

feel good about their work and their ideas. It's a good example of how a teacher's own

difficulties with writing can inspire her to develop methods of instruction that are

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effective. Her further remarks also show how her lack of confidence can lead a teacher to accept a piece of writing written in a way that doesn't make sense.

> *Once I asked a girl to change something. It didn't make sense the way she put it and she said, "But I like it that way." I said, "That's okay." If she felt strongly enough to tell me she liked the way she expressed it, I said that was okay too. Artistic license, she could have it. So I left it . . . it meant a lot and she felt like she had that style and that's okay. I wouldn't want someone changing my words either without asking . . . I try to treat them how I would like . . .*
> (Nora pp. 9-10)

Nora backs away from correcting something in a piece of writing that doesn't make sense because the student feels strongly about keeping it the way it is. This suggests that a teacher may go too far in the encouraging and accepting mode. Students may not get enough guidance from a teacher who hesitates to point out problems because she doesn't want to be critical at all.

"I remember teachers doing that to me and how that felt." Tanya has reflected on her own experiences in school and has deliberately used her own reactions to help her to shape a writing program that would have worked for her. She never felt like a good writer, never enjoyed writing, and marvels at those who are able to write and enjoy doing it. As a result she does not demand that the students write creative stories or essays on demand. She prepares the way for the assignment. She tries to integrate the writing into the other subject areas so that there are purposes for writing.

> *I don't think I was ever a good writer. I don't think I ever really enjoyed writing. I've never thought of myself as a writer period. I marvel at people that can . . . I don't think I was ever exceptionally good at it . . .*
>
> *You know what? You always use yourself. I would not like someone—I don't tell kids to do things that I wouldn't want people to tell me to do. Like, "Today we are going to write a story." There are teachers that do that. I remember teachers*

doing that to me and how that felt. I don't do that. So I try and think a lot of the
kids being the way I am, where it's perhaps a reluctant writer. You have to foster
creativity. You have to do a lot of introduction, a lot of preplanning before you're
going to get the best out of the kids. You can't give them a piece of paper. I think
that's how I was schooled. A piece of paper, "We're doing creative writing today.
Write a story . . . And I'm going to mark it." And I'd sit there. "I don't know what
to write about. I am not good at this." I don't ever do that with kids, ever. We
relate it to something. We're on to something. I'll do language arts in science.
Right now in fact I'm doing something with the kids about endangered species and
it's all sort of from the beginning of adaptations.
(Tanya pp. 6-7)

Tanya says that her methods of instruction are based on her own experience and the idea

that her students are like her. They are not based on consultation with her students nor on

observations of them, nor on theory about how students need to learn to write. They may

be better than the methods that Tanya endured when she was in school but there is no

way for her to know if they are the best methods of instruction that she could use with her

students. Her use of them is simply a reaction.

"I teach the children some of the things that I've learned about writing to

make it easier for me." Doris freely admits that she has *"never seen the connection"*

and *"can't get excited"* about writing in the same way that she can about reading. She

talks about having to work at writing. Keeping a journal is something she did enjoy but,

strangely enough, she does not really see that as writing. She thinks that the effect her

attitudes have had on her teaching is that she tries to teach the children ways that they can

do the work of writing more easily. She is saying that writing is a chore. It is always

going to be hard but there are ways you can do it. This attitude with regard to teaching

writing is in sharp contrast with her attitudes toward teaching reading where what she

wants to communicate to the students is the love of reading and the pleasure it can bring. She never thought of reading as work but to her writing is nothing but work.

> *As a writer, I've never seen a connection to writing in the way I've seen it to reading. I can't—I can't get as excited about writing as I can about reading. I can totally immerse myself in reading. Like if I'm reading fiction and the character . . . If it's a male character and he's mean, ugly and wretched . . . well, my poor husband! . . . I mean, that's how I read but I don't feel that way about writing. I have to work at writing . . . I'm trying to think of—as a student I wasn't a great writer. I did the writing as work. It was not recreational. You keep a journal. You keep a diary. I always did that. I found that was an expression— That was a self-expression. That was worthwhile for me. But in terms of writing in a literary aspect or literary outfit, writing was work for me . . . I would choose—if I need sort of an outlet—I'll choose to read. I'll choose to read . . .*
>
> *I guess it did in the sense that I knew that writing for me I had to work at. So I guess I wanted to teach the children—what am I trying to say here? I guess what I wanted—what I do is I teach the children some of the things that I've learned about writing to make it easier for me, and that's what I want to teach them—in terms of generating ideas, in terms of organization. So my writing probably is quite clinical or my teaching of writing is probably quite clinical in that I'm always looking for ways to make the writing easier. I often boil down writing to things like that, those kinds of things . . . which are important for kids to learn, strategies of writing because the writing doesn't come easily to me, so I need to look at writing in those terms. It's almost sort of a clinical approach to writing as opposed to the reading isn't. It's sort of an embracing of a reading . . .*
> (Doris pp. 23-24)

This is the same teacher who was at a loss when faced with students who did not choose to read because for them there was nothing interesting, nothing fun about reading. She could not relate to that way of thinking at all but she can relate to students who do not enjoy writing. Because of her own experience, she can work with them to explore the mechanics of writing. She can help them learn strategies that will make writing easier for them. It does seem unfortunate that this more clinical approach to teaching cannot include some of the pleasures to be experienced in the enjoyment of doing difficult things

well—the pleasures to be experienced in the accomplishment of things that you have to work at.

In a sense Doris' reactions in teaching to her personal experience have been the opposite of what they could have been. If she could have imagined a love of writing. she might have figured out how to teach in ways.to encourage it in her students. If she could have imagined difficulties with reading. she might have been more able to teach strategies to deal with that. In a sense both approaches are needed in literacy activities. the love of it to encourage the doing and the strategies to deal with the problems. Most of the teachers seem to be inspired by their experience to provide only one aspect. They love reading so they want to encourage it. They have problems with writing and want to provide help with it for their students. What would be required for them to provide both aspects in both literacy activities?

"I want them to express themselves." Estelle does not say much about her writing abilities or her attitude toward them even when asked directly but she does say that she doesn't write much and then tells a few stories that illustrate how her writing has recently improved with the use of word-processing and e-mail. The implication is that writing has not been a favourite activity for her nor one that she has much confidence in.

> *I don't write a tremendous amount. Now I'm going to tell you something interesting that's happened is going on e-mail. Sending messages. Even doing university assignments on a computer has been easier and one of the easier parts of it is I can change and I can patch and I can cut and I can paste and I can move things around. I can delete. and I don't have to redo it and at the end it's finished. It's not like. now I've got to type it. So I've felt more relaxed with it. And I have found [a fellow teacher] whom I spoke to you about, we will send messages to each other pertaining to school and there will always be a little personal message and I have gotten to know [her] through e-mail more than I have gotten to know her here in the school . . . Partly because we don't have the time. but we also get*

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to the essence of what we're wanting to say. There isn't this whole preamble . . . And she walked up to me the other day with a big smile and she said, "Great message yesterday." And she had been upset about something that had happened and I saw humour in it and tried to share that with her . . . So I think my writing has even become stronger through the computer . . .

As far as my teaching my kids, I want them to express themselves. I do not do journals daily because I have found, unless you direct them, a lot of these kids don't have a lot to say. I don't have something different happening in my life every day. And a lot of them don't. But we can pick events. Like Rosh Hashanah. And so we do it in a modified form. I have them writing a tremendous amount and we save it and we mount it and we illustrate it . . . And there's just so much we can do. I have them writing a great deal . . .

I think that the rigidity of writing has changed. I still expect the spelling, because when I have found that they can't read what they've written two months later, then their writing is not worthwhile. But I don't make a thing about it. It's like, I myself am not a strong speller. I keep a dictionary. "Somebody check this. Somebody check the word such and such for me. I'm not sure in this word. Ah, I can never remember that word and you know, I probably never will. I have to use the dictionary all the time. Is it one C or two?" That kind of thing. I let them see that it's a weakness of mine, but I have a way of handling it. And they have spellcheck.

But I don't think I've been as rigid. There's more casual speech in it. I've insisted on the quotation. If you're going to use quotations you must use it with new entries. New paragraphs. Each speaker. That was easily handled with this group. I don't know how easily, but we have. But I didn't say, you can't do it. NP. I kept putting, new paragraph. Eventually they got it.

I had some who came—one little boy who never puts a capital—no capitals, no periods. And I pulled out one day twenty different coloured pens and I said to them. "Okay you guys, don't bring this to me until you've marked it. And check it with a neighbour." There isn't a lot of time for the editing and the checking and cross-checking. Time is really an element. But you can get around it. So, take it home and check it. You just don't want the parents checking it. That's the other thing. And that happens. My concern about them using a computer is that I can't see the process. As an adult I find that it's really helped me. I do let them use it. I personally had to feel comfortable that they were capable of writing complete sentences, writing paragraphs. They have style. Once I saw that they were able to do this—then the computer—I encourage it.
(Estelle pp. 10-11)

Estelle's first comment about her goal for teaching writing—that she wants her

students to express themselves—contrasts with her next comment that they don't have a

lot to say. Her basic method of teaching writing seems to be to have the students write a lot. She allows expression and style to be more informal than it was in her day at school and works with student through peer-editing and self-editing to maintain certain selected standards. Computers helped her to improve her writing so she lets her students use them too with only a few trepidations about who is doing the work.

"My writing has been more effective as I've become an experienced teacher." Toni says that teaching writing has helped her develop her own skills as a writer, by helping her become more aware of things she learned in school. She remembers disliking reading and writing in school. Working with students has helped her, she thinks, to enjoy it more and to do it better.

> *I enjoy writing. I probably enjoy reading [more] than I do writing but I like to write . . . It wasn't until I got into teaching that I started to feel a bit better about my writing . . . I mean I did okay. I did fine with my writing but it wasn't something I particularly enjoyed to do. But I guess the more I did, the better I got . . . I guess teaching it I find that—and doing lots of editing with the children—I find that it's helped me with my writing because it's almost like I'm going back in time and relearning everything that I took for granted as I went through school . . . . I remember I didn't enjoy it very much. I didn't enjoy the feel of the language arts part of the program in high school. It wasn't until I'd got to university, spending more time working with students that I started to enjoy it more . . .*
>
> *I'm sure that it's been effective, because we do a lot of writing. I think it has. I think my writing has been more effective as I've become an experienced teacher. I've enjoyed it more and I feel that my kids are enjoying it as a result.*
> (Toni pp. 8-10)

"If I have to write a report, I don't shake. I don't shake anymore." When asked to talk about herself as a writer, Barbara went back to her own experience in school where she felt that she was not given the encouragement that she needed to develop her

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writing skills. Thinking about her own experience makes her feel even better about her students who have been given the chance to develop writing skills. The key is their self-concept as a writer. She is particularly pleased by their confidence in self-expression. She hastens to add that they are not coddled, nor are they down-graded or too harshly criticized either. She wishes she had been taught that way when she was in school.

> *I was never a good writer, never, and that's why I think I'm very excited that these kids—I don't think I was ever made to feel comfortable about my writing. I think I was always criticized. I think when I went to school people were always— Some people find writing very easy, it's just a talent. I always thought I was put down. I don't want that ever to happen to any of my students . . .*
>
> *I think there were things that I did have to say, but I think—and even when I first started teaching, they swung too much the other way. I feel I've got an even balance for what I'm doing. I'm not tearing them down. As a final job they can't hand in garbage. So, personally, I feel that's what I would have liked to have been at, at that point.*
> (Barbara p. 8)

She wants a balance between the freedom and encouragement that at times may border on license and the kind of harsh requirements that may stifle the initiative that is essential to the eventual learning of confident writing.

Barbara's own experiences in school have had an influence on her teaching but as with Toni, there is also an influence that works the other way. The experience of working with students on their ideas and their writing has had an effect on her attitudes toward her own writing and to learning situations in general. In situations where she is evaluating information or having to display her ability and understanding in any way, she is much more comfortable and confident.

> *I think because I am trying to preach to the kids how important it is—I, sort of, am trying to—I realize there is so much out there, so much depth in things, that I try to read different materials and I try to—I don't do much writing. I honestly*

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don't do much writing personally . . . Being female and with phones or whatever. I
don't . . . But you know what? I do . . . through the last number of years, my
comfort with telling the kids the importance of this all—If I do have to write, I
write with more confidence. I think that's the key thing, is confidence and
knowing someone is not going to shoot you down. Like no one is going to shoot
me down now. I can write whatever I want.

I think I went through an era where everything was red circled and everything
was torn apart in literature, and that's awful. It's awful. You can never—it's so
hard to rebuild that confidence . . .

Even filling out an application. Like, hey, you are expressing yourself. This is in
ink! . . . So I think in that aspect I am growing—as far as being more comfortable.
If I have to write a report, I don't shake. I don't shake anymore. I think that's a
result, too, of just knowing that, like imparting this to the kids at school. I am
beginning to believe what I am teaching . . .

But I think with . . . I wish somebody had said to me there's not an exact answer
for everything. That's where I think the system failed . . . enough people are doing
that now. There isn't an exact answer always. Knowing that, hey, if I went to a
movie and I got something else out of the movie than someone else, I would think
that I was wrong. But you don't have to be wrong. There's different ways.

As a result, I'm even more confident when I do, even as an adult, saying I didn't
like the way this article read. It smacked of this. Whereas maybe a few years
back, even ten years ago, I was not comfortable. Yeah, this is what it said and if
you say that's right, well, I guess it's right. So I think, totally, myself as a person
has grown that way and maybe that's why I'm comfortable even doing that.
(Barbara pp. 24-25)

Barbara has been emboldened to think for herself, to put forward an opinion, and

therefore encouraged to spend time reading and thinking. Her teaching and her work

with her students have had a profound effect on her level of confidence in her own

thinking and learning abilities.

"I've never changed because that—to me—works." Sarah describes herself as

a perfectionist and a fanatic in regard to her writing. She reports that as a student she had

to work very hard at writing essays. The result seems to be that she is absolutely sure of

herself and her ideas. Unfortunately her methods even as she describes them were highly idiosyncratic and very demanding. She would go through fifteen drafts of a first paragraph and work at it until that paragraph was a perfect mini-outline of the paper before proceeding with the rest of the paper. She always used a piece of poetry as a guide to the ideas and process of the paper. Prose was difficult for her because she preferred to write poetry. Finally she concludes from her own experience that the basis for learning to write are a good grounding in grammar and spelling.

> *As a writer? Again, my strengths are in creative writing. Actually, I think I write, used to write, very well-put-together essays. I slaved over them, I'm a fanatic when it comes to writing. As well, I'm a perfectionist. It took me a long time just to get the opening paragraph. My poor mother, may she rest in peace, used to go through—I can't tell you—fifteen readings. I don't even think she listened to me . . . I needed somebody to listen to me. I needed to read it out loud to somebody. And until that primary paragraph, very first paragraph was down pat I couldn't write the rest of the essay . . . Everything else fell into place after that. But it's always that opening paragraph that had to be "just so."*
>
> *And I always began any essay with a poem. I would find an appropriate poem from what I had studied in university that could be paraphrased easily according to the topic that was chosen for the essay, so it was an 'abstract' essay. It became more abstract in the beginning and then more concrete as I went through and proved what I was supposed to prove. As far as my writing ability continued, I write poetry. That is my ultimate strength and it comes to me naturally. I can create a poem in two minutes for you. On anything you want . . . I'm not a prose person . . . And yet I mastered it in university . . . I think my formal training in seven and eight was a lot of grammar and spelling, which is very concrete. You can't teach that incorrectly because you're following guidelines.*
> (Sarah pp. 6-7)

This set of experiences added up to a recipe for a very traditional teacher. What she has concluded from all this and put together as a method of teaching writing is a fanatical interest in and devotion to correctness and the practice of intensive proofing and editing of all of her students' work, beginning with their first drafts.

Ever since I've started to teach I've always encouraged editing when editing wasn't the thing to do. And I always corrected their first drafts. I always had a key for them to follow, a symbol that I would put on their page. I never put the spelling on there for them. I always put Sp. I always believe I should identify what they spelled incorrectly because if they spelled it incorrectly there was a reason for it. They may not be able to realize that in the long run when they edit because they aren't as careful. I always put G for grammar. I always circle punctuation, whether it was missing or it was incorrect punctuation, and I always—I've never changed because that—to me—works. And it still teaches them independence, and it still teaches them responsibility because they still have to go and do the correcting. And it encourages them to ask me if they don't know. And if it's something that I think they're really going to have a problem with, then they work with me rather than independently.
(Sarah p. 10)

Sarah presents perhaps the clearest example of what happens when a teacher puts together her own ideas about teaching practices into a method of practice without any input from the experiences or ideas of others. Her own experience is a bit unusual but if she had been able to examine it along with other ideas and points of view she might have been able to reach conclusions about how students need to be supported and directed in a literacy program. As it is she has constructed a program that is not very conducive to her students' development of skills and confidence in reading and writing.

"So I can really relate to them as writers and they can relate to me." Nancy was the only one of the teachers who volunteered the information that she liked to write for pleasure and professionally. She also was the only one who considered the two kinds of writing together when asked about her personal writing practices and immediately talked about the influence of her own writing on her teaching of writing in the classroom.

I write also personally . . . I've been writing since I was a teenager. I've really been into poetry and things like that and I just started up again a few years ago. And I've put some articles in magazines and a really exciting part of that is with my class when I'm going through the writing process with them, and I tell them

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the story of how I sit at the lake and I write. And I rewrite and I write and I rewrite and, you know . . . So I can really relate to them as writers and they can relate to me . . . Because I tell them about how frustrated I get or how when I write it the first time I don't care about the spelling . . .

I'm not judging my writing, it's just something I love to do. And I write, and I've always written and I have a journal and it's just one of my "tools" in life. It's just a personal part of me . . . because that's what writing's all about.
(Nancy pp. 7-8)

She talks about having done this since she was a teenager but Nancy is also one of the teachers who learned innovative methods of teaching very early in her teaching career—including instruction in how to teach using the writing process. It seems likely that she put these methods to use in her own writing very early in her teaching and that her experiences and teaching practices have continued to influence each other over the years.

In conclusion, it does seem that in the accounts of these teachers, personal practices and beliefs in reading and writing did have an influence on teaching practices and behaviours. It seems that experience and reflection on that experience becomes a part of every teacher's repertoire. Each of the teachers had drawn heavily on their own experiences and practices when constructing their teaching practice. But a teacher's own experience is not necessarily a good single basis for teacher knowledge and practice. Experience is necessarily individual and it is subjective. When reflected on in private, experience is always solipsistic—subject to the skewing of individual self-interpretation. A teacher was an eager reader and wants to promote that enthusiasm with her students. But her students are not all like her and she ends up neglecting other important concerns in reading comprehension. A teacher has negative experiences with academic writing and therefore wants her students' experiences to be different. But it is not always clear to her how best to do that.

There were specific ways that the teachers' own reading practices tended to limit their teaching practice. Most of the teachers read for personal enjoyment. Reading was an important part of their lives and they assumed that it should be equally important for their students. They also assumed that the best method for getting students to read a great deal was to engage their interest in narrative. Their implied theory of reading comprehension was that a child who does a great deal of reading will learn to get information from text in general. in the course of doing the fiction reading and doing some activities such as answering questions on stories or chapters in a novel. The teachers seemed to believe that the reading practices that are learned in reading fiction. will serve the student equally well for reading non-fiction or informational text of various kinds. They seem unaware of the specific strategies that are needed to read effectively for information. The teachers are so convinced of the value of their general approach that they are concerned most by students who say they have no interest or little interest in reading narrative. They assume that this is the same as a student saying that he or she has trouble getting meaning from a text.

One of the teachers said outright that a teacher who is not a reader will not give enough attention and time to encouraging reading. It may well be that the best way to begin to teach reading is to get the students interested in listening to and reading stories. However. this idea by itself is not a sufficient theory about the nature of reading and what is going on when students are learning to read and learning to read for meaning and/or information. When students run into difficulties and/or lose interest in later grades this idea does not offer any remedial approaches, no theories of reading comprehension. no repertoire of reading strategies to give the teacher alternative ideas or approaches.

Many teachers think that simply by encouraging "bulk" reading they are avoiding the old way of teaching reading based on a decoding theory of reading when students were simply assigned texts and skill practice. They have not embraced, however, the new method of supported response to reading based on a meaning-making definition of reading. They have simply given their students more freedom to choose and less direct guidance for skill development.

The three teachers who emphasized their desire to help children make better quality choices in reading, based on their personal enjoyment and appreciation of literary texts, varied in their methods of encouraging this. Two of them did structure classes that involved children in interacting with texts of various kinds. The other teacher's primary method of teaching an appreciation of literature was to encourage a very traditional critical stance focussed on detecting the meanings that are assumed to reside in the text.

A few of the teachers outlined similar programs of encouragement and celebration of reading in order to engage their students in reading a large amount of material. There seemed to be far more emphasis on volume of reading rather than on understanding or appreciation of texts. A few of the teachers did mention specifically reading for information and reading with a purpose. Even so, none of them acknowledged that many reluctant readers are motivated and able to read text that is difficult for them when the text contains information that they consider essential to know.

There was only one teacher who based her teaching of reading on encouraging her students to construct their own meaning from a text. She explored with them how people get meaning from text in different ways at different levels and encouraged them to have

confidence in their own ideas and interpretations. She was also the only teacher who admitted that she was not an avid reader.

The influence of the teachers' personal experiences with writing and their difficulties with writing were even more obvious and problematic than the influence of their experiences with reading. When asked to talk about themselves as writers and their experiences as writers the theme that emerged most clearly was that the majority had problems related to writing. Eleven of the teachers were critical and/or unsure of their own writing ability. Only one of the teachers said that she loved to write. She and one other described themselves as good writers. All of the others said they did not consider themselves to be good writers, that writing was hard work, and that they did not enjoy it. Several of the teachers after describing themselves as poor writers added that in spite of this they had done alright in school and university. Some seemed to suggest that they had worked very hard to attain success, others that their standards for themselves were higher than their teachers'. Many comments implied a reluctance to write because of the fear of being evaluated negatively. Several mentioned the fear of not being sufficiently creative to meet expectations.

Almost all of the comment about writing focussed on writing that had been done for school. There was an unspoken assumption that the topic was school writing or academic writing. Writing for pleasure, activities such as journalling or letter writing, were mentioned by a few of the teachers but discounted as if this kind of activity was not the real topic of the discussion.

Although a few of the teachers commented on writing experiences in courses they had taken recently, most of their descriptions of school writing were necessarily from the

past. Despite this there was a sense that their experiences had taken place outside of time. There was an immediacy to their descriptions of writing anxieties and difficulties as if they had only to think back to experience them again with all of the attendant feelings.

Those who had difficulties with writing nevertheless believed that there was little effect of this on their teaching. One teacher felt that her writing while not outstanding was adequate for teaching. Another who considered herself a poor writer said that you really didn't teach much in the way of writing in the early grades. Most of the others denied any effect and only on reflection did some find some connections between their own negative experiences and the practices that they used for teaching writing.

One teacher tries to give her students strategies to deal with writing. Another has decided to relax many of the formal requirements for correctness especially in the early stages of writing and allows her students to use their home computers even though she is uneasy about both these issues. A third teacher gives her students lots of support and praise and tries to build enthusiasm. A fourth is conscious of wanting to help her students to develop the skills she feels she lacked but is unsure how to do this. A fifth is careful not to overcorrect her students' work and seldom requires them to do the kind of writing that she found difficult. A final teacher shares this last approach and also works hard to nurture her students' writing by encouraging independent thought and self-correction and improvement. while limiting teacher correction. All of these teaching approaches have clear links to the teacher's own experience but all of them were being implemented by teachers who were unaware of the connections to their own self-concept and practices of writing. Moreover the majority of these practices are less than perfect

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and even the best of them cannot stand alone as a single approach to teaching writing. A effective writing instruction program would include: instruction in and use of the elements of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, and revising), peer editing, self publishing, attention to rhetorical concerns of purpose, audience, and occasion, and awareness of genre issues. It has been suggested that while reading is certainly important, a good process writing curriculum is the essential element in a literacy program (Applebee, 1991; Raphael & Hiebert, 1996) to ensure that students develop and maintain confidence in their skills. In addition, Au and Scheu (1996) have found that only partial use of the elements of an effective program reduces the realization of the potential positive effect on the literacy development of students. A few good practices will not result in a program that makes differences for students.

The two teachers who described themselves as good writers had also had this attitude affect their teaching but there were different effects in each case. In spite of her rather unusual cognitive style of writing and her affinity for writing verse, one of the teachers felt that she had become a good writer as a result of a solid, traditional education and her own hard work. Taking her lesson from only a part of her experience, she was determined to provide the same kind of traditional training in skills and correctness for her students no matter how much pressure there was on her to teach in a different way. Her teaching methods were a clear and direct result of experience that was both unexamined and partially understood. In contrast, the other teacher who considered herself to be a good writer, had learned her skills and gained confidence in her early apprenticeship as a young teacher in Whole Language and process writing. She now consciously uses herself as a model in teaching writing to her students. She may have

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been able to use these experiences because of the deliberate way she had learned them in the course of her teaching. In these two cases it is again clear how influential a teacher's experiences and practice are im shaping her practices in teaching literacy skills. It is also apparent that a conscious awareness of experience and practices makes it possible for them to be used in instruction_

Three of the teachers also talked about a reverse effect, the ways that their recent teaching of writing had improved their own practice and pleasure in writing. One said that working with her students on writing had helped her to be a more confident writer herself. Another talked about how using a computer and sharing ideas with another teacher by e-mail had helped her to improve her writing. Yet another told how helping her students develop confidence in their own ideas had helped her to gain a confidence in her own perceptions and ideas: that she had never felt before. These are further examples of the important link between : personal experiences and professional practices for teachers of reading and writing.

Despite this clear link, for these teachers their practice of teaching the language arts was largely unexamined. The idea that there was an important influence of experience on practice seemed to be new to them. Only one teacher had thought of her own experiences as a writer as a useful model for her student writers. The difficulties that the teachers had all had with writing were largely unexamined, even after years of experience as teachers of writing, working with students to develop writing skills. In several cases their difficulties could clearly be seen as barriers to effective work with students. Even when a teacher's personal writing concerns seemed to indicate a direction for action, as it did for a number of these teachers, it was not always completely positive.

When methods are formed as a reaction to experience and not based on a full understanding of the discipline, there are bound to be inconsistencies, overemphasis, and lack of coverage.

Possibly, a teacher would have a better basis for her practice in teaching reading and writing at least if she had spent some time analyzing her own experiences. She could first examine her memories and organize them into the theories of instruction that were current at the time that she was in school. She could then compare her memories with those of others to find out if her experiences were typical for her time. Then she could compare her reactions to them to see what part personality played in the sense she has made of her experiences and whether other reactions to them were also possible. It seems that it is inevitable that personal experience of schooling will have an effect on teachers' practices. It makes sense that this process should be examined and become more conscious.

Teachers' Beliefs about Children Learning to Read and Write:

The Relationships between Beliefs and Practices

In an attempt to get at the thinking and beliefs of these teachers about reading and writing, they were asked for their thoughts and ideas about the process that children go through in learning to read and write. This line of questioning was used to get at their thinking because the literacy acquisition question, while not directly related to their everyday practice, is the basic question that underlies all of the methods change in the language arts in recent decades. Behaviourist beliefs about language acquisition along with behaviourist learning theory previously shaped a phonics/skills-based theory about reading and writing. The advent of cognitive psychology and theories about the innate nature of language ability in the nineteen sixties, coupled with research into emergent literacy and writing processes created wholesale change in theories about literacy development. The new teaching methods that resulted are commonly referred to as whole language methods but include language experience, emergent literacy, and process writing methods as well (Froese, 1991). An important question of the present study is how teachers have made the change from the old skills-based methods to the new whole language methods. One suggestion is that teachers' thinking in the language arts has to change before their teaching practices change (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Another contention is that in all subject areas, teachers change their practices and then, when they see positive results, they change their thinking (Fullan, 1985; Guskey, 1986). The teachers in the study were asked about their thinking in regard to reading and writing as part of the investigation of this question.

Some of the teachers commented that this was a difficult question and that they had not done much thinking about it. They are not required to think about reading theory in the normal course of their work. The job of teaching requires action, arranging the learning environment, structuring learning activities, and dealing with student behaviour. Their answers to these questions were probed to uncover what thinking they had done and were willing to talk about. Many of the teachers gave very brief answers but a few had wondered about these questions and hints of these ruminations emerged in their answers. Only two of the teachers had given the questions considerable thought and had worked out positions that they were able to articulate. Most of the teachers expressed ideas that put them part way along the road to new ideas but these newer ideas were mostly embodied in practical ideas about instruction. Virtually all of the teachers expressed their ideas in terms of children's learning activities in the process of learning to read and write. They provided factual descriptions, often in the form of anecdotes of a particular child's learning behaviour. Even when pressed to tell or describe more, they did not typically talk about theories or ideas to explain the learning processes. All of their beliefs were implicit in or embedded in their thinking about methods, activities, and approaches.

