

TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
RELATED TO PLAY

BY

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PENNY MORCA

A thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Psychology
The University of Manitoba
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Abstract

This study investigates the way the curriculum initiative called play becomes part of an early years teacher's personal practical knowledge. Through classroom observations and interviews (individual and group), the teacher's pedagogical thinking was assessed. The interviews involved discussions with teachers about their beliefs about play, learning centres, child-centred learning, activity based learning and developmentally appropriate practices, as well as discussions with individual teachers about their classroom practices. From the understanding of each teacher's context, each teacher's image of play was found to be an organizer of their personal knowledge. Reflection, articulation and interaction among teachers was also found to can help teachers become conscious of their own belief systems, and to act with greater knowledge of their classroom practices.

Chapter I

Introduction

The study investigates the way the curriculum initiative called "play" becomes part of an Early Years teacher's personal practical knowledge. The research is based on the assumption that "teaching is a complex and cognitively demanding human process" (Clark and Peterson 1986, p.293) and that teaching is guided by thoughts, judgments and decisions (Shavelson & Stern, 1981) performed by teachers as they organize their practices according to their beliefs.

Descriptive research has been useful to researchers in the past in exploring teacher's personal and practical experience. Olson (1980) provides the basis for this type of research in the following statement "to understand how teachers construe their practice we need to develop ways of gaining access to the teacher's thinking" (p.1). Descriptive research such as Spodek (1988), Elbaz (1983), Porter (1983), and Clandinin (1986), to mention only a few, have examined aspects of teacher's thinking through the use of narratives, observations and interviews. Their research investigated the theory, values, experiences, knowledge and beliefs upon which the teacher draws to complete the

tasks related to teaching. These investigations or foundations of teacher thought called personal practical knowledge helped to explain how teacher's practice has evolved within a contextual framework.

This research focuses attention upon the teacher's perspective allowing the teacher to speak about teaching from his/her own personal view. Personal knowledge as explained by Elbaz (1983) is generated by an individual within situations and experiences. He postulates that personal knowledge acts as a resource guide for action in the present and future form. "It is revised continually as the individual interprets messages from situations and people as to the effectiveness and personal verifiability of the knowledge" (Elbaz 1983, p.157). Elbaz classifies practical knowledge into five areas of a teacher's individual teaching style: knowledge of self, of the teaching milieu, of subject matter, curriculum development and instruction. Influences of knowledge come from situational personal, social, experiential and theoretical perspectives.

Clandinin (1986) viewed personal practical knowledge through the images teachers had developed. Clandinin defined images as the "coalescence of experience" (p.130). Images were descriptive statements

characterizing a teacher's understanding of him/herself. The images could be used to describe the teacher's concept of self, of the classroom, of subject matter and the organization of teacher's knowledge in a specific domain. Teacher's images were formed as a result of personal values, beliefs, past experiences, knowledge of theory and knowledge of school traditions. Clandinin suggests the image a teacher holds of his/her personal practical knowledge reveals a viewpoint to teaching practice.

Elbaz (1983) reminds us that images change in each situation provided. She argues that "an image is something one responds to rather than acting from " (p.134). She cautions against superficially seeking evidence of rules or images in a teacher's practical knowledge. She elaborates by saying it is the way statements function in thought that indicates the teacher's personal practical knowledge. We must look at the mediation between thought and action as the guiding practical principle. These operate simultaneously in different situations and statements.

Elbaz (1983) used both interviews and observations to access parameters of knowledge. Clandinin's (1986) approach differed in that she used participant

observation as well as the interviews to uncover the images. She investigated private experiences which contributed to a teacher's image of his/her practice. Clandinin paid specific attention to emotional and moral expressions of images. She sought to bridge past, private experiences with present practice. Clandinin understood images as the connection between the educational private aspects of a person's life. In her work, the assumption was made that image was the central construct for understanding personal practical knowledge. In Elbaz's case, images were descriptive statements which were characterized by the teacher's understanding of him/herself. Elbaz assumed that practical knowledge was ordered by a hierarchical framework with different procedures operating at each level.

Professionals bring to their practice a personal knowledge of what they value and how they utilize that knowledge in the performance of their practice. However, practitioners are not always conscious of their own knowledge, beliefs, values and images that organize or inform their practice. If asked to explain how they accomplish an act, practitioners are unable to render a full account. Schon (1987) describes this ability of

knowing without being able to verbalize as "knowing-in-action" (p.25).

What is it then that a teacher knows about curriculum, theory, practice in a classroom? How do the dynamics of experience, values and theory influence a teacher's thinking? How is personal practical knowledge transferred into classroom practice? What is the relationship between personal practical knowledge that a teacher possesses and his/her practice?

The present study was developed to address these questions. Although the investigation cannot answer all these questions, it will provide access to a practitioner's knowledge and practice. The study was designed to gain insight into a teacher's personal knowledge about the curriculum initiative, Play, and how his/her knowledge has been constituted in their practices of Early Years education.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to define the following terms and concepts.

Personal Practical Knowledge

Teachers hold a complex, practically-oriented set of understandings such as their intellectual beliefs about education, beliefs about child development theory

and their own individual teaching experiences, perceptions, feelings, values, purpose and commitment which they use to shape and direct their teaching. Personal knowledge acts as a guide as the individual teacher interprets the situation and makes actions plans for the present or future. This definition takes into account features of both Elbaz's and Clandinin's usage of the term.

Rules of Practice

Rules of Practice are brief descriptions or statements of what to do or how to do it in a particular situation. For example, a rule of practice may relate to how to deal with an aggressive child encountered by a teacher in his/her classroom. The rule suggests the means to handle the situation that has arisen.

Practical Principles

Practical principles are more clearly evident in the practitioner's actions. The holder of a principle will be able to give a reason for their actions and as Elbaz suggests will act in such a way that their behavior over time is consistent with their personal beliefs. Practical principles are based on the reflection and understanding of the teacher's past experiences. They may result from experience, formal

theory or develop from the conjunction of theory and practice.

Images

Images are concise, descriptive statements of a teacher's feelings, characteristics, values, needs, and beliefs as he/she understands how teaching should be. The image a teacher holds of his/her personal practical knowledge reveals a viewpoint towards the practice of teaching.

Elbaz (1983) distinguishes these three terms: rule of practice, image, and practical principle as ways of mediating between thought and action. He clarifies the terms: the image as being something one responds to rather than acts from, the rule of practice as a guideline from which a teacher acts, and the practical principle as the mediator between thought and action. These terms and concepts are valuable as they may tell us a variety of things about a teacher thinks and acts.

What is Play?

Play has intrigued educators, psychologists and theorists for many decades. Some view play as a natural way in which children learn about themselves and the world in which they live. Spodek, Saracho and Davis

(1987) describe play:

"as an activity that children engage in naturally, they do not need to be prodded to play. Play helps children understand and express the world...at a thinking and feeling level.... It involves the use of symbols or objects...which allow for flights of fancy" (p.182).

These authors feel that play allows children to gain a sense of control over their environment while others (Schwartzman 1978) have tried to define play in terms of what is play and what is not play. She states: "Play is not work; play is not real, play is not serious, play is not productive..." (pp 4-5). This definition does not clarify or make content distinctions between work and play. Recently there has been some agreement over common elements of play (Monighan-Nourot 1990, Rubin, Fein & Vandenberg 1983, Almy, Monighan, Scales and Van Hoorn 1984, Spodek, Saracho & Davis 1987, Katz 1990).

The elements include:

1. Play is intrinsically motivated (self-directed activities, free exploration).
2. Play involves attention to means rather than ends (goals are flexible and may change).
3. Play may be non-literal or symbolic (children

may transform their realities and they may be symbolic of unconscious desires and feelings).

4. Play involves freedom from external rules (children are free to create and change rules which is different from a rule imposed in a game).
5. Play is self-referenced rather than object referenced (distinguished from exploration as a child imposes a personal organization on objects and situations, unlike initiation).
6. Play actively engages the child (concentration, enthusiasm of the child as well as mastery derived from play).

These scholars have noted the complexity of play and recommend many characteristics to define the phenomena of play. Summarizing their definition of play, it would seem that play is the individual's interaction (verbal or concrete) with the objects, materials and other children in his/her environment. Play as a curriculum initiative refers to a set of beliefs about how young children learn. The theories and concepts of play will be fully developed in the review of the literature.

This thesis is a case study report of three

teachers' personal practical knowledge of play and their resulting practices. Interviews have been employed to gain access to information about their thoughts and beliefs about play, observations have been employed to reconstruct the teachers' classroom practices. By conducting the research in this manner, the researcher accesses information about teachers' personal practical knowledge of play as they explain their beliefs and practices in the classroom framework in which they operate.

This introductory chapter has provided a rationale for the present research and outlined the premises upon which the research is based. The next chapter reviews in more detail the theoretical basis of this study as well as specific research in this area.

Chapter II

Literature Review

There have been numerous studies done in the last decade on teacher thinking and practice. Clark and Peterson (1986) investigated teacher thinking, Clandinin (1985) as well Elbaz (1983) explored teachers' personal practical knowledge, Yonemura (1986) investigated teacher thoughts and beliefs. King (1978) and Spodek and Rucinski (1984) examined teacher constructs as the basis for all teacher actions. Teacher theories, constructs, thoughts and belief systems, as they have been called underlying early years educational practices have been attracting increasing attention (Spodek 1984, 1988, Feeney & Chun 1985, Clark & Yinger 1979, Charlesworth & others 1990, Isenberg 1990).

Teacher Thinking

Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) pursued research in personal practical knowledge in teacher's contexts as it was articulated by them. To gather data and arrive at conclusions, they used case study approaches with the methods of participant observation and interview. The purpose of the research was to reveal teacher knowledge and to gather information about images teachers used to gain insight into their personal practical knowledge.

Other research has sought to explore the notion of personal practical knowledge and its relation to classroom practices.

According to Spodek (1988) teachers process information as they work with children. They relate their work to educational concepts and accumulate a set of values. Their interpretations about classroom perceptions become the basis for teacher decisions and actions in the classroom. Spodek found that teachers' implicit theories have developed from personal and practical experience. Similar to Spodek, Elbaz (1983) says a teacher's knowledge base has been developed through the integration of personal experiences (individual's values and beliefs) and practical experiences (teachers' accumulated teaching experiences and educational theories learned in teacher education programs). Spodek suggests that in order to understand the nature of teaching one must understand the behavior of teachers as well as each teacher's thought processes.

Research (Shavelson & Stern 1981, Shavelson 1983) reviewed on teacher behavior suggests behavior is guided by thoughts, judgments and decisions. Judgment refers to the process of evaluating or categorizing a person or object (Shavelson 1983). Teachers are seen as

thoughtful professionals who may choose from a variety of strategies to help their students reach a learning goal. To form judgments about their students' cognitive, affective and behavioral states, teachers must integrate information about their students from a variety of sources (observation, records, standardized test scores). Teachers take this information and relate it to their own beliefs and goals and the nature of the educational goal in order to decide how they will teach. Teachers' planning decisions influence the content, materials and activities of instruction in the classroom. This research suggests the greatest percentage of teacher thinking (content, teaching strategies, objectives) concerns the learner.

In contrast to thinking based on student behaviors, teachers' thinking may be guided by a personally held system of beliefs, values and principles. Clark and Peterson (1986) reviewed research on teachers' thought processes in Wittrock's Handbook of Research in Teaching. They maintained that teacher actions were directly caused by three categories of teachers' thought processes, including: teacher planning, teacher thoughts and decisions and teachers' theories and beliefs.

Yonemura (1986) documented in detail one teacher's thoughts and beliefs about children, teaching and programs for young children. Through classroom observation and discussions with the teacher, Yonemura was able to understand the ideas, values and beliefs of this teacher and how she implemented these in her programming for young children. Yonemura found this teacher's practical knowledge and thought was related to her actions. Her "thoughts could always be traced back to various values and beliefs" (1986, p.7). Yonemura's description of the beliefs of the teacher studied indicate the teacher's personal knowledge and technical knowledge of teaching guided her actions in the classroom.

Porter (1983) looked at the beliefs and practices of five teacher's perspectives. The purpose of the study was to explore the role of developmental theory in program practices. Porter used a case study approach that included participant observations and unstructured interviews. The analysis of the study showed teacher practices were consistent with theoretical constructs. In reflecting on their own professional development and belief systems, teachers cited early relationships, experiences and events as important. Further graduate

studies were discussed as experiences that reinforced their classroom methods and rationale.

Verma and Peters (1975) found little correspondence between teacher beliefs and their actions in the classroom. Verma and Peters developed a Teacher Beliefs Rating scale as well as a Teacher Practices observation form. They found teachers put minimal effort into implementing a theoretical program. Of thirty-eight teachers sampled, only two teachers had practices that were consistent with their beliefs. The authors found that teachers created their programs according to their personal comfort level.

Roland King (1978) referred to beliefs, values and behavioral customs of teachers as cognitive constructs. King examined the thoughts and ideas of English infant teachers. Through classroom observation, interviews with teachers and administrators and document analysis, King determined that the teacher's beliefs were related to what happened in the classroom. He found that the teachers viewed the children as passing through a natural sequence of physical, psychological and social development. Ideas such as individualism, child development theory and learning through play were important to these teachers and determined their

child-centered programs. King concluded that teacher actions were related to the ideas they held about child development and the learning process

Spodek and Rucinski (1984) examined three first grade teachers to identify the beliefs or constructs that underlined teacher decisions and actions. Teachers were observed in their classrooms and teacher decisions became the basis for the interview. Statements about belief were organized into ten content areas and presented to the teachers for their personal confirmation. Value statements were separated from belief statements. The researchers found that the teachers differed in the number of belief statements made by each. More importantly they found all three teachers held some beliefs in common. Beliefs held in common predominated in the categories of classroom management, learning and instructional processes. Each individual teacher had additional beliefs which related to their curriculum decisions and were characteristic to them alone. Results showed that teacher beliefs, more than their values, controlled decisions made in the classroom. The study concluded that teacher beliefs or theories-in-use were consistent with each teacher's classroom practice.

Reviews of research (Elbaz 1983, Porter 1983, Clandinin 1986, Yonemura 1986, Spodek & Rucinski 1984, Spodek 1988, & others) indicate the importance of understanding how and what the teacher thinks and does, as it is the teacher who decides what the curriculum will be when it is delivered to students. Some authors (Clark & Peterson 1986, Yonemura 1986, King 1978, Spodek & Rucinski 1984) felt teacher actions are guided by a personally held system of beliefs, values and constructs. Others (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, Shavelson 1983, Porter 1983) felt practical experiences guided the teacher's action in the classroom. The studies all support the notion of past experience as the basis for teacher knowledge and practice. Teachers have had to make sense of what they doing from the context of their school, students and personal limitations, abilities and knowledge. All teachers have had to develop their personal practical knowledge based on their context, situation and experiences. It is a tool that has allowed them to function as teachers. These studies have furnished the basis for investigations into aspects of personal practical knowledge and its relation to practice. The question of how a particular curriculum initiative comes to influence a teacher's personal

practical knowledge and how it is " translated " into practice becomes a pertinent question for research.

Play

One of the major issues teachers and researchers struggle with is the nature of play and it's relationship to the educational system. Theorists (Piaget 1950, Erickson 1963, Labinowicz 1980, Weininger 1982) refer to play as "the child's mode of learning." This belief is based on knowledge of how children learn, grow and develop. Many teachers who are familiar with child development theories and understand the value of play, use play as a central practice in their program. These teachers implement programs that are based on:

"the best knowledge of theory, research and practice about how children develop and learn... with attention given to the individual needs and interests in a group...."(Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992 ,p.13).

These teachers implement programs which advocate methods of play with the child as the central part of the curriculum. Other teachers who know play is important have difficulty transferring the theory of play into classroom practice. Research on play to document its essence has been going on for years. Many theories have

been formulated to explain a specific aspect of play, such as its intellectual, emotional and social qualities. The theories are useful as they help us to understand the basis of teacher's personal practical knowledge.

Theories of Play

Over the years several researchers (Mitchell & Mason 1948, Gilmore 1971, Ellis 1973, Fein 1979) have reviewed major theories of play. Gilmore (1971) divided these views into classical and dynamic theories of play. Classical theories of play (surplus energy, relaxation, recapitulation and pre-exercise) are older theories which primarily sought to justify reasons why individuals played. Dynamic theorists (the psychodynamic, constructivist theory) acknowledge the fact that individuals play and they discuss the implication of play for child development. This monograph will review only the dynamic theories, because they are the most relevant to teachers' beliefs.

The Psychodynamic Theory

The psychoanalytical theory, based on the work of Freud (1920), extended by Erickson (1963) focused on personality development and emotional problems. Freud believed that an individual's personality developed in a

fixed pattern of stages that emerged as the body matured. The treatment of individuals through these stages would determine whether individuals developed healthy or abnormal personalities. In particular, Freud focused on the child's wishes and needs and his/her relationships with others.

Erik Erickson (1950, 1963) similar to Freud stated that all individuals pass through a series of stages in their lives. He proposed eight stages of psychological development for children with each stage based on the development of the previous stage. They are: Trust vs. Mistrust (birth to one year), Autonomy vs. Doubt (two to three years), Initiative vs. Guilt (three to five or six years), Industry vs. Inferiority (six to twelve years). In Erickson's framework, each stage presents different problems to be solved. As the child succeeds with age, he/she advances to the next stage of development. The basis for personality strength is the achievement of a balance between the child's wishes and the demands of the environment.

In psychoanalytic theory, play is seen as a form of therapy whereby children rid themselves of their fears and anxieties. Pretend play was seen as extremely valuable as it allowed children to cope with situations

they were having difficulty with. In general, the psychodynamic theorists believed play provided the means for children to communicate and overcome emotional pain. The constant expression of emotions through play, they felt, promoted the development of a healthy personality.

The Constructivist Theory

The major theorist in this area is Jean Piaget. Piaget (1950, 1952, 1962, 1972) believed the development of the human intellect involved two processes: assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation the individual acquires information through experiences. Information from the outside world is integrated into the individual's scheme of understanding. If the information does not fit adequately with the child's developing knowledge, the child will modify his/her organized thinking patterns to accommodate it. The new balance is referred to as equilibrium. Play allows children to process information from the outside world and integrate this knowledge with their previous experience. Therefore play is necessary as it contributes to the development of a child's intellect.

Piaget (1962) distinguished play as having three categories. The first category has been referred to as practice play, characterizing the sensorimotor stage of

infancy. At a very young age, children explore objects by using a reflexive pattern of physical behavior. (Saracho 1991). The second category is symbolic play. Preschool aged children participate in dramatic or pretend play to represent the outside world and manipulate (assimilate and accommodate) elements to their understanding. The child's ability to change meanings and manipulate reality provides them with a source of pleasure (Piaget 1962). Children engage in dramatic play to master feelings and new skills. The third category of Piaget's theory is called games with rules. It is the play of school-age children from about six years to adulthood. Piaget believed as children moved from the early years to the primary grades, they engaged less in dramatic play and more in games with rules. Others (Smilansky 1968, Parten 1971) have surfaced to clarify aspects of children's play.

Smilansky (1968) expanded Piaget's stages of play and added a fourth category, constructive play that occurs between practice and dramatic play. This category is the manipulation of objects by the young child to construct or create something. Smilansky's categories are: functional play (repetitive muscle movements, practice of language skills to explore the

environment), constructive play (creation of something), dramatic play (imaginary situations created by the child to represent the real world) and games with rules (the acceptance of rules and the child's adjustments to these rules). Piaget's theory reveals the three categories represent kinds of activity at a developmental level while Smilansky's view suggests a developmental sequence of activities. Both theories are concerned with the intellectual development of the child through play.

Parten (1971) studied play and discussed the implications of this activity in terms of the social development of the child. Parten's study identified six stages of social play: unoccupied behavior (the child watches activities and moves from one to another), onlooker (the child watches others play and may ask a question or make a suggestion), solitary play (the child does not seem interested in others, he/she plays alone), parallel play (the child enjoys playing alone alongside others), association play (the child plays with others and there is little negotiation) and cooperative play (the child organizes the play with others, dividing responsibilities and negotiating roles). Parten sees unoccupied, onlooker, solitary and parallel play representational of a younger child while associative

and cooperative play is a more mature behavior.

Parten's study views play from a different perspective-- social competence. However, similar to the other theorists (Piaget 1962, Smilansky 1968) the social nature of play nurtures intellectual development.

Both the psychodynamic and the constructivist theories demonstrate the significance of play as an educational activity. Play allows children to cognitively understand the world in which they live and master new skills or concepts. Through play, children may use symbols, objects or actions to represent reality and gain control over their environment. Dramatic or pretend play presents an imaginary stage by which children can express their inner thoughts and feelings. Psychodynamic theorists view this type of play as valuable to the individual's personality and emotional development. Pretend play offers opportunities for individuals to interact and become aware of the values, beliefs and ideas of others. The theories collectively suggest that child action is the source of knowledge, development of intelligence, personality and moral development.

Piaget has criticized "classroom practices such as lectures, repetition of drills, programmed instruction,

audio-visual or teacher demonstrations...as not active enough" to stimulate children's thinking. (DeVries & Kohlberg 1987, p.25). Methods aimed at promoting the development of intellect must include construction, co-operation, discovery and above all, appeal to the child's spontaneous interest (Piaget 1948, 1973). Applying theory to classroom practices, the constructivist theory implies that education adopt methods of play as part of the early years programming as the learner should be at the centre of all decisions made about the curriculum.

Curriculum Theorists and Play

Curriculum theory related to play is found in the works of the noted progressive educators- initially in the work of Dewey (1938), but later in that of Schwab (1969, 1971) and Pinar (1975).

Dewey: The Principles of Interaction and Continuity

Dewey (1938) felt the educational process was a lifelong endeavor of learning for all persons. In his particular view, the teacher would assume an interactive role of both student and teacher. As the educational experience unfolded, the teacher would act both as a teacher and learner in the classroom. Dewey's advice for teachers was that an openness and willingness to

learn would help them to reconstruct their experiences into guides for practice. He felt these prerequisites were necessary for reflective teaching. He argued that the present situation and the personal experience of the teacher dictate what is relevant and worth knowing.

"What he learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow" (p.44). His principles of continuity of experience and interaction of the individual within his/her situation are lifelong experiences of educating and becoming educated.

How does Dewey's (1938) and Piaget's (1962) work pertain and relate to the theories of play? Both take a view of education as being a lifelong, learning endeavor, both emphasize the importance of meaning rising out of context and both acknowledge the importance of the learner's past experience. A further similarity between the two would be the emphasis on the importance of processing information from the outside world and integrating this knowledge with previous experience. While Dewey speaks of continuity and interaction in adults, Piaget (1962) parallels with his discussion of assimilation (acquiring new knowledge) and

accommodation (fitting new knowledge into already established patterns of thought). Similarly, teacher action or child action provokes reflection and it becomes the source for intellectual, emotional and social growth. While teachers reflect to understand their learning of new concepts, children play to learn new skills and concepts. Both learn through doing, experimenting, planning and talking. Learning occurs in teacher's minds or in children's minds as a result of:

"an interaction between thought and experience, an interaction with a physical object, or an interaction between a child and an adult or between children and their peers "(Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p.17).

While Dewey views learning as a principle of continuity, early years educators view learning as a developmental process.

Dewey (1938) speaks more about learning as an abstraction while early years educators speak more specifically about learning in the classroom and the shared task between the teacher and learner. Early years educators advocate child-centred curriculum whereby the child takes an active role as a decision-maker in the classroom and the curriculum is based on

the needs of the child. As Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) suggest, in reference to early year's curriculum guidelines for children ages three through eight, (position statement developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE)), "the goal of child-centered is to base curriculum decisions first and foremost on the needs of children and the ways in which children learn" (p.36). This approach advocates the development of the whole individual.

In connecting Dewey's views of education and early years educational views, the curriculum is strongly influenced by the learner and the teacher's responsibility is to nurture, guide and reflect on this process through observation, evaluation and dialogue with the learner.

Schwab: Theory and Practice

Schwab (1969, 1971) discusses the problem of theory and practices in informing curriculum. He notes that pedagogical knowledge or theory pertains to the application of content knowledge (curriculum) in teaching. However, the theory of teaching must involve

the practice in a comprehensive relevant manner. To clarify, he acknowledges the role of a teacher's professional beliefs as well as the teacher's personal beliefs as an integral component of the curriculum deliberation process. Schwab's contribution is the identification and importance of teachers or educators having the knowledge of a variety of theories to influence their practice. Pedagogical or theoretical knowledge functions as an influence to teaching practice.

As suggested by Schwab's work, all educators have a theoretical framework from which they make decisions. In developing curriculum for early years classrooms, child development theory is something which teachers must consider in working with children in the classroom. Child development theory helps teachers to realize the principles of developmentally appropriate practice to inform their teaching practices. Child development theory advises or guides decision of practice about what is important to learn and when is it appropriate to teach it. This theory influences curriculum decisions and advises early years teachers to be aware of age group differences, individual and cultural differences among learners (NAEYC).

Supporting Schwab's work, Spodek (1988, 1990) advises that "we cannot justify the content of what we teach solely on how children learn because the "how" is more concerned with the method; decisions about what to teach, the content of the curriculum, are heavily influenced by curriculum theory" (Bredekamp & Rosegant, p.17) Burchfield and Burchfield (1992) elaborate by saying teachers draw on their own theoretical framework or theoretical principles to explain what they do with the children in their classrooms. These authors suggest that as teachers we are influenced by the work of many noted child psychologists and educators. They present a list of theoretical principles or theoretical understandings drawn from the work of Dewey, Vygotsky, Bruner, Piaget, Katz and others that underlie early year's practice. These are as follows:

1. Children learn best when their physiological needs are met and when they feel physically and psychologically safe and secure.
2. Children construct knowledge and want to make meaning and sense out of their world.
3. Children learn best and more naturally in diverse social context. Learning is a social process. Heterogeneity facilitates learning and

better reflects the world that our children will inherit.

4. Children learn best when they are actively involved and when the content and context of learning are meaningful and relevant.
5. Children learn best when they initiate, evaluate, and to an extent, direct their own work and play. Play is the work of young children and is a natural avenue for learning.
6. Children learn and develop expertise in different domains at very different rates, learning leads development. Children do not develop in a lock-step or linear progression.
7. Children learn best when the curriculum is integrated and when all areas of a child's development are brought to the learning process (physical, social, emotional, moral, and cognitive).
8. Children are unique and learn best when their individual needs, interests and learning styles are known and respected and inform teaching.
9. Children learn how to be life-long learners when they focus on the processes of learning rather than on isolated skill, memorization, and rote

recall.

10. Children learn best when they are challenged on the margin of their development in a given domain. Building on what children know and can do is essential to appropriate teaching practice (Bredekamp & Rosegant pp.151-152).

In consideration of Schwab's (1969, 1971) work, the crediting of theory, individual experience and specific context is essential to teaching young children. All educators have a developed belief system that informs their decisions and guides their practices. As Schwab and early years educators highlight theories are an integral part of teacher knowledge as they help teacher's understand what they do, why they do it, and help them explain or justify their practices to others. In conversations with teachers then it is important to find one's root beliefs about children, learning and teaching as these theoretical beliefs are influential.

Pinar: The Journey of a Learner

Pinar (1981), in his explorations of autobiographical and psychoanalytic work, made attempts to reconceptualize the field of curriculum studies. Similar to Dewey (1938), he spoke of a "heightened consciousness" in developing curriculum. He spoke of

curriculum as a journey or understanding of self. Curriculum evolved from the individual's specific biographical, historical, political and social context. The curriculum acted as the means by which teachers could concretely practice and connect their thought or experiences to the present. Clandinin (1985) and Connelly (1987) further explain this journey, "a teaching act is an act of understanding... an act of personal participation through which teachers come to know... teaching" (Clandinin, 1985, p.2).

As Pinar emphasized the importance of curriculum, early years educators too, felt that curriculum needed to be based on theoretical principles of how children develop and learn, needs and interests of individual children and relevant to children's family backgrounds and cultures. Early years educators define the curriculum as an:

"organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals and the context in which teaching and learning occur." (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p.10).

While Pinar spoke of the curriculum as a connection linking a teacher's thought and experiences to the present, early years educators see the curriculum as the interaction between the teacher and child as each learner seeks to construct knowledge or obtain meaning from the environment of the classroom and each other. Both of these stated views, agree that all learning occurs as an interaction between thought and experience.

Similar to Pinar's (1981) notion of learning as a journey, early years educators view learning as a cycle. All learning begins with an awareness of the experience. The next step of the learning cycle is exploration whereby an individual has a direct hands-on experience to assimilate or construct their own meanings in understanding. The third step is inquiry whereby individuals inquire or ask questions and accommodate new knowledge to prior learning. Finally in the cycle, individuals may seek out opportunities to utilize or represent their learning. In this journey or cycle, language is used as a tool to promote interaction with others and communicate ideas as the learner, teacher, child, seeks to make, organize and reconstruct their knowledge. As Vygotsky (1978) points out we do not understand or own a concept until we have articulated it

to others. This kind of learning is important through life, "as it is essential to test mental hypotheses constructed against the thinking of other people."

(Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p.15). Vygotsky further reminds us that meaning does not occur in isolation but rather through the social interaction with others.

The above discussion clearly raises matters of relationships--the relationship between teacher thinking (Elbaz 1983 Clandinin 1986, Spodek 1988) and practice, between child development theories (Piaget 1950, 1952, 1962, 1972, Erickson 1950, 1963) and teacher practices (Burchfield & Burchfield 1992), between play beliefs (Smilansky 1968, Parten 1971, Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992) and practical contextual considerations (Dewey 1938, Schwab 1969, 1971), between curriculum as a planned program and curriculum as a journey (Pinar 1981) whereby the individual develops and learns.

The curriculum is no one textbook or a course of studies. It is the result of the learner's response to the environment and the teacher's attempt to offer activities in tune with the needs of the learner. The implementation of the curriculum becomes an interactive journey between the learner and the teacher. The teacher interprets theory and experience into his/her

own constructs and plan, organizes and puts into practice, learning opportunities for the student. Of importance is language as it is used to communicate ideas as both the learner and teacher make, organize and reconstruct their meanings and understandings. It is to the language that we turn to understand a teacher's personal practical knowledge in terms of their experiences, constructs, and images that they generate in their discussions of play as part of the early years curriculum.

In adopting a teacher or practitioner's point of view for gathering the data, rather than a researcher's point of view, the teachers in this study are viewed as professionals in charge of their classrooms and the meaning created in them. Rich (1985) states:

"Teachers know their children. They are well versed in child development, understanding learning theory and keep up to date with research...in their own classrooms they are in the business of theory making. They shape reality together with their children and filter their developing knowledge through the screen of prior knowledge." (p.723).

The purpose of this research, then, is to investigate the teachers' personal practical knowledge of play from

their own point of view and to examine how this knowledge relates to their classroom practices.

Chapter III

Methodology

The present chapter focuses on describing the participant selection, design and procedures of the study. Each of these features was chosen to facilitate the understanding of teacher beliefs from their own point of view.

Participant Selection

The participants used in this study were three grade one teachers employed at the same elementary school in the city of Winnipeg. The participants' teaching experience ranged from 15 years to 22 years with the majority of those years being spent teaching in early years classrooms.

The participants were acquaintances of the researcher who volunteered to be involved in the study. Once selection of subjects was complete, letters were circulated to explain the study to the Superintendent, the principal of the participating school and the participating teachers (Appendix A, B). The teachers were required to fill out a consent form confirming their willingness to participate in the study (Appendix C) as well as a teacher information sheet (Appendix D) to collect some personal information about each one. A

meeting was arranged with the teachers to clarify the study and outline the procedures for the study. Concerns such as ethics, confidentiality, data collecting methods and questions were clarified to the group. Each teacher became aware of their right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques included: interviews consisting of unstructured, open-ended questions, audiotapes of interviews, observations and notes of a day in each classroom. These devices used together, provided data on the teachers' beliefs or perceptions of play and their understanding of their own practice. Bogdan and Biklen refer to this type of research as "naturalistic evaluation" whereby the researcher focuses on "educational issues as they are perceived and experienced by people" (1982, p.160). As these authors suggest, collecting the data and jointly analyzing it becomes an inductive process which narrows information and focuses on significant issues.

Procedures

To begin the study, the researcher met with all three teachers in a group interview format to discuss teacher beliefs about play. Teachers were asked to

define terms such as play, learning centers, child-centred learning, activity-based programs or active learning and developmentally appropriate practices. These concepts were selected as they signify common concepts used in reference to early years education. In addition to defining the terms, the teachers were asked to describe how each concept would function in an early years classroom; what would the practice of these concepts look like in a classroom? They were asked to comment on scheduling of activities, room arrangement, use of materials, themes or topics of study in their classrooms, child-initiated choices, decision-making in the classroom and the teacher's role in the classroom. The group interview lasted about one hour.

Following the group discussion, the researcher arranged an observation date with each teacher. The researcher spent one full day in each classroom, making observational notes of the schedule of activities of the day, notes about the use of concrete materials, and notes about the groupings of the children. Notes were written about the teacher-child relationship, teacher instruction, integration of the play curriculum, and teacher's role during the day. These areas had been

chosen for observation as they were the external structure (as determined by the decisions of the teacher) evident in the classroom.

After the observation had been completed, the researcher met with each teacher to share the observation notes and interview them again. A modified form of stimulated recall was used to ask teachers about the classroom practices observed that day and the thoughts that led to those practices. Overall, an open ended unstructured question format was used for the majority of the interviews to give teachers the opportunity to talk freely about their thoughts and feelings concerning their classroom practices. This format gave the researcher the opportunity to probe for further details to understand each teacher's practical knowledge employed in their classroom. The questions followed a funnel approach (Kerlinger 1977) beginning generally and becoming more specific in order to collect data pertinent to the questions directing the study. In some instances, the teacher's were asked to respond to a colleague's statement. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to this as a spiralling process where the teacher responds to the constructions of others.

Once all individual observations and interviews

were completed, a final group interview was organized. In this last interview, teachers were asked to reflect on their individual beliefs and practices as well as their thinking about Early years classrooms. The purpose of the last interview was to invite the teachers to discuss connections they felt existed between their thoughts and actions. The length of this interview was an hour.

Through the project, audiotapes were made of all interview sessions. The researcher transcribed all data received. The data was shared with the three teachers in the event that they might have wanted to add additional comments to clarify their opinions expressed in the interview. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to this process as member checking. The main purpose of this process is to allow participants to react to what has been presented as their "construction".

The study took place over a seven month period from May to December. The researcher started with a group interview, conducted observations and interviews on each teacher before proceeding to the next participant. The final interview was conducted after each teacher profile was completed and reviewed by the corresponding teacher.

Data Analysis

As in Spradley's (1979) work on ethnographic studies which seeks to investigate a culture from within, the researcher analyses the data from the teacher's personal vantage point. Through each interview, the researcher has tried to reflect on each teachers' pedagogical thinking. The researcher has examined the teachers' personal practical knowledge, the role child development theory plays in their knowledge, the beliefs, values, and images which direct each teacher's practice and their own interpretation or reflection of their practice.

In analyzing the data, the researcher considered where, for each teacher, curriculum was generated. The researcher wondered whether the curriculum was generated from outside the classroom in it's guideline form or generated by the needs and interests of the students. The fundamental differences between these views became clearer when the teachers articulated the decisions they made about teaching, learning, the curricular content, evaluation and the involvement of their students in the educational process. These areas became the focus of discussion in analyzing the data.

Altogether these methods allowed for description

in-depth of three teacher's personal practical knowledge. The observations and interviews demonstrate how teachers understand and utilize their personal practical knowledge in their teaching situations. The proximity of the research findings to reality as the teachers define it, depended on the skill of the researcher to evoke thoughts that converge on the topic as well as the ability of the participants to describe those thoughts. In this sense, the results therefore represent both researcher and participants, and an effort will be made to identify the contribution of each in the next chapter, which reports findings.

Chapter IV

A Review of the Research Findings

This chapter presents a background profile of each teacher in terms of the years of experience, education and grade levels taught. It contains a group interview with all three teachers discussing concepts of play, followed by a classroom observation, an individual interview of each teacher and last of all a final group interview or meeting. Each interview or observation is discussed briefly in a form of a reflection by the researcher.

Teacher Profiles

Table 1 illustrates the information collected: years of teaching experience, grades taught, educational background and additional professional development courses, from all three teachers. However, it does not reveal the number of years taught at each particular level. For example, the data failed to exactly show of the fifteen or twenty-four years taught, how many years were spent teaching at the different grade (K, 1, 2, 3, 4) levels.

At the time of the study, all three teachers were teaching at the grade one level. Previous to that, Teacher 1 had taught a term grade one class for four

months, with earlier experience at a higher level. Teacher 2 had taught grade one for several consecutive years. Teacher 3 had just returned to the classroom to teach grade one from about nine years of resource teaching. Of importance, Teacher 2 had the most recent experience teaching at the grade one level as well as she was the only teacher with educational training in the early years.

For the purpose of this study these teachers will be known as: Jane (Teacher 1), Sarah (Teacher 2) and Jessica (Teacher 3).

Insert Table 1 about here

Group Interview No.1

Prior to our group meeting, I handed out the list of concepts: play, learning centers, child centered learning, activity based learning, and developmentally appropriate practices, that we would be discussing at our interview. I explained to the three teachers: Jane, Sarah and Jessica that they would be asked to define the terms and then relate the terms to practices in the classroom. I did this to alleviate some of the stress

Table 1 Teacher Profiles

Teacher	1	2	3
Total years of Teaching experience	15 yrs.	24 yrs.	22 yrs.
Grade levels taught	1,2,3,4	K,1,2,3 Migrancy, Resource	1,2,3,4 Resource
Educational background	B.ED	B.ED specialization in Early Childhood	B.A, B.ED
Professional development courses	Active learning workshop	3 graduate level courses	C.E.L workshop (children) experience learning) (Active learning Workshop

the participants were feeling about our first meeting. The teachers felt that if they knew what I was going to ask them, they could do some prior thinking and be able to answer the questions more quickly. Most of the teachers had family commitments and were limited to a certain amount of time after school. I felt compelled to accommodate them as I wanted to become familiar with their thoughts and beliefs about the theory and practice of play in an early years classroom.

The interview was held after school from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. When the teachers arrived, I noticed two teachers, Sarah and Jessica, had brought notes with them about what they wanted to say. It appeared that all three teachers were very nervous about talking on a tape, sharing opinions and basically, wording their answers to insure they made sense.

As the interview began, I could see that I needed to work very hard to establish an atmosphere of trust among the group. Even though I knew all three teachers and had worked along side them, I could sense their feelings of intimidation in discussing their beliefs and inner thoughts about classroom practices with me. I was conscious to use body language such as head nodding, and smiling to ease the mood and show my acceptance of all

of their answers.

**Key Researcher - R, Teachers: Jane (1), Sarah (2)
& Jessica (3).**

R: Define play as you see it and then how you think it applies
to an early years classroom

Jane (P1):

One aspect of play I think, is a way for kids to understand
the world around them and in the classroom by using the
materials and playing with them. They can understand how
certain things fit together or why this happens by playing,
not because somebody said we'll take these two things or
we'll take this puzzle or take these blocks and build
something. They use it themselves to make sense of the
materials that they're using. That's one thing I think.

R: Let me clarify this--it's something you believe the child is
responsible for doing or what?

Jane (P2):

Well, I think some of it. Some of it is the child
themselves discovering things on their own and sometimes it
can be teacher directed by putting certain things there for
them to play with. But, I don't think it's always directed.
I think a lot of it is free exploration with materials,
being able to talk to each other and not always directed by
somebody. I think the way they use the materials. They

come to some conclusion about the world and the way things...

R: So, you're just saying it can be teacher directed?

Jane (P3):

That was one aspect.

R: One aspect.

How would you define play and its operation in the classroom?

Sarah (P4):

I found that very difficult because it seems to be multifaceted, play is a multifaceted activity of many dimensions and there are many kinds of play: some negative, mostly positive. But I see it as the means by which children first experience success, achievement and mastery of new skills. And I think that through play children discover and experiment and make sense of both the physical and mental and intellectual around them.

R: You are saying you think it's something that the child just does himself?

Sarah (P5):

No, I don't think that's one dimension of play. I think that within, I think play changes between home and school. Often at home it is more solitary play and with other siblings it can be parallel play, even within the classroom

when children first start school it can be parallel play. I think looking at it from perspective of grade one classroom I think it is a little more teacher directed in that you have some--you determine somewhat the direction the play will take from the materials you put out--the grouping and the problems you might set up for the children to solve through play. I believe that within the classroom that play is the medium through which children express many emotional conflicts that they may be working through. And it's probably the primary medium in a classroom setting in which they learn and practice and hone social skills such as communication, sharing, cooperation, negotiations, compromise and just getting along with others. And so I think when we set up the classroom for the play the many different kinds of learning and conceptual development to happen, the one common experience is the social growth and the development of social skills.

Jessica (P6):

I think what I have to say is basically the same, but I'll say it in different words. I think play is how children explore and make intuitive discoveries, and I think we guide their play by providing, by the materials we provide. The materials we provide guide the children's discovery of concepts. I think a lot of incidental learning that we don't

even know about goes on during play, and the concepts they pick up. And I don't know if you want any examples.

R: You decide if you want to cite examples--feel free. You just decide what you would like to say so that you are understood too.

Jessica (P7):

I remember playing a game called trouble with a little four year old child. And she was saying things like, if I get 7 next turn and you get 3, then I'll be 4 ahead of you, and then on the next turn if you get--I thought she's doing subtraction. She's doing it so painlessly--through play. And also I have the very, very often quoted phrase 'play is child's work'.

Sarah (P8):

Yes, I was thinking of that whole aspect of how I could rephrase play is child's work. But indeed I think children bring to play all the mental energy, creative energy and the concentration and the focused activity that we bring to work.

R: You wanted to elaborate Jessica. Is there a place for play in the primary classroom? What do you think about that? You have defined it already.

Jessica (P9):

Yes, definitely, and right now in the classroom I have

specific playtime that I always called activity time because of my background. I come from teaching higher grades where play was not considered the thing to do. So I always call it activity time; the kids always call it play time. And finally they've won me over and now I call it play time too. During that time, they play, but I am working towards having children cover more of the curriculum through play and at this point I'm not sure of how to do it. I know how to do it incidentally, but I'm working towards orchestrating it.

R: Then you are saying to clarify it, that you feel there is a place for it in the classroom as well?

Jessica (P10):

Yes.

R: It seems like everyone is in agreement with that. Jane, how would you define learning centers and how you would see them used in a primary classroom?

Jane (P11):

All right, learning centers to me would be something, would be a very specific topic--maybe it's bugs or animals or one specific topic. It could be frogs. It could be trees. It could be spring. Anything that in that you would find numerous activities activities related to that topic. I could go the whole range of the curriculum--math, science, language arts, reading. There could be books there. I

think the learning center would have a topic and the things that would be in it would be related to that topic--with goals and objectives, things that you would want them to learn by visiting that and working through the activities.

R: With that you are saying you would think the learning center is something that the teacher structures?

Jane (P12):

Yes.

R: How do you see learning centers in the room? Is there one learning or are there many learning centers? How does it work now in a classroom? If somebody was coming into the room, and you had defined learning centers, what would they expect to see?

Jane (P13):

Do you mean my classroom or anybody's classroom?

R: Well, just generally speaking.

Jane (P14):

I have a variety of centers and I refer to them as learning centers because there are specific objectives and goals for each of the centers. There can be a whole range of things. The ones that I have in my room, that I chose to have, are a science, an art, a reading, writing, a math center, a game and puzzles, sand and water. And within those centers each one has its own specific, you know each activity that is

placed in the center has a goal and an objective. I would hope that at the end of going through this activity the child has reached that objective.

R: So some you say then are stationary and you.

Jane (P15):

Basically, but they change.

R: They change?

Jane (P16):

Yes.

R: Sarah, would you like to talk about learning centers?

Sarah (P17):

I think the learning centers are more structured in that when I prepare the materials and set them up, I have some specific goals in mind for skill development and conceptual development too. I think that the learning centers probably go beyond free exploration and experimenting. I probably have more input than I do in the initial play centers in that I participate in them by asking questions, the what if type of questions, or would you explain to me, or how do you think it would work? So that I perhaps begin to channel the children's thinking and experimenting along the lines that are going to lead to seeing casual relationships and drawing conclusions. And, in fact, working through conceptual development I think probably in all the learning centers

that I have.

R: Which one?

Sarah (P18):

We always have one tied in with the math that is water--some measurement of volume or capacity. Measurement of some form and that can be in the water or the sand. I always have a science one maybe with magnets or a magnifying glass, something to do integrated with the science or social studies that we're doing at the time. The writing center, a lot of block building and manipulative materials for construction. The center that has been opened, the learning center that has been open all year, is the dress-up and house center. And I find that's the one that the children do most of their language development and it's when they're encouraged because there's a lot of role playing or development of language through that, a lot of social learning. I believe that I must also participate in these centers with the children so that I can help develop the language, the thinking skills, but very much be actively involved in the learning in the centers. I think like Jane, that those learning centers are much more related to what's in the curriculum--all the subject.

R: So if you had to define a learning, what would you say it is? You told us now how you see it in the classroom. So

what exactly is a learning center? Can you define it for us?

Sarah (19):

It's a center that's set up with materials for children to work with to master specific skills and concepts.

R: It's something then that the teacher structures?

Sarah (20):

Yes.

R: The teacher structures it and is it something that changes or?

Sarah (21):

Yes, they change with each area, but--subject--as we're doing social studies or science. It changes throughout the year. The only one that stays the same is the house center, dress-up and language and drama. The art ones change too, but they're integrated with the current theme. The learning centers are used to consolidate the learning that's going on, the current theme. It's not so much structured from the point of being teacher directed apart from the fact that I have specific learning goals, goals for learning that I hope will come about through the children working together, cooperating, sharing.

R: Jane, do you have anything more to add before I go on to Jessica?

Jane (22):

The one thing I thought, yeah, I didn't say, the different centers and the theme that they do. They change and follow the curriculum. Maybe not the specific topics of the curriculum, but the goals.

R: We can go back and forth. If you feel that there's something that you haven't said that you want to, just please interrupt us. Jessica, did you want to define learning centers? What are learning centers?

Jessica (23):

Well, what Jane and Sarah have said is what I'm working towards. Right now my centers are free exploration. They're set up where the children go and they do what they want. I haven't really structured them so that I feel that they are meeting any of the curricular objectives through their play centers.

R: Did you want to tell us about the learning centers you have?

Jessica (24):

Yeah, I have a sand table, water table, and block center with big blocks and lego for fine motor, coordination, all sorts of blocks. Actually now someone gave me some wonderful blocks. I feel the block center is quite complete. I have a dress-up center that I feel is quite meager, could use a lot more in it, but the children enjoy

what's there. And there are certain children that go to the dress-up center, I mean what we call a house center, whenever it's playtime that's where they go. And at this point I'm not saying you have to go somewhere else, you go there everyday so today, because I feel that's where they are developmentally ready to be. That's where they are going to go. If a certain child that goes to the dress-up center went to the writing center, it would be meaningless to them. Then I have a writing center, a reading center, a listening center, and a quiet center and a science center.

R: Do you want to comment or define a learning center then? What would you say about a learning center? A learning center is...

Jessica (25):

Well, I would say right now the way I have it, a learning center is a time for the children to have free choices. They don't have to, and I changed this because of the course that I took. I don't feel that I got a lot out of that course but a few things that I did get--I used to have a chart where they had to put in the names and I worked so hard making that chart.

Jane (26):

It was beautiful!

Jessica (27):

Yes, and now I don't use that chart any more because that chart, it was pointed out to me and I believe that that chart restricted their choices. And now I don't have any limits on how many kids can go to any certain center because I feel they have to realize for themselves there are too many kids there, I'll go somewhere else.

R: I want to draw this again. So learning centers are a place the children can go? And what kinds of things do you see as important as being out in that area? Like, if you said you have a dress-up center, you say you have art, and reading and writing, so then can I assume the children will choose whatever they want to do when they get there?

Jessica (28):

It's free exploration with the materials.

R: So you put out materials then for them to freely explore.

Jessica (29):

Yes, and so far they haven't really, and I intend to. I'm going to put things out for the water table, what floats and what doesn't, and they have to..., but so far I haven't done that. Also, another center I would like to open but I'm a bit leery because someone left it in the room, is a woodworking center. I don't have any wood yet. But, and I did in my previous classes have a woodworking center. It's very noisy, kids pounding with a hammer. But I would like

to, maybe the last month just before school is over, set up a woodworking center. So I see centers as a place for free choice, a time for children to pursue their own interests, make their own discoveries. And I would like to learn how to direct them more without...I would like to learn how to cover the curricular objectives through the centers.

R: What do you see as your role while they are in their centers?

Jessica (30):

Actually, very little. What I usually do to be perfectly honest, when the kids are in their learning centers, I read with individuals. I teach reading at that time to individuals.

R: How do you schedule learning centers? Nobody has really mentioned scheduling the play or learning centers. How do you all feel about that?

Jane (31):

Well, I schedule, it's a specific time in the afternoon, for an hour.

R: So you schedule?

Jane (32):

Yeah, it's scheduled time. The students know that it's sometimes in, like sometimes it's before recess if we don't have phys.ed. and it's at that big block of time from 1:15

to 2:15. Or else, it's right after recess. Well, it's not quite an hour but it's fifty minutes when it comes right down to it. Most days they get the full hour of uninterrupted time.

R: Sarah, do you usually schedule or is there a time better than a certain time?

Sarah (33):

No, I schedule it. But it's not everyday depending on the timetable with phys.ed.--I do the math totally activity-based program too, so that takes a large block. One of the things that I didn't mention that I keep getting, through play and the different learning centers, children develop obviously self-esteem and a sense of self-concept, a sense of what they're good at. And they also develop what other children are good at, so I try to recognize those who show skills and use them for development of self-confidence and self-assurance, and to consolidate their own learning. I use them as helpers who will explain and work with others. So, although I never tell children which center they have to go to, I often try to team up children with leaders or with children who have expertise in that particular area and I certainly don't expect the same end results from all children, at each of the learning centers. But I find that it is a good chance for leadership and tutors, self-tutoring

and peer group tutoring too.

Jessica (34):

Oh, I forgot one of my centers. I also have a game center.

R: Sarah, depending on how your day is going, is that what you're saying? Sometimes you may schedule it, sometimes you may not?

Sarah (35):

No, there are certain days in the, in our six week cycle, that I can't open up all centers because we can't have that time block that makes it easier.

R: So, sometimes you might choose to open a few centers and...

Sarah (36):

Some days as they finish off their work we have really free choice and they're much more limited going to centers, and they tend not to be those where they're doing experiments. More in terms of probably writing center, no sorry, house center. Dress-up is one that they always choose, and I'll put out the big blocks, little blocks, legos and the games.

R: Then you're saying again, I'm just clarifying...

Sarah (37):

So, those are not so much the learning centers as free activity, choice centers called choice centers.

R: You're drawing the distinction between learning centers and choice centers. Choice centers are where the children...

Sarah (38):

No, I don't think I want to make that distinction. Maybe I'm looking at it at the end of the day as being more recreational.

R: Let's clarify. Sometimes you only open some centers as opposed to all the centers at once?

Sarah (39):

On the days that I schedule, that's part of it. I find that it takes at least the hour and the quarter to do all the learning centers effectively. Then I do open them all up because often I have to bring in materials, all those learning centers.

R: So then sometimes time could be a factor?

Sarah (40):

Yes, it is a major factor. Some days we have done more large group activities. There is a quite time at the end of the day when they can choose.

R: So not everyone might get a chance, depends again if they are finished their job for the afternoon. Then they would be able to choose from one of those centers. Is that right?

Sarah (41):

Yeah, some, often they choose their book for the home reading program and then after that's finished, they go to other choices. Sometimes they don't take it, sometimes they

can take the half hour to choose the books and talk about them and share them.

R: So, depending on their books, they might not decide to go?

Sarah (42):

They might not decide to go to something.

R: Jessica, I was going to ask you about the time. How do you feel about time or scheduling?

Jessica (43):

I have it actually scheduled on my timetable.

R: You have it actually scheduled?