Learning to Read

The teachers' answers to the first question, about reading, could be arranged on a continuum running from a traditional phonics/skills approach on one end, through mid-points of skills-in-meaningful-context approaches and immersion-in-language-and literacy approaches, to a whole language/developmental approach on the other (Stephens,

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1991). At the beginning of the continuum would be Sarah's answer that phonics was the most important component of a reading program. Six teachers (Barbara, Donna, Kelly, Nora, Tanya, and Toni) gave answers that would be somewhere in the middle but tending towards the further end. They mentioned sight words and/or phonics but also mentioned as important, and wondered about other influences such as language experience and exposure. At the further end of the continuum would be the answers of five of the teachers (Estelle, Kim, Nancy, Rose, and Suzanne) who attributed learning-to-read to factors such as language connections, immersion in literature, natural development, and engaged interest. By these measures only one of the teachers gave a completely traditional answer to the question. Six gave answers that were somewhat mixed but tended to be further along the continuum past the midpoint. Five of the teachers gave answers that suggest a more complete whole language approach to the question.

There was also a range of ability and/or willingness to talk about theory. Three of the teachers (Nora, Suzanne, and Toni) answered the first question by making statements of belief about methods or telling stories about children's learning behaviour that involved no attempt to relate their ideas or experiences to theories about literacy learning or child development. Seven of the teachers (Barbara, Donna, Estelle, Kelly, Rose, Sarah, and Tanya) gave some hint in their answers that they were trying to relate their thoughts or experiences to the development of some literacy theory. Only two of the teachers (Kim and Nancy) gave answers that showed a developed theoretical basis for their ideas. Most of the teachers had not really wondered about what the activity of reading actually is or how it is learned. They do not seem to have given much consideration to basic questions about the nature of reading.

In recounting their ideas most of the teachers used examples of children learning to read that were drawn from their personal experience. Several also referred to experiences with children learning to read in the school setting. Some did both. The few who did neither were those whose statements and explanations about literacy acquisition were the most cursory. It seems that the most common authority for these teachers' ideas about how children learn to read was their experience with their own sons and daughters, their grandchildren, or the children of friends and relatives. These ideas tend not to be theoretical. They are practical and largely based on personal experience or, at least in their thinking, referenced to personal experience. The personal experience may be the source of the ideas but it also seems to be considered the best evidence to support these ideas. This is interesting since these teachers have spent many years in early years settings working with children learning to read and write and yet they seem to have been more impressed by personal, even private experience with children's learning. They may believe that children learning to read in school are somehow different from the children whom they know personally or that children in school somehow require different processes.

Most of the teachers have moved in their thinking about how children learn to read to a current whole language approach. Only about half of them, however, referred in their discussions about reading to the questions about reading comprehension that would be germane for the grades they currently taught. Although it is clear that for many of them their thinking about these questions has had an influence on their teaching methods, the direction and sequence of this effect remains somewhat murky. What does seem clear is that for most, if not all, of them, thinking about literacy learning in theoretical

terms has not been the impetus for them to change their teaching. However, almost all of them have made changes. As we will see in the later section of this paper on personal change processes, the changes that they have made have been largely driven by hearing about new methods, trying out in their classrooms the ideas or methods that they think will work, and making decisions, often on the basis of their students' responses to a single trial. Changes in their thinking have often accompanied these investigations but have not been the engines themselves of change.

"I know that what works is a combination of phonics and sight words."

When Sarah first began to talk about how children learn to read, she began with the example of her younger sister.

> *My sister, when she was four, learned to read from Dr. Seuss. My mother would read to her. My sister would run along with her finger. She then memorized the words and taught herself, at least, to read Dr. Seuss.*
> (Sarah p. 17)

She then apparently changed tack and talked about a more traditional sight words and phonics approach that is effective in teaching all children and not just for some like her sister.

> *Initially, I know that what works is a combination of phonics and sight words. Not one, but a combination of both to accommodate children who use one and/or the other, or both. And I know that whole language is not the way I would go because it doesn't serve everybody's purpose and then some children come out non-readers because whole-language is not for them. I know that phonics is very and vitally important in the language process and it helps them to learn how to read. That to me is a good, sound beginning—giving them both.*
> (Sarah p. 17)

When challenged in the light of that opinion to account for her sister's learning to read from experience, she countered by saying that phonics was also involved as it was for all

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the children of her generation who without exception learned to read. In fact she says

that phonics is the necessary basis of reading. I think this demonstrates that her definition

of reading is decoding rather than the more modern definition of reading as making

meaning.

> *That's the way she learned. But she also learned through phonics in school. And
> . . . I firmly believe that phonics is [more important] because when you go to a
> dictionary and you look up a word, it gives you all the key symbols on how to
> pronounce that word. So, that's phonics. Without a background in that, then you
> aren't able to really use a lot of skills that are taught along the way. To me it's a
> background. It's a basis. I think sight vocabulary is important as well. But I was
> brought up with both. I'm an excellent reader and most of my generation—unless
> we were learning-disabled—are excellent readers. And we're extremely literate.
> And yet you do not find children, wholesale, graduating with literacy.*
> (Sarah p. 17)

Sarah goes further, invoking the authority of other experienced teachers to say that whole

language does not work for all children.

> *It's not that I'm acting alone. I talk to a lot of colleagues of mine teaching public
> schools in elementary and high school all over the place to see what they think
> too. And when they're all agreeing, I can't be wrong. Or I can't be that wrong
> because I hear the same arguments from them. And these are teachers who have
> taught as long as me . . . I don't know if I'll be around when they start saying,
> "We made a mistake." But I know, with whole language they've already admitted
> it. Whole-language is not the answer for everybody. They already know that.*
> (Sarah p. 18)

Sarah's authority for her opinion is her own experience as a student in school and

her professional opinion backed up by the opinions of other experienced teachers. The

example of a child in her personal family experience learning to read through literacy

activities comes to mind but is rejected. She is the only teacher in the group who

explicitly discounts personal experience as a basis for her ideas about children learning to

read.

Sarah also basically states her opinion as a set of procedures with no links to theory or further explanations—just the assumption that basic skills in phonics allow the child to benefit from later instruction. This is then followed by appeals to authority.

Sarah's adamant opinions about literacy are not really a surprise. She is the one teacher in the group who has resolutely not made many of the changes that are now common in the teaching of reading and writing. She is still using very traditional methods in her classroom especially in writing instruction where she corrects student work, requires them to rewrite with corrections, and believes that students should learn basic skills of usage before they are allowed to use computers. In reading she uses novels but follows a fairly predictable method providing background information, giving the students chapter questions and sometimes other related activities, and having students review the book.

"I think for a lot of them they need both approaches." Three of the teachers in the middle group (Barbara, Tanya, and Toni) basically make brief statements about their beliefs about children learning to read. Barbara includes some language experience and supported reading practices in her answer but has some reservations about the efficacy of these approaches. She is more definite about exposure to good literature and material that will engage the interest of children but still seems to think that sight words and phonics are the basis of instruction.

> *Kids have to be taught some sight words . . . and phonetically. Then I think just experience. I do believe in a little bit of this language experience . . . Kids . . . give the teachers sentences. She writes and the kids repeat it. I don't go for that because I think . . . they're not really reading but they're repeating what they think and they give you the wrong idea for what they see . . . When they see it on the*

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paper . . . they remember what people said . . . They're supposed to be reading it .
. . It's not clear. And it might be teaching the wrong, getting the wrong message.

I think thematics, I think sight words, and giving kids things that are interesting to
look at. Like the books . . . the old style books—that was terrible when I look at it.
I mean, to have things that are not cluttered, that are interesting, the stories the
kids can relate to.
(Barbara p. 16)

Barbara supports the use of literature, themes and stories that children can relate to but is *

suspicious of supporting children's early attempts at reading and tolerating mistakes at

the beginning even though this is an approach that she supports for teaching writing. She

does not draw on personal examples for her ideas. She does not seem to have authorities

that she can invoke for these opinions. She mentions that she has never taught primary

and does not discuss her practice of teaching reading in the content areas which would be

more appropriate to her experience in teaching the upper elementary grades.

Tanya's answer to the question of how children learn to read was brief. She

simply says that teachers can no longer rely on a single method to teach something.

I don't think you can answer it in one sentence. They learn to read many, many
different ways. I can't answer in one sentence . . . I don't think there's one
formula. I really don't think—I think teachers that do that, whether they do all
whole language, it doesn't work for everyone. We as teachers have had to learn
that, that you can't stand in front of the room anymore, use one method and get
everyone. It's not just language arts, it's not just reading. It's everything.
(Tanya p. 15)

Tanya does not give concrete examples nor does she provide any theoretical backing.

Her answer does relate to the nature of her own practice though, where she has figured

things out for herself, made changes, and used a variety of approaches rather than relying

on a traditional way of teaching.

Toni's ideas are similarly brief and developed only from her experience. She also

does not talk about teaching her students to read for comprehension but she does endorse

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a mixed approach without specifying what that would consist of. The only time she

needed to think about a child learning to read, the problem was dealt with for her by the

resource teacher.

> *Well, I guess a mixture of both whole language and I guess they would need both phonetic and whole language. I think . . . they need both approaches . . . I had a child last year who . . . came from another school and she wasn't . . . reading. So [the resource teacher] took her right back a couple of grades . . . and kind of worked her way back up . . . by the end of the year this child was enjoying it because she had . . . already regained that confidence that, "Oh, maybe I can read."*
> (Toni p. 19)

"I can just draw from what I did for my kids and as a Nursery teacher."

Nora answered the question of how children learn to read by recounting how she had

taught her own children to read when they were preschoolers and by telling what she had

done as a Nursery teacher. Her methods were a combination of sound play, language

experience, and immersion in literacy.

> *I taught my son to read when he was three . . . Sight [words]. Ball, cat, mat, man, can. That's how I taught my kids to read. I started my kids reading, sight-reading those kind of words when they were three. I mean, they weren't reading novels. Sounds, we just did sounds. And I fooled around with songs. I taught nursery for awhile . . . And we did chanting . . . You know, pointing to a letter and saying the sound it makes and pictures . . . but I read to my kids from the time that they were babies. They were babies and I would read them books and my friends would say, "Are you crazy? You're reading to your babies . . ." I know that they were listening, they were looking . . . because I would point to a letter p and they would say "p . . ." we moved on to something from there. But also because when I read them a story when they were little, and they would be in my arms in the rocking chair . . . I wouldn't just read . . . I would point to the words . . . I wasn't just pulling the words from the sky . . .*
>
> *I can just draw from what I did for my kids and as a Nursery teacher . . . I used to write out poems, Imogene McIntyre style . . . and I'd take index cards and I would write the word and I would say, "Who can find the word ball in this poem?" And they would look. And how many times we would find it and how many letters are involved and let's make the sound—that's how we started, I mean I got all the ideas from her on how to do it and that's what I did.*

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*And just little stories, making things up as songs . . . we would learn the words to
the songs and then we would sing them . . . it's much easier when you put
something to music and they just read it and we would read the words to the
songs and once the kids knew them up here it was easier to transfer it . . .*
(Nora pp. 18-19)

This is a kind of language experience or skills-in-a-meaningful-context approach to
teaching reading but Nora does not label it as such. She just tells the stories of teaching
her own children and teaching her Nursery classes to illustrate her ideas of how children
learn to read. Her idea is the methods she used. Her authority for these ideas is both
personal and professional because it is how she was trained and what she did and it
worked.

"If they want to read, they'll learn to read . . ." Donna believes, based on her
experience with her grandchildren, that the method of learning to read doesn't really
matter. What does matter is whether the child wants to read, the child's motivation. In
effect she is not interested in inquiring into what is going on in the process of learning to
read. She is only interested in what drives it and the activities of it. Her thinking about
children learning to read is referenced directly to personal and professional experience.

*I've thought about it [how kids learn to read] but I have a 5-year-old
granddaughter. I've thought about it considerably. They want to read. I'm
convinced of that. If they want to, if they want to read, they'll learn to read . . .*

*[My granddaughter] wanted to read words so badly . . . you would take her into a
store . . . she's trying to read . . . every sign she sees . . . I say, "I'm bringing home
books. She's got to start. I mean, you've got to do more." So I brought in all
these stupid, little one-liners. But a kid that's been read to knows that if this word
is brand, then this word has to end like brand because they are going to be
rhyming. She'd look at the pictures and she'd figure it out . . . And she learned a
few core words from the computer. And she's reading . . . And she's reading
because she wanted to read. Now, if we had left it, she would have read in grade*

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one because she really wants to read . . . But, I mean, she sees everybody in that house walk around with a book all day . . .

The other one, we don't know when she taught herself to read, but she was writing at three. She made me a grocery list. She would write my grocery list and I dictated it . . . taught herself to read by writing . . . It just happened. They both knew their letters before they were two, so it wasn't that one was ahead of the other but one—"Have me write some s's." "Okay, you can write my grocery list." So lemon came out l-m-n. Prunes were p-r-n . . . and that's how she taught herself. This one needed a little bit more of my bringing the right books for her because she wasn't learning it through writing . . . Two different kids, [two different] approaches.
(Donna pp. 20-22)

There is a direct relationship between what Donna believes and her eclectic practice in the classroom. although her school program seems driven by time pressures to emphasize a more skills-based approach than would be suggested by Donna's more leisurely approach with her granddaughters.

And the kids in school absolutely are different. I think, what we do to accommodate that is, we do all sorts of things. We do basals. We do phonics. We still do that. We do journals. We give them every opportunity and we've never stopped. We've never cut out anything. We never went to full language and said, okay, we'll never do phonics again. We don't do as much phonics . . . But we still use phonics . . . it's still done as part of the program . . .

In that classroom now there are two kids on individual programs and four reading groups. One group is totally reading. They can read anything. And they're still reading basals plus other stuff because they'll get through the whole grade one basal program and whatever, just because it's good basics and it gives them something to do with them when everybody else is doing something. She can say to them, "Okay, go read story no. 3 and do the workbook pages . . ." Then there's two groups that are average learning, still on basals. Then there's the bottom group that I'm working with. It's in a basal, a different basal. Then two kids that are totally on their own and we are trying a multitude—or whatever.
(Donna pp. 23-24)

Donna seems to think that her granddaughters can basically choose how and when they will learn to read but that this approach is not appropriate for the children in the grade one classroom. On the other hand she does not feel the need to deal with this

apparent contradiction in her thinking except to say that the children in school are different.

"That comprehension of what she's read, where has that come from." Kelly answers the question of how children learn to read by referring to her granddaughter as well, but her approach is more thoughtful and she tries to connect her observations of her granddaughter with how children learn in school. She begins by talking about how children first learn to read through sight words but she is more concerned with the question of how children make sense out of what they read. By thinking about comprehension both in the classroom and in the learning of her granddaughter, she recognizes that children depend on the meanings they have understood in their oral language interactions in their families. This leads her to speculate that a lot of literacy learning is accomplished at home rather than at school.

> *I think that some kids learn through, I don't know how to call it, memorization of words. I guess it's that "sight-word" kind of thing where they recognize words and make big—they get them into their memory bank and they accumulate enough of them and then that's it. And I think if they sound out words when they're learning to read as well . . . Comprehension can only come— comprehension comes through the discussion of what's read. They have to have experience . . .*
>
> *I have a granddaughter . . . And she's six years old. And I'm thinking about how she is learning to read. And I'm watching this very carefully because I'm very interested to see how she's doing this . . . I was reading to her from the time she was two years old. And I have to say that I thought she would be reading by now. And part of me is a little surprised that she's not. But . . . she showed me her list of sight words and she said, "You have to test me on them." I said fine and we did it . . . and she does her sounding-out, and if I say to her, "What does every mean?" she can tell me what it means. She understands "not only." Now where has that come from? That comprehension of what she's read, where has that come from . . . I would say that the dialogue she has, that the adults have around her. The fact that nobody ever "talked down" to her, that if she asked, "What*

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*does this mean?" we explain, you know, what does this word mean . . . not
assuming that she won't understand something . . .*

*But I—is this an awful thing to say? I really wonder how many actually learn to
read in school! I don't mean . . . that a lot of kids will learn to read on their own,
but there are going to be kids where the teacher doesn't really teach them how to
read.*
(Kelly pp. 4-5)

Kelly is using her observations of children in her classroom and of her granddaughter and

trying to look beneath the surface of their actions and understand how their meaning

making comes about—how it is possible. She is forced to conclude that oral language

and verbal interaction have to be an integral part of learning to read. She is groping

towards a theory. In her case this is part of her teaching practice. The changes that she

makes to her practice are driven by her trials of new methods and her reflections on the

outcomes. She is actively figuring out her theory of reading instruction.

The five remaining teachers are clustered together because they all considered the

question of how children learn to read without reference to sight words or decoding skills

or phonics. The concerns that they included in their discussion of the question were the

engaging of children's interest in literature, the connectedness of language processes, and

the natural progression of literacy ability through immersion in literature. Three of these

teachers account for reading by the child's interest in literacy, their exposure to books,

and their gradual growth of understanding.

"They read the book to their child and their child can fill in the words."

Suzanne who was in her first year of teaching when she was interviewed, had been

educated in the new methods of teaching children to read. Her explanations are not yet

fully developed through teaching experience but she explains her observations of the

children of relatives or friends. reading with their parents. by expanding on these ideas. without reference to older. skills-type theories. She also makes an explicit connection to her own efforts to encourage parents to read with their children.

> *[They learn to read] by having someone reading to them, following along . . . The exposure. Just watching . . . I see just from relatives and friends who have kids. they read the book to their child and their child can fill in the words without . . . they are not reading—exactly. They can read the book and get some of the words wrong. but eventually they'll see that word enough and they'll learn that word . . .*
>
> *And we encourage that the parents read to the children as well. that they just spend time reading together. That's part of our reading program and the first notice we sent home was. "Read together. Read with someone. Read to them. Let them read to you."*
> (Suzanne pp. 23-24)

Although this is not something she has spent a lot of time thinking about. these are the ideas about methods. if not theory. that underlie Suzanne's practice of teaching reading.

Estelle believes that learning to read is essentially a mysterious process but she is sure that children need to be immersed in literature. they need to be read to, and they need to be encouraged to continue reading. This is how she raised her own children to be readers and this is what she does with her students. She surrounds them with good books and tries to sell them on reading and its joys and benefits.

> *That's a tough one [the question of how children learn to read]. . . I'll tell you why. My son . . . I don't know how he learned to read . . . He looked at books constantly. There were stacks and stacks and stacks of books. I think having the books around, reading to them, is a must. I think that I would like to have somebody read to me even at this point. When I took the adolescent literature course . . . I read a novel a night, for days. And so I would go to the library weekly and I would pull in seventy-five books . . . There were tomato boxes [of books] in my dining room. Both my kids never left the room without a box . . . [My daughter] and I ended up doing a paper . . . it was a novel approach where I read the book that she read at different times and we both made our comments and reviews on it and how we felt about it. I would say. "Oh, I just can't wait till you read this." and to her it was boring and dull and no action . . . So I think that having the books. reading to them. making them . . . I think that there's an*

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*attitude. They both were taken to the library for story time. Even though I read to
them, somebody else would, and here was this building that had all these books . .
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*I will tell you that I do story talks with them [her students at school] . . . What I
did . . . I had not a single book in my classroom in August . . . the books in such
bad condition . . . There was nothing worth keeping. I went through all the books
at home, because we've kept a lot of them. [My son] cleared his shelving and I
brought a lot of his books here. I order books regularly through Scholastic . . . I
have to have books in my classroom. I would come and I would say to them,
"Has anyone read this?" And that's what I'll do . . . "Could you read this for
me? I haven't time to read it." And they'll come to me and say, "You've got to
read this book. No, you just have to!"*

*It's so crucial, that no matter what approach you use, as far as the teaching—but
I did the same thing . . . I read to them every lunch hour and every recess break.
So they would have several books read to them. And there are wonderful books
out there.*
(Estelle pp. 14-15)

Estelle is confident that all the students need to encourage them to read, is unrelenting

exposure to good books. She is sure that the joys of reading are enough to engage

students and that this is the crucial issue in reading. Her authority for this is her

experience with her own children and her experience with her students. Her practice in

response to her ardent beliefs is the extent of her theory about reading.

Rose is reminded by this question, of her own anxieties about her child learning to

read but still believes that the most important concern is reaching the individual child and

motivating the child to read.

*I don't know. You see, that's such a hard one because I was concerned with my
own little one . . . there [were] kids who'd been reading when they got there [to
preschool] . . . And my own little one wasn't and I was terribly upset . . . And then
I . . . [heard] this speaker . . . "Reading can take place anywhere from the ages of
. . . two to twelve and every person is at their own pace, at their own speed . . ."
you do get some here whose parents say . . . they've been reading since they were
two or three. Now, I don't know how much of that is reading, recalling, or just
recognizing, or repetition . . . they all listen to the same story so many times, they
love it.*

Anyhow, I think the most important thing—I happen to believe in some of these current writers . . . but you've got to try and reach the child. Now I don't know if that's so much a problem with the little ones but obviously it must be because we're getting them in four or five and six—not good readers . . .
(Rose pp. 16-17)

In this respect, engaging the interest of the child in reading, Rose's ideas are very similar

to Estelle's but she also believes that some understandings are available only to children

who read good quality literature.

I've learned . . . [some people] do not read for entertainment. [They] read for information . . . But [they] would never pick up a book to read for enjoyment . . . [the] motivation is for a different reason. And I guess that's what I'm saying, is that we have to allow for that as individuals. We have to see that there are some children who just—I have a little boy in grade six this year . . . And he went to Montreal for the Chess Championships and came sixth in all of Canada. But he reminds me of [others] in that respect—he can't read narrative—when he reads a novel he can't understand what is the . . . he doesn't understand—he's . . . read only "chess" things. Things that he's interested in. He's never read romance and adventure and mystery. And so I . . . This is what I said to his mother . . . I said, "Get him to read . . . You've got to find things that he's going to be interested in and make him read them." . . . Something that is going to grab him. They've got—and that's hard I guess. How do you motivate those kids? How do you motivate those kids because it's not because he can't—it's not because he doesn't have the ability or the intelligence. It's just that he has never chosen to do so. And maybe, you know, there hasn't been . . .

They need imagery, they need figures of speech. They need to be able to close their eyes and listen to a passage and get a picture. Not just conversation. I said, you turn off the picture on the television and . . . you don't get any imagery . . . take the screen away and it's nothing but dialogue. And this is why . . . I'm not putting Gordon Korman down but the majority of his work is just conversation. If you zip through the chapters, it's just dialogue . . . [Another children's author] is a little bit better. I think he has a little bit more description in certain parts . . . But! We're reading Farley Mowat, for example . . .Wilson Rawls and he did Where the Red Fern Grows. *I mean . . . there's meat, there's material, there's— and we stop and talk about—like I can remember even in* Sounder, *the way they were describing that there were no lights . . . And I said, isn't that just the most wonderful descriptions! Can you imagine, he's describing that there are no lights . . . And I started to get—and they're all looking at me . . . And I said, "That's what writing is. It's like a piece of art. It's your piece of art, the words have to describe the picture for you . . ." And I don't like them to write stories with a lot*

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of dialogue. At first when you start writing, the writing process—when I ask them to write. Like sometimes in grade four, I'll insist that they write without any dialogue because they come in after writing in their journal for three years, and all they've written is dialogue . . . It's not—it's not a story . . . No. It's not thinking.
(Rose pp. 17-19)

The benefits that she believes are only available to children through reading good books are the ability to understand a story through the narrative structure of story, the ability to appreciate an experience or perception or picture that is painted for the reader only in words, and the following of a reasoned argument. But Rose's ideas are not clearly articulated as such. They can only be teased out from the flow of her words and stories.

"When children learn to speak it's similar to how children learn to read."

Kim and Nancy were the only teachers who were able to provide theoretical answers to the question of children's literacy development. Kim provides a very concise and sophisticated answer to the question.

I think that it's a blend. I think they learn from the sounds, from the phonetics, from sight, from writing, from chanting—from writing out their thoughts and realizing, "Hey, this thought has a reason to it." So it depends on the level, you know. If you're talking kindergarten and grade one, the way they learn to read isn't necessarily—is at a much lesser level than the older grades. I think, by the older grades it's already a part of them. So, like, by grade three they know how to read but they have to learn how to enjoy reading, and they have to learn how to do factual writing and those kind of skills. So it depends on what level you're asking it . . . [But if you go right back to the beginning] sound. I think it's sound and environment. And just constant sound and hearing the sound written down and seeing if the written sound— [Making a connection].
(Kim p. 17)

Her answer is sophisticated because she is trying to answer the *how* part of the question—how does the learning come about. The other teachers tended to talk about the activities that seem to lead to reading or the kinds of things that teachers can arrange for

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children to do in order to teach them how to read. Kim's answer tries to explain how the activities or learning arrangements lead to reading. Kim also doesn't seem to need to tell anecdotes or appeal to the authority of her personal experience although she does seem to be drawing on her observations of children's learning behaviours in school. The insight that she shows is also evident in her accounts of her teaching practice.

Nancy also displays a theoretical understanding of how children learn to read and the connections between literacy and other language processes.

> *I don't think children learn to read by just one way. I think it's a conglomeration of things going on simultaneously. I think children learn to read by being exposed to books. by being read to. by speaking—the more they speak and discuss I think the readier they'll be to read. By being curious about the world. If they're curious about the world they're going to learn how to read. I think most often children teach themselves how to read. I think that we as adults are not that instrumental in their actual—I'm not talking about how I teach with higher level. I'm talking about phonetically or, you know—sight and the basics. The beginning. I think it's natural. I think it's like . . . Joan Tough! I remember reading some of her stuff . . . on language acquisition . . . Old stuff is being triggered. And everything came . . . this reminds me of how children read. I think when children learn to speak it's similar to how children learn to read. I do . . . That's what I think. That's what happened with my own children. Because I never taught primary. They started reading real well without me . . . I was there to say. "Isn't this a beautiful book?" and reading to them constantly. and they learned how to read. It's amazing!*
> (Nancy p. 20-21)

She sees learning to read as connected to speaking and listening and being curious about the world. Her authority is mostly professional and academic but also extends to personal experience with her children. There is also a clear relationship between her beliefs about literacy and her practice.

Learning to Write

On the question of how children learn to write there were fewer traces of more traditional modes of instruction. As with the responses on reading there was one teacher who retained her belief in traditional modes of instruction in writing. All the rest of the teachers gave descriptions of learning to write activities and methods of instruction that would be considered in line with process writing ideas. None of them mentioned copying examples or doing punctuation or grammar exercises, the kind of skill-based instruction that used to be the norm in writing instruction. Three of the teachers (Kelly, Kim, and Nancy) also gave theoretical explanations along with descriptions of activities and methods. These were the same teachers who had explored or outlined theoretical ideas in answering the earlier question about learning to read.

In general then the responses of the teachers to the question of how children learn to write used more current terms (and avoided older terms) about writing instruction than their responses to the question about learning to read. Their ideas and beliefs about writing seem to be more current than their ideas and beliefs about reading. There are many possible explanations for this.

Maybe the new methods in writing instruction seem to have more application to the work of these teachers in the Middle Years. They were more able to think of students of theirs who were still struggling to improve their writing. They don't think of reading as something their students are still learning, in terms of comprehension, to do better. Reading seems to be thought of as a unitary ability that is acquired early and then is simply used as a basis or mechanism for other learning. Writing seems to be thought about differently.

Maybe the older traditional notions about learning to read are more firmly embedded in the educational establishment. Reading still seems to be a mysterious skill that happens inside the child and reading theory is still a matter of controversy and therefore maybe is still considered to be in the hands of the experts. Perhaps also practitioners are not so wedded to older notions of how children ought to learn to write.

Maybe reading is a more salient skill because of the way it can be required to be done as a performance to be observed and assessed. Teachers do not traditionally sit and watch as students struggle to write sentences. They tend to evaluate the results later.

"It's reviewed every single year, and it's stressed every single year." Sarah was the one teacher again who steadfastly maintained her belief in a traditional explanation of how children learn to write

> *Through examples. A lot of the times children's responses are put on the board in the early grades. so they see what it looks like. And I think example helps. And then they copy down the examples. It increases their vocabulary, and the sense of putting together a complete thought. It comes naturally, I believe through example . . .*
> (Sarah p.18)

She does. however. refer to emergent writing—children scribbling letters and writing their names at home. a type of activity that in previous times was considered to be not worthy of notice—and puts it into the context of her explanation.

> *Writing letters and learning initial words might come first. Little children like to write their names, and then they learn to read them. And so. I'll say writing. Writing comes first and reading comes second . . . That's right. Probably, probably very elementary writing would come first because most children start printing their letters at home . . . and then they read them back. And it's recognition. It's word and simple recognition . . . I think it's safe to say that in most cases the writing comes first and reading follows.*
> (Sarah pp. 18-19)

This is not the traditional view of reading first and then writing much later. It is interesting that Sarah does not seem to be aware that this part of her answer may be incompatible with part of her previously articulated position on learning to read. This may be a way that changed ideas begin to creep into the thinking of teachers, a little at a time.

Any of the new ideas that she thinks are valid such as teachers' conferencing with students, she simply includes in her description of the old methods. Good teachers always did this. They didn't call it by the same name.

> *Some of them [my ideas] have changed and sometimes I think the longer I do it, it just confirms that maybe I'm doing it the right way. And the more I do it and the more it's successful—I think that the teacher, conferencing with a student, you naturally do that because there's a need for it. And so even though they came up with the fancy term 'conferencing' we always did do it in some form. Might not be in the form that they'd like to see it with 'round tables' and this, that and the other. But it's done. And so again I'm not particular on the formality of it as much as the practice of it.*
> (Sarah p. 19)

Earlier in the interview when asked if she were willing to make changes in her methods to address areas where students did not seem to be learning well, Sarah did take up the question of what is going on when children are taught to do something but apparently don't learn. The example that she uses is of students who despite being taught when to use capital letters do not do it correctly. She concludes that they need to internalize the new skill and will with maturity learn it. It is not the teacher's fault that they don't learn it.

> *I would zero in on the writing skills just for that. But I would have to say a lot of it is developmental. If they don't use capitals at the beginning of the year and they're still not using them at the end of the year, it's not because they haven't been taught to do so. It's because they haven't internalized it yet ...*

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And so I have learned not to be as critical and as hard on myself, which I tend to be, and look at it as a failure, because it's not that they weren't taught. And they can orally tell you, they just don't do it. And so only through practice and maturity, I feel, they are developing their own sense of editing and the process of writing will just come. And there are kids in high school who still don't do it. And it wasn't because they weren't taught and I think the onus can't be put on the teacher. It has to be placed therefore on the student . . .

It's reviewed every single year, and it's stressed every single year. It's not something that's neglected.
(Sarah p. 15)

It is interesting that her explanation of learning a new skill in writing does not really coincide with her explanation of learning by copying examples. She does not, however, think this example through to its logical conclusion, perhaps showing the way that different ideas about instruction can co-exist in a teacher's practice.

The most common response given by the teachers to the question of how children learn to write was a short description of students' learning activities and/or teachers' methods. This was the response of five of the teachers.

"Just getting excited about getting their words down on paper and building on that." Barbara's description of student activities and teacher methods in learning to write puts the emphasis on doing the writing as opposed to learning skills and on the importance of self concept of student. She contrasts this with the skills and correctness emphasis of the old days and the effect it had on students.

I think, if you had to ask me now, it's different than if you asked me a number of years ago. I think now learning to write—I think just making the kids, even when they're little if they write a sentence and not really worrying about correcting them when they're little. Just getting excited about getting their words down on paper and building on that. I think that's the basis of it all, the comfort level to express their thoughts . . .

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Years ago, it had to be correct. It had to be whatever, yes. Like now, I mean I can see how important it is for the kids to be comfortable, wanting to write, and not having a pen in their hand or a pencil in their hand and being stuck, being afraid to write a word down. That's a horrible, horrible thing to have to happen.
(Barbara p. 17)

Tanya's explanation is very similar. She explains her thinking about students learning to write by describing how not to do it and implying that these methods used to be common and still unfortunately exist in schools.

Well, they have to be given a lot of opportunity. I think I could answer more on how do they learn not to write well than . . . I think that any teacher that is too focused, or too strong or too obsessed in one area, for a lot of kids can do more harm than good. How do children learn to write? You've got the teacher that's marking every single, solitary spelling mistake. You've got the teacher that it has to be indented half an inch. It has to be all those things. That's how they learn not to write . . . So it looks really terrific in the end.
(Tanya p. 15)

She implies that it is the opposite that is needed. Teachers should encourage students to write and not be too concerned at the beginning with correcting spelling or requiring a neat format.

Rose also thinks that teachers simply have to give students the opportunity to write and lots of encouragement. Then she remembers the difficulty of getting students started on a piece of writing and concentrates on the difficulty that some students have in finding something of interest to write about. She also comments on the difficulty that students have in managing plot elements so that stories are resolved in the end.

By doing more I guess. I think just by encouraging them to do lots . . . And by enjoying it, yeah. And having—like, the hardest thing is to find something they're interested in writing about. So quite often—you know, you don't want to give them a topic because some of them may not have any experience with that topic. You sort of have to get them to sort of come up with something, even if it's somewhat unrelated. You know what I do sometimes with the spelling? I'll have them take all the words and sometimes there's a connection. "What do you think? Can you categorize these words to get any groupings?" Some of them—I will say, maybe if you take that group could you write a little story about that?

Using some of those words . . . Just as a starter. It doesn't have to be long, you know. A thing I noticed, they were writing mystery stories. They can't end them, so they all end up in a dream, or "to be continued" . . . I said, you're all like soap operas! It's going to go on for the next ten years. Like General Hospital.
(Rose p. 19)

Toni's explanation is quite brief but goes outside of the classroom or at least the writing class to say that students have experience writing at home and that they learn certain styles of writing from their reading. After that they only need time. This suggests that to Toni the writing process is mysterious and takes place elsewhere, somewhere where it is not observed by the teacher.

> *I guess they're exposed to it doing a lot of outside writing—writing letters, writing thank-you notes. Reading also helps them, different authors' styles of writing. They have to be exposed to a variety of things . . . An immersion . . . Well that's why I say that even with the writing that we just need time. Perseverance and time.*
> (Toni p. 19)

Suzanne describes the emergent literacy activities of children she observed in a Nursery class. Her description is clearly of a process writing classroom but in the middle she wonders if it is a description of the "old way" of thinking. She is not aware enough of her thinking to be able to contrast it with another older way. She is not familiar enough with theory to know which side she has come down on or to know what the other explanation of learning to write would be.

> *Again I think they start by scribbling. They see other letters formed and they try to spell their name. They start learning the letters. Am I going back to the old way now? . . . Start with their name . . . This is from my experience in junior kindergarten . . . Yes, they've learned to spell their names but then they want to write someone a message. Can you write out the letters for me and try to copy them?*
> (Suzanne pp. 24-25)

It is obvious that this reply is based on Suzanne's experience in early childhood classes and as yet there is little connection to the on-going learning of writing in her own classroom.

Two of the teachers gave more considered replies to the question.

"A lot of them feel that they've progressed." Nora's answer to the question is more lengthy (even when abbreviated here) but her ideas are not dissimilar nor does she really deal with the *how* of the question. She starts with the technical ease that computers have given children so that their work is easily drafted and corrected and sometimes indistinguishable from an adult's. This ability to produce something so easily strongly motivates children to write and in writing they improve dramatically. Her next comment echoes Toni's observation that children learn different styles and gain confidence in their ability from their reading and from the possibility of seeing themselves as writers. But her final comment is that students need to feel good about their writing and have a positive self-concept in relation to writing.

> *How do they learn to write? I think the computer has helped a lot in that respect. I don't know if that's the right answer you want to hear but I feel the computer's helped a ton. I watch the kids in my class . . . And I think the computer with printshop writing and publishing where they can stick in all these pictures and all these cute little things and they can fix their mistakes in two seconds, they don't get frustrated and they can save it and go back and make corrections . . . it's made the whole draft process better, easier for them . . . we read every morning for ten minutes in the class (USSR) and I notice a lot of kids are coming in and they're writing newspapers, and they're printing it and they're distributing them to all the kids . . . they write Michael's News. They write stories in column format and they make copies on their computer and they bring it in and they hand it out to the kids and then they're all reading each others' and this will spark someone else to go home on their computer and start write a newspaper . . . And a kid's story on a computer looks as beautiful as an adult's story on the computer . . . and it puts them on an almost equal footing. I mean, you don't know when you pick*

up something if a kid wrote it. etc. So I think that's helped too . . . It's very motivating because it's so pleasing.

And in terms of getting them to write I could only think it . . . goes back to exposure to different books and different authors. You show the kids that different styles are acceptable and that every poem doesn't have a rhyming word at the end and everything doesn't have to mean acrostic or couplet or limericks aren't an acceptable form of poetry and they're fun. We did limericks just a little while ago. I think when they see that they realize that they could write something. that they could be good . . .

They can see—I gave the students a report card that says, "Do you think you're a good writer?" You know. what makes a good writer. Why you think you're a good writer, what helps you write. what motivates you to write. what do you think about when you're writing, what do you like to write about. Things like that and I gave it to the kids at the beginning of the year and I read their responses and most of them didn't think they were good writers . . . and we talked about that. and now when I talked about . . . "Do you think you're a good writer?" Yeah. Not everybody but a lot of them feel that they've progressed. because they feel good. I think it's all in motivating kids to feel good about themselves and I think once you can do that—If I tell somebody they can do anything they believe it, if you keep on them I think that they start to think that they can't do it . . . if you're hearing "You're smart, etc." all the time you believe it. If you hear "You're stupid" you believe it too.
(Nora pp. 19-20)

"Gee, this is good." Estelle also has the belief that students learn to write by

writing and being praised for their work, by sharing what is written with teacher and

classmates and feeling good about it. She first thinks of telling a story about her son and

then recounts a few examples from her classes that illustrate her points.

By writing, and by being praised for what they write . . . My son writes very precise. concise. to the point. He just gets to the nut of it. And I say to him . . . "There has to be a little bit more here . . . you've got to pad it." . . . To him he'll get just this one line that will be . . . And I say to him, "Tell me where did it happen. when did it happen. Why? Who did it happen to? Tell me more." . . . And the thing is that his depth and understanding is there. but if he's not going to . . . One of the things that worked best with him was praising him. "Gee, this is good."

I have students in the class . . . I said. "I was really glad you were going to be in my room this year because I remember your style of writing in Grade Two. And I want to see . . ." She works to that. The kids insisted her one story be put in the yearbook. If nothing else, this has to—and we'll read. We'll share what we've written. They want to hear each other's stories . . . I had one child submit a story to Scholastic. Now—quality or not, he felt great about what he wrote. And they're writing to the authors.
(Estelle pp. 16-17)

"She's got kids writing all sorts of things." When asked how children learn to write, Donna referred to the teaching practices of the kindergarten teacher at her school. She tells the story of that teacher's practices, the reactions she gets from parents, and the work that the children produce. This must seem sufficient to her to explain how children learn to write—an account of a teacher's approach to teaching it and a list of writing activities that are in use.

Now here certainly they get tons of writing in kindergarten. [The kindergarten teacher] gets tons of it. She's got parents down her back like crazy, how dare she do it? But she's got kids writing all sorts of things . . . Journals and pictures, and "I am happy because—" or "I am happy when—" All these kinds of things . . . If the kids need help, she gives them help. If they want to write it on their own, write it on their own. But I just saw about five or six kids, I guess it was their journal and they were excellent. They were excellent. I mean, they were—I could read enough that I could read them. That's something we had never done before. Kindergarten had never done it. We would start it in first grade. We still get, you still get some kids by December still aren't writing anything that makes sense. So we are doing journals and stuff like that in the beginning years.
(Donna p. 22-23)

Only three of the teachers, Kelly, Kim and Nancy, were able or willing to consider the question of how children actually learn to write. How do the activities and teaching methods bring about the desired result? What happens in the students themselves?

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"If a student doesn't understand what this complete thought means, well,

where do you go from there?" Kelly suggests that students learn to write by reading.

She does allow that they can be directly taught some aspects of writing—skills such as

writing in different genres. She is not sure. however. how you teach some writing

abilities that seem to come naturally to some but are difficult to explain. Her example is

writing in complete sentences rather than fragments. Students who have difficulty with

this do not seem to benefit from simply being told to write in complete thoughts. She

suggests that this ability is developed in some way from reading but is puzzled about how

to teach it. She has watched her students and been puzzled by their variety of skills. For

example. she has a student who likes to write in verse and wonders where that comes

from. She is sure that you can teach students some strategies or little tricks that will help

them with their writing but comes back to how teachers can directly teach correct drafting

techniques. She considers peer correction. It seems to her to have some pitfalls but she

has been able to model doing it with them and they seem to have picked up on how to

make comments constructively.

> *I think that kids learn how to write by reading! I think that the more kids read the more they will write. But, there's different forms of writing that can definitely be taught to them. I mean when you talk about letter writing, writing a letter. When you talk about creating a coherent sentence though, I believe, and I have thought about this myself, and I'm not sure. I'm still not sure. If I say to a student, "This is a sentence fragment, it's not a complete idea" they don't understand me. They say to them it sounds like a complete thought. But then there's this other child over there who does it without thinking . . . So I do have a problem because I do see a lot of books written about it. I haven't read them. I haven't read these books about how kids write and—I, I haven't. But I constantly am asking myself the same thing and . . . And I've watched, I watched this. Like [my one] student, how do you explain the fact that they prefer to write in poetry than . . . How do*

you explain that? He didn't learn that from a teacher . . . He wasn't taught how to do that. And how do I teach another student not to write sentence fragments?

I've learned with kids though in that sense that you have to give them a little— give them little "tricks of the trade." I suppose. You have to know that. "Don't start a sentence this way because chances are it's going to be a sentence fragment." I feel like I'm giving them rules they have to remember, but at the same time I don't want to see them a year from now, two years from now, still writing in sentence fragments. But I have a—I mean, as many times as you can say a sentence is a complete thought—if a student doesn't understand what this complete thought means, well, where do you go from there? And you can give examples . . . [Peer correction]can work too. And the only down side of that is that sometimes students will think they're being unfairly criticized. Because especially by grade six let's face it, everybody knows who's the "good student" and who is not so good. So if student A who is kind of weak leaves out something in her writing and somebody else says, "I really didn't understand" student A's going to think, "Of course not. I'm not such a great student. And you know I'm not such a great student."

I discovered with this class that I can really be a good role model for them! (Laughter) What a revelation. But we've tried. We've done a writers' workshop situation where the kids write and then we have our author's circle. I got this from Diane Zak. I went to visit her classroom in the spring. It was wonderful. I loved it. I loved everything. And so I took some of her ideas back to the class. And when we had our authors' circle and the kids were reading out what they had written I started by saying, "I like that you did this, this, this," and they pick up on making a suggestion on how to make a suggestion. And the kids picked up on it. I mean now if I say "comments" or "suggestions" they are fine with it. You know, they know they've learned how to word things in such a way, but you know—so I can work with that. It can happen.
(Kelly pp. 6-7)

Kelly's comments are in the form of ruminations. It almost seems as though she is thinking out loud. She is trying to come to grips with the questions that are suggested to her by her difficulties with her students related to writing. The ideas are not yet fully developed but they do show a teacher who is examining her practice and wondering about the reasons for things that she sees her students doing, at the same time that she is trying to make practical plans for her activities in the classroom. Her focus will be on activities but they will be thoughtfully chosen and planned.

"When you're writing, you're reading and you're speaking and you're thinking." Kim is more interested in exploring language theory and its relationship to literacy learning. Her learning to write explanation is similar to her explanation of reading. She believes that it involves an interaction and connectedness of all of the language skills. Because of this she favours an early immersion kind of teaching. The teacher doesn't talk about what is being done but encourages the student to explore and learn by doing.

> *By doing it. To me, it's by doing it. By feeling comfortable doing it. By learning the skills to learn to do it right. At the beginning, it's as easy as "One thought has a dot at the end." You know, but it's constantly doing it. And if you "say" in a sentence, you can write that sentence. But you talk before you write. I think that's the way a baby's process would be. A baby would speak before they necessarily understand what their sounds say. They still have to say the sounds. It's the same kind of things . . . And that's the whole-language part that I like, because it's an immersion . . . And you learn to do them both together, that they can work together because when you're writing, you're reading. And you're speaking. And you're thinking. So you're doing all the same skills.*
> (Kim p. 18)

"But they put the pieces together themselves." Nancy 's explanation of children learning to write is that it is connected to all the other language processes and is a natural process the same way that language acquisition by young children is a natural process. She agrees that the environment has to be arranged by adults and the process encouraged but she believes that children themselves make the connections among language processes that allow them to learn to write.

> *Well I think children begin to write by drawing pictures and talking about their pictures. And what they say about their pictures, that is their first written word. If you can take that and put it with the picture—that's the beginning of writing . . . . And then as they start to acquire the sounds and the symbols and they start*

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putting those together through trial and error and reading it themselves and having other people reading it and . . . Very gradual. very natural and I think there are definite stages when things just "happen."

And the older I get the more I see that with my students and my own children. I know my own kids in grade one. they had such great ideas! They were such wonderful speakers and readers and yet their written skills were so poor. And I remember thinking, "Holy Moley." But all of a sudden in grade two—Snap! End of grade two their spelling and their writing and it all just falls into place! I really think that we as adults play a much smaller role in this picture than we give ourselves credit for! If you want to know the truth!

Stimulation. it's there . . . We arrange for it. exactly! But they put the pieces together themselves . . . Innately? Partially . . . Yeah. I think it's a code. It's a disposition just like for language. for learning. for writing. for—Absolutely—but all the other stuff has to be put into place. Obviously!
(Nancy pp. 21-22)

When looked at overall the teachers' comments about learning to write show that all but one of them have made the transition in their practice. and in their thinking about their practice. to a new process writing set of methods for teaching writing. They are in the process of changing to a new set of methods of instruction in writing. They seem to have adopted some but not all of the teaching practices that are associated with process writing. At least they are no longer relying exclusively on having students copy models of correct practice or drilling them in punctuation or language usage skills in isolation from actual writing. When asked about their beliefs. however, most of them either tell anecdotes from their experience or talk entirely about methods and practices. Only three of the teachers seemed able to talk about the subject of children learning to write by including queries and speculations and beliefs about it in an abstract way. These were the same three teachers who had articulated a somewhat theoretical approach to talking about how children learn to read.

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When looked at overall. the responses of the teachers to the question of how children learn to read and to write show a tendency to refer to teaching methods or learning activities rather than a theoretical understanding of either skill. Only one teacher accounted for learning to read by reference solely to the old phonics and sight word explanations. but six of the teachers still referred to these explanations while clearly believing that something more complex that included language and literacy experience was going on when children learn to read. Five of the teachers did not mention phonics and sight words, the traditional activities of reading acquisition but discussed various aspects of language development and immersion in literacy activities. Overall most of the teachers did not express a considered opinion about how children learn to read. They do not seem to have examined basic questions about what reading is. They do know what activities are seen as useful in encouraging the development of reading and the actions that teachers are usually expected to take in aiding this development.

In recounting their ideas about children learning to read most of the teachers made only limited attempts to give these ideas a theoretical basis. In fact they seem to have understood the question as a request for a description rather than for an explanation. While several teachers made some attempt to relate their ideas to literacy theory. only two of the teachers gave answers that showed that their ideas were developed or grounded in a theoretical perspective. Most of their accounts of children's learning to read behaviour were actual accounts of the learning behaviour of children whom they knew—their own children and grandchildren or the children of family or friends. References to children learning to read in school were actually less common as if this kind of evidence were less convincing than personal experience and anecdote. They may

also believe that children learning to read in school require different processes or that these children are somehow different. One teacher, after talking about the reading history of her two granddaughters, said that the kids in school are different and that teachers do many things to accommodate this difference.

In addition, none of the teachers were led by this discussion of reading acquisition to consider questions related to their own students' learning of reading comprehension. This suggests that they do not link questions of reading acquisition to questions of later reading comprehension through a theoretical understanding of the nature of reading. In other words they see no link between learning to read and reading to learn. It also suggests that for the majority of these teachers, the changes that they have made in their teaching practice, at least in reading, have not been driven by changes in their thinking about reading theory.

Their lack of basic theory might also mean that they might not recognize the difficulties of a student who was struggling with reading comprehension. They assume that they don't need to worry about helping students learn to read because their students are able to read when they get to their grades. In fact, in these schools, students with reading problems are provided with help by a resource teacher. The teachers do know what kinds of activities will generally encourage reading comprehension but they may not be able to explicitly teach reading to learn. If a student had real difficulties they might not know how to deal with them. Teachers need a basic theoretical understanding of reading and they need explicit strategies that will be useful for students who need assistance or who are in difficulty.

When asked to explain how children learn to write, the majority of the teachers again relied on descriptions of learning activities and student behaviour rather than talking about theory. Three teachers did explore theoretical explanations but these tended to be exploratory or tentative. Teachers had fewer ready answers to this question and were more likely to admit that the writing process was a bit of a mystery.

On the other hand their descriptions of students learning to write involved fewer traditional ideas like skill-based exercises and grammar lessons than their descriptions of students learning to read. It seems that their ideas about writing were less traditional than their ideas about reading. Either current writing theory is more attractive and explanatory to teachers or traditional reading theory has a stronger hold. The latter may be the truth because there is still considerable controversy about the proper ways to teach reading. Many teachers may still be considering that traditional reading theory makes a good case. There is no equivalent lobby group or body of opinion that still promotes a skill-based theory of writing instruction as the sole legitimate way to teach writing.

It seems clear, at least in the area of writing instruction, that these teachers have changed their teaching practices ahead of their thinking. Most are already implementing some of the new ideas about children developing writing skills by doing a lot of writing and working on drafts to polish their products. At the same time they are still groping in their thinking to an understanding of the theory that supports such practice.

Whether talking about how children learn to read or how children learn to write, most of the teachers talked in almost exclusively practical terms. This suggests that the question of which changes first—teachers' beliefs or teachers' practices—may really be focussing on the wrong question. Almost all of the thinking that teachers do about new

teaching methods is in practical terms. As we will see in a later section of this chapter, teachers typically hear about new methods, try out in their classrooms the ones they think might be useful, and make decisions about adoption based on their observations of the results of a single trial—often focussing on the responses and reactions of their students. Ideas in theoretical terms are for some teachers mixed in with their practical ideas but for many teachers, and certainly for the teachers in this study, theory in the form of their beliefs, remains implicit in their practical beliefs about method. Teachers' beliefs and teachers' practice are not separate but inextricably melded in their classroom work.

Teachers' Assessment of the Essence of the Change in New Methods of Instruction: Beliefs about Language and Learning

All of the teachers recognized that there had been enormous changes in the teaching of reading and writing over the course of their own careers. Most of them seemed to be comfortable referring to this complex set of transformations as if they were a single change that had led to whole language methods. When asked to say what they thought the essence of this general change in teaching methods had been, they all had slightly different responses. Only four immediately gave a thoughtful answer which seemed to indicate that they had previously given this question some thought. A few said that they were not sure how to describe it but gave partial answers and answers by implication in other parts of the interview. Several gave answers that were tangential to teaching methods but were related more to school organization or setting. These were other areas in which they had seen profound changes during their careers. One teacher discussed several innovations but said that she did not consider them to be useful or effective.

This was probably the most demanding question in the interview. It required the teacher to mentally review teaching practices and philosophy in the language arts over her career and summarize the essential difference between earlier and later methods. The intention was to induce the teachers to talk about their ideas and beliefs in the subject area and, thereby, to assess their understanding of the changes in thinking about language and about learning that had ultimately led to changes in teaching methods. These teachers were all teachers of the language arts but their practice also included other

subject areas and other instructional concerns. Had they thought about the changes in language arts in these terms at all? How far had their thinking moved in relation to their practice? Do they think about literacy learning in terms of learning activities and teaching methods only, or do they think about literacy in terms of individual cognitive and language learning? And if they go that far in their thinking, have they considered the social construction aspects of literacy development? This is not a common level of teacher talk. Many teachers tend to couch their ideas about teaching in terms of methods and activities rather than ideas and theories. These teachers' responses to this question could therefore provide a gauge of their level of comfort with the underlying concepts of whole language (for reading) and process writing.

The underlying principles of the new whole language methods are summarized here from discussions and outlines by Froese (1991; 1994):

- Language is a naturally developing human activity, always used purposefully for communication, expression, and/or reasoning;

- The classroom can be a context for real-life language activity;

- Language is not taught by being segmented into activities but should be integrated with other subjects;

- Language is learned holistically first, differentiated and refined later;

- Classrooms should be flexible learning environments rich with a variety of real language materials including quality children's literature, student writing and other student or teacher made materials, information texts of many kinds, multi-media and popular culture materials, and people from the community;

- Instructional decisions are made by teachers, not dictated by materials;

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- Teaching should be based on individual student needs and meet and stimulate student interests:

- Instructional purposes should drive how students are grouped and organized for learning and collaboration is encouraged;

- Students of all ages have the ability to think critically and creatively and should be given the means and the opportunities to do so including planning their own work and making decisions about it; in this way they develop ownership of their learning:

- Teachers must assess student learning in valid and authentic ways. with parental and community support but in classroom situations. Students need to be involved in their own assessment; in this way they develop responsibility;

- The teacher is a model learner and a supportive adult in the room to assist and guide student learning;

(Froese. 1994. pp. 13-15).

The teachers in the study had incorporated to some extent some but not all of these ideas about whole language instruction although the single feature that occurred reliably in all of their classrooms was the use of children's literature.

The principles of process writing as embodied in the work of the National Writing Project are summarized by Hairston (1982) as follows:

- Instruction should focus on the writing process which is seen as recursive rather than a linear process of pre-writing, drafting, and revision. Editing for correctness is a concern only later in the process.

- The teaching of invention strategies and discovery approaches to generate ideas and begin drafting are features of writing instruction.

- Attention needs to be paid to rhetorical concerns of audience. purpose. and occasion.

- Evaluation attends to the fulfillment of the writer's intention and the meeting of the needs of the audience.

- Writing is seen holistically as an activity involving intuitive as well as rational faculties.

- Writing is a vehicle for learning and for development as well as for communication and expression.

- Writing includes a variety of modes including expressive and expository.

- Writing theory is informed by linguistics and cognitive psychology and is based on research on the composing process.

- Writing is an activity that can be examined and described.

- Writing can be taught.

- Writing instructors are people who themselves are writers and who model their writing practices for their students.

In fact, the content of these teachers' answers to this question about the essence of the change in the teaching of reading and writing, covered a wide spectrum. Some of the teachers in response to any question were more likely to recount personal or classroom stories to illustrate their ideas. More common was a series of specific comments on teaching methods or a general overview or perspective on methods. A few teachers included some consideration of classroom learning situations and children's learning needs. Only a very few teachers included some theoretical consideration of the nature of learning in language arts or the nature of language itself. In the practice of teaching, theory is embedded in method. For most teachers, theory, method, and practice are

inextricably mixed and embodied in their beliefs (Berko & Niles. 1987). This seemed to be true of these teachers in their thinking about the teaching of reading and writing.

In the course of the interview Sarah took on each of the innovations in the language arts that were mentioned and either denied that they were actually changes or attempted to prove that they were not appropriate or useful. In the case of novel study. oral reading. and conferencing she had her own particular interpretation and ways of using these approaches to instruction. Other methods approaches such as peer-editing and self-editing, response to literature, literature circles. and the use of computers for word-processing or Internet searches were ideas that she rejected as not useful or in some cases irresponsible on the part of the teacher. It soon became clear that asking her what she thought the essence of the change had been. would be irrelevant at best. This question was not pursued with her.

Tanya's first response to this question was to talk about the difference between teaching in the public and private systems. When asked to comment specifically about reading and writing she said that the main differences had been the use of themes and the integration of writing, in particular, into other subject areas.

Because she had made many changes early in her career, when she had been involved in team teaching and working in open concept classrooms in the nineteen seventies. Rose found the question difficult to respond to. I had asked her to think about it in terms of a contrast between her earlier and later experience. When she approached it that way the significant recent changes in education seemed to her to be a retreat from more progressive methods of instruction and classroom organization. She couldn't separate methods in reading and writing from a more general consideration of teaching

methods. Finally she dealt with the question by saying that she had seen more real

change recently in another area—the use of computers.

> *I guess really there wasn't a great deal of difference . . . I don't think so . . . You know where I'm seeing a great change is taking them into the computer room once a week extra and using that for writing. And just—and you know what? They love it. It's good for me because I always used to feel badly if they'd come and hand me something that they did on the computer at home because—Who did it? I would get very upset while marking anything that they'd take home because—and yet here we have to let them do that because we're pressured with time again . . .*

> *So I've always insisted on the rough draft, and so they say always, "Well, I did my rough draft on the computer." Print it, and then bring it to me with the rough draft and the changes after. Okay. And I'm really learning a lot having that time with them in the computer room. I could use more time in the computer room with them.*
> (Rose p. 15)

Rose is much more comfortable describing a method that she uses and how the students

react to it than trying to describe the essence of the change from earlier to later methods

of teaching. She was also one of the teachers who usually responded to questions with a

narrative of some kind.

Donna also seemed to have trouble with the question of how methods had

changed in essence. Instead she commented on how she thought students had changed in

their abilities and capabilities over the course of her career.