Jessica (44):

Yes, I do. And I have it on different days too, depending.... Like I have it everyday but not at the same time everyday, depending on the timetable.

R: So you usually have it, Jane said an hour, Sarah said half an hour, sometimes an hour and a quarter. What would you say that time frame would be?

Jessica (45):

Mine, depends on the day but I would say on the average, 45 minutes.

R: So yours is a range as well? Trying to fit it into your schedule?

Jessica (46):

Yes.

R: So it might be longer or shorter? There's a little bit of a range difference then?

Jessica (47):

On day 5, they get a long period because we don't get phys. ed. that day.

R: On a shorter day then, they might get 30 minutes or longer?

Jessica (48):

Well, if you count clean-up and all that, it's always 45 minutes.

R: Every teacher is handed a curriculum guide divided into subject areas. My question is how do the concepts of play, learning centers relate to the curriculum guide? How do you believe the curriculum guide should be designed for the early years?

Jessica (49):

I think the way the curriculum is designed is a little more difficult but not insurmountable. For instance, the math curriculum is set up for active learning, especially the new math curriculum which just came out. The language arts curriculum is also set up for active learning. For example, there is an extension to the curriculum guide that has a lot of specific ideas and I think they are active learning ideas. Ideas like keeping your ideas relevant, not workbooks but letters to different people, journals, story

writing, all of that is advocated in the language arts curriculum. I think that is active learning. As far as integrating social studies and science curriculum, I think that can be done. It might be easier if it was all written up as one integrated curriculum guide.

R: Are you saying you think it's fine as written in separate curricula areas?

Jessica (50):

I think it would be better if it were one integrated book, but I don't think the problem is insurmountable.

R: How do you think the curriculum should be used in an early years classroom?

Jessica (51):

I think it should be used as a guideline. I don't think you have to adhere to every single sentence in the curriculum guide, that is except for math curriculum. But the way the language arts curriculum is set up, it's mainly ideas and the social studies and science is mainly themes. You can't do all, there just isn't time.

R: Sarah, what are your thoughts about the present curriculum guide?

Sarah (52):

I don't find the curriculum so restrictive because we do a lot of experimenting and discovery, formulating hypotheses

and testing them and all this comes into the play. I think that is what active play is. That is all readily handled with science, math program and the language arts. I find the content of the curriculum is fine for following, but it is not restrictive. There's a lot of room for creative drama, creative story telling and writing. It would be nice if the curriculum came all ready written up in an integrated program, but I don't find it difficult to integrate.

R: Then you find the curriculum contains a good source of ideas?

Jessica (53):

Primarily, I use it as a guide of content that needs to be covered in grade one. To a certain extent I use it to follow the sequential development of ideas, especially in the math program.

R: Would you like to add to this discussion?

Jane (54):

I think the curriculum should be more integrated. I don't think it needs to be divided necessarily into subject matter the way it is. I think more like a thematic approach which a lot of primary teachers do, where you do social studies, math, language, health, everything related to that theme. I think it would be easier for people to follow rather than saying this is social studies and we're doing all about me.

In another area we might be doing something from another area of the curriculum. I think they need to look at it as a whole package rather than individual subjects.

R: If the curriculum was integrated, what should be the goals?

Jane (55):

The goals would not be much different from the present goals of the curriculum. If they integrated it under themes, I think it would be a lot easier to meet all the goals for social studies and science rather than separating them. I'm sure a lot of these goals are interrelated and much the same.

R: I would like to switch our focus back to definitions of early years' concepts. How would you define child center learning and how does this apply to the classroom?

Jessica (56):

I see child centered learning as the child being the main focus rather than the teacher standing up lecturing the children, I guess, but I know I've been to workshops where the children choose the topics and the children, and I believe in choice and I do give the children. I do believe the children should have choice and that's what makes it child centered, the choices where the children have the choice about topic and what to write about. But I have never yet, maybe someday I will give the children a choice

to make up their own theme. I've been to workshops on that, but I haven't done it. I've always provided the themes and given children choices within the theme. But my instinct between teacher centered and child centered is where the child is the focus rather than the teacher.

R: Are you saying the teachers structure the theme and the child has choices? Is the child participating as a decision-maker?

Jessica (57):

Yes, to a certain extent but not totally. Like he or she doesn't have the choice not to do any kind of writing. Right now, I'm giving them the choice of four different types of writing. But they have to choose one of them. They can't say--I choose not to write.

R: You see choices functioning all day then?

Jessica (58):

More or less. There is a time and a place I think, where the teacher just stands up and does do teaching or instruction.

R: Is it divided then in the classroom? You feel then some things can be teacher directed, but most of the things are teacher directed and within that the children have choices?

Jessica (59):

Right.

R: You've done two things Jessica. You have defined child centered learning and discussed how you see it used in the classroom.

Jessica (60):

I think it depends on the subject area. Like my sand table is totally child directed. I don't do any directing. I don't tell them, I don't give them any direction, but my reading lessons are teacher directed.

Sarah (61):

To me child centered learning arises from the interests and ideas that the children generate. The activities as much as possible set up for them to learn and experiment and develop concepts around particular ideas and interests that they have raised. Very often the centers happen not from my planning, but have come from what the children have been doing or learning, or the ideas that have come from another center. Child centered as being age appropriate, and very much activity based and with choices. It's very much tied into the thematic approach, but choices of activity around a certain theme.

R: The teacher then structures the environment to a certain extent based on what the children's interests are. Do the children discuss their interests with the teacher so the teacher will put out those materials?

Sarah (62):

Yes, very often it comes from when the children say why don't we do...or we could.... It often comes from story books we've read or something that another child has done in an activity center. It will generate other ideas, and the kids will get real excited and say we could use the blocks to build castles. We could take the other construction materials and join or use them in those centers. I let that happen. I encourage that. I think that is child centered where many of the ideas are generated by them, but usually around what's going on in the classroom.

R: So you see it as the children participating as decision makers?

Sarah (63):

Yes.

R: But the teacher ultimately makes the final decision?

Sarah (64):

No, not necessarily. The children will discuss that themselves and generate more ideas through discussion. When the interest and the enthusiasm is really high, obviously that's the direction they want to go. Perhaps it's best if I give an example. You talked to me a few years ago after a workshop you had been to, about how children love to talk about their accidents and their going to the hospital. From

that we talked about it in class and we began. The children had ideas of writing their own books and putting a book together, they built up their own hospital center and they worked on first aid centers. They gave me an idea about the kinds of things they needed, and I brought in the materials and set up the space. I brought in materials that I had for them to use to set up their own centers.

R: Under those circumstances the children generate the ideas and whatever direction a theme or a learning center can go is dependent on the children?

Sarah (65):

Often it happens in the math centers when they're doing any kind of measurement with water or sand or volume. They will come up with more ideas. Particularly, that happens with sand and water. They develop their own ideas. They will often, without meaning to, draw others in who are interested. The ideas come, they discuss, negotiate, compromise and work out more things or plans they can develop in the center. So it's teacher directed to a point, to an extent that I will bring in the materials and provide the space. I participate in discussion only as much as to be part of it with the enthusiasm, but not do any more of the directing than I have to.

Jane (66):

I use a child centered approach in the classroom. On the continuum of the change towards this child centered learning approach, I may not be as far along as I would like to be because, although I give my children choices, I'm in the same position as Jessica, a lot of it is teacher directed. I guess I don't feel confident in that the children will choose a theme that will encompass the skills that the curriculum sets down that they must know. At this point I don't feel confident, but I try to give them choice through the day. At activity time it's total free choices through the day, and total free choice according to what activity they want to go to. Once they get to that activity there may be several choices available to them, but I have set out those choices.

R: What do you think about this whole idea of child centered learning when you hear people talk about it? What are your beliefs about it?

Jane (67):

That's what I was just saying. What I believe is that we're moving in that direction. I'm not at the point where I feel confident, because I come from a background where teaching was very directed I wasn't a facilitator, I was the ultimate, you know, if we were going to do this it was my idea. Maybe once my class was really gung-ho on dinosaurs,

we did dinosaurs, but most of the things were teacher-chosen, teacher directed. This is the activity you will do, no choice, very little. So I'm trying to move along that continuum where I can feel confident and say what do you want to learn about? Maybe have individual, I mean ultimately you wouldn't even have a whole class working on the same theme. They may, you know, but I don't know if you would ever get to that stage with six year olds. I think you'd be..., I think you would go crazy. I don't think you could individualize to that stage, but I believe there has to be choices. I believe that they have to use hands-on materials of..., they have to see it, do it, almost live it in order for it to have meaning for them.

R: You're saying they have choices within the materials?

Jane (68):

I give them choices, but all of the themes are teacher directed. I usually decide but within that theme. Right now my class is doing insects but they are really keen on ladybugs, so for the next two weeks we're going to do ladybugs. We have ladybugs in the room. They have chosen which direction the insects will go, but ultimately I decided to do insects. You know, it wasn't a group of kids saying "hey, can we learn about...".

R: So you're saying then you think child centered learning is

taking the interest from the children, that's what you basically believe that it is?

Jane (69) :

All of us do writing process. We take the kids at the level they can handle, if they're not taking risks with letters we might scribe for them. That's child centered. They're making the choice that heh...I'm not ready to take a risk. I'm not going to...but this is what I will do. So even though we don't sit down and consciously say I give them a choice, we really are giving them more choice than we think we are. But I feel I have a long way to go on that continuum to really feel it's a true child centered approach.

R: Do you feel you don't have confidence in the children or that you worry that somebody would think that you were not following the curriculum? What are your concerns about it?

Jane (70) :

Part of it is that - would the children choose activities that would broaden the skills and develop the skills that the curriculum sets out? Unfortunately, we are still beholden to it...I suppose if you sat down and went through the curriculum and listed all the skills, you could for every subject area you could say, oh, they haven't done this. But I think maybe sometimes you would still have to

direct them to come to...

R: So you would be concerned that someone would come in and say what's happening here? What are you doing? What are they learning?

Jane (71):

Yes, that's right.

R: You mentioned that in using a child centered approach means that the teacher acts as a facilitator, that's what you just said. You see the teacher as giving charge to the children or letting the children be the directors of learning and the teacher assuming the facilitator role. You can see this happening in the classroom?

Jane (72):

Yes.

R: But you're not comfortable with this?

Jane (73):

Yes.

R: Does anyone want to add anything?

Sarah (74):

Yes. My whole program is not planned around children choosing and doing their own thing all day long. We have time. The first block in the morning is always a language arts period and there are choices of what they will write, but we will all write. This afternoon we are doing a unit

on fairy tales and the children that choose the house center produced a play and they did Goldilocks and the Three Bears. They chose, they directed themselves about the dialogue and the dressing up and the script and making up the tables. Lots of decision-making and a lot of good cooperation and a lot of compromise. I didn't tell them that's what they had to do in the dress up center, but they chose that opportunity to produce a play for the rest of us.

R: Do you want to add anything else? Anyone else? Let's talk about activity based learning. What you think about the approach, how you would define it and what your thoughts are about how it works in the classroom?

Jessica (75):

One of the main things I got out of the course (we just took that four day course), was to distinguish between activity-based and active learning. I was under the impression that activity-based was synonymous with learning centers. I thought if you didn't have learning centers or activity centers all day that you weren't doing activity-based learning. One of the things I learned to distinguish was that activity-based learning was actually active learning. A total program includes whole language strategies, literature based reading, writing process, hands on manipulatives. So, that to me is what active learning or

activity-based is all about.

R: So you see this functioning in a classroom?

Jessica (76):

Oh definitely. I think probably most grade one classrooms are doing that.

R: What kind of barriers would you see opposing that kind of approach?

Jessica (77):

An opposing kind of approach to that would be a basal program.

R: So if you had a basal reading series in progress then you wouldn't be doing active learning?

Jessica (78):

Well, depending on the particular basal. Some of them are more whole language oriented, but if you took the program and you followed every single page of the teacher's guide, then you probably wouldn't be doing a whole language program. Therefore, you wouldn't be doing...I mean, if you're just going to give kids worksheets, that's not active learning.

Jane (79):

Are we talking about active learning or activity-based learning?

Jessica (80):

I'm saying they're the same.

R: Are there any other barriers that would make a teacher feel uncomfortable about in using that type of approach?

Jessica (81):

I'm saying that activity-based is more than just learning centers. I'm saying it also means whole language strategies, literature-based reading, writing process, hands on manipulatives, and I'm saying that those things do not necessarily have to be done in center time. I mean, I do have a reading center but we also do other reading strategies that we don't do at the reading center.

R: So you say that most classrooms are doing this. You can't see any reason that teachers would say that they're not comfortable with it?

Jessica (82):

No.

R: So the things you already mentioned are connected with an activity-based program. If a person does those things they are running an activity-based program?

Jessica (83):

Yes, according to the way I am defining an activity-based program which is not the way I used to define it. To me activity-based used to be synonymous with learning centers. I would prefer to call it active learning rather than

activity-based.

R: Sarah, can you talk a little about your thoughts on activity-based learning. I want you to define it, telling what your beliefs are and how these beliefs relate to the classroom. Beliefs may relate to parents, administration, etc. You might want to touch on what advantages or disadvantages might be associated to this type of approach?

Sarah (84):

I feel very strongly about the necessity of an activity-based program, but I don't see it limited to centers, activities and choice activities either. An activity-based program involves active learning, active participation, active doing, and there can be activity-based planning but everybody working together, a new theme. A concept or a new skill is introduced to everyone in math and everyone is participating together. I believe that is activity-based learning. I don't limit that to centers, but with activity-based learning I do see it as a time for children to be using materials and actually doing, learning by doing.

Jessica (85):

Oh, I forgot to mention that, learning by doing, not watching.

R: Do you want to extend about that or bring this type of approach into the classroom?

Sarah (86) :

I find it difficult to discuss this because I have never done anything else, and that's partly my background, my training and my own schooling. My early education was New Zealand, based on the Montessori approach on the developmental period of children making choices and doing. But I do believe that for any activity a child does, any learning a child does, it is not of any great value unless they have a chance to verbalize. I believe concepts become established when children are able to talk and tell, or somehow use language to describe what's happening, what they've learned. By that process, they fit the new learning in with what they already know. So, I believe that with an activity-based program, there's always a very strong element of language of speaking, talking, sharing, asking, discussing, and telling. I think that we must have an activity-based program more or less activity in all primary schools, surely at this stage of our knowledge about education.

R: So, you don't see any problems with this type of learning?

Sarah (87) :

No. I see a lot of problems where children sitting passively absorbing or not absorbing. I think we always have to remember when children are sitting passively and being told,

a lot of learning is going on, very often it's not the kind of learning the teacher has in mind. But children are always learning something.

Jane (88):

I feel the same as Sarah and Jessica. An activity-based learning program has the children participating in activities that they are using materials or moving their body but they are doing. It can be a whole class doing an activity, it can be two kids doing an activity in a center, but that they are actively participating in learning. They are not sitting just listening or watching. They are using materials to develop the concept. When you first mentioned the question about the drawbacks, would other people hesitate to use it? Sarah said she can't believe that people now don't use that in primary classrooms. I think there are some who don't because it's noisy and some teachers aren't used to the noise. Maybe because there's no written worksheet they have handed in at the end of the lesson, they have no record sheet...did they or didn't they? Maybe you couldn't get around to them. For myself that's not a drawback, but I can see it being drawbacks for other people. if you haven't taken a class recently. If you're not familiar with early childhood but you're teaching in a primary grade, I think there are people who don't understand

that children need to be involved actively. I believe some people see it with drawbacks. It is so different from how we used to teach.

R: So you are saying it can be noisy and you don't really know if the children are learning? Somebody comes in and says to you, "Well, how are the children learning?"

Jane (89):

And parents, because they didn't learn that way here or where they're from, they have a hard time seeing...oh, yeah...maybe they are learning. Where's the worksheet? Because that's the way they were taught. They think all they're doing is playing. That everything has to be written down, otherwise, how do you know that they know. Some Administrators feel the same way, they want proof. They want some kind of written sheet the kids have recorded on to prove to them that they know it. And those are drawbacks for some people.

Sarah (90):

I think there is a great deal of recording whether it's during writing or doing diaries or graphing or drawing, but there's always some. I believe too, there needs to be some end product, some activity after the activities that enables the children to learn to share and talk and use their language to make it meaningful.

Jane (91) :

I'm not saying that these are drawbacks, but I am saying that some people will see them as drawbacks. I see activity-based learning as multi-sensory approach to learning where the children are totally involved: touching, holding, doing, smelling, writing, looking. When I plan the activities that are going to be followed up, I try to have as many of the senses involved in each activity as possible.

R: How do you believe this should be used in the classroom? If a classroom just had a bunch of materials, would that be activity-based learning?

Jane (92) :

I think it's balanced between teacher-directed like a lot of what you want the kids to know you use an activity to do that rather than just standing there verbalizing all this stuff. You teach the skill by some activity where they are physically, actively involved in it. And sometimes it's the children. At a center they can pull out material that you've never put out there before. Something they haven't used for ages and find a new way of doing something and discover...oh, yeah...even though this container is long and skinny and this one is shorter, this one holds more. They discover on their own. In the classroom some of the activities are teacher directed when we're doing our reading

or writing and other activities are child-initiated with materials that are accessible.

Sarah (93):

I think that you could have all the materials in the world, magnificent materials in the classroom, but unless the atmosphere and the classroom climate is right, I don't think children make those quantum leaps in understanding. I don't think they make, they're able to take materials and use them for very divergent purposes. I don't think they make the experiments and I can't think they do the innovativeness of materials, nor do they get into more divergent thinking unless they have a lot of freedom to move and use materials for purposes other than original introduction. I also have some concerns about materials and activities once you get into grade one, grade two, that they must go beyond just the experimenting and experiencing that we do probably into nursery and kindergarten. I think that for development and growth to take part, the children must have the freedom and be encouraged to use the materials for different purposes, to go beyond just exploration. Sometimes I think you see in the blocks especially, children will do the same activities over and over again. That's when you need some teacher direction, teacher throwing out some ideas about I wonder what would happen if....how could we use the blocks to build

something...if we were studying fairy tales...what could we build?

Jane (94) :

Oh, no other words you ask them questions to develop that thinking. Something that's not going to be a yes, no answer.

Sarah (95) :

Open-ended and I think the very vital role that teachers play in an activity-based program since that's what we're talking about is asking those open-ended questions and participating in the groups. I do a lot of participating in the house center where we do the language and the role playing. I model some of the kids of roles and acting and drama. I only have to do it for a short time and then the children get the ideas and take it from there.

R: This seems like a good time to inquire about evaluation in activity-based program. How do you believe students should be evaluated? How should student progress be reported to the parents?

Jane (96) :

I think anecdotal works best for me because I can see how each child's progress is different, rather than taking a set standard and seeing how they measure up to that. I can see how each child progresses individually from one skill to

another. You know watching them at sand or building with lego...seeing if they are becoming more creative, seeing if they are exploring differently, or just expanding on the skills they have come into the classroom with. By watching them and making short notes on what they've done that day, you can look back. You could say at the beginning of September this is what they were doing and now it's December, they're doing this now...they understand it. By talking to them about what they're doing, having them explain it, I find it works best for me. I don't know if everyone would agree with that.

R: You think then only anecdotal, only observation is necessary for evaluating a child.

Jane (97):

Not only that. Some things require a written task. Like for example, math, for understanding addition and subtraction. They might have the concept but then can they move it to the more abstract and concrete. You might need to know that. In language there has to be some recording as well. For example, in the writing process and in the reading. But I think by observing and keeping careful notes of what they have done, you can see the progress. I don't think you can measure everybody by the same yardstick.

R: You cited the example writing process? Can you clarify

this?

Jane (98):

I mean keeping writing samples.

R: You would keep samples of the work and then you would observe what the children are doing.

Jane (99):

I guess a portfolio assessment is what I'm thinking of. At least that's what they call it.

R: In other words, are you saying you believe it's important to look at children as individuals rather than as a group? Looking at individual progress that's how you would evaluate?

Jane (100):

Yes.

R: How should progress be reported to the parents? Right now there is a report card, what do you think about it?

Jane (101):

I think the report cards, a lot of it for grade ones for September is irrelevant. There's a lot of things on that report card that the kids aren't doing. You have to tell them this is what they could do in September, but now this is what they're doing. You show them the samples of their work. I guess it's sort of both. You have the anecdotal, you see what they do on a daily basis. You jot things down

as you notice the light comes on at some point. You write that down about that student and pass that information on to the parent. I guess showing the portfolios, the samples of what the writing was like in September, this is what it looks like now and explaining how they might now be using vowels.

R: You're saying when reporting to parents it should be based on the child's individual work how they are functioning as an individual in the classroom. Do you believe the report card is necessary?

Jane (102):

Personally, I don't think it's necessary. When I read my own kid's report card it doesn't really tell me anything that I don't already know. I would maybe like to know some other things that they do in the classroom. The report card really lacks that, and there isn't time in the ten-minute interview to give me all of that information that I would like. As a teacher I would prefer not to have the report card and just have a longer time to talk to each parent. Then you would have to make sure every parent came in or they would get no information about their child.

R: How do you believe students should be evaluated and how should their progress be related to parents?

Jessica (103):

I detest the present report card. I detest the letter system the S, VG etc.. I think the reporting should be anecdotal and we should report in the most positive way possible what the child can do.

R: Does that mean with parents you should be discussing the child's progress with them?

Jessica (104):

Definitely. I feel those letter grades are very detrimental to practically everybody.

R: In the classroom you said you feel teachers should use anecdotal methods to evaluate students?

Jessica (105):

I have some forms I use such as a reading form. I just check off certain things such as whether they can point to words, whether they are attempting to print, but for reporting I think it should be anecdotal.

R: How do you think students should be evaluated in the classroom?

Sarah (106):

With the classroom I believe that it has to be an ongoing process of observation, but looking at the skills and conceptual development specifically. I think evaluation should be done at the end of a unit such as math. The evaluation I've done is to have a support person do the

evaluation. I will ask them to work one-on-one with the children, give them ideas about the questions I want asked which are very non-directive to draw from the children as much knowledge as they have. But I find it better to have someone else do that evaluation because I'm not sure that as a classroom teacher I'm not programming the answers.

R: So you believe teachers should be evaluating students through observation?

Sarah (107):

Yes, but with a definite checklist of skills and progressions and understanding of concepts. Because otherwise it becomes a little too unfocused. In reporting to parents I have done a lot of thinking about this. I'm really as concerned as Jessica with the card or report they send home. I'm also concerned about giving parents unrealistic pictures of where the children stand. I think that ideally we need to send with the report cards, a covering letter that just shows what particular skills and concepts we have covered during that reporting period. It should indicate the child's level of master of whether they understand it, are still working on it, or need to have help. When the parents know exactly what the children have been learning, what's been going on, then you can make very positive comments about their strengths and about how much

they have progressed. Also show areas they still need to work on.

R: Are you saying you believe each teacher should develop their own checklist of the things the children have been working on, not a general universal checklist that applies to everyone?

Sarah (108):

Yes. That, in addition to doing evaluation of each child, you have to do a very quick resume of what's been covered in each subject area during each specific reporting period. Often I think in report cards, especially in the area of social studies and science, it is so vague and children don't often realize they do science, social studies. They often say when do we get to do math?

R: Let's talk about the term developmentally appropriate practice. You must have heard this term before as it's been used a lot, especially in reference to primary classrooms. There was a whole book written in fact, entitled "Developmentally Appropriate Practices".

Jane (109):

Our library just got that.

R: I guess I want to know if you've heard about it, what you've heard and what are your thoughts about it?

Jessica (110):

I took it out from the library, but didn't get a chance to read it. But to me the term developmentally appropriate practices is sort of like apple pie. Of course, we're going to do appropriate practices. I mean, who's going to do developmentally inappropriate practices? Maybe we do, but not deliberately. We're not going to do that. We're going to attempt to do appropriate practices, and to me that means...practices that are going to enhance the child's self-concept. Because that's the number one indicator of what anyone can do, child, adult, what you believe you can do you do. So if we give the children tasks, whereby they can have some success, it's developmentally appropriate. We don't expect them all to be doing the same thing at the same time. We accept and praise what they can do. We don't ever say, well, look he's doing so much better than you, why don't you do what he's doing? With the writing is a great example. Some children can't even form letters yet, they're just doing hieroglyphics. But if that's the best they can do, it's developmentally appropriate for that child to be making hieroglyphics. But there are differences of opinion. Some people I think, would think it's developmentally appropriate for that particular child to do pre-writing things like drawing a bunch of circles or drawing a bunch of squares. I think it's just as well for him to be doing what

he thinks are letters.

R: You would say developmentally appropriate practices applying it to the classroom is for the teacher to accept each child where they are?

Jessica (111):

As long as they're doing their best.

R: And the teacher's job?

Jessica (112):

To move them along so they're always doing their best.

R: So you look at where the child is developmentally and then help them grow and develop?

Jessica (113):

Right.

R: How do you see this fitting in with the curriculum? I mean, the teacher has a curriculum to teach...

Jessica (114):

No. This does come before the curriculum. This is more important than the curriculum.

R: You believe then, developmentally appropriate practices are more important than the curriculum?

Jessica (115):

Yes. Well, I was just saying to the vice-principal as we were talking about evaluation, that we can't ask children to do the Bader Word Inventory unless they are at an

independent stage of reading. There wouldn't be any point to do that. That would be a developmentally inappropriate practice. To put this Bader Test in front of a kid and say read it, when it's totally meaningless to them. We should keep accepting where they are without trying to move them along and help them make progress.

Sarah (116):

I don't have anything to add to that. Developmentally appropriate seems to me something fairly obvious. We bring in the materials that children are able to use and individual expectations of children's ability and many other emotional considerations at that time.

R: Then the teacher's role is to be conscious of each individual and their own abilities?

Sarah (117):

Yes. I don't think though, if you were teaching a grade 1 class, you'd have different materials, different activities. There are all kinds of themes through which all kinds of children can have their needs met. Within one theme they are all working on a common project with different levels of involvement and different levels of expectations in the end product. But they do have a sense of being part of the class and participating as equals. I think that's very important for self-concept.

R: You're just saying that the teacher only needs to be aware of individual differences?