> *I don't think they're as good a reader. Believe it or not, I am not for total whole language. I don't think kids generally are as good a reader as they were . . . I really think so . . . First of all, they don't read at home the same way that they used to . . . And you don't get parents that are willing to read to kids as much . . .*

> *I would go to more whole language and to a more fun way of learning because I think kids nowadays require it . . . I don't think—I just think they need it now. They're entertained all the time. We have to sort of like keep up to computers and keep up to videos.*
> (Donna pp. 14-16)

(This response from Donna is quoted at greater length in a later section of this chapter that deals with teacher's responses to change.) Donna seems to be saying that the changes that have occurred in the teaching of reading and writing over the last two decades have been necessary to engage the interests of children who are increasingly in need of stimulation and therefore unable to learn by the old methods.

Later in the interview Donna, as though she had continued to think about the question, volunteered another thought about the differences that had been engendered by the change to whole language programs. This time she considered one of the benefits to the system of a more inclusive program.

> *I think using more whole language means less resource kids for me. They're not singled out, no. It's not that there will be less kids because I'd still have to work with them. But there wouldn't be . . .*
>
> *There's this little ESL kid . . . She can't read. She should be in grade 1. But it shouldn't make any difference if they were doing a total whole language [program]. She would be okay. Doing the half and half, she's sort of muddling through . . . when she gets into, where everybody is on page 37 today, she'll die.*
> (Donna p. 20)

Donna has seen this effect of the programming on the students. She is still considering the program in terms of its activities and student response not in terms of how it differs in essence from a more traditional language arts program

In the interview with Kelly, her answer to this question was interrupted but she did say that she thought the major change was that students have more say in what they will do especially in writing instruction. There is more consultation with students about the content of their program. Students have more autonomy.

In the interview with Suzanne it was suggested that she might not be able to answer the question because she had little experience, at this point in her first year of

teaching, to report on. However, she volunteered that she had noticed one difference

when comparing the reading and writing program for her students with what she had

learned in school. Although she was trained to teach primarily in the use of the newer

methods, when it comes to examining the school program critically, the standard that she

uses is her own experience in school.

> *Yes, I can. Because we were doing a winter unit and a lot of information that I get is from the other teachers. A teacher who . . . isn't teaching this year gave all the files and I photocopied them . . . One of the sheets was practicing adverbs and adjectives. When I was in school, we had to learn what the noun was, the adjective, I mean every part of a sentence . . . And the kids had no idea, they had no idea what an adjective was, what an adverb was. So I started talking to them about nouns. What's a noun? This I know is part of the change . . . [in] whole language instead of concentrating on each individual word you're looking at a whole sentence, a whole paragraph, and the kids didn't know how to break down the sentence. They didn't know what a noun was. I was really surprised.*
> (Suzanne p. 16)

When Suzanne is comparing programs she looks at teaching and learning activities, the

kinds of activities that teachers will use to structure student work. That seems to be the

natural focus or level of interest for teachers. They are always interested in activities

(ideas) that they can use with the kids. They think about teaching primarily in terms of

activities and method.

Doris also made changes early in her career so the question for her was a little

different. The question became how things had changed in her teaching of reading at her

first school at the beginning of her teaching career. What she described was a move

away from basal readers and workbooks toward a learning centre approach.

> *Everything was reader-workbook . . . I had taught from a basal . . . and that was fine . . . [later] we were using the—what do they call . . . the reading kits with the storybook. That was sort of the beginning of that and I was involved . . . Those individualized reading kits. We were working with learning centres. I was involved with all of that . . . actually there were quite a number of people—I wasn't involved in that committee initially. There were a number of people . . . that were involved in*

that. That was the beginning of the child-centered experience-based learning, beginnings of the CEL . . . I remember having [them] in my room, but [one] went on to become one of the leaders of the CEL program, and there were lots of us involved . . . So again my classroom was used as a pilot for some things.
(Doris p.16-17)

The second part of the question was how the teaching of writing had changed at her

present school since she began to teach there over a decade ago. What she describes here

is the new and different approach to teaching writing in which the student is encouraged

to write in situations where there is a definite purpose for the writing that is being done.

> *As I look at our school—the writing—again going from the kind of writing I did as a student and the kind of writing that we used to do here, was, "Write a story about your summer vacation. Write a story about this. Write a story about that" . . . It was sort of useless writing. There wasn't functional writing . . . and that has dramatically changed particularly in—well, a few years ago I would have said in the primary grades. Now I can think I can say it's even changed in the upper elementary too. The writing has become more of a function . . . It's functional writing. Writing for a purpose not just, you know, creative writing . . .*
>
> *To produce a product that has a purpose. It's a letter to someone. It's a summary of something that they've seen in order to help them study when they study later. It has a purpose. It's not strictly creative, narrative writing. There's far more expository writing . . . far more purposeful writing.*
> (Doris p. 25)

Doris distinguished between the changes she had made in reading instruction early in her

career where she primarily talked about methods and materials and the changes that she

made later in writing instruction where she talked more about the goals of instruction. In

neither one, though, did she consider learning theory or the language characteristics or

needs of the students.

Toni also focussed exclusively on methods. When asked about the essential

differences between her early teaching of the language arts and how it was taught now,

she first related some of her early teaching experiences in an inner city school and

contrasted them with teaching now in a school that draws mainly from a suburban area.

When asked earlier in the interview about how she had taught the language arts in her

first years of teaching she had described instructional differences in order to explain what

she had done then. The difference mainly was between the teaching of grammar directly

and the use of themes and integration within language arts so that ideas for what to teach

in grammar and spelling come out of the students' work and emphasize what they need to

work on.

> *My training is different from what I am doing now. In fact the way I approached language arts at the beginning was quite a bit different than the way I'm doing it now . . . I guess from the beginning it was more grammar . . . in isolation from the actual writing. We'd teach the grammar . . . and then we would do creative writing but there were no "themes." I just find that now I'm doing it a lot more thematic and everything's being integrated. It was so isolated then. That's how I changed. Like, everything that we do in language seems to be all integrated with the other [subjects] . . .*

> *We spent a lot of time working doing workbooks. We'd focus in on certain points and that's what we'd work on. Now I seem to be incorporating it right into my lessons . . . I'm still doing grammar cards, homonyms and synonyms, but at least now we'll take it and I'll use it as a spelling lesson. And usually what I'll do is focus in on—like, after we've done some kind of creative writing or some of our writing then I'll focus in on what the problems were of, you know, the class, and that's usually what our spelling lesson will be or that will be our next lesson. So it's not isolated.*
> (Toni p.1-2)

When asked about large-scale comparisons, Toni was unsure what to say but she was

perfectly able to discuss her own practice. She seems though to talk about it as if it is

something that happened to her without her conscious awareness, methods that she finds

herself doing. In general, the teachers were better able to describe changes that they had

implemented in their classes than to talk about a general system-wide or even a school-

wide change. Many of them also do not have much of a sense of control or conscious

choice in their use of methods.

Estelle was one of the few teachers who responded immediately to the question without hesitation. She uses some of the same words as Toni but explains that her choice of reading and writing skills to be addressed are not just suggested by the students' problems in their writing. Teaching of skills is not the goal of instruction the way it once was. The acquisition of skills is accomplished within the larger objective and activities of reading and research and writing that the students do, often integrated within one of the content areas subjects rather than just in Language Arts.

> *For me, the essence is the integration. Everything was in isolation . . . [now] if I see an opportunity when a word comes up that they don't know, and I can teach them a phonetic skill, I'll use it right there. We don't do sentence structure, subject, predicate, with the diagramming and stuff, which I happen to have loved . . . but we don't do that kind of thing. The grammar and the structure is done in their writing. Whether it's in research . . . [or] their reading. I'm not concerned about a formal reading [program] because they're doing it in their research and they're reading it back to me. And I'm getting the results from them with the comprehension that's occurring. So it's the total integration of subject area, that to me has been the biggest change. I guess I've taught for enough years that the changes came in and out but that's . . .*
> (Estelle p. 13)

Even though her discussion of the methods is more sophisticated she does concentrate on talking about methods and approaches as the essential change and does not comment on underlying reasons for the change. She is also skeptical, in the way that many teachers are, about the lasting power of the most recent changes.

Nora at first said she didn't know how to respond to the question. She began by talking about her own experience in school studying literature and decrying the level of analysis that seemed to kill the enjoyment of literature for the students. Then suddenly she had an inspiration and talked at some length about a changed aspect of her teaching that she was proud of—the way she had been able to introduce her students to important ideas and authentic material that some might think they were too young to understand.

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I guess if I really have to think of a change, I think that we expose kids today to harder material, to a more advanced way of thinking and they can handle it . . I just did a unit with my kids . . . I had somebody in my class from South Africa. And I had the parents come in to talk to the kids about what it was like to live in South Africa . . . and how blacks are treated. And that became a social studies unit where we compared life in Winnipeg and life in Cape Town. And then we talked about . . . Black History Month where I brought in the Underground Railway, Tar Beach and Uncle Jed's Barbershop—all kinds of black literature and books. And it was wonderful because it exposed them to so many things. And then we talked about the issues and what was happening with apartheid and they became our spelling words, and it became our social studies unit integrated with a unit on "How to treat people" and how people like to be treated. I mean, I had a parent phone me: "Apartheid? I don't even know how to spell apartheid. How could you make that a . . . spelling word?" And I said, "You ask your kid about segregation and you ask him about governments and you ask him about apartheid and who Nelson Mandela was. And he'll tell you" . . .

One of the parents brought an actual ballot from the very first election that blacks were allowed to vote . . . there were pictures of the particular candidates and then a picture of their party . . . And I said to the kids, "Why do you think there's no writing on it? Why are there pictures?" And one kid put up a hand and said, "To tell if the candidate is black or white." And I said, "That's right." . . . And I asked, "Can anyone think of another reason?" And they put up their hand with, "Most people can't read." And they got it! And then we talked about the privilege of going to school and everything . . .

People today know that kids can . . . come up with amazing ideas and I'm always marveling . . . We'll be talking about something and they'll write an answer that's fabulous . . . I would never even think the way they think . . . It's fabulous! . . . I feel that whatever I've thrown at them, they've just risen to the occasion.
(Nora pp. 14-17)

Much of what Nora is talking about here does have to do with methods but she is also

getting at an attitude of respect for children's thinking and ability to deal with authentic

material that is quite unusual.

The final three teachers to be considered here were the only ones who seemed

already to have given this question careful consideration and to be able to give a ready

and sophisticated response. They did talk about methods to some extent but they all

included in their discussion the goals of education in a broader sense and the nature of the learning situation and the needs of children as learners in the language arts.

Barb had given this question a lot of thought. She said that the difference in language arts teaching now was that teachers are paying attention to what children think and encouraging them to think. With all the changes in the world the old way of teaching through repetition is no longer sufficient. In reading, the students need to learn to analyze information and in writing, they need to learn to express ideas.

> *The essential difference is that I think we are encouraging kids to think . . . The old way, for me, was just very cut and dry with just question, answer, little short stories, not getting too deep into any material . . . The new to me is just teaching the kids how to think. The world is changing technology. The world is different. We don't need people who repeat things. We need people who are learning to think, who are able to use the information and do something with it. With reading, it's being able to analyze rather than repeat . . .*
>
> *In writing it's the same thing. Instead of just being able to write a paragraph which is grammatically correct, sentence structure, paragraph—Having the freedom to express one's thoughts, feeling comfortable expressing your thoughts. Rather than trying . . . to make . . . [up a] story, which we did, which I did—trying to get the kids to write intellectually about something, intelligently about something. That's a real change. And the kids can write about a subject. They don't have to make up stories. I think it's put less stress on kids, the change because you don't have to make up the story . . .*
> (Barbara p. 14)

Barbara's consideration of the changes in language arts doesn't end there. She goes on to talk about the idea that in reading and in writing the student builds an understanding of the text and a drafting of ideas beginning with their own experience. She also begins to talk about the idea of having the students work together even in their writing, although her thoughts about this do not go much beyond the restraints of the physical arrangement of the room on the students' ability to work in groups.

It's interesting, there's some courses I took—whatever—they talk about when you come to reading or writing, you come with your own experiences, and obviously what you're writing about you know is from your own experience. Even reading, you bring your own experience to a story, so obviously what you're going to get from the story depending on your situation, what you've experienced, you will take something else, something different . . .

I do let them do more group things. Even writing they can do together. I think even though I still do have rows—and that for me is easier to look at it. I need things in straight lines . . . I certainly encourage kids to discuss things with each other much more. Even though the physical setting—they could sit, they could get on the floor and do that kind of thing, or do their writing or talk to each other— the absolute physical desk to me, it stayed the same . . .

I think there are more books around now for the kids to read. There's just more visual stimulation. I think when I first started, things just had to be absolute. It was a very structured situation, and it was black and white. Now I think, I guess even going on teaching styles now, I mean, we're able to bring in more. Visually things are I think more appealing in a classroom. It's conducive for learning, being interested . . .

There was only the library that you'd go get your books, and the library was the sacred place where you had to be quiet . . . it wasn't enjoyable because it was always you had to be quiet.
(Barbara p. 14-16)

She talks about the larger societal change in the availability of information, changes in the type of information that is available to education, and the ways that access to information has changed. Earlier in the interview she had already said something quite similar about the need for teaching students to do analysis and thinking rather than just rote learning and the idea that there isn't just one right answer to a question. The focus of education is no longer on just memorizing facts. Students should be able to explore the reasons for things, come up with their own answers, and have confidence in themselves and their ability to examine and understand the world of ideas.

Unless you're with an author while they're writing something, you don't know unless they are absolute facts why somebody is— There might be clues but there could be different reasons and it could be analyzed different ways.

I really, now, allow for kids' thoughts on things, rather than—you know, Why did so-and-so go? Why do you think so-and-so did such a thing? I think I've become—and I'm getting wonderful responses from the kids. I think it's real thinking and they realize their ideas are important and there isn't my answer all the time. There are different possible answers . . .

I've gone through many changes—I mean, even in teaching, like personally. I've just—you know with the ways things are changing, I mean, the kids, I know—for facts, you can look things up. You have to be able to analyze things and draw inferences. I think I try to sort of stress that—in the language arts, social—whatever we're doing.
(Barbara pp. 2-3)

In these parts and in other parts of the interview Barbara repeatedly brought out current theory and expressed it in terms of her own classroom and teaching situation. She was however, rather unusual in that. There were only two other teachers who had similar insight.

When asked the question about the essence of the change in the language arts, Nancy was clear about what she thought the differences were.

I won't use workbooks, I won't use a formal spelling program. To me this has no meaning. My language arts is incorporated quite often into my subject matter. We're doing 'Sound' in science . . . so I'm doing onomatopoeia. My spelling words this week are 'vibration' and 'frequency' and it all becomes part of the whole. When I went to school I sat there and filled-in the blanks and . . .

I've done a lot of reading projects this year that are individual and independent. My first couple of years of teaching I did use a starting point, a "crutch." And as the year went on it pushed further and further away because as I gathered stuff to go with whatever I was doing I didn't need it. And I have Networks this year and I just pull from it. If I'm doing my animal theme in science I'll pull from it. There's this thing on energy so when I do my science—"electricity" I start next week—I'll pull that energy stuff out to correlate with my science theme. And I run off some of the workbook pages . . .

It's tied into whatever you're doing. I don't remember when I went to school— because that's when I think of that real traditional approach. I don't remember that meaning—that sense of overriding meaning. And I'm not saying I have it in

every single thing I do—that is my goal. I'd say I'm about 60-70 percent of the way there . . .

I think skills need to be taught. I think there's a place for functional teaching . . . and I need to teach these kids. But direct teaching—I can do that as long as it's in a meaningful context . . .
(Nancy p. 14-15)

Nancy talks about the purpose of education as building that "over-riding meaning." She acknowledges that skills are important but also that they have to be taught and learned in a meaningful context. In isolation they mean nothing but in context they are part of what is required to make meaning for the child in the learning situation (Wells. 1986).

·   Whatever the content of their answers almost all of the teachers demonstrated that they had accepted some but not all of the changes implied in whole language and some but not all of the changes implied in process writing approaches to teaching the language arts. Most of the teachers in this study had only begun to understand and believe in some of the principles for process writing. Most of them were convinced though that writing is a process that needs to be practiced and learned by students with some freedom to make errors and develop skills gradually through activities that involve purposeful writing. Only one of the teachers seemed to be venturing beyond whole language and process writing into a social constructionist approach to the teaching of the language arts. Some of them were considering the merits of small-group collaboration and work in research skills and reading literature but none were approaching collaboration in writing. Kim was the only teacher though who even came close to a social constructionist approach to teaching in the language arts, the idea that language and literacy develop through the social uses of language in interaction with others (Dyson, 1988; Heath. 1983). In her discussion of the essence of change in the language arts, she begins by mentioning the

integration of the modes of language—of reading and writing—into a literacy program so that students no longer distinguish between the two. But she goes on to talk about the way that students are now allowed to talk to each other in class while they work cooperatively and this is seen as part of their learning process. She sees it as a vital part of their learning.

> One [change]would be that it isn't reading and writing. That it's now a combined—that the kids a lot of times don't know what reading is versus writing because they're busy doing both. So that it's not two different lanes of learning. That's probably the biggest change.

> And the second one is that it's okay to talk and work together. And that cooperative learning is the way that they learn. I don't know if my kids could handle not talking and working things out, they're so used to it . . .

> I mean, you can have your 'U' and you can have your four-desk cluster but if they can't work together you still have a traditional classroom. It just looks a little nicer . . .

> Because I think their mind is always thinking. Like, a lot of the time their stories go on forever because their head has it right. Their mind is thinking it right. So they need to do it. The other reason is, they like to talk. They like thinking things out. They like to share. So it's natural for them to work that way. Like, to me it's not a compliment to see a quiet classroom . . .

> I think it's a whole process. The whole child has changed. I mean, the child who raises their hand for every answer doesn't exist very much now . . . they didn't, but they had no choice before . . .

> I really think that we can only expect kids to be the way we are as adults. And usually, unless you work in a government building in a little cubicle you don't work by yourself. And you want to talk with people . . .And when you're working you might read a little bit out loud and forget that there's people around. And that's okay as adults. But then we take the kid and we say you can't do any of that . . . And you have to stay in that seat and you have to raise your hand . . .

> So then you wonder when do they [adults] get this luxury? Like I'd expect to give my kids exactly what I'd expect for myself—same respect and the same kind of skills.
> (Kim pp. 15-17)

Kim recognizes that children's learning needs are tied to their language abilities and social needs. It is through the use of language for thinking and for social interaction as needed for learning that children are able to accomplish their learning goals. Her approach accords the child the same respect that is given to adults. Children have serious work to do in their learning and should be able to accomplish that work without hindrance and restriction.

Most of the teachers found it difficult to analyze the essence of the changes that have transformed language arts instruction in the last twenty-five years even though most of them have been teaching throughout most of this period. Those who did consider differences did not talk about anything beyond methods and approaches. A few of the teachers related their answers to the requirements of the learning situation but only three of the teachers talked about the ideas that underlie the changed teaching methods they have seen over the course of their careers. Teachers in general think of their job of teaching in terms of what they do with their students. They think about change in terms of new activities and materials. not in terms of the underlying ideas about learning that may have fuelled the change. For most teachers their beliefs are embedded in their approaches to instruction to such an extent that an invitation to talk about ideas is answered by comments on method.

Personal Change Processes in Teaching Reading and Writing in Times of Change: Teacher Change and the Construction of Practice

All of the thirteen teachers in the study had been teaching during the two decades of change in the language arts. Although none of them had spent a lot of time thinking about this, they all could point to changes they had made in their practice of teaching reading and writing. They were able to describe the methods they had employed to make changes or the ways that changes had come about without their active initiative. They also had their own beliefs about change in education, how it came about or did not, and the role that teachers had in the process of change.

The Change Process

Within the group of teachers studied, the pattern of diffusion of change was observed to follow a process similar to the change processes that have been observed in other social institutions. These typical patterns of the diffusion of change were first observed to be operating in the diffusion of changed agricultural practices in rural areas of the United States in the nineteen forties. Rogers (1995) observed change processes in several other social communities and found similar patterns. In a social community individuals play particular roles in the change process. Universally, the mechanisms for change are social interaction and personal influence.

Many of the teachers knew exactly when they had first heard about the changes in teaching the language arts that were referred to as "whole language." Several of the

teachers (Doris, Estelle, and Nancy) immediately entered into the excitement of new ways of teaching. In diffusion of change terms (Rogers, 1995) they would be called Early Adopters. It was possible for these three to be Early Adopters because they all reported that they were in contact in their early years of teaching with fellow teachers who were, again in Rogers' terms, Innovators. Innovators are individuals who are adventurous in their thinking, who are competent, control resources, and have ties to other Innovators inside and outside of the system they are working in. Doris, Estelle and Nancy all came under the influence of innovative teachers and benefited from their example throughout their teaching careers. In comparison with Innovators, Early Adopters are seen as talented but they continue to have their strongest ties into the group inside the social institution. They tend to have a high degree of peer respect. This quality means that Early Adopters can carry innovative ideas into a system and promote them where Innovators may be suspect because of their perceived outside ties. This only works, however, if the system is able to accommodate change. These three would also have liked to be Innovators on their own but did not find the opportunities to do so. When Doris found herself teaching in a new school where new approaches to teaching reading had not penetrated, she continued with her innovative ideas in the privacy of her classroom. Only much later did she learn that the principal at the school had been holding her up as an example to the other teachers. When Nancy wanted to involve her students in self-assessment she was discouraged from doing this by her school administrator. When Estelle left the schools where she had team-taught with partner teachers in open-concept classrooms, she was unable to pursue this style of teaching in other schools.

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A larger group of the teachers were not exposed to new ideas as early in their careers. They therefore seem more cautious and resistant. Some of these (Kelly, Kim, Nora, and Rose) gradually tried out and adopted new methods. They have the characteristics of the Early Majority who tend not to be leaders in the system but have a high degree of interaction with fellow teachers. Others (Barbara, Donna, Tanya, and Toni) made changes also but a bit more slowly and reluctantly. They would be considered the Late Majority who tend to be more skeptical of change and cautious. They also tend to command fewer resources in the system. They will only respond when peer pressure increases or when the necessity for change increases or when uncertainty has been dispelled and the system supports the change.

Only one teacher in the group was resolute and really made very little change at all. Over the years of her career especially when she was pressured to make changes, she appeared to be considering some things but consistently rejected them. She would be considered a Laggard. Laggards seem the most cautious and traditional of teachers but they also tend to command the fewest resources and have the fewest links even within the social community of the institution. They may tend to be loners and will only adopt changes when staying within the system demands it. Actually it may be a good strategy to nurture the development of Laggards rather than forcing them into making changes since they may be the invisible have-nots in the system, often operating without the social supports that, for other teachers, feed creative work.

Sarah signaled that she needed this kind of help at the end of her interview when she said,

> *If somebody is going to criticize my work I want them to be constructive and I*
> *want them to be nurturing. I think that if you want a teacher to make changes that*

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you should sit down with her the way a mother would with a child—the way a teacher would with a student—and nurture the change. Who is going to sit down with me and spend time?

The totality of what goes on in a classroom depends on the teacher—the caring and the compassion of that one person. Each of us is a human being. We are still frightened sometimes and uncertain. We get frustrated. We still go home and cry and think about leaving teaching . . . [I] hear that teacher coming down the hall and wonder what it will be this time. What criticism will it be?
(Sarah p. 21-22)

It is by no means certain that Sarah would have made changes no matter how they were presented to her. What is certain is that she was not given the kinds of help and support that she needed to change her habitual ways of making instructional decisions for her teaching.

The final teacher in the group of thirteen, Suzanne, was in her first year of teaching. She was in the trying-out stage. It was not yet clear what decisions she would make but she was already questioning some of the assumption of more up-to-date methods and not sure that she could support them. What is clear is that even as a new teacher she already had an approach to assessing change and to the construction of her teaching practice that was similar to the approaches of the more experienced teachers.

"It didn't really sit right with me:" They were suspicious of new ways at first

When change in the language arts was first bruited, Barbara as a young teacher was unimpressed with the ideas that were unfolded to her. She hung onto her own ideas—and note that she identifies these ideas with the way that she was "brought up"— which suggests that the ideas were personal and came from the way she had been raised as well as the way she had been taught.

At that time they were just sort of starting to change. You know, they were beginning to talk about not correcting in all the grammar, correcting sentence structure, and making the kids feel good about what they were writing. It didn't really sit right with me then because it was just too much swinging the other way from the way I was brought up—where we corrected things. It was leaving everything go—making the child feel good about themselves.
(Barbara p.1)

This is also Barbara's first mention of the "ideas as wearing apparel" metaphor. Barbara says that the new ideas "didn't really sit right with me." This metaphor suggests the feel of the fit of a coat or tailored jacket. If the garment has been tailored to fit, it will sit right on the person's shoulders. But for Barbara the new ideas just didn't feel right. They were too extreme.

Kim also remembered having a negative reaction to the new ideas. Similar to Barbara's memories, Kim remembers that it was presented to her as something that you do, a procedure that the teacher carries out, not an idea or theory about how children develop literacy.

I remember thinking that it was stupid . . . now I don't but at the time when I was first told it, I thought it was stupid. I thought it was stupid because the first approach I heard of it was that you didn't care about punctuation and any kind of writing. So they could write 'gobbledygook' and as long as they were creative and happy with it, even if they couldn't read to you, that was acceptable . . . And that to me was silly.
(Kim p. 12)

Initial suspicion was a common first reaction of many of the thirteen teachers. They did not adopt a new method when they first heard about it just because it was the thing to do. They assessed the new idea carefully, paying particular attention to its source. They were essentially skeptical of experts who were non-teachers, a bit more accepting of ideas that came from teachers whom they didn't know, and generally receptive to ideas that

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came from their colleagues in their school or division. When the source of ideas was closer to home they were more amenable to giving the new idea a try. Trying the new idea out in their classroom. the "trial and error" method. was the main approach these teachers used to make changes.

For these teachers there were many conventional ways of finding new ideas: going back to university: going to inservice presentations or professional development events: and reading and self study. The most common way to encounter a new idea was to watch and learn from other teachers—including student teachers. Some of these teachers were considered role models but others were teachers who were partners in some sense in team teaching situations. Other more unconventional means of finding new ideas were also features of the way that these teachers learned new things. Some of this learning was the result of reflection on parenting experience or on their own experience in learning situations.

No matter how the new ideas were acquired they were universally tested in the classroom. judged to be useful or not. and put together in unique ways to form teacher practice. Finally. they were sometimes used to influence other teachers.

"I realized how much I didn't know:" University Studies, Inservices, Conferences and Workshops

A few of the teachers deliberately went back to school to learn more. to further their understanding of teaching and learning, or to refresh themselves by putting themselves back in contact with the latest thing in education. Most commonly teachers take evening or summer courses as part of degree or certificate programs. Others return to school as

full or part time students in education programs. Doris talked about two periods of time

when she returned to university. the first time for a post-baccalaureate certificate and the

second time for a masters program. The first time she recalls wanting more education to

help her deal with the questions raised by her experiences in educational leadership

within her school division.

> *I guess what happened . . . I was very active on some of these committees with [the*
> *school division] and they were in the process, during the years I was there, they had*
> *gone through the process of developing a new goals and philosophy statement for the*
> *division. I was involved in that. Then the natural step beyond that was the teams of*
> *teachers were selected to work towards implementing those goals and philosophies. I*
> *was quite involved in that. As I became more and more involved with that, I realized*
> *how much I didn't know . . . about education, in terms of the theoretical aspect of*
> *education and research, and that's what prompted me to go back. So that's where*
> *that came from . . . So I decided I was going to go back to university.*
> (Doris p. 9)

In talking about the second time that she returned to university, Doris referred to the

earlier motivation. having her desire for knowledge stimulated by her work. She also

talks about the particular isolation of working in a small private system in the latter years

and needing the stimulation of talking to others who are interested and concerned with

the same issues that she was struggling with.

> *What happens to me is that the more I learn, the less I feel that I know so, therefore, I*
> *need to go back to learn some more in very simplistic terms . . . The other aspect of it*
> *is as I was teaching here and putting in the years teaching here, I realized how*
> *isolated I was and I needed some stimulation—academically isolated here . . . You're*
> *not part of a larger system . . . you're really isolated and I felt like—and each time I*
> *went back to university I realized my motivation to go back was I felt like I was*
> *drying up, academically drying up.*
> (Doris p. 11-12)

Several teachers could point to specific courses that they had taken as the source

of new ideas that were important to them in changing their practice in teaching the

language arts. They had to try these new ideas out and see how they worked with their

students first but they did confirm that these ideas had come from university courses.

Barbara tells about a course that she took that completely changed her thinking and her

practice of teaching writing.