Sarah (118):

Always so that everyone has the sense of working together and that there are no special activities for those who are not ready yet, within the framework of a common theme or activity they participate. Obviously, we don't bring materials that are potentially dangerous into the classroom. I also think that there's a lot of, a tremendous amount of learning that goes on by working in small groups and working with peers or peer group leaders. Often children progress, quite often having a child who's in need of more help, more attention, working with a more able student. That does not mean it's the more academic, more mature, sometimes children who are not strong in academics, can be leaders in other fields. I always try to find what each child is best at and give them a chance to show and lead and produce things to share with the others.

Jane (119):

In listening to Sarah and Jessica, what came into my mind was, it's almost like a new name of individualized instruction. I think teachers have been doing that for a long, long time, accepting where a child is at and trying to build on that, trying to encourage and make the child feel

that they are in a safe environment where they're okay no matter what they can and cannot do. They are not measured against the best writer in the classroom, the best reader in the classroom. This is what you can do and that's okay.

But we would like to get there and there are certain things we will do to try and get that person there, and that would come under developmentally appropriate practices. If, like Jessica says, this child is writing hieroglyphics at least he feels he is writing like everybody else. He's not being taken to a corner and made to use different materials that would make him stand out, that would make him feel different. We can look at our published books and we can see some kids have five or six sentences with punctuation on a page, and others have something that has been scribed for them. But they're all published. It didn't have to be five sentences with punctuation. Your book is valid and yours is too, but they are different.

R: You're saying you have to recognize individual differences?

Jane (120):

Yes, and that's your job as a teacher.

R: We've talked about a number of components related to primary classrooms, and I'd like to know if you think anyone can be an early years teacher, or do you need some early years qualifications either at the in-service or university level?

Jane (121):

No, I don't think just anyone can be an early years teacher. You have to like small children and know something about how they think, how they process information, and what motivates them. I think the fact that they are active and can't sit still for very long and to listen is difficult. They don't have long attention spans like older students might. They are all at different levels. I'm sure older students are too, but I don't think the gap is quite as big. In grade one there is enormous differences, like some kids are reading, some are not reading. I don't think just anyone could walk in and teach. I think some early years workshops would be good. In teaching grade one you have to keep them busy, find things to motivate them, let them move around. I don't really know if anyone could just walk in and teach grade one. I mean, I think they could teach them or they could try to teach them, but I don't know if it would work for every child in the classroom. I think you need some early years, either a workshop or something just so you are aware of what they are like. I mean, your teaching methods would have to change somewhat to come down to their level. You have to start with the basics with younger children because if you are used to teaching older students, younger children don't always know what you mean when you say line

up, write your name here in the top left hand corner.

R: Sarah, what are your thoughts about necessary qualifications for early years teachers?

Sarah (122):

I taught in a French bilingual program and at that time no one had enough French. Only high school teachers spoke French and could teach it. There was tremendous damage done to self-concept for the children and the teachers as they struggled. Certainly it was not an activity-based program.

R: What kind of training do you think is necessary?

Sarah (123):

Some developmental training and psychology to know the sequence of development.

R: At the university level?

Sarah (124):

Yes.

R: Did you want to comment Jessica?

Jessica (125):

I agree. I think teachers should have training and for those who don't have training, as much in-servicing as possible. I went to an active learning workshop last year because I didn't come out of early childhood training. I took elementary education. But what I wanted to do was very different than what I learned at university.

R: So you are thinking that university isn't that important as long as you have in-services...

Jessica (126):

I think people coming out of university now are getting a lot of good training. Students now are getting a lot of good early childhood approaches. I wouldn't like it now if I was asked to go back to university for training.

R: You're suggesting for people who have finished university, it's necessary for them to take early years in-services, etc. before walking in to teach an early years program?

Jessica (127):

Yes, definitely.

Sarah (128):

Yes, I do too. Perhaps the most practical learning comes from in-services.

R: Both of you are saying that not just anybody can walk in and be an early years teacher.

Jessica (129):

You have to know what materials to set up, what activities to plan, you have to know the developmental level of students.

R: It's really hard to be an early years teacher.

Jessica (130):

Harder now than it once was. But in one way I think it's

easier because now we are meeting the needs of the children.

Sarah (131):

To do it very well, it's physically and emotionally, intellectually very demanding. It's not too difficult to do it superficially without the knowledge of developmental psychology and without knowing, planning the kind of activities that will lead to children making great leaps in understanding. For them to develop the concepts, see relations and draw conclusion.

Jessica (132):

It's a lot more difficult than running off purple papers. It think it's easier because children are a lot more interested in the learning process.

Reflections on Group Interview No. 1

As our first interview began, I had hoped my questions would promote teacher thinking about play, and discussion of how teachers construed their practices related to play in the classroom. As the interview started though, I felt the teachers were trying to fit their answers to what they thought I wanted to hear about play. By discussing concepts such learning centers, child-centered learning, activity based learning and developmentally appropriate practices, I

hoped to provide the context in which teachers could discuss their personal practical knowledge (theory, constructs, values, experiences, beliefs and content knowledge) about play in their early years classrooms. I explored each teacher's thinking, keeping in mind, the work of Elbaz (1983), Clandinin (1986), and Schon (1987) as well as the theory of play (Piaget 1962, 1972) and theoretical principles underlying early year's practice (NAEYC/NAECS/SDE, Burchfield and Burchfield 1992).

Teacher 1

In discussing the whole concept of play, Jane spoke in very general terms about various concepts and had some difficulty explaining how play would manifest itself in an early years classroom. "That's one thing I think" I think some of it". That was one aspect". (p.51-52, p.1,2 & 3) "the one thing I thought" (p.60, p.21), "I'm not at the point where I feel confident"... (p.76, p.67), "Part of it is that"... (p.78, p.70) "In listening to Sarah and Jessica, what came into my mind was"... (p.99, p.119). Elbaz (1983) would explain this teacher as struggling to bring her knowledge to a state of awareness. Piaget (1962, 1972) would see this Teacher as trying to integrate information into her own

scheme of understanding or knowledge. Jane had a need to justify her thoughts and practices throughout this interview. She used words like "each activity that is placed in the center, has a goal and an objective"... (p.56, p.14), "they change and follow the curriculum"... (p.60, p.22), "I don't feel confident that the children will choose a theme that will encompass the skills that the curriculum sets down"... (p.76, p.66). The goals and objectives and skill orientation of the curriculum seemed to function as this teacher's rule of practice in the classroom. The curriculum guide was important to Jane as it gave her a concrete and justified definition of her work.

The practical principle underlying this teacher's practice seemed to be that the teacher was the center of the learning process. "Although I give my children choice... a lot of it is teacher directed "...most of the things were teacher-chosen, teacher directed"... (p.76-77, p.66 & 67) "I usually decide "... (p.77, p.68) "that's your job as the teacher"... (p.100, p.120). As indicated in her statements she believed in giving children choices within teacher directed activities. She believed child-centered meant "we take the kids at the level they can handle"... (p.78, p.69). Overall, Jane

felt a strong sense of responsibility to teach the curriculum and instill new learning or knowledge in her children. Although Jane believed "children used materials to develop concepts" (p.85, p.88), she was not confident as she said a few times... "I don't feel confident...I'm not at the point where I feel confident "... (p.76, P.66 & 67) in the belief that children would learn what "they needed to know" through self-directed, self-referenced (Monighan-Nourot 1990 & others) concrete experience (Piaget 1950-1972). She used her past teaching experience..."It is so different from how we used to teach" (p.86, p.88), "I come from a background where teaching was very directed, I wasn't a facilitator, I was the ultimate" (p.76, p.67) as a frame of reference as she reflected on her present practices.

Teacher 2

Sarah seemed to draw on her theoretical constructs of child development theory to explain the concept of play in the classroom. She referred to language development, social learning, development of self-esteem, sense of self-concept and conceptual development as a guide to explain her practices. She used terms like "conceptual development, problems to solve,

emotional conflicts, social growth and mastery of new skills" (p.52-53, p.4 & 5) as she discussed the purpose of using play as a "medium" or mode of instruction in the classroom. To her the curriculum was associated with active play. "I don't find the curriculum so restrictive because we do a lot of experimenting and discovery, formulating hypotheses and testing them and all this comes into the play" (p.69, p.52). As she further explained her thoughts of curriculum and child-centered learning, she echoed many early years principles. In her classroom, I understood the curriculum develops from the experiences of the learner and it may be changed by the learner. "Very often centers happen, not from my planning, but it has come from what the children have been doing or learning, or the ideas that have come from another center" (p.73, p.61). To her child-centered learning arose "from the interests and ideas that the children generate... activities are set up for them to learn and experiment and develop concepts around particular ideas and interests, they have raised" (p.73, p.61). Further to her discussion, she touched on child-centered as being age appropriate, activity-based and offering choices. When asked how the children participated as decision-

makers in the curriculum she stated that there is much discussion in her class, "the ideas come, they discuss, negotiate, compromise and work out more things or plans, they can develop in the centers" (p.75, p.65). Overall she felt the children should take an active role in their learning...". I let that happen...I encourage that. I think that is child-centered, where many ideas are generated by the children" (p.74, p.62).

In Sarah's dialogue, I recognized several concepts which seemed to indicate imagistic possibilities. Images (Elbaz 1983) of her as a negotiator emerged as she described her work with the children. She said there is "lots of decision making and a lot of good cooperation and a lot compromise" (p.80, p.74). She spoke of her need to participate with the children and be actively involved in helping "develop the language, thinking skills and be actively involved in the learning" (p.58, p.18). She felt it was important "that everyone has the sense of working together and they have a sense of being part of the class and participating as equals" (p.98, p.117). A practical principle of Elbaz's and Burchfield's (1992) of let's learn together seem to be shaping as she described the social context of her classroom.

Teacher 3

Jessica similar to Jane did not give many detailed descriptions of play and had difficulty verbalizing some of her practices. I was reminded of Schon's (1987) notion of knowing-in-action in that Jessica cited numerous past experiences with children, rather than general principles. I found Jessica to be very honest and reflective of her personal strengths and weaknesses. As she discussed learning centers, she responded with statements such as, "haven't really....I intend to...I'm going to put things but I would like to but I'm a little leery"...(p.62, p.29) indicating she realized this was a weak area of her classroom practices. Although Jessica believes in "playtime" and "free exploration", she indicates that at that time, she "reads with individuals.... I teach reading at that time to individuals" (p.63, p.30). She realizes her strength is in the area of teaching reading, so she abandons playtime to focus her attention on working with individual children. I felt Jessica demonstrated a deep sense of responsibility for her students in letting them have "free choice or free exploration of materials" (p.61-62, p.25 & 28), regardless of her own preferences and strengths. She had internalized and maintained

beliefs about play although she was comfortable with direct teaching as she said in her preference to teach reading while children were engaged with materials.

Jessica seemed to accept the views of early years curriculum, but as the interview continued, she expressed uncertainties about how they could be applied in the class setting. Jessica felt "play is how children explore and make intuitive discoveries" (p.53, p.6). She felt teachers "guide play by providing...the materials" (p.53, p.6). To express her concerns she said, "I am working towards having children cover more of the curriculum through play and at this point I'm not sure of how to do it"... (p.55, p.9), "my centers are free exploration... I haven't structured them so I feel that they are meeting any of the curricular objects"... (p.60, p.23). She provided "time for children to pursue their own interests, and make their own discoveries" (p.63, p.29). To explain the relationship between herself and students, she felt it was important to give children choices but their choices were teacher directed. "I've always provided the themes and given children choices within the theme" (p.72, p.56). When asked if the children participated as a decision maker she said, " yes , to a certain extent, but not

totally... , I'm giving them the choice of four different types of writing, but they have to choose one of them"... (p.72, p.57). Jessica described child-centered learning as the "child being the main focus rather than the teacher" (p.72, p.56).

During this interview, Jessica did not see herself as possessing a strong working knowledge of the various concepts discussed. She knew she possessed certain beliefs and these had evolved out of past life experiences. I was alerted to Clandinin's (1986) view of an image as a "coalescence of experience" (p.130). I sensed Jessica's thoughts were associated with personal beliefs that she had acquired through her past teaching experiences.

The last discussion of this interview dealt with qualifications to teach in an early years classroom. Jane and Jessica felt that teachers should have training either by a workshop or by in servicing. Sarah thought some developmental training and psychology at the university level would provide individuals with the knowledge of the sequence of child development.

As the interview ended, I believed the group had begun a journey (Pinar 1981) of "heightened

consciousness" or "awareness" in understanding their thoughts about play and their actions in the classroom.

Reactions

From the first interview with Jane, Sarah and Jessica, I felt that all three teachers were well versed on the theory of early years concepts. However, I was left wondering how their beliefs of the concepts of play, learning centers, child centered learning, activity based learning and developmentally appropriate practices would be implemented in their classroom practices. Would there be a gap between the intended theory and the actual practices in the classroom? I wondered how each teacher's background experience influenced their interpretations of the early years concepts. How did the experiences, values and theory influence the teachers thinking? Last of all, I was curious as to how the teachers organized the curriculum or the main framework of their programs. What role did the students play in designing or organizing the classroom curriculum?

I realized I would have to ask all three teachers, individually, more information about the organization of the curriculum in their program. As Rosegrant & Bredkamp (1992) remind us, meaningful curriculum results from

conceptual organizers (such as themes, units or projects), child development knowledge (cognitive, sociemotional, language and physical development of child), knowledge base of academic subjects (math, science, social studies, language arts, health, art and physical education) and knowledge of the continuum of development and learning for children in various age groups. Summarizing this view, curriculum needs to consult and focus around the whole child: address the childrens' interests and needs, be age appropriate and individually appropriate (focusing on developmental and learning differences among individuals) and include content knowledge of the academic areas. The essence of this view is the belief that the learner plays an active role in shaping the learning process. Keeping this view in mind, questions such as their role and the child's role in determining the curriculum, the organization of themes, the decision making process, the selection and arrangement of classroom materials, the scheduling of activities and the evaluation of students in the classroom, came to mind.

As the interview ended, I found Jane spoke in very general terms about the various concepts. At times, she contradicted herself, indicating that she was still

trying to make sense of her practices (teacher directed- child initiated, prescribed curriculum- child centered curriculum) on a continuum as they related to the early years. Sarah was very articulate about her beliefs and how the concepts would be implemented in the classroom. I thought that Sarah would be practicing many of her beliefs when I visited her classroom as she had a strong commitment to them. Jessica, similar to Jane, seemed to be struggling to make sense of her practices in view of early years concepts. I found Jessica to be honest in revealing that, although she believed in many concepts, she was unsure of how to implement many of these ideas in her classroom practices. I thought that Jessica would be experimenting with some of these concepts because she felt it was necessary, even though she was unsure of their value. I wondered how the responses of these teachers would change once I had observed their classrooms and they had to explain those concepts in terms of what they were practicing in their classrooms.

I was anxious to begin the classroom observations and the individual interviews, as I wanted to know more about the relationship between teacher thinking, theory and practice.

Jane's Classroom

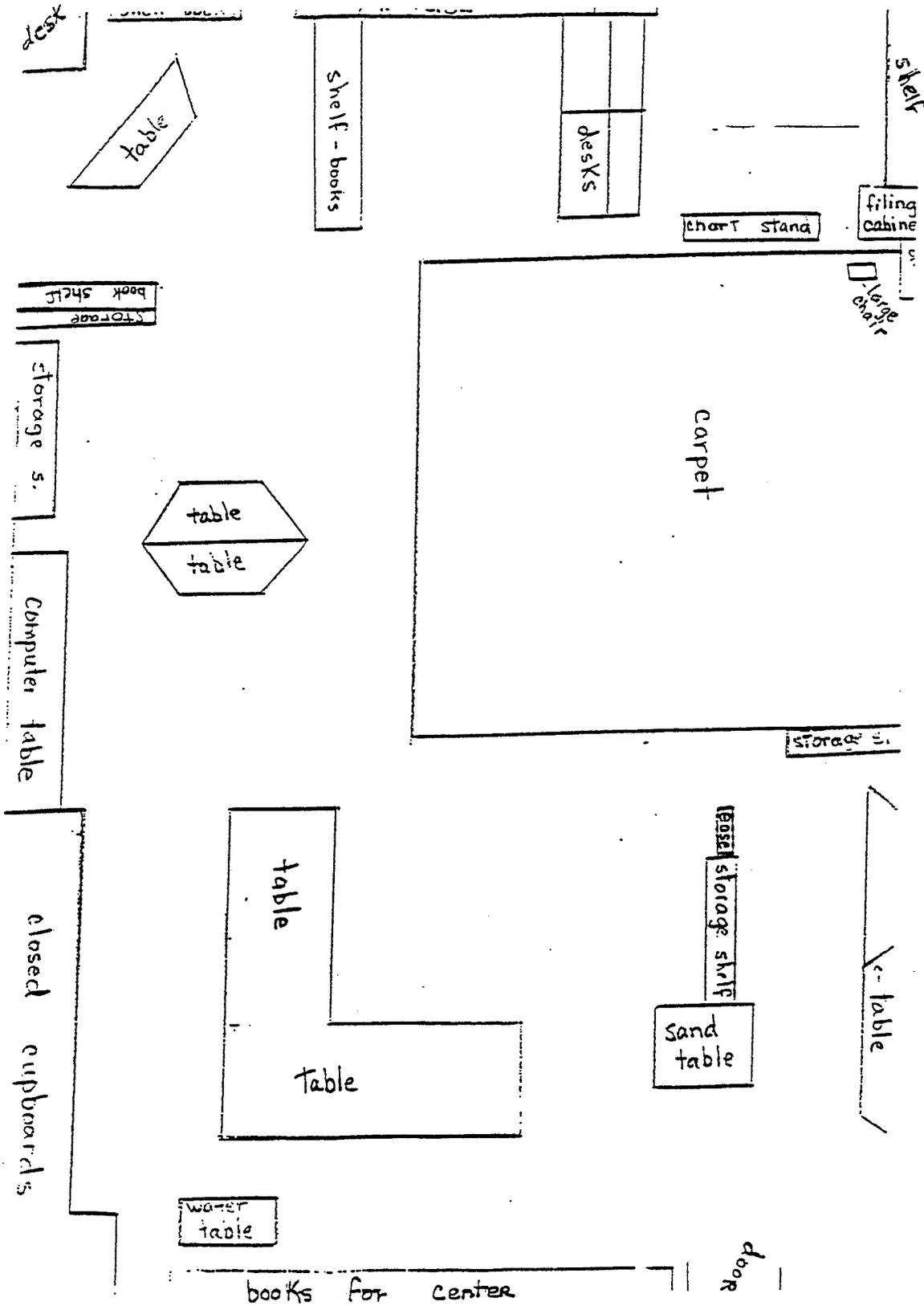
When I visited the first teacher's classroom, (Map of classroom, Figure 1), I was very careful to sit writing oblivious to others, in the corner of the classroom. I wanted to remain objective and not get involved in disturbing or interacting with the students. I wanted a total day's view of the teaching context of this teacher's classroom so I could ask her about the many things that occurred during the day. I am fortunate that the students knew me so they were not that curious as to what I was writing. I talked with many students at the recess and lunch breaks.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Observation

9:00 Large group of children (20 altogether) are seated together on the carpet. The teacher calls the roll call and picks helpers for the day. The teacher reviews days of the week, weather, number of days the children have been in school, number of boys/girls present and pattern shape to be added to the calendar. The teacher draws the attention of the group to a message she has written for them on

Figure 1, Jane's Classroom.



the bulletin board. The children choral read the message. The teacher talks with the group about the long/short sound of the letter "u". She picks a few students to circle words with the letter "u" in them. She has the whole group read a poem entitled, "I like Bugs", and asks the group what other substitutes of words can be made in the poem. The teacher explains that she has put out three activities (pattern blocks and shape cards, geoboards and elastics, and a box of small colored geometrically shaped blocks) for math this morning. She explains they will be exploring these materials. She picks each group of students and instructs them as to which activity to go to.

9:45 The children leave the carpet area to start activities. At the carpet area the children are to explore the wooden colored blocks. The teacher sits and watches as some of the children start building. The teacher poses the following questions:

What are you trying to build?

What kind of blocks did you use? (Teacher inquiring use to shapes of blocks)

What kind didn't you use? Balls?

What do you call these? (Teacher holds up small wooden sphere).

Why didn't you use these? (Refers to the spheres).

to this group of 7 children sitting on the carpet. Six children are seated around two trapezoid tables using the pattern blocks and corresponding cards. The cards are self-correcting as small shapes are given and the object is to find the blocks that correspond to the shapes.

A third group (7) of children are working at two long rectangular tables. There is a question written on a piece of paper..."Can you make these shapes on the geoboard"? There are shapes drawn on white cards. The children are trying to copy these shapes, using elastic on their boards.

9:55 The teacher turns out the lights and tells the children which center they will be going to next. Eg. The children at the carpet area will move to the geoboards. The geoboard children move to the pattern blocks, etc.

10:06

The teacher turns out the lights again. She suggests to the children to clean up their materials before moving to the next activity.

The teacher circulates to all the groups and returns to new group on the carpet.

10:10

The teacher again turns out the light, checks with each group at their new activity and returns to the carpet.

10:20

Lights are turned off and the teacher tells the children to clean up the last area where they were working.

10:20-10:35 - Recess

10:40

The children have hung up their coats and have assembled on the carpet. Another adult starts to read the book entitled, "Rosie's Walk", to the large group. The teacher has two students helping her set out snacks on tables for the children. The adult picks one of the children to sit on a chair and read, "Cat in the Hat", by Dr. Suess, to the group.

10:46

The children leave the carpet to sit on chairs and eat their snacks.

10:55

Most of the children are finished their snacks, some have taken a book and are seated on the carpet. Others are standing around the bookshelves looking at the books.

11:00

Classroom teacher leaves classroom, some papers in her hands. Another adult enters the classroom and gathers the children on the carpet. The adult previously in classroom selects nine children and leaves the classroom with them.

The adult reads a book called, "The Hungry Caterpillar", to eleven children seated on carpet. The adult asks the students to name other bugs that could be written about in a book. The group of children generate ideas while the adult writes them on the board. The list includes: caterpillars, ladybugs, ants, beetles, dragonflies, spiders, worms, etc. Adult asks the students if they know what bugs eat?

11:17

The children take blank paper and folders entitled "writing folders" to their tables.

The adult circulates the classroom checking with each student.

11:25

The adult asks the whole group "Who has written down a word I can see?" A few hands go up and the adult heads for those children.

11:27

The classroom teacher returns.

11:35

The other adult who previously left the classroom with a small group, returns with her group. The adult circulating the classroom leaves the room.

11:46

Both the classroom teacher and other adult are circulating among the students talking with each one individually.

11:55

The children are asked to finish what they are doing and clean up. The children clean up and return to the carpet. The teacher has a small discussion with the children and asks them to get dressed for lunch.

12:00

Children leave for lunch.

1:00 The children re-enter the classroom and sit on the carpet. Four older students arrive at the door and the teacher selects four students to buddy up with them. The four younger children select books and leave the classroom, books in hand, accompanying older students. The classroom teacher explains she has two books to share with the class. She starts to read the first one, entitled "bugs".

1:20 The older students return the children to the classroom. All children are on the carpet listening to the story.

1:22 The story is completed and the teacher says she is going to explain the activities for the children to choose from. She tells the group "the blocks you used this morning are out, there is plasticine at the art center for you to make an insect, there is a stamp in which you can use your thumb to make a ladybug. At the writing center you can write about insects. At the science center we will be starting our insect booklets. I'll be calling you in small groups to work with me there. The computer is set up for the helpers of the day to use. I didn't get

a chance to change the tape at the listening center.

1:30 The children leave the carpet area.

1:35 Teacher calls 4 children to work with her. The sheet she hands to the children requires the children to add one word to complete the following sentences:

All insects have _____ body parts.

All insects have _____ legs.

Insects have _____ feelers.

Insects have _____ wings.

Insects have hundreds or thousands of

_____.

The teacher helps the student to generate ideas and write those ideas in standard spelling on the sheets.

2 children at the sandbox

3 children working on the computer

2 children building with lego

3 children building using the colored blocks

3 girls sitting around the desk which has a tape recorder, 3 headsets And no tapes in sight

2 children at the water table

1 child drawing with markers

- 1:45** Teacher glances up from where she is seated at long rectangular tables and tells one child..."You need to make a choice".
- 1:50** The teacher calls 4 new students to work with her.
- 2:00** A new group is called to work with the teacher. The teacher walks over to the water table to talk with one student who is using plastic tubing. On her way back to the table where she was sitting, she shuts out the lights saying, "Everyone is making too much noise. It's all right to talk, but some people are making unnecessary sounds". The teacher returns to the small group of students seated at the tables.
- 2:05**
- 1 child is in the sandbox.
 - 2 children at the water table
 - 3 children seated with the teacher
 - 1 child writing on the chalkboard
 - 5 children working on lego
 - 1 child doing puzzles
 - 4 children at the computer
 - 3 children still seated around tape recording, styling one child's hair.
- 2:08** The teacher turns out the lights asking the children to stop what they are doing and show her

10 fingers. She announces it's clean up time. She says, "if you have something to share, save it until after recess". The teacher begins to direct the clean up.

2:12 Children return to the carpet area. The teacher checks the classroom and asks the children to line up for recess. The teacher has all the children return to the carpet and asks them to try to line up once more.

2:15-2:30 - Recess

2:35 Children have entered the classroom and are seated on the carpet. Teacher walks to the intercom and buzzes, saying "Could you send the vice-principal down here please, as I am having some difficulty with one of my students". An adult arrives and takes the child with her.

2:37 The teacher returns to the carpet and inquires whether anyone has something to show or tell the group about. Two boys bring a lego project to the front of the class and tell about it. The teacher asks if the group has any questions to ask them. Another child wants to read a book she made. (The book appears to have been made at another time). The teacher tells the group that we only have time

for two questions to be asked of the children whom are sharing. Two children talk about something they found at recess. One child stands up to talk about a book she read the night before. During the discussions, the teacher asks questions of the children.

- 2:50** The teacher asks the whole group what they know about ladybugs. Children raise their hands to give information.
- 2:55** The teacher starts to read a book to the group about ladybugs. The teacher stops reading to review the life cycle of the ladybug as illustrated in book. A jar is passed around containing live ladybugs.
- 3:05** The teacher finishes reading the book.
- 3:10** The teacher asks two children to bring the book bags out to the carpet. An adult interrupts wanting to borrow the computer. The teacher helps to move the computer table from the classroom.
- 3:13** Teacher returns to carpet and reminds the children they may not choose to sign out a book unless their last one has been returned.