> *I went back to university a few years ago. I had my courses assessed for special*
> *needs, and I was one course short . . . so I went back. Actually the course I took then*
> *helped me with the teaching of language arts . . . Of all the courses I've taken—it was*
> *Practical Issues in the Language Arts, and I realized then the importance of putting*
> *things down in writing. Before that it was always creative writing. Then I learned*
> *that the process—and I mean, we were taught that the process of writing is important,*
> *and feeling comfortable, expressing your thoughts in writing was important . . .*
>
> *In my classroom teaching I stopped having the kids make up fictional stories, because*
> *not many kids are creative writers. My focus became making the kids feel*
> *comfortable about writing, asking them to write about something and being able to*
> *just—the kids just taking their pens out, "I can't write. I can't think of anything," just*
> *being comfortable enough to write.*
> (Barbara p. 1-2)

Later in the interview Barb reveals that the source of her realization about the personal

importance of the writing process was actually partly her personal experience of writing

in one of the course activities. Her belief in the importance of the idea came from

personal experience rather than from being told about it. Nevertheless the crucial

learning experience did take place in the university class as one of the learning activities

arranged by the instructor.

Donna also traces her change process back to a time when she went back to

school to upgrade her qualifications. The KWL that she refers to is one of the better-

known learning or research strategies that can be taught to children to help them to

organize and to evaluate learning projects. The letters stand for key words in the three

questions that children are encouraged to keep track of: What do I already *Know*? What

do I *Want* to learn? What have I *Learned*?

I was asked to take on the library. In order to do that, I promised them, I had to promise I'd go back to school and learn how to be a librarian . . . I had a couple of outstanding "profs" there . . . I absolutely knew nothing. I realize now I had been teaching reading and knew nothing about children's literature . . . Then I started— that's when it really started changing here because I started pulling people to do more units and more research. Instead of giving them an assignment and say, "Okay, go home and study Japan and write me a report", we started trying to do them in school and the whole thing. KWL . . . and that really works great with grade threes because that's where we teach it.
(Donna pp. 9-10)

Donna gives the credit for the changes that she started to make in her school, to the

university courses that she took at that time. She thought so highly of the university

professors who taught those courses that she called them her "role models." "This

woman was phenomenal" (Donna pp. 9-10). She did however identify them as fellow

practitioners rather than outside experts. They were teacher librarians and children's

librarians who had been seconded to teach these particular courses in children's literature.

Other teachers recall key learning experiences taking place in teachers' workshops

and conferences. They talk about learning in workshops mostly in terms of learning new

practical skills. This was the focus when Kelly told of taking the mandatory Department

of Education and Training workshop on teaching the new language arts curriculum that

so many teachers complained about having to attend. Kelly enjoyed the workshop for the

way that the new curriculum organized the material of the old curriculum and made it

more "workable."

I went to the department language arts workshops and I really liked it. I like the new curriculum. I like the way it's set up. It's certainly far easier to handle than that other stuff. And you know it's a shame that the old curriculum had a lot of great stuff in it, but then it's a great reference book. It's good for reference!

[The new one is not much different] it's just condensed. So I do like the format of the new curriculum and it's far more workable as, you know, just from that standpoint. But it's more direct. It's more to the point. This is what we want . . .

*[I don't mind the mandating of the new curriculum] I don't think that I think too
much about stuff like.that. I feel like I'm always accountable.*
(Kelly pp. 7-8)

Similarly. Kim remarks that the inservice workshops that she was able to go to

because of her principal's support of whole language methods, were really valuable for

teaching her the skills, the specific methods for how to teach in this style.

*Now we had this principal who was really into whole-language. And because of him
he was really good about sending us to in-servicing. So that helped with the journal
writing and those kind of skills which are so important. And even—everything . . .
with the organization. the portfolio-keeping and the . . . critical self-assessment and
reasons for—and those kinds of skills.*
(Kim p. 14)

In talking about her learning and her making of changes in teaching writing. Toni

almost sounds reluctant to admit that any of this change has come about from attending

conferences. She seems to want to think that all of the changes that she has made have

been as a result of her own initiative. seeking out new ideas and finding material in books

that have been either recommended by other teachers or written by teachers about their

practice. She begins with the comment that her way of teaching writing is very different

from the way that writing was taught when she was in school.

*Very different from when I was [in school] . . . That's why I say it's changed and I
guess I've taken this approach for the last five years. [Pause] And I was just
going to say that a lot of that is from reading . . . Either a recommendation. or
books I've come across . . . looking for other books—usually at places where
teachers are meeting. You know they have more instruction—you know, books
for teachers . . . I mean I've gone to some that have been very helpful, some
conferences that have been helpful . . . I feel that it is on my own initiative but I
have picked up from various things that I've gone to.*
(Toni p. 12)

Nancy recalls that early in her career she was involved with a lot of professional

development activity that was organized by and for teachers in her school division. Some

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of this was activity that was sponsored by school divisions but a lot of it was organized

on the initiative of individual teachers who favoured change and by the unofficial teacher

organizations made up of these progressive activist teachers.

> *On my own I took whole language courses that had nothing to do with the*
> *university . . . through [the school division]. A lot of P.D. there and I student*
> *taught there my third year and my fourth year and that's where I began my*
> *career. And at night the fellow from CEL—him and his wife . . . My second year*
> *student teaching I was at [his school] so I picked up—that's the philosophy that I*
> *embrace . . . I didn't get a 'philosophy' from my teacher-training!*
> (Nancy p. 3)

Nancy continued this interest in learning about new methods after she had moved to the

small private school system, through informal teacher networks, and through on-going

personal reading and self-study.

> *I've been through a lot of P.D. stuff over the years and I've done a lot of reading. I'm*
> *still reading. I just read a fantastic book about webbing—that new book . . . it's all*
> *about webbing in language arts and all through the subjects. I read a lot.*
> (Nancy p. 8)

"The best thing I ever learned:" Observing and Learning from Other Teachers

Teachers have always paid close attention to what the other teachers in the school

are doing. As beginning teachers they watch the more experienced to see how things are

done. Sometimes, like Barbara, they observe practices and behaviours that they do not

want to duplicate but the observation frequently leads to learning and the determination

to act differently.

> *I like certain things and other things I don't want happening. Little kids don't have to*
> *worry about these things. When I was in [another school division] I remember . . . I*
> *didn't have any children at the time. A teacher was yelling at a kid out in the hall and*
> *I thought, "Oh, my God! I hope a teacher like that never has my kid." Even though*
> *the kid was little, I'm sure you have been called things that hurt you as a child. So, I*

mean. the world isn't all that great when you can't keep patting kids on the back for everything they are doing. But you know what? If you can, do it!
(Barbara p. 26)

Kim also talks about learning from teaching partners, teachers who teach the same grade in the school, and from teachers who are new to the school. She explains it by saying that in this small private system they do not get a lot of chances for stimulation—they are "stuck."

> *I like new things . . . I liked when there was a younger teacher who would come into the school at my grade. I really liked when there were two teachers. And one of my second or third years of teaching, third or fourth years of teaching grade three there was a young teacher who came in. And so she had all the new things from school. And I liked it. I liked being able to copy her . . . Because you're stuck.*
> (Kim p. 10)

The new ideas came from the university but they had to be mediated by a teacher (even a beginning teacher) in order to be seen as trustworthy. Maybe also this was a safer way to get an idea than from a course yourself because you would have complete control over whether you would adopt it.

In Toni's case the teacher with new ideas has several times been a student teacher, ostensibly in the school to learn from her. Since she assumed that the student had access to all "the new methods of teaching," Toni not only picked up new ideas from her, but she also found it reassuring that the student's ideas were consistent with her own.

> *The last five or six years I've changed my approach . . . I'm always trying to keep up with the new methods of teaching and so I'll always try to find books that people— teachers . . . have now written about what they're doing, through my student teachers that come through the faculty. And I've noticed a change in the way they're approaching the written language as opposed to the way I was taught. I've noticed a real change . . . I think it's helped . . . I know last year I had a student teacher from the faculty and I found—actually, last year would be a year that I felt that I really learned a lot from my student teacher . . . I really find that the approach she took to language arts really was a learning experience for me too . . .*

I was already doing the thematics and she fit right in with her approach . . . It was just very encouraging to have somebody come in who was doing very similar things and you know, you always pick up new ideas . . . New material. And I find also working with very different teachers—everybody sort of has something to contribute.
(Toni pp. 4-5)

Toni also gives credit to other teachers in the school, particularly Doris who for a time worked as a Resource teacher with some of Toni's students.

She works with students in my classroom and I've watched her approach and I've used it on some of my kids, and so I find she's been quite helpful . . . I like her editing skills and the way she approaches the editing with the children . . . Self-editing, peer-editing.
(Toni p. 10)

Donna also talks quite explicitly about her personal strategy of watching the work of other teachers, particularly new teachers, and learning their methods. This is an unusually frank admission of copying the methods of other teachers. The target teacher may not even have been aware that she was being used this way. It is ideas that are wanted even to the exclusion of open collaboration.

We've had teachers over the years that do whole language. They haven't lasted here. But we've had teachers who—and I'm smart. I learned from them . . . We had one teacher here who was excellent . . . the teachers that worked with her did very, very well . . . I learned a whole bunch of stuff on how to do this. But I can't convince—I think there's lots that still can be done with reactions to reading . . . When I see the kinds of reactions people do to written work, I wish our teachers [would]do it.
(Donna p.11)

Donna would like in turn to be able to influence other teachers to adopt these new methods. Teachers don't respond that well to being told what to do, however.

Seeing a new method in action seems to be one of the best ways to learn it. Kim reports learning an important method when she watched a reading clinician working with her class.

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But the first time I learned KWL was . . . the reading clinician came in to do my class
and I stayed and observed. And . . . for research skills, it was the best thing I ever
learned . . . It was wonderful.
(Kim p. 14)

Sometimes the teachers who were observed and taught by example were so important

that they were referred to as role models. Nancy said that the staff at her first schools

were extremely important for her learning and development. But she not only observed

them she actively worked with them and discussed their work and their ideas.

> *From the beginning my role models [names two women]. Do you know these people?*
> *. . . [another name] they were kind of my role models . . . they were teachers in the*
> · *school that I was teaching at . . . (Pauses) Hmm. I think I was pretty nervous at the*
> *beginning. I was nervous . . . I worked pretty closely with a woman named [another*
> *name] Do you know her? She's also a lovely woman—she's still around. She taught*
> *grade five. I taught grade four. Do you know [another name]? At that time my first*
> *peers. I had a lot of mentors and I haven't spent any time thinking and discussing*
> *this before so this is all just off the top—*
>
> *When I think back, I guess that's where I did most of my learning, was from these*
> *people that I worked with. And I didn't have kids then, I wasn't married, and would*
> *hang out after school. We'd go to the bars on Friday and sit and 'talk shop', you*
> *know?*
> (Nancy p. 4-5)

In all of these extracts from the interviews that deal with teachers observing other

teachers, teacher knowledge is mostly thought of as skills that can be shared and learned,

less commonly as ideas to be talked about, and most rarely as theories about learning.

"I was lucky in working with people that were willing to try:" Teaming or

Collaboration with Other Teachers

Although teachers often are able to observe each others work, they are less often

able to actually work together in a team teaching or collaborative arrangements.

Nevertheless these kind of opportunities are perhaps the most prized source of ideas for

teaching. Some teachers have had to go outside of their own school or division. Estelle

talks about conversations with other teachers as the source of her ability to change things.

> *But one of the other things that I've done besides the university is that I've kept in*
> *contact with people from other school divisions . . . "What are you doing?" you know*
> *. . . Teaching would be a bore to me if I did the same thing every year. So I can teach*
> *the same grade, but it's a different year. If I have . . . 25 years experience, it's not one*
> *year 25 times. I'm constantly changing things.*
> (Estelle p. 9)

Kim notes that the system does not provide a lot of help for a teacher who wants

to be innovative. She thinks that the best opportunities are team teaching and working on

teaching projects with other teachers. To underline her contention that it is real contact

with teachers who have real things to talk about, that is the key to keeping current, she

remarks on her own experience trading comments with other teachers on teacher chat

lines on the Internet.

> *I don't think the systems help you a lot. I think they send you to an in-service. I think*
> *what helps the most is being able to team-teach. Talking to another teacher about*
> *what they want to teach . . . Or a little project like being a project teacher so that you*
> *can have those things. Being able—I even think the Internet helps. Because I go on*
> *some of those teacher chat lines and we talk! I think those kind of things help the*
> *most . . . [real people] doing different things so that you can try something new. I*
> *think that's the biggest.*
> (Kim p. 13)

Kim is willing to trust an anonymous teacher on a chat line (who may not even be a

teacher) more than an organized inservice.

Early in her career in another division, Rose had some unusual experiences teaching

with two other grade six teachers in an organized open-concept situation.

> *The memories that I have the most recollection of would be the 'team teaching'*
> *approach that we did. Now, what we did do was we took the three or four subject*
> *areas and we had three grade sixes in one corner of the school . . . But what we*
> *would do is we would use the classrooms each as a base, and we might be having*
> *math, science, and language arts going on in the three classrooms, teacher-directed*

*or sometimes the children themselves . . . And then we had a group working
independently watching a film or working on something independently in the hall.
maybe math. So we had four different groupings but with three teachers. But we'd
also have to. like we were, when I say 'teacher-directed' they wouldn't be up there
lecturing for the whole time because we also had to mind what was going on. And
every half-hour. about, we would change and rotate. And the kids would go from one
. . . each person would be responsible for that one program . . . Sometimes the kids
would move to you . . . And that was really quite advanced to try doing in those days .
. . we just didn't have the materials, we made up our own . . . so you see one group
might be practicing if we were doing in social studies a drama—I remember the
'sighting of land' or something when we had a little skit that we were going to do.
And we'd run it off. So this group might be independently working here practicing
this skit and maybe watching a movie on Christopher Columbus. This group in this
classroom with a teacher would be doing perhaps sciences, math. perhaps doing
language arts. or this group might be doing social studies background. content. so
that they were ready to do the skit.*
(Rose pp. 7-9)

It's partly the memory of this early collaborative and very innovative work with her

colleagues that leads Rose to believe that there has not been a major change in how the

language arts are being taught. To her and to many of the teachers. innovation is all in

the methods. in what the teacher does in the classroom, the teacher's actions.

Toni credits one of her partner teachers, a teacher teaching the same grade within

the school. with having an influential role on her own practice. This credit given to

fellow teachers is usually unstinting. Teachers don't mind admitting that some of their

ideas and practices. even the ones that have shaped their practice over a long period of

time. have come from fellow teachers. The knowledge of how to teach belongs to

teachers and is meant to be shared.

*I think she does a lot of thematic teaching, or she came with a lot of ideas about
thematic teaching—a lot of books, lots of ideas. And through the years . . . I felt
in that period of time, there was a couple of years we weren't working together. I
found that I was still carrying, still using a lot of those ideas. And even though I
changed grades a few years ago I was still using the same approach.*
(Toni p. 6)

Toni also seems to be equating books and ideas as just two versions of the same thing that can be gained from watching other teachers.

Sometimes the ideas of other teachers were not really useful but a teacher always has the final say in what she uses in her classroom so seeing what another teacher does can be instructive in making your own decisions. Barbara reports working with her partner teacher but still deciding for herself what methods suit her style.

> *You know, in our school it's really hard to sort of get together. I would get together with my [same-grade] partner . . . We taught together for a number of years, so we would get—but you know what I found? Just, your styles were different. I'm not into handing out four chapters of questions and say, 'Do it and then hand them in.' To me that's—so I guess everyone's style—to me part of this was discussion. So I guess we did a little bit, but then the execution . . .*
> (Barbara pp. 11-12)

Actually it is clear that the differences that Barbara felt went far beyond style into the realm of values and beliefs about teaching. She did not actually approve of the instructional decisions that the other teacher was making and so was pleased to not have to implement them with her students.

In answer to a question about how she made instructional decisions in the language arts earlier in her teaching career, Rose talks about the exercise of that sort of judgement as something she was able to do with her partner teachers. They were able to be "very selective" in their instructional decisions partly because they formed common cause in making decisions.

> *I think that I just sort of—first of all I probably was asking the other grade four teachers what they were doing, how they were doing this, etc. And we used the 'Network' series . . . we would be very selective in using what we wanted to use. And then we've done a lot of work with the novels.*
> (Rose p. 13)

Doris talks about her own experience and what worked for her. She had people that

she could collaborate with. When that ended she went back to university to once again

get that collaboration. that sharing of ideas that she needed.

> *I had my network . . . My friends, that was my network. And when I sort of drained*
> *that dry and those people had moved on, I guess that's why each time I kept going*
> *back to university, for exactly that. I needed that collaboration. I needed that . . . as*
> *I see our teachers now doing, talking about how they're going to present a unit and,*
> *you know, everybody throws their ideas together.*
> (Doris pp. 19-20)

She then observes that teachers now are able to work together and collaborate,

specifically on ideas. more than they were able to when she was a young teacher.

Tanya observes that as new ideas came up. she and her fellow teachers would hear

about them and they as a group were always willing to give things a try and if they

worked move them into practice.

> *I think I would try. I was very good at going to inservices and there was the*
> *buzzword that year, something that you were to do, and I think I was lucky in*
> *working with people that were willing to try. We would try together. If it worked,*
> *we'd use it again. If it didn't, we didn't.*
> (Tanya p. 14)

Teachers also encountered or generated new ideas by means that might be considered

more unconventional. Several teachers were aware that they had used their own

experiences in school. their experience in parenting their own children. and/or their own

recent learning experience. When these experiences are the source of new ideas it is

usually the result of reflection on them.

"The compassion of living with a child:" Parenting Their Own Children

Tanya sees an evolution in the kinds of concerns that inform thinking about teaching methods.

When you first start teaching you don't have children. You compare a lot of what's happening and how the kids are to how you were then. But once you have your own children, then you start comparing to your own kids and you don't think about yourself sort of. I used my kids, and I noticed even with my kids, my kids in elementary school were—they loved reading
(Tanya p. 6)

Nora was pleased when her son was around the same age as the students in her class. She was able to get a clearer understanding of the kinds of things that children of that age are interested in, what is "in" and what is not. But she was also more knowledgeable about learning capabilities and styles and predispositions that are common to the age group.

I feel as a teacher, it's given me insight into what he finds boring, what he really likes, what he wishes he's spent more time on, what he'd like to delve into, what he'd like to do a project on. I find it's a real feedback and it's not a matter of trying to adjust the information. He's right at the level that I'm teaching. And I found that a tremendous amount of help . . . [My kids would always] tell me what they like and what's 'hot' and what's not, and I would try—always try to incorporate something that's 'in' with my work . . . [it's] really helped a lot and a lot of the questions I make up with the kids are very current because of my kids . . . But it's just a matter of knowing they don't want to talk about 'Ninja Turtles' anymore—that's out—and knowing something else is 'in.' Sega is in, Nintendo is not. So when I write a little blurb or write a question or story problem I say how many Sega . . . Just enough that the kids know that I know. I mean for whatever reason that's very important to them.
(Nora p. 1-2)

But Estelle had perhaps the most profound comment on how being a parent had affected her teaching. She talked about the struggles of parenting a teenager and how it made her see that the struggles and difficulties of growing up are there in every individual even when they are not visible to the outside world.

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*I think being a mom has really helped me in understanding. Just seeing the struggle
at home. Just life. The compassion of living with a child, the [difficulties] that I
never heard of this in my own life before. And you look at her and she's perfectly
normal.*
(Estelle p. 16)

"It's a horrible way to feel:" Experienced new methods themselves

Another unusual effect on the teaching decisions of these teachers was their

reflections on their own recent (and earlier) learning experiences. Barbara recalled a

powerful learning experience from a university class.

> *What we did was, at the end of each class—it was like journal writing, I guess. At the
> end of each class, we had to spend five minutes just writing. I never realized until
> then, I was one of those people who was afraid to put [anything down] . . . because it
> was going to be criticized. Someone was going to look at it and analyze it to the nth
> degree and tell me it wasn't good—and this sentence wasn't good. I don't want my
> students to feel that way. It's a horrible way to feel.*
> (Barbara p. 2)

Perhaps because she was put into the unaccustomed position of the powerless student she

decided that this was not the way to get somebody to learn to write and she decided to do

something about it in her own class at least.

Donna talked about a particular course at the university in which students

experience what it was like to be in a modern writers' workshop situation—the students

experiencing the methods that they were learning to put into effect in their own

classrooms. Donna was convinced that this would be a useful learning experience for

any language arts teacher. *"We've had people come in to talk to us about the writing

process but we've never done it . . . I think that that's what we have to have [a course

using the experience of the writing process] . . . I certainly think that [teachers] have to

see that process. Maybe they have to go through it"* (Donna pp. 26 & 28).

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Kelly also talked about her own experience while implementing a writers'
workshop approach in her classroom and struggling with the idea that she should be
writing at the same time as the students and not spending the time marking or other paper
work.

> *If it's writers' workshop and you're supposed to be writing, then I had better do
> that . . . It was hard. It was very hard and I thought, "This is really an eye-
> opener for me!" Some kids, some people, not just kids, are able to sit down and
> just (makes writing sound) and other kids—they're like this (sighs)—"What am I
> going to write about? Here we go again" . . . So basically I just started writing,
> like, a journal—sort of vented my frustrations on paper. Which I couldn't read
> out loud to anybody . . . But it was still good for me to see that, to go through the
> process. Absolutely! To go through that process of what it feels like to have
> somebody say to you, you know, "Write!"*

> *No taking the time to file papers and so on. (I've always said that if it weren't for
> teaching . . . I find you learn an awful lot!) I'm learning about how kids react and
> about their fears and insecurities, how that really—of course—affects what they
> learn and how they learn.*
> (Kelly p. 12)

Tanya was able to think back to her own schooling to learn the same kind of
lesson. As she has worked with students over the years she has become sensitive to the
kinds of things that students are conventionally asked to do that are unreasonable and
unnecessary.

> *I don't tell kids to do things that I wouldn't want people to tell me to do. Like,
> "Today we are going to write a story." There are teachers that do that. I
> remember teachers doing that to me and how that felt. I don't do that. So I try
> and think a lot of the kids being the way I am . . . perhaps a reluctant writer. You
> have to foster creativity. You have to do a lot of introduction, a lot of preplanning
> before you're going to get the best out of the kids. You can't give them a piece of
> paper. I think that's how I was schooled. A piece of paper. "We're doing
> creative writing today. Write a story!" And I'd sit there. "I don't know what to
> write about. I am not good at this." I don't ever do that with kids, ever." We
> relate it to something. We're on to something. I'll do language arts in science . . .
> So I can see through the years more and more of integrating all the subjects.
> Even though our timetables go language arts, social studies, science, math, I can
> integrate it all.*
> (Tanya p. 7)

It is interesting that all of these examples of teachers' reflections on their own learning experience are about writing. This is the area of teaching in the language arts that is experiencing the most rapid change just now and that may be why it is the site for teacher reflection. Many changes have already been made in reading and nearly all the teacher felt that their personal experience did have some bearing on how they taught that aspect of the language arts. The influence of the experience of writing has been a topic of more recent interest and speculation.

All of these methods or vehicles for change in teacher knowledge—courses. workshops. observations. team teaching, and reflections on experience—are just ways to pick up ideas. The real cauldron of change is the classroom where methods are tried and weighed and decisions are often made on the basis of student responses.

"Believing that it would be a worthwhile experience:" Trying New Things

When teachers are faced with new ideas or methods their typical response is to wonder whether this is something that will work with their students. The only way to find out is to try the new method. Estelle has the attitude that new ideas are always worth a try provided the teacher has done some research.

> *I mean I walked in here this year, I hadn't taught [this grade] here in three and a half years and I said, "Let's do literature circles." I've never done them. I've taken courses. I researched it for six weeks and questioned other people and went into it with apprehension but believing that it would be a worthwhile experience. We can make changes in it, and it's not the only approach I would want to use. The way it was presented I thought, "Oh this is the only way," but it's not the only way.*
> (Estelle p. 9)

As a result of her experiment she now feels that she understands the overall approach and knows that it is an idea that she can work with and modify to meet her needs in her

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classroom with her students. She is confident that a single trial of her best guesses of this method was a valid trial of the method.

Suzanne also believes that a single trial and her observation of the student behaviour that results from it are enough to demonstrate the value of a particular strategy in writing instruction.

> *Actually I am really understanding the importance or pre-writing activities. Whereas before, of course pre-writing activities are important but from the beginning of the year until now, I've seen what a difference it can make. Whereas there were times where I may have assigned something and we didn't have time for pre-writing activity and I get their work back, and this isn't what I wanted. Not that I'm saying that to the kids and I'm reading it and . . . Then I took the time the next time to brainstorm with them and like I said, the story web . . . And I see the difference. For some kids . . . they have the idea and no matter what they've written before, no matter what they thought about before, they have the idea in their mind and that's what's going down on paper . . . It isn't necessarily in the format that you wanted it . . . and it's not always in the direction you want it to go in . . . I want to make sure. For example, we did the story web, like I was saying, where they had the characters and they had the plot and they had the problem and the solution. Then they'll write their story basically without looking at what they have because they have the idea of the story and they are forgetting to include the problem and it ends up being a paragraph . . . So that is something, if I realize the importance of in my first year of teaching.*
> (Suzanne pp. 14-15)

And it seems that the evidence that Suzanne looks at in order to evaluate the method is whether or not the students' work was in the format or direction that she wanted.

Although Suzanne who was a recent teacher education graduate has supposedly been educated to teach using the new methods. in several respects she showed that she was going to try out things or promote methods that are more identified with traditional teaching methods. She expressed surprise that the students didn't know any grammar and thought she might like to introduce some (pp. 16-17). She said she was comfortable teaching in a teacher-directed manner even though she had been trained to use learning centres rather than large group discussion (p. 27). She also differed from the other

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teachers in the school in requiring her students to write a project out in longhand rather than on the computer so they could learn spelling and editing skills.

> *I also don't believe in only using your computer, where a lot of people feel spelling isn't as important anymore because you have "spellcheck." Well, I'm against that. I think you absolutely should know how to spell.*
>
> *I had this conversation with a few parents and another teacher or two. Recently I had an endangered species project that the kids had to hand in, and all the other teachers let their kids do it on their computers. I said I wanted them handwritten by each student with no computers. And I am all for technology and I love computers, but they're learning how to hand write. They learned last year but some of them still need the practice, and some of them absolutely need the practice of editing and proofreading their own work. I don't want them to let the computer take over yet. I'm sure a couple of years from now, I'm sure even next year that they're allowed to all the time.*
> (Suzanne p. 13-14)

Even though Suzanne has been carefully prepared in her teacher education program to teach in more progressive ways she still has the instinct of most teachers to try out new ideas that she comes up with to see if they really will work in the classroom. It is interesting that most of the ideas that occur to her seem to be more traditional ideas that she has recalled from her own experience in school rather than the more progressive ideas that she learned in her teacher education program.

Kim thinks that the new methods were invented because the old methods didn't work. If they had worked there would have been no need to invent a new way. She believes that you have to try the new methods in order to get the most out of them. She seems to believe that inevitably there will be valuable aspects and parts of the new method and there will also be pieces that do not work as well. Teachers need to discover by trial and error how the good parts can be maintained and modified and how the not-so-good parts can be discarded.

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I think there are new ways because I think that the tests have shown that the old ways aren't working . . . I think they came about because people weren't happy. I don't think you change something that works. I think one of the reasons that change doesn't work at first is you're so upset that you've changed everything and you wash everything away and then you realize, "We need the change, but we need a few of those things." Like, Montessori blew it but they still have centres . . . And I'm saying they still work but now we make the kids go in a logical, organized manner. And they have to show something, they can't just choose and drop it. So a lot of these things were great but they just can't be by themselves.
(Kim p. 17)

Kim also talks about the need that teachers have to be free to take risks in trying

new things—even things that might not work perfectly the first time—things that might

fail. She talks about administrators' having enough confidence in their teachers that they

let them work out for themselves new ways of teaching.

I'm not going to learn the same way, if I have to be scared, to blow it . . . if this is supposed to make me grow and me do better as a teacher and as a learning experience for me, then I have to be able to say I blew it . . .

That it's okay to blow it. That hopefully it's gonna be blowing it so I can do better the next time. I've blown lots of things! I've told my kids lots of times, we really spent a week doing something that we really don't need to do! Because it wasn't so great but we'll do it differently now—kind of thing. That's okay but I don't know that I'd feel that was okay if I didn't feel that my administrator—if my administrator doesn't know what I'm doing that's fine. And let me just do it. But if I think she's right there on top of me . . . [examining children's work].

But who cares? It's neat, if it's the best they can do . . . for them—that's what I say, if this is a successful product for that child, that's what should count.
(Kim p. 20)

Barbara's account of making changes in teaching reading, from reliance on Basal

readers to the use of literature, includes a comment on how she tried the use of readers

but found that there was not enough substance there in the stories to work with. Then she

comments that this decision was right for her students but that readers might work for

other students. This suggests that she believes that the results of the trials that teachers

make are valid only for their own students. that they are not decisions or findings that can

be generalized to any other group of students. These trials of new methods are not

thought of in a scientific way but only as evidence of efficacy in a specific time and

place.