- 3:20** Teacher sitting on carpet is having one student read to her. Another child arrives when this one is finished.
- 3:25** The teacher asks students to put the books away in their bags or back on the shelves. The teacher shuts off the lights and asks the group, "what does it mean when I shut off the lights"? Reminds the children she wants them to stop when the lights are off. The teacher escorts one child out the door and shuts the door, leaving the child outside the classroom. Teacher asks large group to put their chairs up and line up for home time.
- 3:30** The teacher dismisses the students for home.

Summary of Observations

Jane appeared to be organized for the visit. Her day began with a group meeting, followed by math, the exploration of materials. The math exploration period appeared to be very teacher directed as the teacher picked the group of students and picked the activity they would go to. At each of the three activity centers there was a job for the children to do: at the pattern blocks the children used self-correcting cards, at the geoboards there were shapes or white cards with a question, asking them to copy the shapes and at the

geometric blocks, the children were expected to build something. To move the groups along the teacher used the lights as a signal and told each group which activity was their next selection. I wondered how the children were exploring these materials when they had a specific task to complete. I looked forward to a group discussion period or debriefing session whereby the children might share new discoveries they had made with the materials. Recess followed this activity. The rest of the morning, the teacher was replaced for a certain time by another teacher who directed the writing subject during writing time to half of the class. When the classroom teacher and other adult returned, they circulated among the individual students.

In the afternoon, the children gather on the carpet, the teacher read a story about bugs and she explained the activities she had set out for the children to choose from. She gave instructions about what to make with the materials, what topics to write about and who could use the computer. The teacher called a group to work with her on a paper and pencil task at the science center. Other children were called to complete a fill-in-the-blank sheet. As I glanced around the room I recorded what activities the children

were involved in and how many were working together. I happened to notice that no children had chosen to use the plastercine at the art center to make a bug or use their thumb and the stamp pad to make a ladybug. Perhaps a more open activity would have interested students as it would have allowed them to use their imaginations and be creative. Three children continued to sit around the tape recorder even though there were no tapes in the machine as the teacher indicated. They seemed to be doing some role playing as it appeared they were using the headphones as a telephone. One child seemed to be involved in drawing with markers rather than writing about insects. Soon it's clean-up time and the teacher announces it is sharing time after recess.

After recess, the children gather on the carpet. The teacher inquires whether anyone has something to show or tell, the group. Most of the children shared other things they had done at another time except for two boys who had made a lego project. The teacher informed the group that there is only time for two questions to be asked of the children whom are sharing. The day ended with the teacher reading a book to the group about ladybugs while a jar was passed around for the children to examine some live ladybugs. The

excitement over the specimens was adamant among the group. A quick glance of the bugs was followed by the sign out of library books. Soon it was time for home and the teacher dismissed the students.

Reflections

As I mentioned, Jane seemed to be very organized for my visit as she controlled most of the day. It was interesting to observe this teacher as it showed me how each individual interprets theory based on their own experiences. For example, this teacher said she used themes as a method of teaching in her classroom, yet, I did not see much stimulating creations or visuals hanging up in the classroom. At the time of this visit, this teacher was studying insects or bugs as a topic with her students. A quick glance of this classroom, showed there were no interest centers or materials set up for independent research by students on this topic. I would have thought the teacher might have a variety of centers where the children could bring in different kinds of specimen samples in which to classify or sort different bugs, the children could learn about the process of mounting bugs, the children could dissect bugs to learn about their body parts, the children could watch larvae to see how mosquitoes grow and develop, the

children could write to companies and research about the pesticides that control various groups of insects, and the children could draw, paint or sculpture large scaled bugs to investigate the various kinds. My thoughts of using themes to connect the real world to the child's experiences in the classroom through play, seemed different from Jane's.

The observation of this day, showed the teacher to be very much in control of the decisions and the structure of the learning. As I thought about our first interview, Jane had said she used a child centered, hands-on approach to learning, whereby she gives the children several choices. But in reference to choice time, Jane said, "although I give my children choice... a lot of it is teacher directed, teacher chosen" (p.76, p.66 & 67). Again, I found my definition of these concepts to be very different from Jane's ideas. The choices offered to the children on this day were all teacher directed and very closed ended activities, which means they did not allow much individual thinking or creativity on the child's part. Some of the activities observed in the morning were the math activities (pattern blocks with matching cards, geoboards and elastics to make geometric shapes). While the afternoon

activities were the choice activities (the plastercine bug and the thumb print ladybug). I wasn't surprised that when given a chance to make a decision, in the afternoon, none of the children chose to go to these activities.

The sharing time near the end of the day was particularly interesting. Of the six children that wanted to share, only two individuals had something that they had made to share from that choice time period. The creation had nothing to do with the topic of study, insects. The rest of the individuals had other products they wanted to share. Instead of a debriefing session to discuss new discoveries or share new learning, the sharing time in the classroom was much like show and tell. In this format, higher level questions are difficult to formulate and in most cases the response is... "isn't that nice".

From what I had observed this day a number of questions came to my mind regarding the child's role in the development of the curriculum for the classroom. I wondered how Jane determined the needs and interests of the children in her classroom as she was busy in the afternoon calling groups to complete a fill-in-the-blank activity. Perhaps I had failed to understand this was

another form of a hands-on activity. I wondered if the children generated ideas or questions about topics and how their ideas were developed. I wondered if Jane observed and interacted with the children when they were making choices so that she may have noticed the lack of interest, motivation and stimulation in her present theme. I would ask Jane more about the development of curriculum through our interview together.

Interview with Jane

From our first interview together to my observation of Jane's classroom, I had noted some variances between what Jane had said she believed about various concepts and how she had practiced these concepts in her classroom. I wondered if in the first interview, Jane had been honest, unthinking or unaware in naming the beliefs in her world. Perhaps she had just verbalized ideas for the purpose of the project. I was hopeful that I could understand more of Jane's thinking by asking her to put her classroom experiences into language that she could distance herself from and we could both study. Individually, I thought, Jane would feel more comfortable answering the questions related to the child's role in the development of curriculum in her classroom, that the observation had raised for me.

R: How is your program designed? What are some of the goals (curriculum, developmental) you have for the students in your classroom?

Jane (P1):

Some of the goals follow the curriculum and some are more performance and developmental related. I may individualize goals for some things like reading and writing. Some of the goals would be right from the curriculum. Do you want me to be specific?

R: Well, if you're talking to a parent about your program, could you give me some highlights to describe your program?

Jane (P2):

My program is designed to meet the goals and skills laid out in the curriculum. Also, to develop the skills the child comes into the classroom with, develop those further. There are more individual goals in the math and writing. The goals may not be the same for every child.

R: You have mentioned the curricula goals, do you have any developmental goals for the children coming into your program? My program is designed to...

Jane (P3):

Yes, my program is designed to have all children be able to write independently as much as they could and to be reading.

To be able to use the math skills, I guess these are all more curricula goals. I guess the individual goals would be in the language arts especially reading/writing, but there might be some social goals and behavior goals. They would be able to work cooperatively. For example, for them to know you don't hurt other people and you respect their property.

R: Then your program is designed to follow the curriculum and hopefully the children will develop socially while they are in your room. Is that what you're saying?

Jane (P4) :

Hopefully have some individual goals as well as not all of them will read and write at the same time. You want to develop goals for each individual.

R: How do you deal with individual or developmental differences in your classroom? Today I saw most of the children doing the same task at certain parts of the day. Was anyone experiencing difficulty with any particular task? If they were, what other kinds of things would you do with them.

Jane (P5) :

Are you talking about writing? If I notice someone is having difficulty with writing, I may sit with them and record for them or I may give them a model to copy from. I

may just assist them. They may be able to tell me the letters, but they can't make the letters. They might need an alphabet or some kind of model where they can find the letters. Other kids would be encouraged to add more detail. Some of them may write all by themselves without a model. It would really depend on their level.

R: You are looking at what the individual can accomplish. You give everyone a certain task, but you say you observe their capabilities and then you may moderate the tasks for them.

Jane (P6) :

Individualize the task.

R: Then according to what you are saying, they are all doing the same task but at different levels.

Jane (P7) :

Yes, that's what I'm saying.

R: Do you consider your program to be an activity-based program? Why or why not?

Jane (P8) :

Yes, I consider it to be activity-based because a lot of the things we do in my class are hands on. The ideas are generated by the children themselves. There is a lot of brainstorming. I don't use a basal reading series. They choose their own books. They choose the activity they want

to do after the book is read. There is a lot of choice. More activity than paper and pencil task. A lot of their follow-up is an activity rather than filling in the blanks or writing in answers. A lot of things are their responses. Yes, I would consider my program to be activity-based.

R: How is the curriculum approached in your class? Is there time allotted for certain subjects or is there an integration of curriculum?

Jane (P9):

I try to integrate. I don't have a time slot for social studies, science or health, but I incorporate it into my themes. I try to meet the goals and skills of the curriculum by integrating everything into that theme rather than separating it into subjects.

R: When I came to visit, you had a certain time for math, then you had language arts as I saw a story being read and the children doing some writing. In the afternoon, you had a certain time where you allowed the children to choose what they would like to do, then they cleaned up and then they had reading time.

Jane (P10):

Yes, they had silent reading and they signed out books for home reading.

R: Then math is a separate time in your classroom?

Jane (P11):

Yes, I guess math would be a separate time, but I do incorporate it into the curriculum as well. We might do a graph or sort animals, depending on the theme, but I do have a time set aside for math.

R: You have a time set aside for math, time for...

Jane (P12):

Time set aside for language arts. It could be writing, it could be a story, shared book experience...

R: Then you don't have a certain time for art, science, health...

Jane (P13):

No.

R: When would you do those things? How would you integrate...

Jane (P14):

It becomes part of the math and language arts. If we are doing a theme on animals we might do a sorting activity, which is math, but I don't say, okay now we're doing math. We might sort animal pictures so we are classifying. It's science, but we are reading the animal names so that's language. Then during activity time, I might have a science center set up where they do more just science-type activities, but again, it's integrated with a lot of other things.

R: Today you followed a certain schedule of activities: math and language arts in the morning and choice time and reading in the afternoon. Is every day similar to this one?

Jane (P15):

Yes, it's basically the same every day. Some mornings we may start with language arts instead of math. It depends when my support teacher is scheduled to work in my room. It's a good time to do writing when the support teacher is in, as it allows another adult time to help out with the differences in the class. She may take a group who is reading very independently and add on details with them. I'll work with the kids who need help.

R: Do you use themes in your classroom?

Jane (P16):

Yes.

R: What is the present theme? How was it chosen?

Jane (P17):

We were doing insects.

R: You use a thematic approach?

Jane (P18):

Yes.

R: How was insects chosen?

Jane (P19):

I had quite a few children who started bringing in insects from the playground, ladybugs mostly. We had a jar of ladybugs in the classroom. They would bring in leaves and twigs every day and check on the ladybugs. I thought the interest was quite high for insects so we actually started with ladybugs. Then we went on and did insects as a whole unit.

R: Why do you use a thematic approach?

Jane (P20):

I've taught both ways, using a skill approach where you continue to build upon existing skills, and a thematic approach. I prefer to teach using themes. It's easier for planning as you can brainstorm at the beginning of a theme, you can think of all the things you can do, you can gather your materials, get resources. If you want to order films, you know what you are going to be doing for the next while. It focuses me and facilitates my planning. I can pick books I might want to use. I overall find it easier to plan, and sometimes the theme can be student-generated so the interest is high.

R: I'm curious about the decision-making process in the classroom. In your room, who made the decisions such as how you were going to arrange the room, what materials you would put out, the themes chosen or the curriculum covered? What

input do you get from your students? Let's start with decision-making. Who is in charge of that in the classroom?

Jane (P21) :

I guess I am, because up until we had done insects, I had chosen the theme ahead of time. Sometime during the theme because of their interest, someone might make a comment and we would pursue it. But up until the point which was May when we did insects, the students had not given suggestions for an idea of a theme. I know they should be involved in more decision-making in the classroom, but I guess I haven't come to that point where I feel comfortable relinquishing that role. Maybe I worried that they are not going to make the right decisions. How do you get 20 children to agree on one theme? I guess I say I make the decisions, I decide what materials will be out. Sometimes I will say I didn't put any materials out here, you are free to choose. They can make a decision as to which activity they want to go to. I don't usually have a limit on the number unless it's something that there is just not enough room. Even with the sand and water, once I decided if six people could work there cooperatively and there was no problem... then that's fine and the 6 can stay. So they do have some decisions that they can make, but I guess they are controlled decisions. So I would say I make most of the decisions.

R: What about the input from students?

Jane (P22):

I guess I really haven't got to that stage yet, cause I don't... Nobody in my classroom has said to me, can we take these out at math? Very often nobody will go to a couple of centers and I'll think maybe that wasn't interesting enough or maybe they're tired of playing with that. But nobody has every really come up to me and maybe I haven't encouraged that... and said to me... can we use this? instead of what you put out.

R: How do you decide your themes?

Jane (P23):

Part of it comes from the skills the kids need, that's part of it... what the curriculum sets out, so I have to make sure that whatever theme I pick is going to bring out some of these skills. I probably base a lot of it on what materials will be available to me, that I can use to carry out the theme. If I can't get any materials then it would be kind of hard to do the theme. I try to do it on things the kids are interested in. I know that in the fall they were really interested in ladybugs cause they kept bringing them in every day. I should have maybe done my ladybug thing then, but I had already started on another one so I thought, wait until the spring. So it varies. I guess

right now I'm more comfortable in myself choosing the theme than I am in letting the children. Nobody has every said, can we do dinosaurs or can we do bumble bees.

R: How do you think you build that in?

Jane (P24):

I guess talking about what they're interested in, what they want to learn about. More discussion with them. As I said before, I guess I haven't come that far along on the continuum of...

R: What do you think would be holding you back from that? Is it something you think you would be comfortable in trying? Or have your practices been based on your group this year?

Jane (P25):

No, I don't think so. I think a part of it is old habit. I've always been the one who has decided and I guess it's just habit and maybe one of the things I need to look at for next year is somehow starting in a very small way of giving them some chance for feedback on what they would like to... and maybe it wouldn't be a whole theme. Something and maybe just build on that... and say okay, what do you want to do? Or what do you want to do next? I think a part of it is... it's just an old habit. It's hard to relinquish all of that control. It's like it's my class and I want to do this and

(I don't care what you want to do!) You know, it's that kind of attitude.

R: Why do you think that has developed? You talk a lot about the curriculum really dictating to you about what you're supposed to do with the kids. I guess you feel really responsible for implementing the curriculum.

Jane (P26) :

I guess it's the skills. I don't know just because they say in science do this and this... doesn't necessarily mean you have to do it that way. But as long as they're getting the skills. I guess in the back of my mind... you hear about all these cases where schools are sued, teachers are sued because they didn't teach their kids. For my own sake, safety sake, I can say yes I did do that and I can show you that I did that.

R: Could you explain how your classroom is organized by looking at room layout, Figure 1. What thoughts or considerations influenced where everything was going to be put?

Jane (P27) :

Well, the biggest consideration was where the carpet and chalkboard were, as I like to have everybody on the carpet first think in the morning, for any meetings or important group work. First I worked from that and the one shelf which is bolted to the wall, the cupboard at the back and

the hooks for the coats. There wasn't that much room to work with and I didn't have that much furniture when I moved in there. I guess I tried to make a comfortable arrangement that would allow for some movement but not be wide open where they would want to run. The corner here was chosen for the library as the book shelves could go up against the wall. I would have liked a carpet in that area. I didn't work around the books because they were always playing when I wanted them...

R: What about tables? I see the tables are not all put together?

Jane (P28) :

Well, I guess I arranged the desks in centers and all of the things in that center related to. All the materials like art would be arranged near that center, so the kids could get it out themselves and put it away.

R: So this is the library, and what's next to it?

Jane (P29) :

This is the math area and the computer table. This was science and this was the art center. The sand and water were between art and science. All the art supplies are on this shelf and there's the easel. The science materials could be put on the counter and I could use this area for display, like books. This is my area here where the shelf

is attached to the wall and the filing cabinet is right here.

R: So when you were thinking of setting up your room, you were thinking of the centers you were going to have?

Jane (P30):

Yes

R: Were you considering groupings?

Jane (P31):

Yes. Because the whole class cannot fit at one area. I can work with the whole group at the carpet and then work with smaller groups at the clusters of desks, tables. More cooperative learning can occur with a smaller group.

R: That's another consideration then. First you said movement centers, and then different groupings with this kind of arrangement. This afternoon when I was in, I saw your children chose which activities they wanted to participate in. Explain to me how choice time works in your classroom?

Jane (P32):

First of all, I don't have any limitations on the number of children that can be in a center, unless it becomes so crowded that they can't use the materials effectively and they are not cooperating. Then I would ask the people that arrived there last, or the ones who were being disruptive, to leave. If anybody is not handling the material properly

at a center, or they are being destructive or bothering or hurting others, they would be removed. They might have time out on the carpet until they think about what they had done and they wouldn't go back to that center that day, they would have to find something else. But I don't limit the number of students. I wait to see if they can cooperate unless there is a problem.

R: Then you work out the problem?

Jane (P33):

I would work it out saying these four people were here first, so let's let them have a try at it. They have the choice to go to whatever activity they would like and if they chose the same one over and over again, I don't force them to go to another center. I try to suggest a center or I might take them over to a center and start the activity with them and leave them to their devices watching to see if they stay there.

R: Choice time is in the afternoon?

Jane (P34):

Yes.

R: What if somebody didn't finish something from the morning?

Do these individuals still have choice time?

Jane (P35):

No, they don't. They have to do what they didn't do in the morning. They made that choice. They already chose to do nothing. During choice time they do the work.

R: Tell me about the materials you put out today, did they relate to a theme or were they selected to develop a particular skill? Today I saw the following things out for the children: a fill-in-the-blank sheet on insects, lego, the geometric blocks out, the computer, the listening station, but I don't think it was hooked up or there was any tapes there, and there was the sand and water table. Plus, I think there was plasticine and ink pads out. Why were these particular materials put out?

Jane (P36) :

A lot of them related to the theme. I put out materials related to the theme so we could build on the skills. The insect book was at the science center and they were talking about the parts of the insect. We had discussed that in the morning. There were name the parts and there were posters out there and then they had to fill in the body parts. That was incorporating the science into the activity and to the choice time. At art there was plastercine and I think toothpicks and other things, they were to make a bug or an insect from that. So again, that was using the art, the freedom to make any kind of a bug they wanted. The sand and

water, I don't think related to the theme, but I usually have those available every day because I think it's good for the kids to use the sand and water to explore on their own.

R: With sand and water, you are saying it doesn't always related to your theme. Would you use the sand/water to develop a particular concept or skill?

Jane (P37) :

Yes. Some of the activities done there do develop a particular skill such as measurement or floating/sinking, even to socializing, verbalizing what they are doing, working together building something, digging. Yes, they do develop certain skills, the activity doesn't always relate to the theme. It does develop skills.

R: If someone came into your room today like I did and saw the water table with the tubing in it, what particular skill would you say you were teaching?

Jane (P38) :

I guess the flow of water, water changes shape, whatever container it's being put into. It's different from a solid/gas in that way. Was there just two things?

R: There was tubing, a water wheel...

Jane (P39) :

I guess movement of water, it can go up or down...

R: During choice time did you set up any specific learning centers or interest centers for the children to explore?

Jane (P40):

I don't think I did that day. I don't know. I think we had tried the microscope with an insect, but it didn't work. I don't think we did it the day you were there.

R: So would you say the interest center or learning center would have all the bug things that you were doing all about insects and you just didn't have one. You had different materials set up related to your theme, is that what you are saying? But not all whole area full of things related to insects.

Jane (P41):

Yes, that's basically how the room was set up.

R: Do you feel like you are covering the curriculum when the children are choosing activities? Why or why not?

Jane (P42):

Yes, I feel like I am covering the curriculum. I make sure a lot of the things the curriculum lays out are there.

R: Such as? On this day?

Jane (P43):

Okay, well they were...

R: What's one area in which you could say you were covering the curriculum?

Jane (P44) :

In the writing, because they have to be able to read... I'm not sure if insects is part of the science curriculum in grade one. I don't think it is. Even though we weren't doing something specifically in the curriculum. I think some of the skills are listed in the curriculum: the reading, the writing on their own, observation because we had looked at the insects and different body parts. In the water they were using observation skills too. In the math I think they were using the pattern blocks or geometric blocks. That's one of the things in the curriculum that they can make designs that they understand the pattern blocks, the symmetry you know... continuing to expand on their design, sorting them.

R: What about the lego or geometric blocks, how would you say you are covering the curriculum with these materials?

Jane (P45) :

Well, they are learning to problem solve with the lego. If they want to build something, which ones go together... which ones should they use to make something. They are socializing if they are working with a partner. They are seeing similarities/differences in the geometric solids. They might see which ones roll, slide... They are

discovering... I guess on their own, rather than being teacher-directed, what these things can do.

R: We talked about this already, but I'd like to be more specific. Would you consider the sand/water table to be a learning center?

Jane (P46):

Yes.

R: Many of your colleagues referred to goals and objectives as we discussed learning centers. What were the goals or objectives you had in mind for the students at these centers: a) sand table - materials included: shovels, pails, cars; b) water table - tubing, water wheels; c) blocks - geometric shaped blocks, lego.

Jane (P47):

For the sand I guess one of them would be to work cooperatively with other kids if there were any. To problem solve what should we do with the pails and cars. To develop some creativity, maybe somebody will think of a different way to use the shovels and pails. I guess one of the objectives I hoped they would figure out is that this pail holds so many shovels and this one holds so many, a problem solving activity in that way. The cars were there more as a social type... could they cooperatively build a road, talk

about what they were doing, role play with the cars... bringing out some language development.

The water I already talked about... movement and different pressures of water will it do different things to the wheel... more of an experimentation. Again, the cooperation, problem-solving... what can we do with these materials. Sometimes they have a choice with material and sometimes I pick so I can see if they can use a skill such as a problem-solving or creativity.

The blocks were a problem-solving activity as I've already explained... the discovery of the materials.

R: At choice time you worked with a group of students... you were doing the insect fill-in-the-blank sheet. What do you usually do when the children have choice time?

Jane (P48):

I don't always work with a group, sometimes I do anecdotal observations reports. I try to do everyone once a week. I pick five students one day, sit and watch them from a distance. I'll see if they interact with others, engage in solitary play, or parallel play, work cooperatively, using the same material as the previous day, has one student been going to lego since September. I write down what I observe them doing. Is there progress being made?

R: How can you be sure you know what they're doing?

Jane (P49) :

I just write down what I see.

R: So during choice time you will work with a group or just sit down and observe?

Jane (P50) :

Or I might walk around the room and talk to different children to see if they are actually learning something from the activity they are doing. Can they tell me about what they are doing, can they tell me why something works the way it does. Other times I might work with an individual, someone who hasn't finished some work from the morning. I might talk with someone who has had some behavior problems. I may listen to kids read.

R: During choice time how do you deal with a child who is throwing sand or wandering around and basically not participating.

Jane (P51) :

The one who is wandering I encourage to do something, or I might take them to a center, sit down with them and say... Let's try this together. I try to motivate or encourage them to choose an activity, I stress that this is the time where we get an activity and we can't walk around doing nothing. Although they do like to observe, it's okay only

for a few minutes. I have a hard time justifying why someone is just walking around. The person who is throwing sand would be removed from that activity and they would have time out. I would talk to them and they probably wouldn't go to sand for a while, maybe a week. It would depend on the child.

R: How do you handle social conflicts that may occur between students?

Jane (P52):

Well, I try to be diplomatic and discuss it. If they are fighting over a material and they can't decide who should have the material, I usually take it away and neither one of them have it. They would have to find something else to do. I guess just trying to be really fair and treating everybody equally. When you don't see what happens you can't be the judge and jury. You have to be a sympathetic listener, try to be fair to both sides. I do a lot of talking about why, how would you feel, more discussion and talking. But I do have expectations of them and I guess I'm still the decision-maker in that respect. I don't say to the kids... what do you want to see? How do you think we should handle different problems? I make all of those decisions still.

R: How do you motivate the students in your program?

Jane (P53):

I try to spark interest in them. I might get really exuberant about something or really excited about something. I get melodramatic about it or theatrical about it. I sit down in a center. A lot of positive reinforcement. I may try to find out from the parent or child what the child is interested in and provide something along the same lines during activity time.

R: How do you evaluate the students in your classroom?

Jane (P54):

I look at what they could do when they entered the classroom and through samples of their work, things I have observed from their reading, participating in class discussions, discussions with me.

R: Are the students evaluated throughout the day, including their choice time, or isn't this necessary?

Jane (P55):

Choice time is the only time I get to sit back and be the outside observer and write things down like I noticed... Throughout the day I may write things down like I noticed they were using vowels in their writing. I do ^{anec} ~~anec~~ dototal reports...

R: What do you say to parents or others inquiring about the purpose of the children making choices?

Jane (P56):

First of all, I say the choices are all very structured. They are not free to do what they want. The activity that they are choosing... although the choices are limited... are very teacher directed. I'm the one who puts out the material and I can say to the parent when they come here, it is play but this is what they are learning. I can give them the skills of what they are learning. It still is play, but they're learning from play. I would stress to the parent how important it is that they have the time to do this.

R: How many students are in your class?

Jane (P57) :

Twenty.

R: What kind of support do you receive?

Jane (P58) :

I have a support teacher work in my room everyday except one day in the cycle. She is in my room for an hour a day.

R: Any special needs students in your classroom? How are they provided for?

Jane (P59) :

Yes, I had one who should have been labeled special needs, but for whatever reason he was not considered in their assessments to be a special needs student. His gross and fine motor skills were poor. He had scoliosis and wore a back brace. He had trouble moving and was slow at moving.

He couldn't print because of his lack of control with fine motor skills. He required a lot of modification to his program. We finally got a computer for him and he did have an aide for half an hour a day. She withdrew him from the classroom to work on the computer.

R: You have a chronological age grouping in your classroom?

Jane (P60):

Yes.

R: Do you find this type of grouping favorable to your practices? How would you like to see early years classrooms grouped?

Jane (P61):

I can't really say. I have never experienced a multi-age grouping.

R: In reviewing your information sheet, I see you have a Bachelor of Education. Do you feel your training prepared you to teach in an early years classroom?

Jane (P62):

Yes.

R: I see two of the teachers have taken additional courses related to the early years. Now you did? You took a ...

Jane (P63):

I took active learning workshop.

R: How do you feel it helped you to teach in your classroom?

Jane (P64) :

Well, it wasn't what I expected. There was some good ideas. I think I get more when I observe other teachers in their classrooms. It's hard in the early years to be given the theory you really have to see.

R: Then you need more experience with the practices?

Jane (P65) :

I think so. You have to see programs in operation. You have to see the kids doing these things. I would prefer to go and observe a program and see the kids doing it, rather than someone telling me this is what you should do...

R: How have your practices changed over this school year. Has anything influenced your thinking about early years classrooms?

Jane (P66) :

I've done more activity-based hands on things in math. When I taught early years before, it was more paper and pencil tasks in math. I really feel they (the children) need those manipulatives and hands on things to make sense of numbers and what they are doing. Some methods we used in the past didn't work. For example, we always used basal readers where the children were expected to sit in their desk and work. I always thought play, sand and water were necessary, but I was governed by basals and curriculum. I

always had center time but not the same way. I would say go do your workbook in this center. I never taught through centers. I think now kids who are low on skills need to discover, explore, use manipulatives, and learn on their own without being told... this is the way it is.

Reflections

In inquiring about the child's role in curriculum development I asked about Jane's use of themes in the classroom. Jane used themes as a conceptual organizer as she felt they provided opportunities to organize materials and resources for the classroom. She said she found using themes..."focuses me and facilitates by planning" (p.141, p.20). She mentioned that sometime "the theme can be student generated so the interest is high" (p.141, p.20) but most of the time, themes were based on..."the skills the kids need" as well as "what materials are available to me, that I can use to carry out the theme" (p.143, p.23). When I inquired about the needs and interests of the children or the input from the children, Jane replied... "I guess I really haven't got to that stage yet"... (p.143, p.22) "It's like it's my class and I want to do this and I don't care what you want to do", (p.144-145, p.25). She summed up her practices or "old habits" as she hasn't encouraged input

from students because "it's hard to relinquish all of that control" (p.144, p.25).

The image (Elbaz 1983) or description of the "decision maker" permeated many of Jane's statements. "I guess I say I make the decisions, I decide what material will be out" (p.142, p.21). In reference to social conflicts "I have expectations of them and I guess I'm still the decision maker in that respect... I make all of those decisions still" (p.156.p.52). In this teacher's classroom she took an active role in deciding which materials to put out, deciding topics and themes. She realized children should be more involved in the decision making process but as she said, "I haven't come to that point where I feel comfortable relinquishing that role. Maybe I worried that they are not going to make the right decisions" (p.142, p.21). As the discussion proceeded, Jane became more reflective and admitted that she should "have more discussion with them, to find out what they are interested in and what they want to learn about" (p.144, p.24).

Jane was adamant that her program was "designed to meet the goals and skills laid out in the curriculum" (p.135, p.2). As indicated in interview 1, this approach appeared to be Jane's rule of practice (Elbaz

1983) as she used skill, goals and objectives to justify many of her practices. In discussing her use of themes as a teaching strategy, she said "I try to meet the goals and skills of the curriculum by integrating everything into that theme" (p.138, p.9). In reference to choice time, "I put out materials related to the theme so we could build on the skills" (p.149, p.36). In explaining the concept of play to parents, she said, "I can give them the skills of what they are learning" (p.158, p.56). She used the issued curriculum guide as the number one source to justify her practices and action in the classroom.

Jane's practice was governed by her personal beliefs and values (Clark & Peterson 1986, Spodek 1988). This teacher possessed the belief of a personal sense of responsibility for learning in her classroom. "I guess in the back of my mind...you hear about all these cases where schools are sued, teachers are sued because they didn't teach their kids. For my own sake, safety sake I can say...yes...I did do that and I can show you that I did that" (p.145, p.26). Jane used some personal experiences of past teaching experiences to comment on her present practices. She valued the curriculum guide and felt she was responsible for teaching the curriculum

in terms of content and skills to the children. She refers to goals, objectives and skills throughout the interview to justify her practices. In discussing the purpose of choice in the classroom, she says... "the choices are structured. They are not free to do what they want... the choices are limited...teacher directed... I can say to the parent when they come here, it is play but this is what they are learning. I can give them the skills of what they are learning" (p.158, p.56). Elbaz (1983) would see the principle of teacher control of the learning process, as an important practical principle for this teacher's practice.

As this interview ended, I felt I understood more clearly what Jane valued and what rationale underlied her practices. Jane's most urgent questions have to do with evaluation. The school district provides her with a detailed outline of her curriculum. She's eager to learn what her students are expected to know and how she can teach them the skills she feels will add up to the mastery of the subject or topic chosen. In her practices, Jane searches for units, themes and activities that fit into the prescribed curriculum and carefully follows the steps suggested. For Jane, the curriculum is

clearly outside the classroom in broad outlines and specific details.

Jane sees herself as having to regulate, even control, the children's learning. She invites her children to participate in asking questions, for them to understand what her goals and objectives are for the topics they study. Parents and their opinions are important to Jane which is why she directs and structures all activities in the classroom. She feels very accountable for her classroom and thus, controls all decisions made in it. She does not trust her students to make appropriate choices or learn through their own self-directed activities. Jane bases the majority of her ideas and responses on her background teaching experiences rather than theory.

From Jane's responses in this interview, I knew many of her practices evolved from her previous teaching experiences and early years theory was quite new to her. She was aware of many of the early years concepts as she demonstrated this in our first interview together but her interpretation of these concepts was still at an abstract, theoretical level. Jane realized this herself as she indicated she needed to see more theory in action. It's hard in the early years to be given the

theory, you really have to see it "(p.160, p.64). She had been to a professional development workshop and was exposed to some good ideas but Jane felt she needed time to observe teachers in other classrooms to see theory in action.

The interview helped to clarify my thoughts about the gap that often occurs between theory and practice. This teacher was exposed to the theory of play and based on her past experiences, interpreted the theory to a certain set of practices. Her limited knowledge of theory accounted for the inconsistency that I observed between her belief statements and her practices. Jane verbalized theory such as child centered learning, without really practising it. Jane was exposed to the theory but lacked the understanding and training of the application of theory. This gap in her experience created the variances in her responses. By again reflecting on her practices, through this second interview, Jane was participating in taking charge of her thoughts, decisions and actions, to examine them and try to make sense of them. The more she discussed her practices, the more she became in touch with examining her whole belief system.

I wondered whether I would note changes in Jane's responses by the final interview. Would she begin to question her own beliefs to see if she really believed in certain concepts? What concepts or information about theory would she want to know more about? What kinds of changes would she want to make to her present practices? The whole process was like a mental voyage as Jane and I learned about her ideas of where she had been and where she was going with her practices.

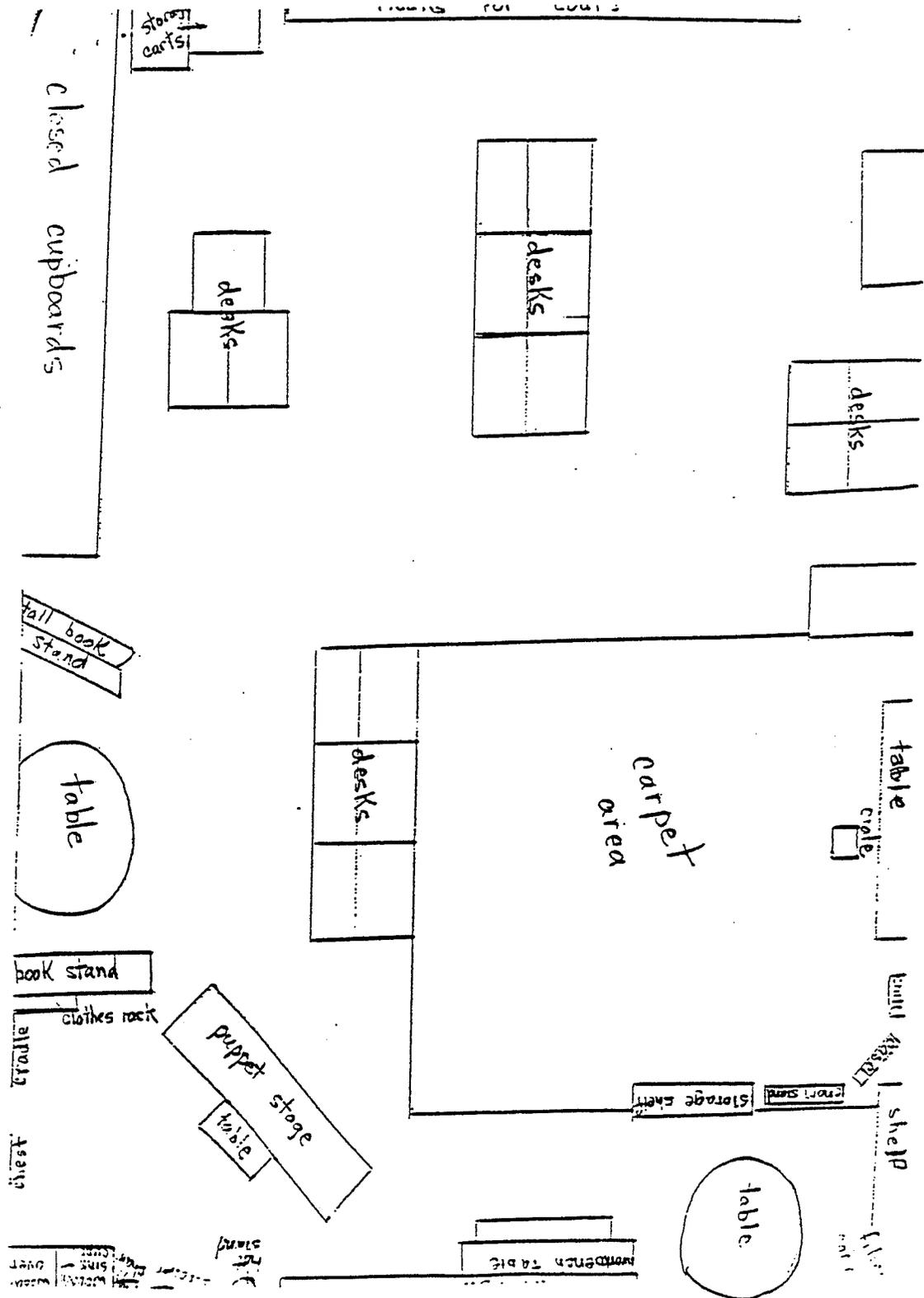
Sarah's Classroom

The visit of Sarah's classroom (Map of Classroom, Figure 2) was quite different from that of Jane's classroom. Sarah entered into the teaching-learning community as one contributing member of it. Throughout the day, she interacted with her students to enhance their learning and her teaching. She invited her students to participate in the decision making process in the classroom as they planned their afternoon activities. She seemed aware of individual needs and abilities as many times she worked with different

Insert Figure 2 about here

individuals or small groups on a variety of activities.

Figure 2, Sarah's Classroom.



Sarah encouraged her students to explore a variety of activities. She invited them to discuss, share and ask questions to help their understanding. As the observation showed, Sarah focused her attention on student roles in her classroom.

Observation

9:00 The children are all seated on the carpet. The teacher is sitting on a chair at the front.

The teacher has the children read a letter on the board. "Dear boys and girls...

I have sad news to tell you today. Melissa was hit by a car and her leg is broken. She is in the hospital.

Mr. Solomon visited her and he said she is fine.

Love, ...

There is some discussion with the children. The teacher asks the student about words they might need to write to a child in the hospital. The words generated are: friend, ambulance, hospital.

The teacher opens a letter written to the class from another teacher. The class choral reads it.

9:20 The teacher asks the children to move to their desks which are all grouped together in clusters

around the room - for the purpose of writing. The teacher looks for a mail man to distribute letters.

9:24 The children return to the carpet. The teacher is handing out papers for the children to finish and asks each child what they are going to do? The teacher says you can..."Write a letter, finish your story, or write in your journal". One by one the teacher checks with each child and then they move to their desks to write. The teacher is still on the carpet.

9:35 A small group of children gather on the carpet. The teacher has them looking at words and circling words they can find in a word maze. The maze of words is related to the story of the gingerbread man. The teacher sings the gingerbread song to remind children of the words. A few children come up to circle some of the hidden words. One boy is working aside on the carpet matching word cards to the same words written on leaves. The group on the carpet continue to search for words in the maze.

9:45 Most of the children leave the carpet to work at their spots. The teacher hands out papers of the maze of them to take with them.

9:50 The teacher checks with two boys - working on word-matching on the carpet. Teacher circulates the classroom checking with other students.

9:55 The teacher sets a timer for children to match word cards and leaves the carpet to circulate among the groups.

10:02

Teacher checks carpet area and is still circulating.

10:10

The teacher reminds children there is five minutes to recess, "time to finish up".

10:20

The recess bell rings and the teacher asks, "Who is ready for recess"?

The teacher checks with each student to see if they are ready for recess. Two boys are still working on the carpet, while some others are still working on papers on desks.

Recess bell rings.

10:35

Recess bell rings and the children re-enter the classroom.

10:40

An adult enters with another adult. The adult moves to the front of the class to introduce her mother to the groups on the carpet. There is a discussion of family grouping on carpet with the children.

(Two boys are working at their desks).

10:50

The teacher asks the children to help her tell a story called "Little Red Riding Hood". The teacher orally tells the story while children and the two adults listen. Children join in helping teacher tell story. The two adults sit on the carpet among the students. One of the adults puts on the mask of a wolf and starts to participate in story. Other adult assumes the role of grandmother and starts to participate as well in dialogue. The teacher asks one of the children to stand up and be the wood cutter. He starts to verbally participate. The children and adults all chant happily-ever-after.

11:00

The teacher asks the children if we could tell the story of the three pigs. One of the adults picks actors and actresses and assists the children to

retrieve props such as table, hats, masks, branches, stroller.

She arranges (actors and actresses) the children around the props.

11:05

The teacher begins to tell the story. The children (pigs) start to verbalize their parts. The teacher and whole group chant and participate in the story telling as the story moves along.

11:15

The whole group - adults and children - announce "the end".

Teacher announces it's our math time. One of the adults assists the children in putting away all the props.

11:20

The two adults leave the classroom. The teacher is seated on a chair in front of children on the carpet. Teachers start to clap and children listen and verbalize the pattern. Children start clapping in response as teacher models the clap. Teacher asks three children to finish their patterns and they leave carpet.

11:23

The teacher holds up and shares some of the children's work. The teacher pulls out envelopes (math folders) to distribute to the children. The teacher checks with each student as to which activity they are going to work on.

11:27

One by one, or in pairs, the children leave the carpet with envelopes and start to take out materials (geoboards, markers, scales, hex-a-link blocks, pattern blocks) to spots to work with.

11:40

2 boys working with pattern blocks
2 girls working with colored teddy counters
1 boy 1 girl working with hex-a-links
2 boys 1 girl working balancing scales (table)
1 girl working with keys
2 boys working with colored tiles (on carpet)
1 boy working with geoboard
1 boy working writing numbers on paper (desk)
1 boy working on separate table on addition
(desk) worksheet
2 girls working on carpet with dot cards
2 boys arranging (lids, spoons, knives, keys,
candies, buttons, plastic cups, stir sticks,

clear plastic wine glasses) 10 groups of 10 items on desks.

11:50

Teacher circulates all around classroom checking with children on the floor, on the carpet and at the desks.

11:53

"Are you listening?" sings the teacher. The children respond. Teacher says she will be checking with each to see how much they are finished. Teacher circulates the room marking each child's folder or envelope - asking each group or individual to put the materials away.

11:57

Teacher discussing with 2 students about some incomplete work that will have to be one in the afternoon.

12:00

"Anyone interested in going for lunch, please join us on the carpet", says the teacher. Teacher joins group of boys and girls after lunch and says, "Girls and boys, after lunch you have music and center time".

12:05

The bell rings and the children leave the room for lunch.

1:00 The teacher is in front of the class with kids on carpet

The teacher asks the children to move with her to bulletin board by the classroom door.

Teacher points to question on colored paper.
What centers do we want for the Fairy Tales?

Some of the children generate ideas while the teacher writes them on the chart paper. The teacher writes cook gingerbread, do a fairy tale show for people, make castles in sand... The teacher views the clock and reminds the group centers are after music, except for some children who have things to finish.

1:05 The teacher leaves the classroom with the children to escort them to music.

1:37 The children enter the classroom and sit on the carpet. Teacher at front of group says, "Some people didn't manage their time... can they go fast". Two children go to their desks and pick up pencils.

The teacher reviews the good work people did in the morning. The teacher says, "Now it's center

time, I didn't put all the centers out that you told me to...

The centers today are lego, big and small blocks.

I put out sand for making castles. What is the water around the castle called? Some discussion follows with the children; also painting and house center.

1:44 Teacher says, "I'm going to choose people sitting nice and tall". Asks a child, "What center do you want to go to?" Asks each child, they begin to leave the carpet once the teacher has spoken with them.

The teacher also reminds the group, there is also plasticine, boys and girls, and puzzles.

1:50 All the children have left the carpet and are using materials. The teacher leaves the classroom to get water with one student.

The teacher checks with 2 students working at desks.

1:55 Adult, perhaps a parent, enters to sit by teacher. Teacher is seated beside 2 students who are working at desks.

2 boys doing puzzles - wooden framed with wooden pieces.

2 boys in sandbox

2 boys 2 girls working with lego

2 boys using big wooden blocks on carpet

2 girls building using smaller colored geometric shaped blocks

1 boy doing wooden puzzle on carpet

One area: 3 girls are dressed in adult clothing, hats included. One boy is sitting on desk behind puppet stage.

2:00 Teacher leaves other adult with two children. The teacher moves to show large book to another child (girl) near where the paints and floor cloth is laid out. The teacher circulates classroom to check with other children.

2:05 One boy talks to teacher (previously working at desk) leaves to dress up in a crown and vest.

2:10 2 boys working on wooden puzzles
2 girls painting
1 boy working at desk
2 boys building sand castle in sand box
3 boys on carpet building with blocks
1 boy doing some puzzle on carpet

2 boys, 2 girls building with lego

1 boy, 3 girls, dressed up in adult clothing

2:13 The teacher discusses with a child about her painting and goes to check on student still working at desk.

2:15 Teacher says to whole group, "Are you listening, please look up. It's recess, today we will go outside and then return to what we are doing".

The bell rings for recess. The children walk out for recess.

2:30 Recess bell rings, children enter and return to their activities.

2:39 Teacher seated at sand table, calls the children over. Asks the children about their sand castle while others look on.

2:40 2 boys and 2 girls painting

1 boy at wooden puzzles

2 girls, 2 boys at lego

Mrs. Vidal putting lid on sandbox

3 girls, 1 boy dressed in adult clothing

4 boys cleaning up large wooden blocks from carpet

2 boys come back into the room carrying an

empty pail

2:45 Adult (possibly parent) same as above, enters classroom resumes cutting out paper with scissors.

2:47 Teacher calls attention of whole group. These people are cleaning up blocks and helping. "They are not all here, but they are helping to clean up. Clean up your centers quickly".

Teacher checks painting pictures with children that are painting and circulates the classroom.

2:55 Adult leaves classroom.

3:00 Some children are looking at books on the carpet, some are cleaning up the blocks. The teacher is opening up the snack for the children. She asks 2 of the children to help pass out the snack. She hands them a snack and they put it out on the desks. The teacher moves around the room helping to put out snacks for everyone.

3:06 Teacher asks the children to put away their books as "we have to play to see". Some discussion with whole group about why they have taken so long to put away the big blocks.

3:10 Teacher says to the whole group, "This afternoon girls and boys, some children have prepared a play

for us to see. What is it called... oh...
Cinderella. Who's the storyteller?"

A little girl starts to tell story, the teacher begins as well to tell the story.

4 children dressed up - 3 girls and 1 boy move around.

The teacher tells the story, stopping to allow the actors and actresses to verbalize their parts. In character, the children verbalize their own dialogue.

3:17 The teacher finishes the story, "happily ever after", asks the children to tiptoe to their places for snack".

The children are eating their snack.

3:20 The fire bell rings and the teacher and the children evacuate the building.

3:25 The children re-enter the building.

3:37 The children are seated, eating their snack.

Teacher circulating, talking with the children.

3:30 Bell rings. Teacher says, "Tomorrow I will go to the hospital to visit Melissa. Maybe more people will write to her. Please finish your snack and put up your chairs".

The teacher dismisses the children for home.

Summary of Observations

The day began in this classroom with a group meeting. There is some sharing of news about a classmate who was hit by a car. Another letter is shared with the class. Soon the children move to their desks for the purpose of writing. The teacher sets up two boys on the carpet with a card matching activity. One student distributes letters to the class. The teacher gives the children a choice of writing a letter, finishing a story or writing in their journal. While the student continues to hand out letters, the teacher calls a small group to the carpet. She works with them for a few minutes and gives them another job to do. The teacher circulates before the recess bell to check on the other students. It appears this teacher is aware of the different developmental levels in the classroom as there is a number of activities that have been provided for the individuals in her class. The children very clearly are not all doing the same task.

After recess, the children, the teacher and two other adults organized a story play of Little Red Riding Hood using props and costumes. The teacher began telling the story but before long the children were exuberant and happily joined in chanting the story. The

dramatic performance was followed by another, the three little pigs. The children enjoyed the dramatic play as it was evident in their giggles, whispers and facial expressions. As the play concluded the teacher informed the group it was math time.

The teacher handed out envelopes with pictures of the activities on the cover, to the children. Again similar to writing, the children were asked to make a choice about which activity they would like to work on. As each child picked their activity, they left the carpet and set up math activities with pattern blocks, teddy counters, hex-a-links and many other things. As I glanced at several activities, it seemed the activities were very child directed. There was the activity but within the activity the child could make choices. For example, one of the activities asked the children to build 10 groups of 10 or 100. There was a wide range of items for the children to pick from: buttons, plastic cutlery, money, cups... to construct and represent their knowledge.

After lunch, there was another meeting on the carpet. The teacher was asking the students for their input on which centers they would like for their fairy tale theme. The children generated ideas and these were

recorded on chart paper. Once this was completed, the teacher escorted the children to music and came back to the room to set up activities. When the children returned to the classroom the teacher told the children which activities were available. She merely listed the centers: house center, blocks, lego, puzzles, sand... No instructions were given to the children on what to do with the materials. Each child told the teacher which center they were interested in working in as they left the carpet. This teacher obviously valued the activities the children were engaged in as she circulated the classroom interacting with a number of individuals involved in play.

Soon the teacher signalled it was time for clean-up. She had 2 students set up the afternoon snack. The rest of the students had finished cleaning up and were reading books on the carpet. The teacher informed the group that some children had prepared a play (practiced during center time) for the group to see. A little girl stood up to begin the story of Cinderella. The teacher joined in while the characters each verbalized their parts. A fire bell rung shortly after the play was finished. When the children had re-entered the classroom, the day ended with them eating their snack.

Reflections

There appeared to be much activity in discovery, exploration and discussion among the children. Piaget (1948, 1973) would have recognized these methods as appealing to the child's interests and as a necessary prelude to intellectual development. The play the children were actively engaged in was intrinsically motivated, self-referenced, free from external rules, non-literal, and concerned with process rather than products (Monighan-Nourot 1990 & others). Other theorists (Erickson 1950, 1963, Smilansky 1968, Parten 1971) might have commented on the emotional, social and moral development provided for the children through the dramatic play center. The pretend play offered opportunities for the children to interact and express their inner thoughts and feelings. All areas of child development: physical, social, emotional, moral and cognitive were provided for in the structuring and organizing of activities in the classroom environment. I wondered if Sarah's knowledge of child development theory would be revealed in discussion of her classroom practices.

From my visit in this classroom a number of early years principles (Burchfield & Burchfield 1992) were

brought into focus. This teacher recognized the uniqueness of each learner as throughout the day the children were presented with a variety of different activities appropriate to their developmental level. This was noticed during the writing time as well as math time. Although the activities were related there was different degrees of difficulty among the different activities. The children were actively involved in planning, initiating, and directing both their own work and play. The teacher functioned in an interactive or facilitator role to extend each child's learning and provide the unique balance of teacher-directed, child-initiated learning.

Unlike Jane, Sarah seemed to trust her students in the learning that was occurring in her classroom. By interacting with them in their activities, Sarah studied her learners and asked questions about them, probing not only their needs and interests but also the way they perceived their own learning. In Sarah's classroom, I found that individuality was promoted and supported by herself as well as the other children in the class. This was evident in how the teacher and the whole class joined into the play that was presented to the whole class after the center time. This presentation to the

class as well demonstrated the cooperative nature of this community of learners.

As I compared Sarah's beliefs to her classroom practices, I could see her verbalized, strong commitment to early years ideas and theory was something that she believed in and practiced. I still wondered though, how she viewed the students role in the development of curriculum. I wondered how the content of the curriculum was decided and how the teaching and learning was implemented. The essence of the interview would be to see how Sarah justified her practices and how theory influenced her practices.

Interview with Sarah

After my second classroom observation had been completed, I noted the similarities and differences between the two teachers. Here were two early years teachers who had established an environment full of things, materials, ideas and scheduled time for children to play. However, their approach for learning was quite different when the stage was set for individual explorations, experiments and discoveries.

Jane worked with a small group during part of the day while the rest of her class chose activities. Sarah was very interested in the activities her students had

chosen, she spent time interacting with her children, to exchange ideas with them as well as present them with problems to solve and questions to answer. There were differences too, in the choices of the materials set up for the children to explore. Jane had presented the children with carefully, thought-out, specific tasks with predetermined endings while Sarah had set up activities such as blocks, paint, sand, plasticine and dress-up clothes that had no prescribed results planned. In Sarah's room, the children were exploring; acting, doing, and discovering the thinking process without necessarily having any products to show.