> *At the beginning it was very cut and dried. I haven't used a reader—I think at the beginning of the year I might do a story with a reader but I just find there isn't enough substance for me to get into. We have the readers here . . . We can't get into it. I guess maybe for different students it might work, but for ours—I do very little. I might do the odd, odd short story. not from the book, from the reader.*
> (Barbara p. 5)

Unlike the rest of the group, Sarah has not really tried out any new methods. Sarah

was the one teacher in the whole group who did not define herself as an innovative

teacher. She thought of herself as an excellent teacher. a very effective teacher. and one

who had worked out her teaching practices on her own and through her own hard work.

She also thought of herself as someone who did not join bandwagons. She considered

new ideas but did not try them if she instinctively felt that they would not work.

> *Some of the issues. I don't know where they're coming from . . . And so I take it as a "bandwagon" approach. and I am not a bandwagon teacher. I like to weigh my options very carefully . . . And I like to use bits and parts from everything that I think will work. And just because the Department of Ed. says "This is the way you should do it." And just because they say it, that doesn't mean they're right. Historically, Department of Ed. has come out with things and then five years later they say, "Whoops, we made a mistake."*

> *And all the stress that was put on the teacher to do the changing was for naught. And I'm a very cautious person in that regard. I try to see in the future. I've always been that way, and things instinctively that I think will not work I don't do. regardless of who tells me it should be done because it's written on a piece of paper. I don't go by that. I don't think anybody is infallible, and even though departments change, sometimes I think they're dead wrong.*
> (Sarah p. 16)

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Sarah has decided that she will not make changes but she describes her procedures for making decisions about her practice in much the same way that the other teachers who have made changes describe theirs. She talks about trying things out and taking bits and pieces that she likes from different places. The difference is that she talks about trying only the things that she thinks will work. And she is determined about this stance. She has not been convinced despite determined efforts to change her practice. Other teachers in the school have tried to convince her to change her practices but she has not been receptive to these efforts. Before she will agree to try something she wants to see it demonstrated. The authority of something that is simply written down is not something she will accept.

Sarah has been particularly pressured to make changes in her practice of correcting all of the children's written work—even first drafts. The suggestion is that she should do less correcting and encourage the children to find their own errors, work with each other to find and correct errors and so on. But according to what she firmly believes, that children first need to be taught skills before they can apply them independently, any trial of this suggested method is doomed to failure

> In the language arts area I have . . . been pressured to—especially with the spelling, I've . . . been told . . . not to correct spelling. Not that I correct it—I identify it—an error . . . About this issue about correcting children's work, instinctively, I have always felt that what I do is appropriate, and it's not absolute because I do allow the children to correct each other's sometimes. It's not a regular occurrence because of what I have explained—I don't think they're really able to at this point. And so I do take it upon myself to do a lot of the initial correcting for them to point out to them, to sit with them, to read it with them and go through it so they understand what I'm talking about, where they've done well, where they can improve.

> I've been told that I should be saying to the children, "Find five spelling errors." So finally I became extremely frustrated and I gave it to a child and I said to them, "Find five spelling errors and show me that you can correct them." And he came back to me and said, "Is this one? Is this one?" And they were unable to do that.

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*Which proved that I wasn't all that wrong in knowing instinctively that if they made
the mistake in the first place—sometimes they can't spot it. Like "their" and they put
"there." Perhaps they'll find it. In most cases they couldn't find five. And if I didn't
identify it for them then they had a very difficult time editing . . .*

*I really didn't think that my method was that archaic. And actually I was doing the
child a service by actually at least identifying the problem. They still have to go back
to do the correcting which is to me a large task. But what it saves them from doing is
actually trying to identify every little thing which they wouldn't. And if we are
striving for perfection in writing, if we are striving for editing skills, I believe this is
one way to teach them to do it. And so this is my method, this is what I've done . . .
And the frustration and stress that I was going through was not worth it so it was
simply a matter of what worked . . . It was always the correcting [that she was
pressured to change]. Always that . . . and I saw it was really irresponsible of the
teacher to do it that way . . .*
(Sarah p. 11-13)

Spelling was the one issue that Sarah reported getting pressure on but her

response to two other issues—literature circles and students writing on computers instead

of longhand—was very similar. She thought the students were too immature to have the

freedom to respond to literature and she felt they needed to learn basic skills before they

were allowed to write using the computer. Therefore she was unwilling to try these

methods because she instinctively felt that they were not appropriate. She also said that

she needed to "see it being done." It seems that Sarah needs a much greater burden of

proof than the other teachers who often tried something that they had heard about or had

described at an inservice.

*I haven't had much background and experience in that [literature circles]. Usually,
discussions that we have are discussions with the whole class, not really smaller
groups . . . But it's not something I'm adverse to—I need to see it being done. It
reminds me of book clubs—when you read a book, you all read the same novel, and
then you discuss it. I think that's okay, but again you're dealing with, in many cases,
immature minds. And I keep thinking of literature circles, like book clubs, as an
adult. And how we are better able to discuss these things. Now children can discuss
on their level and I think that is very important as well. But I would think you would
still have to go back—if you wanted them to see certain things you would still have to
go back and either teach it or lead it, lead them . . .*

*"Well, they have computers now, well, they have Spell Check and Grammar Check."
And I am not that old-fashioned but I think everything should be done longhand. But
I firmly believe, and I am progressive and I don't think I'm archaic, is that you need
to learn the skills first. That a computer is well and good but you still have to
recognize your own errors, you still have to be able to edit and self-correct to a
certain degree and that these skills should be taught first and gained as proficiency
before you rely on a machine to do it for you. And I will always believe that.*
(Sarah p. 14)

Sarah really has no doubts and because she doesn't she will not be persuaded to

try something new without extraordinary efforts involving dialogue, demonstrations and

frequent affirmations of her teaching decisions. Without these kinds of extraordinary

efforts, it seems that teachers will only change on their own initiative, when they are open

to the risks of trial and error. But Sarah does seem unusually resistant to change in her

practice. In this small private system twelve of the thirteen teachers teaching grades three

to six were ready and willing to try new methods in order to identify those that to them

were worth implementing.

Another but different example of resistance in this area is Donna. She has

converted in her teaching to the whole language methods of teaching reading and writing

but she seems to think that the new methods have had to be adopted in order to cater to

the needs of children who are fundamentally different in their literacy patterns than

children used to be.

Donna therefore uses the whole language methods most of the time but is worried

that this will not be successful. She and the other teachers in the school want to use

whole language methods but immediately revert to traditional methods of instruction if

the children do not begin to read right away. Donna doesn't really believe that an

integrated teaching method will help the children learn to read well enough to do the

private system high school program which is still traditional.

> *I don't think they're as good a reader. Believe it or not, I am not for total whole language. I don't think kids generally are as good a reader as they were . . . They can't read the same kind of material that they used to be able to read . . . I don't think they're as good a reader. I think—not that I ever want to go back to that . . . I really think so. I don't think kids are nearly as good a reader as they used to be . . . First of all, they don't read at home the same way that they used to. There's no two ways about it. Kids just don't. You get one or two kids in a class— readers, real readers. But you don't get that many.*

> *And you don't get parents that are willing to read to kids as much. As much as we've been pushing it, we don't . . . I think the parents are bogged down much more, last ten years, way more . . . I think parents don't have the time. Many, many of our parents now, I don't even know most but most work. That wasn't before. It's much easier to put your kids in front of a—and there's videos. There is videos. So instead of reading the book, The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, "Oh yeah, I know that, I saw the video." Okay. These kids, if you ask them, I bet you many of them own more videos that we have books.*

> *No, I think I would go to more whole language and to a more fun way of learning because I think kids nowadays require it. I don't think—I just think they need it now. They're entertained all the time. We have to sort of like keep up to computers and keep up to videos . . . now I'm also worried about it. I am worried, well, I have a granddaughter, I told you, in an alternative program, and they just finished a unit. When she told me about it, I thought boy, if I only could get somebody here to do it. Then I'm worried. She is going to hit grade 6. She is going to have to take those same tests that everybody's going to be taking . . . And, I'm worried . . . will she be able to do what is required of her later?*
> (Donna pp. 14-16)

Here we have a teacher who has done the trials, reached conclusions that are

based primarily on the reactions of students, and made changes—not only for herself but

has also convinced other teachers to make changes—but who is still suspicious.

Ultimately she still has doubts about the new methods. This may be partly because the

decisions to try new methods have been based solely on student reactions to them.

"I'm using the kids as my reference point:" Responding to the Students

When teachers are trying out new things in the classroom how do they know when something "works?" What are their criteria for deciding that something has worked? Frequently for these teachers the evidence that they offered that their new methods were working was the nature and quality of the response they got from the students.

Kelly demonstrates the nature of the scrutiny that these teachers apply to their students. She is constantly measuring what she does with them against the quality of their learning activity and asking herself what learning is going on in the students' minds.

"Are they really learning anything?" I always ask myself, "Are they really learning anything?" So the idea is to have that kind of 'busy hum,' let's say, in the room when you know it's productive—you know, nothing is getting out of control and everybody's feeling good about what's going on. But when you have the classes where that doesn't happen, when you feel like you're keeping a lid on things all the time, that you're dealing with kids who have all these insecurities and all these fears and you're trying to motivate them and at the same time—you know, all that stuff...

Sometimes it's like you need [something traditional] as your Lecture, entry, whatever. But I don't think I'm very good at it... It's that feeling of futility, I think, that I get on just doing this because the kids are acting up.
(Kelly p. 2)

Kelly demonstrates here a teacher concern about student thinking and learning processes and links it with her own instructional decision-making, particularly the decision to use current methods of instruction as opposed to more traditional methods. She is saying that just having an orderly class is an empty objective. She would much rather know how much learning is actually going on but she doesn't have the measurement tools beyond the contented buzz of presumably productive activity. She is

having to judge by the response of the group, not individuals, whether learning is happening.

Rose tells stories about how ideas for learning activities come out of the actual moments of instruction. Sometimes her ideas seem to spontaneously appear just at the moment when she is assigning work. At other times, student comments or suggestions arise and are acted on or not. In this extract there are examples of both.

> *Like, the other day we were doing something in spelling and it was a series of spelling lessons . . . talking about media, the news, writing, TV scripts, etc. So one of my lessons was to write your own script . . . So I said, instead of just making one up, why don't you take a scene from* <u>Bridge to Terabitha</u> *and write a script? And I gave them a few minutes and they all . . . want to work together right away. I said, you can perform them together but I want you each to do your own script. Most of them picked a scene on . . . the bully who's trying to . . . get the Twinkies away from the . . . Anyhow, they loved that scene . . . they really enjoyed that. But it seems to me that things—ideas—often just come right out of the teaching of the lesson. Do you know what I'm saying? Like, some of my best lessons have been ones that we haven't planned because at the time . . . somebody in the class makes a comment. You know, 'That's a great idea!' You know, and then you go on in that strain. And those to me are sometimes the best lessons that we could have.*
> (Rose p. 14)

Most teachers who have spent a few years in the classroom will recognize this kind of situation but it is what this implies that is interesting here. Teachers try out new ideas in their classrooms but the methodology of the experiment is worked out in collaboration with the students as the trial is progressing. The nature and quality of student response is the best evidence that something works.

Estelle gives a clearer example of student initiative and involvement in teaching and learning in her story from several years ago when her class took over the teaching of a unit on space that she had prepared.

> *I had prepared a unit for them to do on space. And there were activity sheets with questions and with little write-ups and then questions . . . I did an introductory lesson.*

We were going to study space, and I had everything ready. The next day one little girl came up and she said, "I've prepared a lesson on Jupiter, on Io." . . . one of the moons. But she said, "I'd like to teach the class. And I'd like to learn to ask the questions about it afterwards." The minute she did that it triggered everyone else and so my preparation became extra activities, sort of like a station that you can go to and these children taught the unit . . . researched, presented, the whole thing.
(Estelle p. 3)

An intensive collaboration with her students was initiated by this incident. This is a remarkable story of student initiative but it is also remarkable because of the way Estelle responded to this initiative and let it shape instruction. This was the seminal incident that started her on a way of teaching that can only be described as a collaboration with her students. Her students have made suggestions and requests and she has responded keeping in mind the important objectives of the lesson rather than incidental concerns like deadlines.

And anything I've given them, I've tried to use innovative programs and projects. They have taken it so far beyond what I would expect for them to do. And I've had to alter things like deadlines. This guy said, "I want to do another province," and then I'd say, "Go for it." The deadline wasn't the important issue. It was the learning and the research that was the focus.
(Estelle p. 3)

Here Estelle is talking about a large project in Social Studies that combined learning Canadian geography with active research, complete involvement, and lots of cooperation and sharing.

I said to them, "Let's tour our country." I studied Canadian geography. I never really knew what any of it looked like . . . When I studied it meant nothing to me. And I said to them, you plan a trip. You must go to three provinces. And you can get there any way you want. You've got an open budget. So, let's not talk money. You can fly, you can bike . . . Some of them did waterways. Some of them started in the North West Territories. It is mind-boggling. And I made up little scrapbooks. And we went to CAA. They gave us information. One day we were standing there, it was just before break. And they said, "We've got a cottage near Dale." I said, "You're planning to go to Banff for this break?" And they said, "Well, you know, Tour Canada." They talk about it as if it's really happening. So they're still working on it. Some of them are finished it and have handed it in. They've gone to travel companies.

We've gone to encyclopedias, CD-ROM's, the Encarta. The kids have used every media that's available. And they're sharing. "Listen, I printed this out," one of them came in. "Who's doing something on Alberta? Look what I found on . . ." Then when you hear them saying, "You really should go to Alberta because they've got the mountains and they've got the . . ." I don't have to mark these projects. And I think what we will do at the end is, I will have them present to the class, an exciting moment, a favourite place, something that no one should miss in Canada. Like, next time you go to Quebec make sure you're there for the winter festival. This kind of thing. But they know Canada. And they were doing research skills. They were reading. You integrate everything with it, the art, the scrapbook, asking for it to be presented in an interesting way.
(Estelle p. 5)

The project has created a situation in which the students have developed research skills and learned academic material in a way that is unusual in its depth and genuineness. Estelle gives the students part of the credit for making this happen too. She also recognizes the qualities of the interpersonal interaction that her students are capable of. She has obviously fostered this development but had to first recognize that the potential was there. In relation to the project work she points out the support and cooperation that her students provide for each other.

They're keen, they're enthusiastic. They support one another. There are a few children in the room that are weaker. But they're never left to feel that they're not capable. And then they team up and buddy up and I don't have children that will push somebody aside that they don't like.
(Estelle p. 4)

In another example of their empathy, she tells of an incident that happened when she was reading to them and came to an emotional part of the story.

When it came to the part where the dog died I could not speak. And the sensitivity of the kids—[one boy] looked and said, "Would you like me to continue?" And I just handed him the book. The whole room was—[He] handled the page, and once they had gotten through that I continued reading it to them.
(Estelle p. 4)

During the reading of the same book she gives another example of one student taking responsibility so that her sister could also enjoy the story.

*One of the girls . . . said. "My sister loves biographies. Could I take the book home
at night for her to read?" And so she would read and bring the book back. She never
once forgot. The sister was reading along. And they loved the book. Because it was a
real life story.*
(Estelle p. 4)

Because of the respect that Estelle has for her students they can not only make

suggestions. they can also critique the methods that she uses.

*And I listen to the kids too. This particular group . . . on Where the Red Fern Grows,
I'm doing a totally different approach. I've done the literature circles with them,
we've had . . . questions . . . and they said to me. recently, after the fact, much after
the fact. they said. "You know, all that work we had to do really spoiled the book."
And I said. "That's what I want to hear, guys."*
(Estelle p. 9)

A personal knowledge of the reality of her students' situations is cited by Kim as one

of the most important first considerations in planning an instructional program.

*The earliest years are just about trying to make them feel good enough about
themselves so they'd be capable of learning. And that to me as a teacher today is the
key . . . unfortunately when I look at even my class today I have a child who's had
parents divorce . . . I have a child who had his parents just come to this country. I
mean he's here four months. I mean you won't have a classroom of them but you've
got a lot of kids who are really aching, and we're not used to it so we don't tend to
look at it that they can't learn. I can't expect my little girl, whose mother is [ill] . . .
to do much learning right now.*
(Kim p. 3)

That's the starting place—knowing the reality of the emotional demands on the

children—and then an instructional situation in which the students can cooperate and

develop as people in the course of learning. make the teaching and learning environment

an enjoyable one for both students and teacher. When asked how her attitude toward

teaching the language arts had changed over the years Kim responded this way.

*I think that watching the way kids work together and using novel studies versus
basal readers, and seeing the writing skills being more interactive into teaching
makes it more exciting. So as a teacher I'm liking it more. That they're learning*

better. and they're learning as more of a full person. So I like teaching now a lot better than [when] I taught then.
(Kim p. 9)

She identifies watching the kids learning as the core satisfaction of teaching.

Even the most traditional teacher in the group. Sarah. recognizes how student response has shaped her instructional planning, although she does give herself all of the credit for working through a new method on her own and developing all of the understanding of it independently.

> *When they said they used novels I got a little worried because I had never done this before and I couldn't imagine what they were talking about. Once I started with them I would never go back to teaching with readers . . . I was teaching with a teaching partner but I was the one who made up all the questions to go with the novels. And that taught me more than anything the education department could have ever taught me. And again you learn how to ask relevant questions and you learn from the responses you get from the students if they're too vague. and you know if you have to go back and change the way you write the questions. And so. over the years I feel that in that sense I have secured a much better program in language arts [working things through] by myself.*
> (Sarah pp. 3-4)

For Sarah the collaboration with the students seems less visible than it is for the other teachers.

Although Toni was not the most reflective of the teachers she did describe how the work of the language arts classroom is done through the writing process and how student work in process becomes the means and material of learning in the classroom. The students therefore become the "reference point" for the teacher.

> *What I'll do is focus in on, like, after we've done some kind of creative writing or some of our writing then I'll focus in on what the problems of you know, the class. and that's usually what our spelling lesson will be or that will be our next lesson. So it's not isolated . . . I'm using the kids as my reference point . . . we're doing a lot of writing. So we're spending a lot of time using that as our language as well. Because we're going through the whole process of writing.*
> (Toni p. 2)

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Barbara sums up the whole process when she talks about her response to her students' enthusiasm about the writing process as she teaches it in her classroom. Her students are willing to take risks because they know that their efforts will be supported rather than narrowly evaluated. Her students are invested in their ideas and proud of their own ability to think.

> *My attitude has definitely changed towards language arts . . . It's not something that there's—you know, you read a story; ask questions; have vocabulary; write a story in creative writing—it's just wherever you want to take it. I mean, it's just so open. What was very encouraging is when I see, like we're doing this book . . . we just finished. And the kids— "Can we do it? Can we take out the questions?" They're so excited about doing the questions. They're so excited about it. I give them quotes. And the quotes—and they aren't hard . . . and the kids are excited. So that really— that makes me feel good, that the kids want to do reading . . . but it really is wonderful to stand up in front of a classroom and the kids to be so enthusiastic, and wanting, and wanting and offering their answers.*

> *At the beginning I found a lot of kids were very hesitant to read their answers because what if it's not right or the kids are going to laugh, but I think they feel comfortable enough now to know that their answer is never really wrong. It's not really wrong . . . Or if it's totally off base, I try very hard not to put them down. So it's totally changed from being very concrete. Story—Questions on the story—Vocabulary—On to the next story. I think because I am enjoying what I am doing and my change in philosophy totally, totally. The kids know, they almost have an ownership of their answer. Like it's their idea of why something happened. It's wonderful to see that even from a one-line answer now, they expand. They're just so comfortable reading. I really am so thrilled that they feel that way about it . . .*

> *When they give the answer, they are very proud. It's their personal—that they've thought of it . . . They figured it out. Rather than even—like they want me to hear and I guess the others, but it's more that they're so proud, I think, that it's their personal thing—they decided on this.*
> (Barbara pp.5-6)

Barbara's response to her students' work is to take pride herself in their ability. This makes it clear that the benefit of innovative teaching is felt in the personal relationship between teacher and student. It is a relationship that is personal but it is also completely

professional because the vehicle for the relationship is the construction of the interactive learning environment as a joint work of teacher and student.

> *After we finish a novel we'll do a character sketch. They come up with their three different qualities and make sure that they are characteristic. Like somebody being nice or being pretty is not a characteristic. They do an opening paragraph and a concluding paragraph. And I'm so proud. They don't even—like they know. they don't just talk about "These are the three things I am going to discuss." They know how to introduce their character sketch and they know how to conclude it with something interesting.*
> (Barbara p. 7)

Tanya talks about this need for a straightforward relationship between what the teacher believes in and what she puts into practice in the classroom. She contends that the teacher needs to be whole-hearted or the students will know, they will detect her lack of sincerity and this will harm the relationship of teacher and student. She identifies this as a major change that has taken place in the teacher-student relationship during her teaching career.

> *I think it happens to everyone where you assign something, you're doing something with the kids and you're thinking to yourself—I do anyway—I think sometimes like I hate to do this but I have to do it. Then you sort of stop and go . . . and you think, "What am I doing? Why am I doing this to them if I really . . ." Kids have to really feel that you believe in what you're doing. If they don't. they know. They can see busy work, when the teacher is . . . "Go write a creative writing story or whatever." Kids are smarter now even and they are not as accepting as they used to be. They're certainly not afraid of us anymore.*
> (Tanya p. 16)

Reflective teachers like Tanya are aware of this change and are to a greater extent taking their cue from their relationship with students in their instructional decision-making.

Nora makes it clear in the next extract that for her teacher knowledge is gained through experience of being in the classroom with the children. That elusive something, that teachers know, comes from the students' responses and reactions and the teacher's apprehension of them. Interaction with students equals teacher knowledge.

*For the fifteen years I've been [teaching and]substituting here . . . I feel comfortable
in any venue in this school . . . after fifteen years here. being thrown into 'one week
for this one, or two months for that one, or three months for— ' I covered the
curriculum and actually I've found that it's helped me—I know where they're at in
grade four, and I know where they're at in grade five.*
(Nora p. 4)

Nora has put in her time at the school and it's interesting that the knowledge that she

feels comfortable with sounds very much like the elusive knowledge that Suzanne

complains so bitterly at not getting from her university teacher training—"where the

children are at" in different grades. This knowledge has come not so much from

observing other teachers but from spending time with the children. observing them.

assessing them. watching them develop. trying out new ideas on them and drawing

conclusions about what to do and how to teach based on their reactions.

"Something just clicked:" Finally Putting it all Together

None of the teachers could really respond to direct questions about what they

believed about teacher knowledge but when asked about a specific subject area. language

arts. they could all describe how their practices had changed in that subject area and the

methods they had used to affect the changes. Many of them in addition were able to

describe the overall process of putting together these ideas into a coherent practice that

embodied the disparate pieces. Their ideas put into effect suggested a sprawling work of

performance art that was put on each time they taught the language arts. For some of

these teachers. students were their collaborators in assembling and presenting the

performance. For others their classroom and students were the canvas. For all of them

though. the performance of teaching the language arts had been assembled and organized

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and refined through many years of experience and trial and reflection. The final result came about from many decisions. It was an assemblage of beliefs and practices that had been constructed by the individual teacher. There were a surprising number of common threads in the way that teachers described the process.

For Barbara there was a moment when it all seemed clear, when many of her experiences seemed to coalesce and create a change that was pivotal for her practice. It was not so much a new revelation as a putting together of the pieces of a puzzle as the last piece clicked into place.

> Oh, yes. I think, you know, actually, maybe eight years ago when I did end up going back to—and something just clicked. It's not something, there was this new revelation, but just the comfort, knowing that—Hey, anybody can write. You can write. Anybody can write and no one is going to mark you down for it, whatever. I think that totally just changed my philosophy [more than] everything I read.
> (Barbara p. 9)

Where did all of the ideas come from that came together in that whole? She can identify some of the sources but others are more amorphous and she refers to them as "the whole sort of shift." These are the ideas as part of current thought, moving into the talk and practice of teaching without anyone really being aware of the process. It is no wonder that teachers find this difficult to sort out or talk about.

> [Figuring things out on my own and] university courses—even just going to seminars like CEL—whatever. I guess I've taken bits of whatever and just knowing what's going on in education, the whole sort of shift. I think that kind of—you know, reading about what's happening.
> (Barbara p.12)

Teachers do tend to be cynical about the forces of change but even within this cynical view Kim has tried the new things and taken from the programs, the parts that work, the parts that she has discovered will work for her with her students.

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Lots of the changes . . . everybody was really enthusiastic about—Montessori and open classrooms. and even whole language . . . And only—that was the only way to do it . . . Take everything in language you're supposed to throw away and let's do it this way. And almost every program—I've tried it their way. And then took about three or four little pieces of it and kept it . . . you're doing it their way. And there were some good points but there were a lot of things that I didn't like . . .

Well. I felt that they [new programs] had a five-year life span . . . maybe ten by the time they've totally died. Like. the first two were totally high-pitched. by the third people were starting to say 'Hey.' and by the fifth they were no longer existent but there were parts that they kept . . . Because they don't work. Like. I don't think there's a program that works strictly by itself.
(Kim p. 10)

It almost seems as if Kim has to identify the new ideas as unitary programs with strict requirements so that she can react against them and claim each new method that she adopts as her own just because she has tried it out and selected it from all the others. Maybe if she had just taken the idea on faith because someone said it was a good idea she would somehow be failing her own idea about what professional teaching practice is. This method of personally adopting new ideas may be a way of actualizing an ideal image of the innovative teacher. the creative teacher for whom her practice is a piece of art.

This may be seen in Nancy's account of her practice as well. Some of what she articulates as her own philosophy has been framed in opposition to ideas that she was presented with. She seems to have pushed some of these ideas into extreme positions so that she could feel that she was reacting against them to form her own ideas rather than adopting them as they were presented to her.

When I say 'whole language' I'm not way at the end. I feel like I'm really balanced . . . language arts fits in all my teaching subjects and it's hard to isolate them because we do do a lot of integration . . . I'll show you a few examples of what I've done lately. I use a child-centered approach from drawing on the kids' experiences rather than. you know. picking everything from elsewhere and—how

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*else can I explain it? I don't teach skills in isolation. I tie them in, and, you know.
I just spend a lot of time on the writing process and things that they've written. I
will use that as material rather than always bringing in from the outside.*

*At the same time I feel like skills have their place. I remember teaching at [a
school known to be progressive] student teaching, and I didn't fully buy into what
they were doing in language arts at that time. I felt there wasn't enough of formal
teaching. I kind of have taken all these things that I've learned in so many
different places and put them into me, you know? My philosophy is definitely
language experience, whole language, child-centered, but I also do frontal
teaching and teach skills that, instead of with a worksheet on compounds they'll
brainstorm, they'll give me the compounds in groups and you know, it's just a
whole different—I get to the same end.*
(Nancy pp. 4-5)

Nancy is convinced that her way of teaching is completely her own construction.

She has observed and encountered methods, tried them, critiqued them, and combined

them in her own practice in a unique way. The relationship between the practice that she

has invented and the models that she has worked from is not a concern for her.

Rose is also proud of using many different whole language approaches and

anything else that is useful and proud of having taken them and adapted them for her

purposes. Although she says she reacts to the kids every year, it is also clear that she

relies heavily on her own experiences and ideas.

*I've always been of a very open mind, when you talk about . . . changing a
program. I've never been narrow-minded because of my years of experience with
teaching that any 'one' program is going to work. You have to adapt, and you
adapt every year to the needs of the class and individually to the needs of the
child, and so you don't just use one whole-language approach any more than you
would use just a phonics approach in the primary grades. You have to take the
good of all of these programs and try to implement it to the best of your ability . . .*

*You know I'm pretty independent anyhow as an individual. I'm confident in the
years' experience I've had. I feel confident about what I'm doing and I
sometimes think I go back on the old things. I'll teach the grammar and I'll point
it out to them, this is how we use to diagram sentences sometimes just for fun.
Even though we're not expected to do it. Because those are experiences that I've*

found helpful and maybe I've found useful in my own learning techniques. so I'll share this with the classroom.
(Rose pp. 5-6)

Rose's practice and her description of it is so idiosyncratic that the view of her teaching practice as an on-going piece of performance art is unmistakable. Probably this is the way that many people teach—working out in the practice of teaching their methods and ideas as a constantly evolving piece of personal performance.

Barbara stresses the personal element of the conclusions she has come to. The school does not really provide any guidance here. The goals of the school for instruction are general and are more concerned with excellence of outcomes. How did she decide what was going to be important in her practice? She decides that what she has adopted has been what she personally felt comfortable buying into, investing in, not because it's what you're supposed to do but because it works.

Because really within the school, there is really—you're not told—like we don't have any major philosophy that we're following . . . I think even [in] the same grade, we're doing the same novels and whatever else but just being individuals and having maybe different philosophies. We don't have a major school philosophy, I don't think . . .

I do stress answering a question properly. People have to know, when you're expressing your thoughts in writing, what you're talking about. That's important besides just putting something down quickly. But when I think back—Did I really think that? Even just my general—like, you know, you go to conferences, we have seminars and stuff. Sort of, everything kind of fits—bits of everything kind of just clicked. From that, I did what I was personally comfortable in.

I even went—different things were in vogue . . . But I think whatever I'm doing now I really have bought into personally . . . I'm not just doing it because this is the way you're supposed to do it. I think what I'm doing is really working in the Language Arts with the kids . . .
(Barbara pp. 9-10)

Tanya sees the process of building a teaching practice as totally personal. When she talks about teachers' feeling comfortable with particular methods she means being

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comfortable immersed in the methods. Her metaphor for teaching practice is more than a

clothing metaphor. It's about comfort living within that world. For her, part of the

comfort is in co-existing with the kids who she says have also changed, forcing teachers

to adapt to their changing needs. She also feels that over a long career, teachers will be

less satisfied with doing an adequate job. They realize how important education is for the

children in their care and they respond to that realization, if they have a conscience.

*In this system I think very few teachers immersed themselves in one particular
way. They adopted things from all of them, like whole language but not total
whole language. They were still going back—you can't—the teacher has to feel
comfortable. If you don't feel comfortable doing something, you are not going to
do it . . .*

*No matter how innovative, no matter how many people tell you how terrific this is,
if you yourself can't handle doing it, it's not going to work. The teacher has to be
very comfortable.*

*But I've seen a lot of change in kids, I think. Kids like to write today, they do.
They love to write stories. They groan and moan about novels . . . They like to
read . . . but they like to read what they like to read. As soon as you put
something on, tell them this is what we're going to work on next, they don't like it
as much as "Here are four novels, pick one."*

*. . . you can't keep kids like we used to 20 years ago in their straight rows and
here is the book we are reading, and everybody is—especially nowadays where
our classes are, I hate to say, varied. You know, we've got special needs. We've
got things that I didn't have when I first started teaching. I had a lower group
and a higher group, middle groups, but I didn't have, either I didn't have the
problems that I have today because we weren't aware of them . . . it's difficult. So,
I don't know. Teaching is definitely harder today and it's not because I'm older. I
used to blame it on that but I don't think so. I think it's just harder, maybe
because we're more aware of . . . I guess 20 years ago you walked into a
classroom, if it looked good, it was good . . . You were doing a great job. Now
there's more to it . . . Like it was you did your best and that was that . . . Maybe
I'm older and wiser and have more of a conscience, I don't know. But I do, I think
teachers are so much more aware of problems and I think as middle-aged
teachers having raised their families, I really feel, have a different—after you've
had your own children, you really really realize that parents are sending you the
best they've got, whereas before you had kids, you were more critical.*
(Tanya pp. 8-10)

The comfort of personally investing in a method of teaching has to include being comfortable with your conscience, being sure that you really are doing a good job. Tanya seems to be saying that the work of choosing a style of teaching is individual work but the stakes are high and teachers' level of satisfaction with a method has to be high before she will adopt it.

Once the change has been made for many of these teachers there would be no going back. Because she made a good deal of change early in her teaching career Doris was a little vulnerable when she changed jobs and began teaching at a school that was not so advanced. Even though she initially felt that she would have to conform to what was being done there. Doris found that she couldn't easily go back to a way of teaching that she felt was inferior. A teacher's autonomy is almost absolute in her classroom so she didn't really know that anyone in the school knew that she was teaching differently until she was told about the school reaction several years later. That's when she found out that her quiet persistence with her changed methods had been a force for change in the school.

I think I caused some change at that point because they were teaching directly from reader workbook. directly. Everything was reader workbook . . . When I started . . . there were these mountains of workbooks on my desk. I thought Holy Crow! I'm not sure what to do with all of these. I learned very quickly that this is what you do. Then I realized, I can't do that, I can't do that . . .

I had [changed]. It just seemed like a natural progression. It's like each time I went back to university, it was just sort of that next step. I didn't see it as change. It wasn't conscious change for me . . . It was sort of the next step because I was always eager to say, Hmm, what's better? What's better? Let's try something new. Again that's part of youth. I truly believe that's part of youth. As I get older, I think some of that change is more difficult because I'm far more rigid in my ways . . . Because then, I was totally carefree. I didn't for a moment worry about anything. I didn't worry. I absolutely didn't worry. I just thought, I can do it. It will be fine. We can do it. So, again ignorance is bliss . . .

I did what I knew what everyone else was doing—putting kids' names on workbooks and they got put on the shelf. You know what? I think I still have

some of those ... I think some of those workbooks are still sitting in there ... I started with them thinking, well, I can do this, but I couldn't do that ... It's just sort of—you gag on it. I remember the principal we had then, because I remember one of the teachers telling me this on duty. She told me this a couple of years later. She says, "I really hated you when you came." Gee, thank you. That was nice to hear. Well, why? She said, "Because every time the principal came into my room, he would always say, "Go see what Doris is doing. Go see what Doris is doing." She said, "I really hated you." And I can understand that ... But nobody ever told me that ...

But I have to try something new. I can't. I can't just do it again and again and again ... So that's what happened here. That's where we began to. I remember when I came here it was everybody do the same page in your workbook and everybody did everything together. The first thing that I did was ... I knew that this was not going to work here so ... I went immediately into working in centres. We worked on—those were the days of contracts. We had, I remember working math contracts and none of that was happening here at the time but it eventually did. As new people came on staff, some of those changes were made. Changes began to occur ...

It was tough here because when you're the new kid coming in, you don't make changes. You take direction. Here are your workbooks. Go! Don't rock the boat.
(Doris pp. 16-19)

Doris had made changes and they had become so much a part of her practice that she could not go back to the old way even though she was the only one in the school who seemed to want to teach differently.

In putting thinking and trying and teaching all together and feeling comfortable and therefore confident, Barbara once more invokes the clothing metaphor—this time comfortable old shoes that have been broken in and are completely shaped and formed to the wearer's foot. *"I have to feel comfortable myself ... Yes, it has to feel like an old shoe to me. Yes, it has to feel—I have to have, I guess, a little more knowledge to feel more comfortable"* (Barbara p. 23).

She takes it even further when she says that the changes that you make as a teacher become part of you, they become your own ideas and practices. Confidence in

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these ideas and practices comes from having constructed them yourself. The acquired

confidence then can lead one to question the authority of anyone who puts the world

together differently.

> *Through the last number of years, my comfort—with telling the kids the*
> *importance of this all—if I do have to write, I write with more confidence. I think*
> *that's the key thing, is confidence and knowing someone is not going to shoot you*
> *down. Like no one is going to shoot me down now. I can write whatever I want.*
>
> *I think I went through an era where everything was red-circled and everything*
> *was torn apart in literature, and that's awful. It's awful. You can never—it's so*
> *hard to rebuild that confidence.*
>
> *. . . even filling out an application. Like, hey, you are expressing yourself. This*
> *is in ink. This is in ink. So I think in that aspect I am growing, as far as being*
> *more comfortable. If I have to write a report, I don't shake. I don't shake*
> *anymore. I think that's a result, too, of . . . imparting this to the kids at school. I*
> *am beginning to believe what I am teaching.*
>
> *I'm even more confident when I do—even as an adult, saying, I didn't like the way*
> *this article read. It smacked of this. Whereas maybe a few years back, even ten*
> *years ago, I was not comfortable. Yeah, this is what it said and, if you say that's*
> *right, well, I guess it's right. So I think, totally, myself as a person has grown that*
> *way and maybe that's why I'm comfortable even doing that.*
> (Barbara pp.24-25)

But all of the understanding that teachers have put together seems to be expressed

as an understanding of method. They have worked out an understanding of the practical

skills of teaching, how to present things, the methods that children would respond well to,

the kinds of things you could do with the class that seemed to result in positive outcomes.

The teachers have not seen what they are doing in terms of the theories of learning that

methods should be based on. Their own investigations have not been couched in terms of

the ideas themselves that they were trying out. All of the teachers have expressed what

they have learned solely in practical terms.

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Even Doris one of the most thoughtful and innovative of the teachers was puzzled by the way that theory continued to be emphasized in her university studies. When she thought deeply about this while working on her Masters degree she came to an interesting conclusion.

> *[The Masters program] was an interesting experience. It wasn't at all what I expected. I had to do sort of an about-face midway. I went in kind of idealistically thinking, now I'm going to learn it all . . . I'm going to learn about all of it now. It's going to fill in all the gaps, because every time I learn something I just had more questions about it . . . And I guess what I always have difficulty with is the gap between theory and reality . . . And I guess that's why I enjoy university so much because the research that you read and the seminars that you're in, everything is very ideal. Ideally this is the way it ought to be. When you're here in your classroom or your room or whatever it is that you're working in, that theory isn't able to be translated directly. It loses something in the translation because we're dealing with human beings . . .*

> *I began to wonder why are you teaching all this theory? Why are we doing this theory because it really isn't applicable here? We're dealing with real nuts and bolts issues of kids who, well, I don't have to tell you the whole realm of what you deal with here. You don't even get to some of the real teaching issues. You're dealing with personalities, a hundred other things.*

> *Anyway, what I sort of figured out, I think I figured out was that you aspire for the ideal. You always aspire for the ideal. I mean that's what you're aspiring for, and I guess that's why so much of it is . . . being taught at the university, the research. This is the ideal; these are the theories; these are the ideal models.*

> *In terms of implementation, if you have that ideal somewhere in your head, then you can at least try to work towards that ideal. But if you fall short of that ideal, it's not a reflection of what you've done incorrectly . . . I kept always trying to find that. I must be doing something wrong; let me learn some more. Because I am not matching that ideal. This isn't the theory that I'm implementing. The theory says this. In theory this is supposed to happen. If I do A, B, C, the outcome will be D, E, and F. But that wasn't the outcome because . . . human beings and issues with human beings, whether it be children or staff or administration, or parents, all the humans that we work with including ourselves, interfere isn't the right word, but don't allow you to hit this ideal, or at least what I thought was the ideal.* (Doris pp. 12-13)

Doris has really struggled with these questions. The conclusion that she has reached is an instructive one. It shows how intensely realistic and practical the beliefs

about knowledge are for most teachers. Doris ultimately has little use for theory. She does not see theory as an abstract thread of meaning or truth through all of the messy reality of teaching. She does not recognize the thread of meaning that runs through and unifies all of her constructions as a theory. After a lot of thought she has decided that the theory that academics talk about is only an ideal construct. It describes a set of conditions and outcomes that can never be attained but are there only to inspire you to do your best and always hope.

"I would love to be able to do some of that:" Planning for Further Change

The teachers who seemed to have been the most progressive and made the most changes also seemed to be the ones who wanted to continue to make changes. Rose had quite a strong speaking and listening component in her program but she wanted to add representing, but representing in words.

> *I mean, I look for the imagery in literature and I'm always trying to show this to the kids. And because there's such a visual world today, and I'm an avid radio listener, and I'm always telling—and I love some of those stories by that fellow from the Caribbean who always tells these wonderful stories. What's his name? I wrote it down on a piece of paper the other day because I heard it . . . 'Something, something, something.' And he does these wonderful stories and I want to do some of those in the class because, for one, their listening skills are not as good today because they don't have—they 'tune out,' they're selective, like the remote control. "Some of you are pressing that 'mute' button on me!" . . . But they do that, they tune you out and I just sort of feel that I would love to be able to do some of that in my language arts. See, I'm a very—I think I change, like I think it's good, I'll try anything, you know?* (Rose pp. 10-11)

Kelly says she hasn't really thought yet about what she will do next but as she begins to talk the thoughts come to her, they seem to bubble up from the back of her mind where they seem to have been taking shape without her conscious knowledge. She

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is interested in more integration and real world connections and more drama and theatre

because of the particular characteristics of her present group.

> *I don't know that I have specifics in mind, and I don't know if this has anything to do
> with particular language arts but, you know, I've always been interested in things like
> mentorships and that sort of thing and working, sort of, "out there" in the community
> or what have you . . . there is something in the language arts curriculum I think that
> relates to that. So that might be something that I might be playing around with. But I
> do already to a certain extent. To a certain extent I already do that. My students go
> to [a retirement home] and interview some of the senior citizens. But I haven't really
> thought about it, to tell you the truth . . .*

> *And also sometimes it's, "Why didn't I have this before? Why didn't I do it for this
> group or that group?" And just off the top of my head, well I'm talking and thinking
> of things like readers' theatre and drama, which didn't really happen all that much. I
> would like to do more of that and I sort of plan to do that this year, sort of see how it
> goes this year a little bit because that's the kind of group I have. I have a group that
> loves to do that sort of—plays. And it's okay if they want to do it. Let me show them
> readers' theatre which they probably don't have experience in.*
> (Kelly p. 9)

Kim would like to move more into the areas of critical thinking and self-

assessment, having her students make critical decisions about including material in their

assessment portfolios and justifying those decisions. She would particularly like to see a

teacher running a program in critical self-assessment in reading and writing that she

could observe.

> *Critical self-assessment and reasons for choosing what they do and those kinds of
> skills. But that's the one area I'd like to go to visit because I don't think I teach my
> kids or have enough time to do it well, to be more critical of why they've made their
> choices. Especially on the creative level.*

> *I would like to see somebody at the earlier years (three and four) doing it themselves.
> We do the book critiques and we pick our reasons why we like a book and things like
> that. But really, for the writing—and they're good, they're really good. When they
> write a story . . . one of the rules we have is the first comment of the person had to be
> a positive. And they can never say a negative unless they have a reason—for
> changing it. And the kids are really good, they're very kind to each other. Maybe
> they're scared of what will happen to them when it's their turn. But they're very
> good, they're really good judges. Like sometimes I think I should just write down*

what they say more. And teach it that way. Because they innately seem to know more.
(Kim p. 14-15)

To try some new stuff . . . writing skills and—not so much the writing skills as the thinking process of the kid to make their writing better. That's what I would like the most. Of the techniques a child uses to be a more critical thinker in writing.
(Kim p. 22)

All of Barbara's plans involve moving into the area where knowledge is being

socially constructed: literature circles. the writing process. and collaborative or group

work in writing.

I would like to do literature groups. In past years I have done—I was taking this course. somebody was telling us about—and I have done a very basic form. but I really haven't had time to do it. Like I would just have kids pick a book and kind of group or try to. you know. the types of books they were reading or authors. and then sitting together and telling everybody about their story. But I didn't have a definite program. So that—I would really like to learn how to do better. I don't feel I'm doing that really well . . .

I would like to organize myself a little bit better with the writing . . . I don't know if themes would work. But I end up doing some things impromptu as things come up and I don't know whether I should have more of a schedule of things that I should be doing . . .

In computer class I find they do [work together] because out of necessity. I really honestly don't feel the results are as good. But maybe if they're more experienced in doing it. it might work. Maybe that's my fault . . . if they had more chance of working together. the results would be better.
(Barbara pp. 22-23)

The teachers who had been most willing to try new ideas were the ones it seems

who wanted to continue to make changes. They continued to ask themselves if they

could do things better and looked forward to trying out new ideas. For them on-going

change and innovation had become a way of teaching.

All of the teachers had made changes in their practice in the course of their

careers. A few of them had begun to adopt new practices very early in those careers.

particularly if they were helped by innovative and generous older colleagues. More

commonly though. the teachers had taken a longer road to arrive at changed practice.

The process had been helped along when ideas came from a close. trustworthy source. or

when the teacher was able to observe a fellow teacher do something interesting with her

class. Even better was the power of a first hand learning experience—feeling the power

of a particular learning experience herself. It was possible to read about new ideas or to

hear them talked about in a course or inservice but the new idea had to be shown by

observation or experience to be worthy. Until the new method was judged to be worth

trying there was no way to accomplish change. The teacher had to be willing to try it out

in her classroom and observe the effects it might have on her students. This willingness

on the part of the teacher to make the trial meant change could occur.

All of the teachers considered themselves to be innovators because they had made

some change. They did not measure themselves against an impossible standard but did

take note of what fellow teachers known to them. were doing. As long as they were not

too far behind current methods. they did not have too many concerns. Nearly all of the

changes that they had made were modifications of their methods of instruction. The

decision to adopt the changed method usually seems to have been based on the outcome

of a single trial of the teacher's version of the new method. If the method evoked the

expected or desired outcome from the students. it was judged effective. In a sense the

teacher collaborates with the students. Frequently students will lobby for more of

something that they enjoy. particular kinds of literature or particular kinds of learning

activities or opportunities to work together in particular ways. The teacher puts together

the method and thereafter sees it as uniquely her own. her own creation for her particular

circumstances. It is the one way of teaching that works for her. with this group of students. at this time.

In terms of change in individual practice. there did seem to be a typical process in how change entered the teaching lives of these teachers from the beginning of their careers and onward. Student teachers are anxious to escape the powerless position of student and achieve the relative power of a teaching position. That power primarily consists of the power to make decisions about and control the learning environment of the classroom. Teachers guard that power carefully. They resist prescriptions for teaching action that come from university disciplinary and professional courses. the lectures of their professors. the dictates of text books, and the curricular mandates of provincial ministries of education. In their classrooms teachers do have the power to work out for themselves what they will teach and how they will teach it.

But change is all around teachers in the educational community. First of all. teachers become aware of new ideas. When change begins to enter the educational community. teachers become aware of new ideas usually in the form of interesting new methods. A student teacher brings ideas with her into the school. There is an inservice put on by the school division. A colleague talks in the staff room about ideas from a course taken or a book read. Someone has a friend in another school division working in a new program. The child of a friend or relative is doing a school project. A neighbour goes to a conference. There is a program on the Learning Channel. Soon fellow teachers are beginning to implement new ideas and can be observed in the school doing things differently. When new ideas are in the air. they are everywhere to be experienced and tested. Teachers who have links into the broader educational community will be aware of

them first but even teachers with few outside contacts will gradually come to be aware as ideas infiltrate their schools. Teachers who feel isolated in their classrooms. who have few links within and outside of their schools will be the last to hear about new ideas.

Awareness may be the first step in implementing change but the second is the teacher's view of the new idea as a valuable. possibly workable suggestion. If teachers hear about new ideas from teaching colleagues in their own school. they tend to be more attentive. They invariably test new ideas by considering the source and are more likely to take ideas seriously when they come from fellow teachers. They are more likely to trust these ideas if they come from teachers they actually know. In general they are suspicious of new ideas when they are put forward by outside experts or officials who are not themselves classroom teachers.

Teachers need to be induced to try new things because this is the only way that new ideas will move into practice but teachers have to first believe that the new idea is worth trying. The single laggard in this group of teachers made negligible change in her teaching practice. not because she never heard about new ideas but because she clearly believed that her own methods were best practice. She was unwilling to try new things because she was convinced that they could not possibly work as well as the ideas that she had worked out for herself over many years of practice. She continually tested a new idea by imagining the results that it would have and found that none of them were proof against her settled ideas of how children learn and need to be taught. All of the other teachers did try out various new ideas in the form of their own versions of a new method. Perhaps they were less firmly settled in their conceptions of student learning because they did seem to need some belief in the possibility of success before trying something.

Innovative teaching ideas are almost always presented and taken up by teachers as specific teaching methods, activities to use with students, or specific approaches for the classroom. The methods themselves are also identified as coming from an individual teacher—a teacher who may be far away but a teacher nevertheless who has simply written her ideas down. This suggests again that teachers consider teacher knowledge to be a set of skills that can be shared and learned and that innovation consists of action taken by teachers rather than ideas or theories. It also suggests that the first step in getting teachers to put innovative ideas into practice is to make sure that they are exposed to these new ideas, ideally in a kind of showcase of teachers demonstrating or promoting the new methods. Teachers who are well respected in the system may be seconded for the purpose of introducing teaching innovations. This may be the most effective means of putting teachers into meaningful contact with new methods and ensuring that that the teachers will see the new methods as promising.

For these teachers, however, changes in practice entered their teaching only by their own personal trial and error no matter what they saw other teachers doing. As Barbara commented, *"just your styles are different"* when she clearly meant a difference in values. In the final analysis all of the decisions rest with the teacher. When these teachers tried new things in their classrooms they used their own version of the innovation. This highly idiosyncratic version of the method was seen as a valid test of a new idea. They were either convinced that the method was effective and useful or they decided that the idea was unworkable based on a single trial. On the other hand, they did not seem to think that the results were generalizable to other populations. They considered the trial to be valid only for the particular group of students that they worked

with. They often said that what they did might not work for all students but that it did work for them. in their situation. with their particular students. Their model of educational effectiveness was completely local. They did not isolate the principles underlying their success and try to generalize from them about education in general. They were content to use their knowledge and experience solely in their own practice.

The teachers also considered the ideas that they had worked out for their own teaching as uniquely their own because they had found the ideas. tested them in their own teaching situation. and adopted the ideas in forms that they were comfortable with. They were also generous in crediting fellow teachers as the originators or donors of an idea. as if teachers were a seamless community of practitioners who came to share a particular set of skills and abilities. However. all they wanted from other teachers was ideas not prescriptions or help. If one of their number tried to impose an idea on the others this would be quietly resisted. Donna was frustrated by her inability to get her fellow teachers to adopt methods that she thought were superior. When Doris entered a new school with her innovative ideas about reading she found it best to lie low. only finding out years later that her practices were being praised by her principal to other teachers. Nancy had found that the best way to introduce an innovation was to quietly do it in her own classroom, not to ask for permission that might be withheld.

These attitudes toward innovation suggest that among teachers there are clearly understood limits that they would apply and would expect to be observed in any organized effort to introduce new methods of teaching. A program to introduce innovative practice cannot be imposed on teachers but the new methods should be offered as ways to solve enduring dilemmas in teaching. such as motivation. involvement. and

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variety. Teachers need to see new methods in operation in the practice of trusted colleagues in circumstances where they have control over how they implement changes in their own classrooms. Another necessity is for a risk-taking ethos where an evaluation-free zone is available to teachers who are trying out new things. Kim says that she needs the freedom to make mistakes without the administration looking over her shoulder continually and judging her attempts.

The teachers always said that they would consider a method successful if it "worked." This is such a common observation among teachers that it is interesting to inquire about what the criteria are for judging whether or not something works. These teachers all felt that they would know when something worked or didn't work. In fact, they seemed to judge the success or failure of a new method by the reactions and attitudes of their students. Despite all of the descriptions of working with other teachers and picking up ideas that they could then try, they chose to make their real decisions in the privacy of their classrooms with the collaboration and help of their students. Many of the teachers were most anxious to demonstrate that their classroom initiatives had worked. Their evidence was always the students' interest, emotional engagement, sustained activity, and superior productions as a result of the particular method that they had introduced.

Teachers try out new ideas in practice with their students. They are most interested in their students' responses, behaviour, attitudes not necessarily progress in learning because that would require a longer term and more detached view than they are usually able to have in the classroom. Rose found that her teaching changed all the time because of ideas that occurred to her in the midst of teaching and also because of the

many suggestions and ideas that her students offer as well and that she is always interested in responding to. Estelle was always interested in the power of particular narratives to capture the emotional engagement and therefore the intellectual interest of her students. Suzanne felt that she, as her remembered grade school self, was on a journey along with her students to discover the reasons for some of her own difficulties and to learn from their learning activity some of the things that she had somehow missed. Toni used student reactions to learning activities to point the way toward material for future lessons. Even Sarah described using student response to shape her questioning strategies. Nora fostered the enthusiasm of her students for particular books and counted on it to carry her students through difficult tasks. Kelly continually judged the efficacy of her teaching approaches by the reactions of her group of students, the feel of the activity and interaction levels, the feel of the hum in the room. Barbara was proud of her students abilities and their own attachment to ideas in the explorations that she had provided for them. Tanya recognized that students know when they're respected and believed in and when they're being conned or given busy work. And several teachers recognized the effects on their own abilities of this collaboration with their students in the business of teaching and learning.

Teacher learning about innovations in teaching is clearly social in nature. The way that change has diffused in these teaching communities is clearly by a network of social connections, friendships, working arrangements, formal and informal networks among the members of the educational community. To a great extent though, the social interaction that has promoted new ideas has taken place not just between teachers but between teachers and their students. The unacknowledged influence of students, their

reactions and suggestions and the pressures they have placed on teachers to implement. to continue. or to abandon new practices. was a major force in the teachers' construction of their teaching practice.

The construction of their practice is like the development of a piece of performance art. They choose parts of what is offered in the environment to create an assemblage of skills and methods, like putting together a puzzle. For some teachers. the students are the canvas on which the work is painted. For others the students are collaborators who contribute in the daily bustle of the classroom to create a chorus to the teachers' lead performance. For these. the students are co creators of their vision. But all of these teachers seemed to have a shared ideal of an active, changing, innovative teacher who is constantly selecting, trying, and shaping new ideas to create an ongoing teaching performance.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The present study was an investigation of teachers' ideas about teacher knowledge, teacher change, and the construction of practice, in particular as it affects the teaching of reading and writing. The study addresses questions about the nature and origins of teacher knowledge, the essential elements in the process of teacher change, and the processes of knowledge construction that result in successful teacher practice. As I have reviewed the material presented and the analysis conducted in chapter four, I have found a coherent set of ideas about teacher knowledge and practice and teacher change. This chapter will first review the conclusions of each section of the preceding chapter, then summarize and organize overall conclusions, and finally, present implications of the study for teachers' professional development and recommendations for further research that are suggested by the findings.

Teachers' Beliefs about Knowledge and Change

Real change in education—change that will have an impact on outcomes and thus on society—occurs in classrooms and is implemented by teachers who are motivated to provide the best and the most effective curriculum and instruction for their students. Change that has occurred in the curriculum and instruction of reading and writing in the

last quarter of the twentieth century follows. and is contingent on. major changes in foundational theories in language and learning. Changes in instruction have been implemented by teachers working in their classrooms. Teachers make these changes as a result of a personal process of individual professional development—building their knowledge of methods. evaluating and incorporating change. and constructing their practice. This is the way that teachers translate new ideas into teaching practice.

Although they all engage in this process of knowledge building. the teachers in the study would probably have been at a loss if they had been asked directly to relate what they believed about teacher knowledge. teacher change. and the construction of teacher practice. However. their stories about their own teaching careers, their goals for their students. and their classroom practices were a rich source of their beliefs about knowledge. about change. and about constructing practice. Their stories about teacher education and their early days of teaching showed what they considered to be valuable teacher knowledge and how they thought that knowledge was acquired. Stories about their personal reading and writing demonstrated how important (and unacknowledged) an influence on their teaching practices these are. When they talked about children learning to read and write they showed how teachers' beliefs about children's literacy learning are embedded in their teaching practices. Their beliefs about language and learning were implicit in their talk about how instruction in reading and writing had changed. When they talked about their own change processes (with regard to pedagogy) they made it clear how they acquired. evaluated. and tested new ideas and how they combined ideas to create their own teaching practice.

The twelve long-service teachers in the study did not express a high regard for the knowledge that they had gained from their teacher education programs. For many of them, teacher education was a long time ago, and for most of them the Language Arts methods they had been taught or directed to use were long out of date and to some extent discounted. Even the teachers who had been trained most recently, however, tended to devalue their training. In some cases they seemed to be unaware of the nature of their teacher education and the impact it had had on them.

All of the teachers had felt that they did not have the knowledge that they needed at the beginning of their careers. They had felt poorly prepared for the challenges of teaching. For all of them the only remedy was to throw themselves into teaching, look around at what others were doing, pick up ideas and methods wherever they could, and, as Donna said, somehow *"you muddle through"* (Donna p. 5). This often lonely effort to gain skills quickly may have contributed to their resentment of teacher training institutions and their determination to see their own hard-won level of skill as adequate.

These teachers expressed an appreciation only for the methods or skills knowledge that they had gained through teaching experience. The knowledge that was valued was "with the kids," at ground level in the classroom. The intimate classroom-based knowledge that the teachers valued, dealt with how students learn and the typical ways that they have difficulties. This knowledge consisted of the ways that experienced teachers present material, the timing and sequence of activities, what "works," what students can do, and how to motivate them to do it. It was practical knowledge, gained and refined in practice.

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A particular skill identified by these teachers is the ability to do on-going informal assessment of student ability and progress. This informs and shapes the teacher's on-going planning and decision-making, both long-term for the whole program and day-to-day in the classroom with the group and with individuals. This skill, referred to by several teachers as knowing "where the students are at," requires the teacher to have an intimate knowledge of student capabilities and ways of working at specific ages and stages of development.

If these teachers were to define necessary teacher knowledge, they would say that it is the practical knowledge that a teacher gains from her experience teaching and only that. They are not interested in theories. These teachers are not alone in these attitudes. In general, teachers do not credit their teacher training as giving them valuable preparation for teaching. Beginning teachers who were interviewed about their attitudes toward their teacher education programs have repeatedly been found to deny the importance or efficacy of their preparation for teaching. The most common complaint is that coursework is too theoretical (Applegate, 1987; Dunne & Dunne, 1993; Housego & Badali, 1996; Ralph, 1994). Other teachers suggest that the theory taught in teacher education programs is not relevant to the issues that teachers are most concerned about (Duquette, 1996; Miklos & Greene, 1987).