Although both teachers had similar initial beliefs about early years concepts, the observations of their classrooms showed that their practices had differed. My discussions or interview with Jane had revealed that she relied on the prescribed curriculum guide and her past experiences to determine her practices in the classroom. She was aware of theory but had not fully understood it, in terms of its implementation in classroom practices. I looked forward to my interview with Sarah as I wanted her to explain her practices from her own mode of thinking.

As I thought about these two teachers I wondered, what was the difference in their thinking about play, the teacher's role and the student's role. How did they compare in planning and determining the curriculum in their classrooms? What role did theory play in Sarah's thoughts about her practices?

R: How is your program designed? What are some of the goals (curriculum, developmental) you have for students in your classroom?

Sarah (P1):

There are a number of elements. It is an integrated program so that the activities are usually centered around a theme. It is also very much an activity based program in that the children are actively participating and doing. There is also a strong element of problem solving in all the activities that the children are involved in.

R: Then your program is designed on activities appropriate for the age level. How does the curriculum fit into your programming?

Sarah (P2):

It's based very much on the curriculum. I find that the curriculum offers a wide scope for integrating the different subjects and certainly for working around a central theme. The skills that I introduce, especially in the language arts

are those that are age and grade related. These skills are those that I try to access on a regular basis... how the children are progressing in the language arts area as well as the math skills. My direct teaching is done to small groups of children who have the common state of readiness to learn new concepts and skills.

R: Then am I to understand that you use the curriculum as a guide? Can you clarify this?

Sarah (P3):

Yes, I don't use the curriculum as the focus of all the teaching, but I do look at the skills and concepts in the content area that need to be covered at the grade levels and work these into the themes we are doing throughout the year.

R: Can you give an example of this?

Sarah (P4):

Well, one that comes to mind now is a science one. Problem solving in both math and in science. But in science, we have a center set up for investigation, discovery, and I do somewhat direct the activities in the science center. Not so much for teacher direction, but focusing the children's attention on skills. It's a discovery method of learning but it's very much activity based too. When I often work at the science center and pose problems, direct the children's

thinking by the problems I will pose, the questions I will ask.

R: What is an example of a problem you might pose to the children?

Sarah (P5):

When we are looking at the whole unit in grade one on floating, I always have a number of things there for them to try. I might say to the children... do you think the bigger things will always float faster than the smaller things. I'd always get the children to think about it and make some predictions first and then have them test their predictions.

R: In your program, is there time allotted for certain subjects or is there an integration of curriculum? When I came into your room for the day, I believe I saw language arts and math in the morning. In the afternoon I think I saw the children involved in a number of activities such as painting, block building, sand, etc. The question again is, is this a normal day for you? How is the day usually organized?

Sarah (P6):

The day is divided up with a solid block of language arts activities from 9:00 a.m. to recess. It starts with a sharing and talking, oral language time, some poetry, singing and chanting, and then there is a lot of

individualized small group activities in the language arts in the areas of reading/writing. Everyday, there is a solid block of reading writing activities, and because it's an integrated program... there is a solid block of reading writing activities and because it's an integrated program... there might be some arts and crafts activities that are tied into a theme we are doing. Right now we are doing a unit on fairy tales. Our whole program is integrated around a fairy tale approach. Everything from the science... growing beans for Jack and the Beanstalk.

R: When do you do your science, you have language arts in the morning and a block of math. What is the afternoon composed of?

Sarah (P7):

We start with a half an hour of reading. I read to the children, they read independently. That is a full thirty minutes a day. Then most days we have an activity time, a free choice time with activities that center around our theme. There's drama and dress-up, house center, center around our fairy tale theme. The sand and the blocks are also related to the fairy tale unit. We may have a different center for cooking. We might make porridge for the three bears. We have been painting fairy tale characters for an alphabet frieze to put around the room.

At the science center we have been planting beans and measuring them. We have math and science around the planting and measuring and the daily observations of growth. There's another center opened up for science all the time too, that's the water. We do all sorts of work on capacity as well as floating and measurement.

R: So in the afternoon you have an activity time which you call choice time, and you fit your science into it. What about social studies?

Sarah (P8):

Very often there are social studies themes that have follow-up activities that we do in the afternoon during choice time. But social studies is often integrated in the morning with language arts, writing and talking, listening.

R: Then the day I visited was characteristic of a normal day in your classroom?

Sarah (P9):

Yes. There are days in the cycle when we don't have this full block for activities. That's when music falls in the middle of the afternoon as well as our gym falls at this time.

R: Then you are saying the curriculum is integrated but you have scheduled language arts and math time where you do some direct teaching?

Sarah (P10):

Yes.

R: The afternoon is where you integrate art, drama and science. Your social studies may be part of a theme in your classroom, is this correct?

Sarah (P11):

Yes.

R: How do the children contribute to the curriculum? What's their part?

Sarah (P12):

When a new theme is introduced... some of these themes that the whole program is based on could well be social studies themes. For example, myself or me and my family. We did two weeks of very intensive center based activities and writing/reading activities around the family, arts and crafts activities... viewing, listening. The children would often come up, have an opportunity to create their own activities. I find that comes more in the dress-up and house center... building and lego blocks. The children will find ways of integrating what they really want to do with the current theme.

R: What do you see your role as being in the classroom?

Sarah (P13):

It is of paramount importance for me to be fully conversed with all the skills and the sequence in which skills need to be introduced in the classroom, and to insure each child is moved on to a new set of skills as they are ready.

R: Would you say you are a... director...?

Sarah (P14):

...of their learning. Yes, I find that the term facilitator of learning has been used too much, but in essence that's what happens. I think that what I have to do most of all is set the stage for the learning to take place. That's not in any way haphazard. I think that the materials have to be there, the opportunities, the time, the discussions, the set-up to lead the children to the kinds of thinking and activities that are directed towards the kind of learning they need to do. A lot of that comes from posing problem solving and throwing out ideas to the children so they can work through them, make predictions and do the testing of their hypothesis.

R: Do you consider your program to be an activity based program? Can you offer specific examples related to this observation day?

Sarah (P 15):

Yes, it's definitely an activity based program. I don't have children watching me do things or others having turns.

I have them learning by being actively involved in doing themselves.

R: Cite an example for me of them actively learning and doing on the day I visited.

Sarah (P16):

I can't remember.

R: You had language arts and math, I believe, in the morning.

Sarah (P17):

I'll talk about the language arts program. I think there was at least four or five activities going on and most of the children at that stage of the game were writing independently. Some were writing cards to the child that had been sick, while some were writing letters to her. Some were very involved in their ongoing project of writing a whole fairy tale book of their own. On the floor I had three children whose level of development was such that they were doing matching of the key vocabulary on the floor. They were actually trying to work together to do a very visual lesson of matching the strips, of putting them in a sequence of all the poems we had learnt.

R: You said an activity based program is one in which children learn by doing. What were the children learning?

Sarah (P18):

One of the things that was going on... I believe any form of writing is a form of learning how to write more effectively. They were learning the format of a letter. They were learning how to communicate in the form of letters with someone who is not there. They have been used to just communicating orally.

R: What was the format of this letter? Was it their own writing...?

Sarah (P19):

It was their own kind of writing. We have done quite a bit of letter writing and I have done a lot of modeling. At the beginning of the year we wrote letters to people to say thank-you or when others were sick or away. We do it as a language experience story. We would write the letters together and the children would give me the ideas. As they spoke, I would write the letter or sentence on the blackboard for us to write it together. We are past this stage with pretty well everyone now. Two of the children who are not yet ready to write their own letters because they are new E.S.L. (English second language) students, dictated their letters to me. I wrote it for them. Then they signed their names and did an illustration to go with it.

R: You felt they were learning to communicate with this activity and learning to write?

Sarah (P20):

Yes.

R: I also saw a number of children later in the morning working with buttons, plastic spoons, lids, etc. I think you had referred to these activities as math time. Do you want to explain about what the children were doing at this time?

Sarah (P21):

The math program is based somewhat loosely on "math their way" and "explorations". In the math program the children have to assume the responsibility of covering all the activities themselves. When they finish an activity they bring their folder and they have it checked off. They date it themselves and when I or an adult has checked that they have completed it accurately, we sign it and they go on to the next activity. In the math apart from all the learning of mathematics, they are learning a great deal about organization and self-direction as well as taking responsibility for completing tasks.

R: Now I saw them doing a number of different jobs. For example, I saw some boys working with pattern blocks, some working with colored teddy bear counters, some of hex-a-link blocks, someone working with balancing scales, colored

tiles, geoboards, some were writing numbers at separate tables. Was there a general theme or concept they were all working on?

Sarah (P22):

There was, they were working at the addition/subtraction facts for ten. They were games. On the back of their folders, there was a diagram picture listing the twelve activities. There was the bowl game, addition and subtraction games for them to play. But in addition to that always ongoing are the measurement centers. It could be... balancing and weighing, and I think that's what you saw them doing. That's not actually related to the ten centers. Another activity that is ongoing is in the measurement of volume and capacity where they use the water. I think some other children were writing the numbers to make a 100 chart.

R: What about the children working with the lids, plastic cutlery?

Sarah (P23):

They were making arrangements to show a 100 things. They were making ten different sets of ten. On their big huge chart they were making rows of ten spoons, ten pennies, ten beans that they were pasting on.

R: Then you assign them to these different jobs or activities?

Sarah (P24):

No, I don't. When we start we do the new centers for ten. We look at the picture on the back of the folder and we discuss all the activities. When there are new games or activities, I introduce these one at a time to the whole class and then as the need arises in small groups or perhaps individually. But overall, the children are quite self-directed in working through all those different activities. At the end of the day I know exactly how much each child has done because I have checked them. There is a lot of autonomy in the math program right now. There is a lot of social learning.

R: Then all these activities you have discussed make up what you call an activity based program?

Sarah (P25):

Yes.

R: You spoke a little about themes. Can you explain your present theme and how it was chosen?

Sarah (P26):

The present theme is our fairy tale unit. It was chosen not quite arbitrarily by me. It was chosen at this stage of the year because most of the children are reading/writing independently and most can produce their own plays. They can read their own books about fairy tales. They can also read the stories to one another, direct each other and

create their own dialogue for doing plays for the rest of the class. When they are doing puppet plays, they are making up the dialogue for the stories too.

R: How does fairy tales relate to the curriculum?

Sarah (P27):

Not necessary, but I would see it as a very vital part in the teaching of English literature. In a literature based reading/writing program such as I have, it is a very vital part in grade one. We have been talking about fairy tales and looking forward to this. We have together said when we can read a little more or after the holidays, maybe we can do this unit. When I introduced this fairy tale unit I said now is the time, we are all reading/writing so well, let's brainstorm and talk about the kind of centers we can open up the fairy tales. Now the children came up with the ideas. They had as a basis the knowledge of the type of activities we have done all year. One of them said, what are we going to do about cooking? I said, we will have to think about it.. We will certainly do some cooking. Which of the fairy tales do you know of that have food we can make? One of the children very quickly said we could make porridge. We might make porridge two or three times in small groups.

R: To interrupt you, I just wanted to clarify then you think it's important to teach using themes? Is that what you're saying?

Sarah (P28):

I find it's a very convenient way. No, it's more than that, I think it's very important because it creates a common thread. It enables children to work together with a sense of collaborating and learning together. This is even though their learning needs and skills and abilities are vastly different. They can still have sense of being part of what's going on in the classroom. Often children who are very good at painting and art may not do as well in the actual reading. They all share together.

R: The themes allow the children to contribute?

Sarah (P29):

Yes. It ties them together. It develops a wonderful communal spirit of sharing, working and participating. You were asking me how the activities were based. The children decided they were going to be using the blocks and immediately came up with ideas of making castle. The one center open no matter what the theme, is the house center. That becomes a center for a great deal of language learning and role playing and language development. They talked about producing plays, making their own puppets. We do a

lot of performance at this time of the year. That ties in well with the fairy tale unit.

R: This leads into the next question I wanted to ask about the decision making process in the room. I'm curious who makes the decision in the room such as materials put out, themes chosen, etc., and what parts the students play. You have already said that the students contribute and bring their own ideas and add to the themes. It seems you have alluded to the fact that themes are chosen either from the interests of the children or from the curriculum.

Sarah (P30):

Especially from the social studies or science curriculum.

R: What other kinds of things do you do to encourage independent decision making of the children in your classroom?

Sarah (P31):

You mean other than choosing center activities?

R: Are you thinking then they are just choosing center activities or helping you create...

Sarah (P32):

They are helping to create the environment and set it up. There is a lot of decision making in math and interestingly enough, I find that it's through the particular math program I have that the children are

introduced to making their own decisions as well as the autonomy of choosing their own activities, taking responsibility or finishing it and who they will work with and on what activity. I find it works well because it's highly structured in the math time. From this the children learn to make decisions and complete activities with the choices they have made. That carries over to more free choice activities we have in the afternoon.

R: Then you are saying choice time is not just occurring at one hour during the day?

Sarah (P33):

It's all day long.

R: In the morning you had children choosing different types of writing, different types of math activities.

Sarah (P34):

In the morning that was a writing period and in that time everyone does some type of writing. There was quite a range of choices.

R: You direct some of them to some choices? If the children are not capable of doing one activity, would you suggest another activity for them to do?

Sarah (P35):

I do make those adjustments.

R: There was a little boy matching words to word strips. Was this a good choice of activity for him to be doing? Is it something he would have chosen?

Sarah (P36):

Very often... yes... if for not other reason, children are very comfortable doing things that they can master. That was an activity where he had to work with someone else so it gave him support as well.

R: Again, let's phrase this, there was choice during the language arts, choices during the math time, but they were all doing math. Then there were choices in the afternoon such as arts and crafts, science, dress-up.

Sarah (P37):

Producing plays, building with blocks. Sometimes even with all these choices the children will ask if they can open the water table and do the capacity measurement activities.

R: Then you are saying choice time is not just one hour a day. The children are making choices all day?

Sarah (P38):

Yes.

R: Then the distinction is the choices are more teacher directed than in the afternoon?

Sarah (P39):

Yes. Even during the reading time the half an hour after lunch, there are choices. The children choose their own books and we have grade six children who come in to read with the children, four days out of the six day cycle. The children choose the books ahead of time that they are going to read to their grade six friend. They also select a book for their grade six friend to read to them.

R: Now that I've distinguished that choice time isn't just limited to one part in the afternoon, it becomes all day. What would you call that one hour in the afternoon? You referred to as more as a free choice.

Sarah (P40):

The children call it their center time.

R: Then it's called center time as opposed to other times where you say this is language arts or math time. What if someone doesn't complete a job in the morning, during math, or they just don't get down to writing, then it's their choice time or center time as you call it, in the afternoon. Do those children have to go back to finish one of their morning jobs?

Sarah (P41):

They do and I start from the beginning of the year with having certain activities that must be done each day. I usually say to the children, it is your choice to do this

now during the work time or to do it when the others are choosing their own activities. The work must be done and it's preferable to do it in the work time that is being set aside for that. I say if you choose not to do it, the consequence is that you will have to finish it later on.

R: Is the distinction then there is a work time and a center time?

Sarah (P42):

Yes.

R: Then the center time is not really any work then?

Sarah (P43):

Very often it is in center time the children will choose to write. One of the themes that has been ongoing since April when the children have been able to write more independently, has been letter writing. We have our own big letter box in the classroom. Sometimes the children will choose to write letters to post the next morning in the classroom. Often they decide this is what they want to do in the afternoon.

R: Then you are not drawing a distinction between work and center time?

Sarah (P44):

Not really.

R: It's just must do and may do activities?

Sarah (P45):

Yes. I do make sure that each day each child spends a certain amount of time in a learning reading and writing activity.

R: Tell me some information about this center time - are the children to remain at a center, are they free to move from center to center. How do you see or keep track of the children in your class?

Sarah (P46):

I don't, I guess. I've been teaching long enough that I never have any difficulty in knowing when someone is not on task. No matter what I'm doing at the other side of the room, there is just a change in atmosphere or level of noise. The children are allowed to change activities but they must make sure they have tidied away what they have been doing. I expect by this time of the year, that they will complete some sort of activity or stay focused ten to fifteen minutes. I don't find that a problem by this time of the year. Earlier in the school year children are not used to making decisions. They may wander and are not capable of making a decision of where they will settle.

R: I wanted to know about the materials you put out this afternoon. I saw some children working in the sandbox, doing puzzles, some working with blocks. How were the

materials chosen? Were they put out because they related to your theme or the children merely enjoy them. Are these centers changed frequently?

Sarah (P47) :

As I mentioned, these centers were brainstormed by the children when we first discussed our fairy tale theme. The children decided with the lego, blocks and sand, they would build castles with moats. The quiet games and puzzles the children can take out at any time. They are not part of one specific theme.

R: Your theme fueled up the children's choices of what to do at each center?

Sarah (P48) :

Yes. The dress-up center is always there as well, but the theme inspires them. The children chose the clothing and were doing the story of the three pigs. The house center was set up to be the home of the three little pigs.

R: Then the materials you selected are put out to develop particular skills as many of us referred to this in our first group interview?

Sarah (P49) :

In this particular theme I put them out because those the materials the children told me they would like to have out in this center of that theme. Now it's not quite so child

directed all year, we have built up to this. At this stage of the year, the center activities are quite child directed. I don't have much to do in focusing or directing their attention.

R: Then the learning centers are out all year round?

Sarah (P50):

Yes, but they use it differently, depending on the theme. There is always a science table with experiments... magnets or a magnifying glass...

R: Does this change?

Sarah (P51):

Yes, this one changes, but I think that one is for planting seeds and measuring them and comparing them.

R: Did you set up any specific learning centers or interest centers for the children to explore? You said in the original interview... learning centers were centers set up with materials for children to work with or master skills. On this day did you have any learning centers?

Sarah (P52):

Yes, I think the children were planting seeds and measuring them. They were doing a log of how much they had grown. Also, they were checking on some of the beans they had planted surrounded by black paper, some they had put up on

the windowsill. There were a lot of experiments with making predictions.

R: This science center you would say is a learning center?

Sarah (P53):

Yes.

R: Or would you say your whole classroom is composed of learning centers.

Sarah (P54):

Well, they are all learning centers. That one was a more focused kind of learning. I would say that in the science one the outcome of the learning was far more what I intended. I had set up the materials so that hopefully, what I wanted them to discover and learn would happen.

R: You wanted them to discover how things grow?

Sarah (P55):

Yes. Not only how things grow but they need light, water. We looked at what happened to those who didn't get it. The plants that are not watered and kept in the light.

R: Then you have all learning centers set up in your room.

Sarah (P56):

I feel that learning is going on all the time. Very often it's not what you have in mind, but there is always learning. There is social learning and social growth.

There is tremendous skills of mediation and negotiation going on between the children.

R: Do you feel you are covering the curriculum when the children are working in the learning centers?

Sarah (P57):

Yes, I do. Probably the most important aspect beyond the social learning... I look on social learning as covering everything from negotiation to cooperation to problem-conflict resolution. All of that is going on and I feel it is all very important learning. That's social learning and learning to work in a group, learning to respect others, learning to help other people. The next most important thing going on in the classroom is the development of language. Especially in this school we have so many children who do not speak English. All the activities that require oral communication or written communication are vitally important learning centers because of the practice going on with language. I think that's why the dress-up and house center play such a central role in my whole classroom program.

R: What about the sand, water table or blocks?

Sarah (P58):

These are all learning centers. If nothing else is going on, there is still communication going on. There is a sharing of these activities.

R: What particular skills or goals did you have in mind for the sand, water and block center? The day I visited you had no water, the sandbox was empty of tools etc., it just had sand in it and you had lego and big wooden blocks out. We talked in our first interview about goals, objectives and concept building in relation to learning centers. Can you comment on this based on your classroom practices?

Sarah (P59):

We have used the sand. The children have tied the sand into the fairy tale unit as they built castles and a moat all around it. There have been a lot of experiments there. The difference between using dry sand and slightly damp sand. Then they brought water in and worked out how much they would need to have a moat. How much water they needed so it wasn't immediately absorbed by the surrounding sand. A lot of learning going on there. Science was going on... especially changes. One of the major emphasis in the grade one science program is on changes and the properties of water, liquid.

R: This day you had no water in the water table, so let's talk about the blocks. What particular goals or objectives did you have?

Sarah (P60):

With the big blocks there is a lot of cooperation. There is a lot of planning that goes into building a castle and building the drawbridge and building the moat around it and working out how you build a fort. They were learning a lot about the shape of the blocks, balancing them, how high they could build it and how you must have the heavy ones at the bottom. The most important learning for me watching them, was the discussion and the cooperation and decision making amongst the group of children to do a cooperative project. There were four children working together to construct a castle out of the big blocks.

R: What about conflicts that occur at this time? And how about children who may be throwing sand or just wandering around at this time?

Sarah (P61):

At this stage of the year when that kind of behavior occurs and it's very rare... it means a child who is causing a problem is probably upset or distressed about something outside the immediate situation. I would take that child aside and have a quiet talk or time out, but often when the

children come to tell and complain I will say very quietly that I only know one way to solve that and that is to close the center down. But if you can think of a better way to solve it. Invariably, they decide they can do better themselves. I throw it back to them to do the negotiation. I really very seldom have discipline problems during the center activities.

R: Today at this time I saw you were circulating the room and talking with students. Is this a common practice for you or do you work with children at a particular center?

Sarah (P62):

I try to circulate a number of times during the course of the center time. For a number of reasons... I value what the children do in this work time and I value their play enough that I show the respect enough to go and participate and take part in it. I think that it devalues the play in the children's eyes, if they are sent off to do that and I sit down and do some important work like pencil and paper work with a small group. Sometimes I use this time for individualized instruction, but I mostly use the time for communications, you know little chats and visits. I become involved in the projects because this is where I go around and throw out questions like... how can you make things that float, sink? The communication I engage the children in

during this time is designed to have them make predictions and to think. I don't direct their thinking and sometimes I probably do. I think I focus their attention and thoughts in the direction I would like them to go.

R: How do you promote social and emotional development in your classroom?

Sarah (P63):

I do a lot of role playing. One of the ways I maintain the discipline is being very quick to respond to approximations of desired behavior. I spend a lot of time commending and recognizing when children are trying or getting better or working at the desired behavior. I do this all day, but in particular, during this activity time when I'm not involved in direct teaching of skills. It's a time when I do more indirect teaching. That's when I direct thinking by the questions I ask and the interest I show in what they are doing. I've never seen that done before, can you explain to me or tell me how to do that. I find it consolidates their learning if they have to tell someone else how to do something.

R: Would you say that's how you motivate students, by getting them to show others?

Sarah (P64):

Yes, primarily by recognizing the development they are making and the skills they are mastering.

R: How do you deal with individual or developmental differences in your classroom, or do you think children function at basically the same level?

Sarah (P65):

No, I obviously don't think that for one minute. I think that they function within the same range of interests and that's why the theme is a wonderful way of integrating a program and drawing everyone in. Everyone can share the common interests and want to find out more about the same things at their own level. I find the theme is a wonderful way for those who know to show those who don't yet know. My emphasis in the program is not on what children don't know, but what they haven't quite mastered yet.

R: Can you refer back to this day I observed to discuss developmental differences. What kind of tasks are available to children who are not reading or writing. Does everyone work on the same task?

Sarah (P66):

They don't do the same activity, but they do it around the same topic. That's where it ties it together, but they will be doing different activities. One of the ways I teach language and reading is through poetry, singing, chanting

and rhymes. We do this every single day. When the children have learnt a new poem by memory. As I introduce a new poem, the written form is on a chart. When they have learnt it they might do a follow-up activity. It may be a cloze activity, arranging word cards or sometimes filling in missing words, consonants or vowels.

R: There was a little boy matching words to sentence strips on the carpet, some were writing cards to the child in the hospital...

Sarah (P67):

Some were writing their own fairy tales. This was an ongoing project.

R: Is this a specific example of differences?

Sarah (P68):

Yes, because the boy on the carpet was at that stage of development. He's just beginning to see visual differences between letters and words. He also told his own fairy tale story which I dictated for him. He did the pictures. He had the experience of telling the story orally and watching me write it and read it back to him. Then he illustrated it. He also then made a book like the others. This is the level he is at... a pre-beginning stage.

R: Are you saying you provide activities for children at different levels?

Sarah (P69):

Yes. When we do one of these poems whatever activity it is... there is a language arts activity or a worksheet of some kind. I will often have four or five different levels of activities for the children to work on before they can put their finished poem in their poem anthology book.

R: How do you evaluate the students in your classroom?

Sarah (P70):

I do it with daily observations. I keep antidotal notes but always keep a diary of progress. When they have finished their journals for instance, I take photocopies of a beginning, middle and ending story. I keep this for the year to note their growth.

R: Do you mean a portfolio?

Sarah (P71):

It's almost like a writing folder I keep on each child. We have daily reading too. I do a lot of work with the children teaching phonics and word families and spelling. We do it in little groups sitting on the carpet with chalk

R: Then the basis for your evaluation is observation.

Sarah (P72):

Yes, but I also do some readings tests too. I will take a piece of unfamiliar writing and have each child read it so I can check for miscues and understanding.

R: In evaluation, you are considering the child's writing, reading...

Sarah (P73):

...ability to communicate, to tell a story. I look at how much detail they have in it. Can they tell the story in sequential order. Can they explain how to do something. I find this is a good test of reasoning and language skills. Can they make a hypothesis. I do this when I am circulating in the afternoons. Can they see relationships, draw conclusions and make predictions.

R: Then you are evaluating your students all day, not just during your more direct teaching periods.

Sarah (P74):

All day.

R: Do you ever ask the children to reflect on what they have learned and how do you do this?

Sarah (P75):

I often will say to the children... how did you know how to do that? I often say to children who are reading to me, what do you do when you come to a word you don't know. They often tell me which strategies they are using.

R: What about other things they have learned? Like you are doing a unit on fairy tales. How do you know they are

learning anything about fairy tales? How do you get them to reflect, just by questions.

Sarah (P76):

We do a lot of discussing and brainstorming. When we are talking about the fairy tales every day I tell a story and then we get as many versions of the story as we can. Then we read and the children become very tuned to similarities and differences between the books. When we do a story or play together, some children are the narrator and others prepare the play in costume during center time. The narrator tells the story and the other children make up their own dialogue. I have a very good idea of their command of language. I learn a lot from the narrator about how the others can keep things in sequential order.