This attitude on the part of many, if not all teachers, persists in spite of the fact that all teacher education programs are based on the understanding that teachers must think deeply about their own conceptions of teaching in order to develop effective practice. In fact, research has consistently shown that student outcomes are related to teacher cognition in many ways (Sprinthall, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1996).

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Research also shows that teachers do not gain higher conceptual levels as a result of teaching experience by itself (NCRTE. 1991) but seem to need opportunities for growth and reflection.

With specific reference to theories of reading and writing, surveys of teachers' ideas (Florio-Ruane & Dohanich. 1984; Waxman, 1986) found that teachers were not motivated to use research results in their planning for reading and writing instruction. Moreover, researchers who attempted to deal with this lack of interest and exposure by providing direct instruction in research-sanctioned methods of teaching reading, found that teachers were uninterested in this kind of instruction as a method of professional development (Lloyd & Anders, 1994).

These teachers' general distrust of experts and theory in reading and writing instruction were further shown in the three areas of the interviews in which they talked about their beliefs and practices in the Language Arts. First, when teachers talked about their own practices and experiences in reading and writing it was clear that these had had an enormous influence on their beliefs about teaching and, therefore, on their teaching practices. Secondly, in their talk about how children learn to read and write they showed how their beliefs about literacy development were derived from experience and embedded in their practices. Thirdly, their beliefs about language and learning were implicit in their talk about new methods which formed the bulk of their comments about the changes that have taken place in the Language Arts. Overall, their reliance on personal experience and their emphasis on only familiar methods, have made it unlikely that they would adopt new practices recommended by research results. They do not seem

to have a mechanism available to them to examine new ideas and theories in the field and use these ideas to modify their own practice.

The teachers' own practices and experiences in reading and writing were a considerable influence on their beliefs and therefore on their teaching practices in the language arts. Teachers who loved to read. and nearly all of them did. wanted to encourage the same passion in their students. Most of the practice of these teachers in reading instruction was focused solely on encouraging the reading of children's literature. This emphasis on encouraging "bulk" reading seemed largely derived from their reflections on their personal experience. Unfortunately. it provides little guidance for other kinds of reading instruction such as direct instruction of reading strategies for reading comprehension. reading non-fiction, or reading for information. It also gives little support for working with students who have reading difficulties. Their methods of teaching reading were good but not comprehensive.

Many of these teachers are in the process of rejecting the teaching of reading as decoding but this does not mean they have embraced the teaching of reading by the teaching of strategies or by the support of student practice or "scaffolding." They seem in many cases to be providing their students more freedom to choose what to read but less guidance. more emphasis on volume reading, less on understanding. appreciation. or analysis. A few teachers focussed on constructing meaning as a focus for reading but they were a tiny minority.

Similarly the teachers' practice in teaching writing was based on personal experience and their self-concept as writers. Those who had had problems with writing in school in the past. and most of them had. approached the subject with caution and

wanted to teach writing in a way that would avoid these problems for their students. All the specific approaches to teaching writing that they described had clear links to their own experience. However, they did not express an awareness of this important effect on their teaching of writing.

They had not noted the magnitude of these influences on both their practices and on the beliefs about reading and writing that were embedded in those teaching methods. Therefore they were also unaware of the ways that this influence made them oblivious to certain needs and potentials in their students. The practices that they drew on were unexamined and therefore the effects were unmediated in their practice.

Moreover, the teachers were also unaware that the majority of their approaches to the teaching of writing were, at best, partial. The effect that several teachers mentioned of the positive influence that their teaching was having on their own writing has to be a positive note because eventually this will also influence their instruction practices. Unfortunately, for most of the teachers, it was also clear that their own perceived writing difficulties and their attitudes to themselves as writers and to writing in general, remain as barriers to their optimum practice in teaching writing.

In another area of the interviews that gives information about the teachers' beliefs and practices in the language arts, it is clear from the teachers' thinking about how children learn to read and write that their beliefs about literacy are also reflected in their use of particular methods. Their beliefs about literacy acquisition are moving toward current ideas and this is reflected in their practices in teaching reading and writing. They have adopted only some of the basic methods of current practice.

The question of literacy acquisition—how children learn to read and write—is the underlying issue that has focussed the attention of practitioners on changed methods of instruction. Although the question does not present itself to most teachers in the course of their work, their explanations of literacy acquisition reveal how their thinking has moved or not moved in response to changes in theory and methods in the field. The teachers' beliefs about literacy were only discovered indirectly in the interviews as they commented on difficult questions. Some of the teachers' ideas did become more explicit with reflection in the course of the discussion, but for many of these teachers their beliefs about literacy remain mixed with, and implicit within, their teaching practices. They discuss what they have noticed in children's behaviour or what they have worked out in practice only in terms of anecdote or descriptions of behaviour or teaching activities and methods. They told stories about methods they used, their students' reactions and their modifications of practice based on these results but most of the teachers did not discuss theories or ideas related to, or emerging from practice.

About half of the teachers accounted for reading acquisition by referring to traditional ideas (phonics and sight words) but also added that there was more involved than just those. The other half mentioned more current ideas. Their ideas about reading acquisition were more frequently expressed as descriptions of what children did and teachers did in the process, than as theoretical explanations. The answers of only two of the teachers suggested that they had devoted some time and thought to considering this question. Most of the teachers described the behaviour of their own sons and daughters rather than school children they had observed. They also did not relate the question of reading acquisition to the growth of skill in reading comprehension that occurs in the

learning of their own students. Their usual approach to reading instruction with their students seems to be to expect that this growth in skill will take place without their own specific attention to it.

In considering the question of writing acquisition the teachers also had few explanations. They seem to have thought about writing only in terms of methods of instruction. In their attempts to talk about writing acquisition theory they relied less on traditional ideas (i.e. direct teaching of grammar and usage) than they had for reading. Their most frequent comment was that writing was learned "by doing a lot of writing." If these teachers have made changes in their teaching of reading and writing, the changes have been made in methods imported into their practice rather than in implementing changed methods to match changed thinking.

In another focus of the interview, all of the teachers recognized that enormous changes had taken place during their careers in the teaching of reading and writing but many of them were not able to describe the essence of that change. This was a difficult question for the teachers to answer. requiring as it did the unaccustomed consideration and evaluation of a variety of changes in instruction and a decision about the most important aspect of those changes. All of these teachers had taught reading and writing for years. but they had done so in an environment that was most concerned about teaching and learning activities and about outcomes, not about theories or even rationales. They had many other subject areas that they were responsible for and many other concerns. Reading and writing were not areas that they were worried about. In their system, there was more current concern about mathematics instruction and about changes in technology that were affecting education. It is not surprising therefore, that they

generally had a hard time answering this question. They were unable as a group to describe theoretical change in relation to reading and writing instruction. They described only changed methods that they had themselves implemented.

Several of the teachers were distracted by other aspects of educational change or seemed reluctant to grapple with the question and ended up not really answering it. The answers of the teachers who did address this question ranged from very concrete answers about specific methods of teaching, through a consideration of students' learning needs and classroom situations, to a few teachers who speculated about the nature of language learning in young children. Most of the teachers who were able to consider the question answered only in terms of teaching methods or practices. When teachers described changed practices in language arts they also tended to describe only changes that were consistent with the changes that they reported making themselves. Their concerns were for methods and for the methods that they are most familiar with. However, the changes that these teachers did report showed that in their practice they had already adopted some (but not all) of the principles of whole language instruction and some (but not all) of the principles of process writing practices.

Throughout the interview, the changes that the teachers describe are mostly in terms of changed methods. The approaches they described were more concrete for teaching reading, and more in terms of process for writing, but they were all methods nevertheless. Only three of the teachers had a considered opinion on the question of the essential change in Language Arts instruction that they were able to talk about readily.

In spite of their lack of active interest in theory, these teachers had made some important changes in their methods of instruction in reading and writing in the course of

their careers. The next section of the investigation looked at how these changes had come about. The overall pattern of the diffusion of change for this group of teachers in these schools was similar to the change patterns found in other social institutions. A few of these teachers were Early Adopters. responding to inspiring Innovators that the teachers usually encountered in their early careers. The remaining teachers were fairly evenly split between an Early Majority and a Late Majority group. (There was one teacher who would have to be described as a Laggard.) But this pattern merely describes how change diffuses through a system. not what occurs in the personal change process of an individual teacher.

The individual change processes of these teachers followed a characteristic pattern. Each of the teachers perceived herself to be alone in her quest for change and development. In this respect. each was on a personal journey and the achievement and implementation of an individual teaching practice was the goal of the effort involved in the journey. Each teacher was aware of pressures to change and at the same time aware of the forces that seem to pressure teachers not to change their practices. They were aware of the movement of new ideas in the general *Zeitgeist* but encountered the ideas only as they filtered through various social networks of colleagues. friends. and parents of their students. Teachers who wanted to make innovations were often helped by contacts with experts or friends who were outside their school. There was also sometimes encouragement from within—a supportive principal or helpful colleague—but some forces also got in the way of change. One teacher mentioned the excessive scrutiny that teachers were sometimes under from a principal who might also actively discourage a teacher from implementing new practices. Several teachers felt that if there were any

perceived problems with new approaches that they would be subject to pressure from parents to undo the changes. On the other hand, some teachers felt pressured to make changes that they were suspicious of and felt unappreciated for their success with more traditional methods.

The teachers encountered new ideas in many ways but they seemed to have most faith in the methods that they observed in the practice of their fellow teachers. Learning from their own personal learning experience with a new method was also powerful but less common. The ideas from fellow teachers seemed most promising to them but were only adopted after a personal trial of the method conducted consciously by the teacher in her classroom. Teachers were confident that they could reach conclusions about an instructional method on the basis of a single trial in their classrooms. The most convincing evidence that something "worked" was the positive reactions and responses of their students.

The teachers were convinced of the appropriateness of the new method based on this trial of it but only for their particular group of students. A teacher might try the method again with her next group of students or she might not use it based on her assessment of the characteristics of this particular group. She would recommend the method for another group of students only with caution. This suggests that these teachers saw what they did as having only a narrow application. They did not isolate the underlying teaching or learning theory that might explain why the method worked in general and so did not consider the idea as generalizable to another group of students.

Although the teachers readily gave credit to other teachers for ideas that they had borrowed, as if teaching methods are the property of all teachers, they also considered the

personal version that they had worked out in their classroom to be uniquely their own creation. There seemed to be rules of conduct for interaction and sharing of ideas among teachers. Ideas should be freely available for teachers to choose to take up as they please but even the best ideas are not to be pushed on other teachers. A teacher's autonomy within her classroom is an absolute value. Teachers should be able to work in their classrooms without excessive scrutiny or even supervision.

The implementation of new ideas in teaching is clearly via social interaction but one of the most important areas of interaction is within the classroom between teachers and their students. Ideas for what to study and how to go about it. clearly do flow from students to teachers in all teaching circumstances but even more when teachers are receptive to these suggestions and ideas are tried in the small private world of the classroom. In all situations. teachers do observe their students' reactions to the lessons that they introduce. In some situations, teachers are privately engaged in vicariously learning themselves, along with their students. The relationship between students and teachers is also changing in subtle ways that are just below the conscious level of instructional decision-making. Teachers' respect for their students' ideas, responses, and insights is certainly evident in the comments of these teachers about the life of their classrooms. If their thinking is to change as their methods become more established. it is only as a result of the cauldron of inquiry of the classroom. This suggests the possible power of action research as a vehicle for change. Their comments specifically about how they have constructed their practice reveal their teaching as a cooperative, creative endeavour that they share with their students more than with any of their other learning or teaching colleagues.

Summary of Conclusions

The twelve experienced teachers in the study consider themselves experts in their own teaching situations. When they talk about their teaching practices. they are speaking from a position of power. their own place in the classroom and they describe their experience. their reflections on it, and the practice they have derived from their experience. The following conclusions have been drawn or inferred from an analysis of their comments. They are summarized in the following seven statements:

1. These teachers' lack of engagement with research and theory and their emphasis on the value of practical methods. have framed their approach to all of the issues related to their ideas and practice in teaching reading and writing.

2. The knowledge that these teachers consider valuable is the practical knowledge that they have gained through classroom teaching experience.

3. These teachers' own. widely varying experiences as readers and writers are the greatest influences in shaping their teaching practices in reading and writing. They are generally unaware of this influence.

4. These teachers' beliefs about reading and writing acquisition are moving toward current ideas in the field. These beliefs are also reflected in their practices in teaching reading and writing where they have adopted some but not all of the essential practices in whole language and process writing instruction.

5. These teachers do not describe recent changes in theories of language and literacy and relate them to reading and writing instruction. By and large, they describe only changes that they, themselves, have implemented, in methods of instruction.

6. In their own change process, they have made changes only where they have been able to make practical trials of new methods that they thought were likely to succeed.

7. Their preferred source of ideas for change has been in their own experience and in some practical trials in collaboration with colleagues and students.

It was not the intention of this study to evaluate the practices of these teachers but to explore teachers' thinking and their change processes in language arts instruction, in these challenging times. These teachers generally feel confident in their work as teachers of reading and writing. They say that their students do well in the language arts in the later grades. In fact, they say that many of their students excel in literature studies, and in writing and debating skills. These teachers have not been closely supervised or evaluated, nor have they had their practices questioned. No one with authority is suggesting to them that changes are necessary in this area of instruction at their level. The teachers feel that they have been affirmed by their system and encouraged in many ways not to make changes. In fact, their teaching practices are generally good and, in their view, have served them, and their students, well.

Most of these teachers, however, think of themselves, not just as adequate, but as innovative teachers. They think that they have made changes carefully to avoid difficulties. They work in a small system with limited access to professional development and so have had somewhat limited exposure to innovative practice. They recounted some instances where their innovative ideas or intentions have been questioned

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or denied. They have sometimes seen or heard that innovative teachers have not lasted in their system. Even so. these teachers are not totally different from other groups of teachers in the public or private systems of education. Teachers are usually judged only by their work and its results. When their work is evaluated they are usually given a few suggestions for change and no more. Teachers' thinking is not usually exposed in the way that it is in a searching interview and analysis.

Also. the characteristics of these teachers are so common among teachers that they may seem normative. Many teachers are uninterested in theory and describe their teaching practices only in terms of methods and approaches. Many teachers are habitually resistant to or at least scrupulously careful about making changes in their practice.

The first challenge for further research on teacher change in the practice of teaching reading and writing, is to do more careful research investigations of how knowledge operates for teachers. In what ways do teachers know what they know. and how do they use that knowledge to make decisions about teaching and about changes in teaching practice? Perhaps individual case studies or even self-studies would be useful here to shed light on how teachers think about change and how they implement new ideas. Attention could be focussed on new methods of instruction in reading or writing, how these have been incorporated into the practice of a few teachers. and the effect this has had subsequently on their thinking about the teaching and learning of reading and writing. This would also yield more information about the interaction of thinking and practice in teaching, specifically in reading and writing instruction.

We also need to know more about the institutional barriers to changes in teaching practice as well as more about the conditions in educational environments that enable or promote the occurrence of change. In the meantime, how can educational systems and educational leaders work with teachers to help them to make changes, rather than make efforts to force them to conform?

Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

It is still useful to ask the question, What would need to happen for these teachers to make some necessary changes in their thinking and in their practices? Can they do some thinking about their practices and experiences that will affect their basic ideas? The answers to these questions would be similar to a review of the general implications of these findings. What was revealed about the thinking and the practices of these teachers was not unlike the findings of other investigations of teachers' attitudes and ideas. And although they were by no means a representative sample of all teachers, these teachers were virtually the whole population of grade three to six teachers in this small, well-respected private system. Conclusions that were reached about this group apply only to them, but in an exploratory study like the present one, implications can be tentatively drawn that can later be measured and evaluated against the needs of other larger populations of teachers.

There are many implications of the findings about this group of teachers for teacher education, teacher assignment, and professional development. Teachers need, in the same way that all learners do, a stimulating and supportive environment, both in their

initial preparation for teaching and in the on-going support structures in their work environments. Their preferred approaches to ideas and actions can be respected and used to structure programs that can have a real effect on their learning.

Teacher education institutions need to take into account the attitudes that many teachers have toward theory. Theory should be talked about in initial teacher preparation only in conjunction with the methods and approaches that it relates to. Theories can be demonstrated to be useful guides in decision-making and problem-solving. Practitioners will learn ideas better if they discover them in their experience rather than read about them in textbooks or hear about them in lectures. Later, when an individual has had some experience, he or she will be able to relate ideas to that experience and more readily build understanding.

To this end student teachers need to have some experience in schools at the beginning of their teacher training programs. This gives them some concrete experience to relate their learning to. Student teachers also need to observe educational settings and be encouraged to discern the operation of theories of development and learning in those settings. Teacher educators need to be very clear on the kinds of knowledge that beginning teachers are most interested in. They need to present material on ideas in terms of method and not try to convince student teachers that they need to be concerned about something else. Teacher educators can also invoke the authority they have as teachers themselves and discuss their own planning and decision-making in addition to their experience in the schools.

Many teacher education programs are using a case or problem based approach to teaching methods (Shulman, 1992) and taking care that their examples and cases are

relevant to local conditions. Another innovative approach is inquiry methods in which students and instructors work in groups to define their basic questions and collaboratively discover answers (NCTAF, 1996; Neubert & Binko, 1998).

In teacher education specifically for reading and writing instruction, several methods are suggested by the findings of the present study. Since teachers' experiences and predispositions are such a powerful force in influencing their teaching, teacher training programs could pay greater attention to students' personal reading and writing experience and help prospective teachers to analyze and understand their experience and their self concept as readers and writers. The collected individual experiences of a class of student teachers could also be used as a "text" in a Language Arts methods class to examine literacy learning in different contexts and/or an historical examination of methods.

It would also be valuable for student teachers to have experience doing the kind of reading and writing programs that they are being trained to implement with their students. For example, student teachers could be trained to use a writing workshop approach by having a writing workshop experience themselves and having the experience of being led to examine their reactions and learning in those situations. A similar approach could be taken to experience-based learning, content reading strategies, literature circles, and other topics. It might be an interesting study to examine the practice of teachers who take these kinds of courses and those who do not. Overall, this is certainly an area where self-awareness and reflection on practices and abilities could form a useful part of teacher education in language and literacy. As we have seen in this study, unless practices are examined they cannot be mediated in practice.

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When teachers are influenced by memories of their own school learning experience to implement the kinds of methods that they are familiar with, this is inevitably an essentially conservative factor in determining what methods will be used in schools since their experience is from a schooling era of the past. This powerful factor in teachers' thinking can, however, be harnessed in the service of innovation by arranging for teachers to have, as part of their training, new experiences of hands-on learning in reading and writing or experiences in exploring and analyzing their earlier experience.

There are also implications of these findings for teachers who are in the middle of their careers or near the end of their teaching. Teaching is a career with few opportunities for advancement. Many teachers feel isolated in their classrooms and feel the need for outside stimulation. The kind of professional development that is available to them is often workshops or conferences that present many new ideas but little opportunity for the teacher to interact with or try out the ideas. Considerable research suggests that these traditional types of professional development are not useful in helping teachers to make needed changes. Many teachers express a desire for interaction and discussion with other teachers like themselves who are struggling with the same issues that they face. They want the kinds of experiences that will allow them to examine their own ideas and practices and measure them against new ideas about teaching and learning. Practicing teachers need the opportunity to work and consult with fellow teachers who are doing similar instructional work to encourage sharing of ideas and practices within schools and school divisions. Study circles of teachers to do professional reading or to support each other in the introduction of new instructional methods would perhaps be helpful.

But if these teachers were to make changes, the process would have to begin with some demand for change. In that case they would need first to have some opportunities for self-assessment where they could privately measure their teaching practices and reach their own conclusions about the changes that needed to be made. Perhaps teachers could be required to take part in some self-directed professional growth that could take several different forms, such as, action research, school visits, or professional reading. A useful instrument to begin this process in language arts may be the use of checklists that list the important elements of a good quality school literacy program (Johnson & Wilder. 1992; Vogt, 1991). Teachers could work individually or in groups to assess their own classroom literacy programs and then study and work together on the elements that need development. This approach might work best because it focuses on methods of instruction which are of most interest to teachers. Another approach would be to have teachers work together to do group problem solving for their students who are experiencing difficulties. Unless these teachers have these kind of opportunities and use them to make changes in their thinking and practice, they, and many teachers like them, will continue to work with only a partial understanding of the requirements of a quality literacy program.

The professional or staff development experiences would have to have certain qualities in order to be effective. These qualities are suggested by the attitudes and ideas of the teachers as expressed in the interviews.

- Workshops would have to focus on methods and involve practice in order to be considered useful.

- Workshops would have to provide experiences in learning that were powerful enough to have the same impact as the personal experiences that these teachers repeatedly cited as learning experiences.

- Programs for teacher development should also be coordinated and led by teachers with similar assignments to the teachers who are studying. All teachers seem to be predisposed to trust and therefore act on the advice and suggestions of other teachers especially those whom they believe have had similar development and teaching experiences.

School-based, teacher-directed inservices would meet most of these requirements (Lavery, 1995).

Part of these experiences could be a routine return to teacher education institutions periodically to learn about innovations in curriculum and instruction in their fields, and to examine, discuss, and consolidate their ideas about teaching. If they are going to be required to do this at regular intervals—in effect to renew their certification— there are some criteria that should be met. Teachers should be released from teaching duties in order to attend these activities and they should be allowed to chose the subject areas to be studied. Reflection on practice is an essential part of developing teacher knowledge and should be institutionalized. In fact reflection is the only viable entry to change in teacher practice in the language arts, for two reasons. Personal experience is the strongest force in moving teachers to make changes and teachers consider their practices as something that they have personally crafted for specific purposes.

Changed methods should be the beginning focus of professional development programs but the ultimate goal should be to change thinking. Practicing teachers need to

reflect on their own philosophy of literacy and understand how this is shaped by experience and reflection. For professional development in literacy specifically, the use of a literacy portfolio exercise has been recommended to help teachers and students examine and understand their own literacy and its place in their lives (Hansen, 1992). With a developed understanding of her own literacy a teacher is prepared to use her own development and experience as a model for her students in the classroom in a true writers' workshop (Graves, 1990). Teachers need to engage in literacy activities with their students, reading, writing, and conferencing along with them (Calkins, 1994) and modeling for students their own writing efforts and experience (Carroll, Wilson, & Au, 1996).

One way to facilitate this change is through support for teachers to do action research. These teachers do believe in trying out new ideas in their classrooms but they need help in designing and conducting their trials and in interpreting their results. Teachers who are supported in the construction of their practice will make the best of it that they are able. In the same way that literacy education for children tries to support children in their natural ways of development rather than working at odds with development, professional development for teachers should work with and enable the course of normal teacher development. Professional development opportunities should provide powerful experiences, provide models and opportunities for practice, promote self assessment and reflection, and support risk-taking and personal trials of methods. In most situations teachers would be capable of greater and more effective efforts if they were appropriately and adequately supported in their teaching practice.

These teachers have made only the beginning of many changes needed. In reading instruction, they are using children's literature instead of controlled readers. In writing instruction, they are using multiple drafts and revising strategies. If they are going to advance in their practice of teaching reading and writing, they seem at this point to need opportunities to learn about and, more importantly, to experience new approaches. They also need, in conjunction, opportunities that are non-threatening to reflect on their practice. Reflection is the best way to extricate beliefs from practices and consolidate changes in beliefs that have come about gradually in the course of implementing changed practices in the classroom.

Teacher's Individual Theories of Knowledge

There was considerable uniformity in the responses of these teachers to questions designed to reveal their ideas about teacher knowledge, their observations of how change occurs in education, and their descriptions of their own change processes. They had similar beliefs about what teacher knowledge was. According to them, it was acquired only through classroom teaching. Nearly all of them thought about their teaching in terms of methods and approaches only. Their ideas were only occasionally mixed with some speculations about language or learning theory and even in these circumstances the theory was usually embedded in a discussion of method.

They were skeptical about change in the language arts and were still to a great extent only at the beginning of entering the era of changed practice that began to be felt in education in the mid nineteen seventies. They did believe, however, in the value of

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changes they had made themselves and they had all made some changes. Many of them were on the verge of making more changes even though most of them were already embarked on entering the final years of their careers.

They were all aware of having created their own practice of teaching in a long complicated process of gathering and testing new ideas and approaches in cooperation with their students. They had all made something out of their careers—their own considered philosophy of being the best teacher that they could be. Even though there were many ways in which they were similar they each had their own individual approaches as well.

The method of this paper tends to treat the teachers only as a group but distinctive themes can be traced through all of the interviews. An entirely different paper could have been written tracing the development and ideas of each teacher as a kind of working practical theory of teaching. For Barbara this would have been about the effort to make a connection between the work in her classroom and the knowledge revolution and other large scale changes in society. For Donna, the theme would have been enthusiasm for the power of literature; for Doris, a determination to support all learners and give each one the key to knowledge and power; for Estelle, the power of literature to engage and shape the reader's response; for Kelly, the desire to know what goes on beneath the surface of learning behaviour; for Kim, a deep respect for the thinking abilities and the learning potential of small children; for Nancy, a desire to give children the best, taking what risks are necessary; for Nora, the energy to teach and inspire far-ranging thinking in young children; for Rose, the power of language to create worlds of interest; for Sarah, the desire to pursue and achieve perfection; for Suzanne, openness to change and learning

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as a teacher: for Tanya a sense of moral responsibility for children and their future: and. for Toni. the determination to do a good job. There are too many stories here to do any one of them justice by itself but in each of these teacher's stories there is a thread that connects experience and knowledge and beliefs to practice.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL A

Language Arts Change Project
Interview Protocol A

Questions for Teachers about the Process of Change

I'm interested in what has gone on in your classroom and in your own mind over your career as an accomplished. an experienced. if you will. a "good" teacher. with regard to your teaching of the Language Arts.

1)   Can you tell me something about your teaching history?

        What was your initial training like for Language Arts?
        Were you enthusiastic about teaching reading and writing?
        How did you see yourself as a teacher of the Language Arts?
        How do you think of yourself as a reader and writer and how has this affected your teaching of the Language Arts?
        What have you felt you had to offer as a teacher of the Language Arts?
        Has this changed over time?

2)   Where were you when the "revolution" started in the Language Arts?

        Had your training prepared you at all for this?
        As expectations changed. did you feel pressure to make changes?
        What help did you get to make changes?
        Were there also pressures not to change?

3)   What to you as a teacher is the essence of this change?

        What are the essential differences between the traditional ways and the new ways?
        How is the new Language Arts classroom different?
        What effect has this had on you?
        Are you aware of the need for changed thinking as well as changed methods and activities?

4)   How do children learn to read and write?

        Have your ideas about this changed over your career?
        How are you involved in this as a reader and writer?

5)   How do you feel about the current demands on you to make changes?

        What kinds of changes do you think you are being asked to make?
        What are your hopes/fears/concerns about this process?
        What are your plans?
        How are you as a reader and writer involved in this process?

APPENDIX II

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Classroom Observation Form – Section A

Classroom Context and Environment

Date:

Time of Day:

Duration of Observation:

School:

Grade:

Room:

Teacher:

Others Present:

Number of Students:

Boys/Girls:

Classroom Size:

Classroom Features:

Classroom Layout:

Displays and Materials Available for Language Arts:

Books and Materials Used:

Style of Presentation Used:

Groupings Used:

Classroom Observation Form – Section B

Narrative and Running Record

Classroom Observation Form – Section C

Brief Inventory of Methods

General

Teacher stated goals for lesson

Teacher use of direct teaching

Teacher use of facilitation strategies

Teacher style of management

Type of relationship

Responses to questions

Student responsiveness/commitment

Teacher handling of disruption

Cognitive Interactionist

Teacher used journalling

Used block reading time

Used theme approach

Teacher used literature

Teacher read aloud to students

Teacher evoked prior experience

Used previewing/predicting

Teacher concern for process / product

Teacher combining of modes of expression

Transforming modes

Provision of purposes

Allowance for invention

Use of editing/revising

Use of classroom publication

Use of drawing/images

Taught mnemonic strategies

Taught about text characteristics i.e. mapping, ordering

Taught about story structure

Used semantic mapping

Taught about genre

Provided advance organizer

Social Constructionist

Teacher used response to literature strategies

Teacher processed literacy experiences

Teacher focus on constructing meaning

Teacher use of collaborative methods

Allowance for student collaboration

Use of various groupings

Allowance for supportive interaction

Use of critical thinking approaches

Use of explicit strategies

Taught self-monitoring strategies

Reading in the disciplines

Writing to learn

Scaffolding

Research skills

Paired or small group discovery

Literature circle

Student self direction