R: You ask the children to reflect on their learning, but most of it is done orally.

Sarah (P77):

Yes, but I also see when they write their own stories to publish in books. I get a very good idea from their stories as to how much understanding they have.

R: What do you tell visitors or others coming to your room about the purpose of the children making choices or working in centers. When you are asked about this time in your classroom, what do you say?

Sarah (P78) :

My rationale for allowing this?

R: Yes, because at this time you circulate and you don't do any direct teaching.

Sarah (P79) :

I talk about the social skills and the personal development of making choices and decisions. I look at the consequences of seeing children direct their own activities. I have people observe and see how children work at cooperative endeavors. How some children emerge as leaders and how they develop the skills of directing others without confrontation. How children develop the skills of working with others and follow directions. I watch to see how they are able to draw everyone in. I draw attention to the fact that the children tend to choose activities in which they already excel and how they can be used to teach others. At the end of center time we have a debriefing or class time when we come together and talk about what they have done or built, what difficulties they have run into with their projects. It may be an ongoing project where they describe how much they have done and what they will do tomorrow. We have a lot of showing and discussing. For instance, those who have worked in the dress-up center will perform a play for us.

R: Then you would say the purpose of the children being actively engaged in these activities is what... social and emotional development?

Sarah (P80):

I also believe we learn by doing. What we remember... primarily comes from what we have actually done and experienced ourselves, not from what we have been told. We retain some of what we have been told but children at this age do not have highly developed auditory memories. The auditory channel is not the one most highly developed at this stage of their education.

R: You are emphasizing the cognitive development of the child engaged in doing activities.

Sarah (P81):

But more than that, I think children are still discovering their learning styles. We have a lot of kinesthetic, visual activities, a lot of listening - all the senses are involved. Children of this age do not sit actively listening and absorbing. They need to be physically active and involved in what they are doing.

R: How is the student's progress reported to parents?

Sarah (P82):

I write a very long anecdotal report card. I will share in the report card, the progress I see in the personal

development of self direction and autonomy and focusing on a task, seeing it to completion. The progress the child has made in working in cooperative group activities.

R: Beside the anecdotal, is there a set check list?

Sarah (P83):

Yes. The finished projects go home. I am a firm believer in publishing all that the children write. The journals when finished go home. Their math folder when finished with all the activities goes home. I tend not to send just one piece of paper. I keep things in folders and files put together to go home. This gives the parents a lot of feedback to see the skills their child has mastered.

R: How many students in your classroom?

Sarah (P84):

Twenty-two altogether, or so I think, 21 children.

R: Your group is organized according to chronological age?

Sarah (P85):

Yes.

R: How would you like to see early years classrooms grouped, by age, multi-age? Is grouping by chronological age favorable to you and your practices.

Sarah (P86):

It works very well in the inner city in that the children come in even though they are turning six or seven, they are

at different stages of developing personal responsibility and work habits and background knowledge. We have a wide variety of skills and different levels. I would prefer a multi-grade class but I see even when children are the same age, the leaders emerge. They look after and help the others.

R: There's not too much difference in what you are practicing between a single grade and a multi-grade to the differences in skill level of the children?

Sarah (P87):

That's right. I think it takes longer when you have all the children the same age to train those who are going to be leaders to take those responsibilities and direct others.

R: How have your practices changed over this school year? Has anything influenced your thinking about early years classrooms?

Sarah (P88):

No, nothing has changed my thinking, but we tend to have children come in during the middle of the year. I have only a small group that have been with me all year. Each time a new student comes in, the whole structure of the classroom is tested. We go through a shaking or a re-establishing of the social order as well. I think the changes in my program have come more from the needs of the children and the

demands of new children coming in, certainly not my philosophy.

R: In reviewing your information sheet I see you have a Bachelor of Education and your training was in early years. I see that some of your colleagues have taken some additional courses related to early years and I just wanted to know if you feel your training prepared you to teach in an early years classroom.

Sarah (P89):

Yes, but that was my initial training in New Zealand. All that I do now, I learnt at that time. But I have certainly modified in my understanding of how children learn has certainly increased over many years of teaching and courses. I was very fortunate to be trained in a system that had the skills for teaching.

R: We never talked about the arrangement of your classroom. Here's a sketch of your classroom, and I just wanted you to tell me what thoughts or considerations influenced where you were going to put the furniture or materials?

Sarah (P90):

It was dictated somewhat by the fact that the carpet is glued to the floor and I had to build around that. I like to have the working area in clusters of desks. I chose to have desks rather than tables because they are very

flexible. I can move them to make big long centers or small ones. I get a lot of flexibility from those. The children do not have assigned seating spaces. The puppet stage stays under the window because it is a corner and gives wall space for the children. I find that the books, shelves and quiet games I center around the carpet because it is a quiet working area.

R: You built your room around the carpet. Why is the carpet important?

sarah (P91):

It's a quiet area and that's where we sit as a large group. I also use the big blocks on the carpet so that's why they're kept on the sand table right by the carpet.

R: Are you saying then, your room is set up to allow for large group or small group activities?

Sarah (P92):

I sometimes move the desks which are used for seat work activities into smaller or larger clusters for math, writing or arts and crafts projects. A lot of the math we do with creative problem solving and the big blocks, I find I can change the clusters of the desks.

R: You are looking at groupings of children, small group, large group activities and considering where you want different learning centers?

Sarah (P93):

Yes, I have a science center and wood working center.

R: And this table beside the filing cabinet?

Sarah (P94):

That's all I have to use, I don't have a desk. Over here there is a writing center, but the table is used for reading in small groups as well.

R: There was a tape recorder out as well on one of the tables.

Sarah (P95):

That was a listening center, but I am flexible as very often the children will bring the tape recorder onto the carpet and plug it in.

R: This table by the door is?

Sarah (P96):

It's water. The lid is often used in setting up a science experiment too. That's my classroom.

R: Thank you.

Reflections

I began Sarah's interview similar to Jane's by asking about the organization of curriculum in her classroom. Sarah said she organized her program according to the use of themes. "It is an integrated program so that the activities are usually centered around a theme" (p.189 p.1). She felt it was important

to teach using themes because "it enables children to work together with a sense of collaborating and learning together "... (p.202, p.28). Furthermore, she felt the themes allowed children to contribute...it ties them together...develops a wonderful communal spirit of sharing, working and participating" (p.202, p.29). When asked about curriculum subjects, she used numerous examples such as "growing beans for the Jack and the Beanstalk story" (p.192, p.6) to show how she integrated her content knowledge of academic areas into her present theme of Fairy tales. Sarah felt she needed to be aware of the issued curriculum guide to integrate skills and concepts into classroom themes. She felt her role was... "to be fully conversant with all the skills and the sequence in which skills need to be introduced in the classroom and to insure each child is moved on to a new set of skills as they are ready" (p.194-195, p.13). In summary, Sarah believed that curriculum needs to focus around the child, address their needs and focus on the developmental and learning differences among individuals. At the same time, the curriculum needs to be presented in an integrated fashion to establish a community of learners.

In this classroom, the teacher allowed the children to take an active role in learning. She explained when a new theme is introduced..."the children have an opportunity to create their own activities"...and they "will find ways of integrating what they really want to do with the current theme" (p.194, p.12). She said when she introduced the present Fairy tale unit to the group of children, "let's brainstorm and talk about the kind of centers we can open up to the fairy tales" (p.201, p.27). Once the activities were chosen by the children, the teacher organized the materials. "In this particular theme, I put them out because those are the materials the children told me they would like to have out in this center" (p.209, p.49). In math she explained the children have "to assume the responsibility of covering all of the activities themselves" (p.198, p.21). Her opinion was that it offered them the opportunity to learn "a great deal about organization and self-direction as well as taking responsibility for completing tasks" (p.198, p.21). As she pointed out, there is a lot of decision making in math. She said that children are introduced to making their own decisions and completing activities of their own choice through the math program.

Overall this teacher said she "set the stage for learning to take place" (p.195, p.14) and children learned by being "actively involved in doing themselves" (p.196, p.15). She provided the materials... the opportunities, the time, the discussions and the set up for the children to learn. The children "helped to create the environment and set it up" (p.203, p.32). As cited in the examples above, this teacher allowed the children to take an active role of ownership in developing themes, making decisions about their learning and assuming responsibility for their learning.

In examining Elbaz's (1983) three levels of practical knowledge, Sarah gave statements that functioned as a rule, as a principle, as an image or sometimes in several ways simultaneously. These rules took diverse forms, "sometimes a brief statement, sometimes an extended description of practice from which a number of closely related rules could be inferred" (Elbaz 1983 p.136). In terms of determining classroom themes, Sarah mentions she encourages a great deal of "discussing" and "brainstorming" (p.221, p.76). Concerning learning centers she says, "there is tremendous skills of mediation and negotiation going on between the children" (p.212, p.56). During the

afternoon when the children were involved in their choice of activities, she said she uses "the time for communication, you know little chats and visits" (p.215, p.62). She explained this rule of practice in the following manner... "the communication I engage the children in during this time is designed to have them make predictions and to think" (p.215-16, p.62). In describing child activity at the block center, she talks about "cooperation, planning, discussion and decision making" (p.214, p.60). At the end of center time she talks about "debriefing or class time when we come together and talk about what they have done or built" (p.222, p.79). In reference to evaluation she considers the child's "ability to communicate, to tell a story... explain how to do something...make a hypothesis...draw conclusions...make predictions... a good test of reasoning and language skills" (p.220, p.73). In these comments a number of distinct rules: discuss, negotiate, mediate, chats and visits, cooperate, plans, decisions, hypothesize, and predict constitute an approach to communication in the classroom which can be expressed in the statement of a principle.

In terms of the rules cited above their rationale is given in this teacher's following statements.

Similar to Vygotsky's (1978) view that we do not understand a concept until we have articulated it to someone else, Sarah says she interacted with children in centers because "I find it consolidates their learning if they have to tell someone else how to do something" (p.216, p.63). All of Sarah's rules of practice find their justification in the principle that communication is a skill requiring a high level of thinking and organization and a difficult one to acquire, necessitating willingness to take risks and practice. Sarah's practical principle of communication and her pursuit to foster it through interaction with herself and other children seems to result from her theoretical and practical knowledge of language, social and emotional development of the child. She alludes to her training in New Zealand, courses taken and her many years of teaching experience as the basis for her knowledge and present day practices. Schwab (1969, 1971) spoke of pedagogical or theoretical knowledge functioning as an influence to teaching practice. As these theorists acknowledge child development theory which Sarah speaks of through the interview is a consideration in the planning and development of a program for children in the early years.

The image of Sarah as a "negotiator" of learning appeared in this interview. Her concerns or interests in helping students to think independently emerged as part of her role as a negotiator of learning. When she discusses how math operates in her room, she says "the children have to assume responsibility...they are learning about organization and self-direction" (p.198, p.21). She stressed the importance of students being in control of their own learning. As she talks about her role in the classroom, she says "the set-up is to lead the children to the kinds of thinking... directed towards...learning...posing problem solving...throwing out ideas to the children so they can work through them, make predictions and do testing of their hypothesis" (p.195, p.14). She further explains her method of teaching as "I learn a lot" (p.221, p.76). "Often I will watch the children in centers" (p.214, p.60). "I value what children do in work time and their play. I show respect...to go and participate and take part in it" (p.215, p.62). "I spend time commending and recognizing when children are trying or getting better" (p.216, p.63). Her teaching philosophy or beliefs hinged upon the notion of the teacher and student experiencing shared learning. "I believe we learn by

doing. What we remember comes from what we have done and experienced ourselves...not from what we have been told" (p.223, p.80). Here she provides us with an image of herself as a learner. The image she generates provides her with the goal of teaching her students to be learner negotiators. She believes in discussing, sharing and discovering their learning styles. "They need to be physically active and involved in what they are doing" (p.223, p.81). Her image of a negotiator of learning helped me to understand that the teacher in this classroom collaborates with her students rather than dictates to them.

For Sarah, the curriculum is in the classroom. Sarah seemed to invite investigation by ensuring a comfortable setting for all learners: students, teachers and other adults. She studied her learners and asked them thinking questions, probing not only their needs and interests but also the ways they perceived their own learning. She expected answers that will contribute to curriculum and to the learning atmosphere of the classroom. Every member of Sarah's class moves in and around the center of the curriculum, taking various roles: sometimes researcher, listener, presenter or expert but always inquirer. Sarah invited her students

to inquire into their own abilities and research their own advancement. In Sarah's room, much of what she said assured me that together with her students she developed a curriculum that's always in process, always flexible, always meaningful and always true to the learners in her classroom.

Different from Jane, I found Sarah to be very much in touch with her own beliefs and practices. Her discussion of her thoughts revealed that theory was important to her and entwined with everything she said and did. Sarah remained true to her beliefs in early years concepts as I noticed these beliefs in operation while I visited her classroom. She continued to further articulate these beliefs in theoretical terms as she explained her classroom practices in our interview together.

Jessica's Classroom

From our first interview together, Jessica had similar beliefs of early years concepts consistent with Jane and Sarah's beliefs. However, Jessica had much difficulty in explaining how the concepts could be implemented in the classroom. I knew from her belief statements that she believed in these concepts but I wasn't sure of whether she valued them and how she

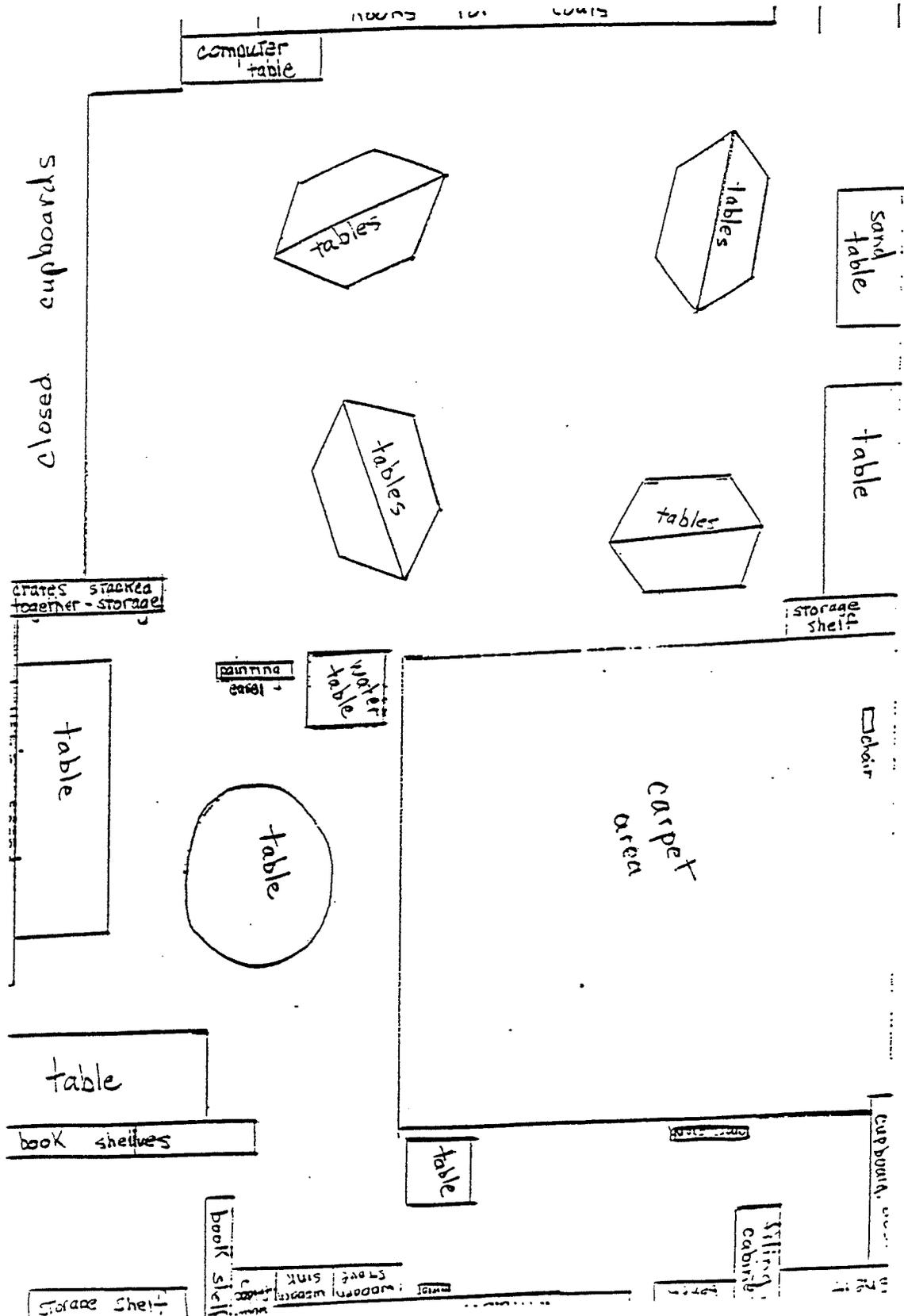
actually practiced them. I felt the first interview afforded Jessica an opportunity to think about her own thinking in terms of what she believed and practiced. As the first interview had ended, I thought that Jessica was still trying to organize her thoughts about play in terms of past experiences and present practices.

From our first meeting, I wondered what the conditions of learning, teaching and curriculum were in Jessica's classroom (Figure 3). She had originally said she worked with individual students during the day to

Insert Figure 3 about here

teach reading, while the other students were interacting with the materials, making their own discoveries. If this was true, I wondered how Jessica communicated with her students to determine their interests and needs. How did Jessica interact with her students to get them to reflect and think about their own understandings. I wondered how teacher directed, the activities were in her classroom. I wondered to what extent the students participated in making decisions about their learning.

Figure 3, Jessica's Classroom



Last of all, I wondered if Jessica encouraged her students to question new ideas, share their thoughts, new discoveries and ideas. I felt confident the observation would demonstrate what value Jessica placed on certain concepts as this was evident in the other classroom observations.

Observation

9:00 The children enter and select books. Two children stand up and read to the group.

9:10 Adult (male) enters the room with film projector. Adult sets up projector. The teacher has the children read a message from the blackboard. The teacher asks the children to fill in missing vowels (group identified these letters as missing).

e.g. G _ d m _rn_ _ _ y_ _ sm _rt g _rls _nd b _ys.

T _d _y Mr. Ryl _nd _s c _m_ _ _ t _ our cl _ss. We

h _ve g _t _t 11:15 th _s m _rn_ _ _.

The teacher picks students to fill in letters on the board.

9:19 Adult steps to the front of the classroom with picture cards. Teacher takes a chair and sits at the back of the carpet.

Adult shows and discusses large photos with group. He holds up a book entitled farming and

asks the group about the type of farms they could name. Ideas such as dairy farm, poultry farm, grain farm and fruit were recorded.

9:20 He flips through the book discussing the pictures with the group. Another adult (female) enters with a child (boy) and starts working on the computer with him.

9:25 The adult starts a reel to reel film with the group. Other adult (female) and child at computer join group.

9:37 Film over. Adult says, "Let's talk about a grain farm. What do they do on a grain farm? What did the film show us?" Writes Grain Farm on board. Discussion generated with group. Points made by group and ideas are written on the board by the adult.

e.g. First we plough the soil.

Then we cultivate.

Then we harrow the soil.

Then we plant the seeds.

We use a seed drill.

The seeds need sunshine, water and heat.

9:45 The male adult asks the children to read back the words written on the board.

9:53 More ideas are discussed and adult adds other sentences to the list. He tells the group of children and the teacher... maybe the group can do some writing about a farm. The teacher goes to the front of the group and asks the children to do some writing about what they saw in the beginning, middle and end of the film.

9:55 The children take blank pieces of paper and move to the tables. Female adult leaves classroom with child.

10:00

Teacher and other (male) child have some discussion. Teacher circulates among the group.

A new adult (female) enters the classroom and other adult (male) leaves the classroom.

10:06

Some children approach the teacher, the teacher collects papers from these children. Two children pick up books and sit on cushions to read. The teacher sets up the computer for another child.

10:13

Six children are sitting on cushions reading books. The teacher is helping a student at the computer. Other female adult circulating in the classroom.

10:19

Teacher sitting at table while child reads to her.

10:20

Recess bell rings. The teacher says to the children, "you may go to recess".

10:35

The bell rings and the children enter the classroom.

10:38

The teacher asks the children to come to the carpet "please". She writes the word "hot" on board and asks the children "who can come up here and change the first letter?" Different children come up one by one. Words written by them on the board underneath hot include: pot, wot, tot, not, mot, sot, fot, bot, got.

10:47

The teacher picks up pointer. "Let's read all of them and then we'll do our writing". She asks the children to move over to the wall to read all the words they use. She points to word cards mounted on the blackboard, children choral read them.

The teacher says to the children, "when I call your name you tell me what you choose to write... a

letter, a story or work in your journal. The teacher points to some green paper on table. She calls the children by name, they each pick up some green paper on table and walk to a spot to sit at a table. One child returns to the computer.

10:54

The teacher circulates the classroom to check with the children who are working at the tables.

11:15

The teacher asks the children to line up for gym.

The teacher leaves the classroom followed by the children.

The teacher returns to the classroom and another adult arrives for a meeting.

The meeting continues to 11:57, the children enter, get their things (jackets, bags) and line up for dismissal.

12:00

The bell rings for lunch and children are dismissed.

1:00 The teacher sits on chair in front of the classroom. Children are sitting on the carpet. Another adult in the room. The teacher asks, "who hasn't had a chance to write a story on the

computer?" One child is identified by the teacher and moves to the computer to work with the adult.

The teacher opens a book entitled Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.

She starts to read the story to the group.

1:07 Another adult (female) comes to the room to pick up a child. Takes child sitting at computer with adult and they leave the room.

Other adult still in room picks up a box, sits at table and begins to file papers into a box.

1:16 The end announces the teacher. "Who picked this book?" asks the teacher. Another child walks to the books shelf to pick a book. The teacher says while the book is being picked, "we will line up to have a drink". The children return to the classroom and sit on the carpet. Child decides the will read a book, sits on a chair in front of class. Children all gather around him on carpet.

1:20 Teacher says, "we have time for one more short book". Child puts up hand. Teacher says, "okay, go pick a book, a short book". Child returns. The teacher says "let's read it altogether". Group begins to choral read. When finished teacher asks children to get in a semi-circle.

1:26 Teacher says, "for math today, I'm going to give some colored chipits and these ice cream cones (cone shapes on paper). One child hands out papers. Teacher asks other adult to pass out chipits. Teacher asks the children to count out six and put some on top of cone and some on bottom.

The teacher says, "when I call your name, you have to tell us how many chipits you have on the top and how many you have on the bottom. She proceeds to ask each child about their arrangement. "Who can come up and write a number sentence?" One child writes $3+3=6$ on the board. The teacher says, "now we are going to show you subtraction is take away". She instructs the group to eat the chipits they have put on the top of their double scooped cone picture. The teacher asks each child how many chipits they ate and writes a number sentence on the board for each child identified. Some examples include: $6-6=0$, $6-5=1$, and $6-3=3$.

The teacher picks up a pointer and they chorally read all number sentences on the board.

The teacher gives instructions to the group on what they will do. They will receive a piece of paper, take their things to their spot and eat some

chipits like they have been doing. They will write a number sentence for what they have taken away.

1:38 The children leave the carpet. The teacher and the other adult circulate among the children.

1:45 The teacher and other adult are circulating classroom, sitting with various children. One boy is at sand table, other adult sits beside a child working on the computer.

1:55 Teacher has collected most papers from the children. The teacher moves with pencil and paper in hand to sit beside child who is reading on cushions.

4 girls placing play money on the floor

2 girls taking out large wooden blocks from shelf

4 boys at water table, using 2 boats and 2 plastic containers

1 girl painting at table

1 girl cutting out ninja turtle picture with scissors at table

3 boys using 3 shovels and 2 pails at sandbox

1 girl working with other adult at computer

2:05 Teacher sitting beside same student (boy) listening to him read

1 boy selecting book at book stand
3 girls, 2 boys sitting at table props cups
plastic fruit, cutlery, purses on table
2 girls building with large blocks
1 girl, headphones on plugged into tape
recorder
3 boys, water table, 1 girl
1 boy and adult at computer
1 girl tracing hand on paper
1 boy at sandbox

2:15 Bell rings. Teacher says you can walk out for
recess.

2:30 Bell rings.

2:35 Most of the children have entered the classroom and
return to their activities.

2:40 3 girls sitting at table with props counting
play
money
1 boy, 1 girl start to play basic sight word
bingo with teacher on carpet
1 boy, 1 girl at water table
1 boy gluing paper around can attaching string
1 boy, another adult at computer
3 boys at sandbox

3 girls, 1 boy using colored elastics attaching them to geoboards

1 boy and 1 girls cutting and gluing at a table, boy is pasting cutout figures to sticks

2:50 Boy shuts off lights. Teacher announces clean-up time.

The children begin to clean up. Teacher says, "Excuse me, where are the people who were playing bingo, we need to put it away".

3:00 "The room looks wonderful. Will everyone please sit at tables."

Adult picks two children to pass out snack. Teacher shuts off light and says, "Can we be a little quieter, it's the end of the day and it's very hot in here". The snack is continued to be passed out. Teacher turns on lights as someone has spilled their milk.

3:09 Adult says, "When I see people sitting quieter, we'll be ready to start". She checks to see if everyone has all snack items. Then announces, "You may start". Teacher says to group, "When you're finished your snack today come and sit on the carpet". Teacher sits on chair on carpet.

Other adult circulates with carton of milk to see who would like more.

Teacher hands notes to those children on the carpet.

3:15 Some children still eating snack at tables. Some children looking at notes on carpet.

3:16 Teacher, "Okay, I think we'll start this and others can join in when they are finished". "Please put your papers on the carpet". Teacher says to group, "The school has given me some money to buy some books and I'd like you to help me choose some". I'll start to read titles and you raise your hand if you think we should buy it. Proceeds to read through note as hands go up, etc. Teacher says, "Okay, I'll put a check mark beside that one". She continues with this process until dismissal time.

3:20 Other adult puts up chairs on the tables.

3:30 The teacher dismisses the children.

Summary of Observations

The day in Jessica's classroom began similar to Jane's and Sarah's day with the children seated on the carpet. Jessica worked with the large group, asking the children to take turns filling in the missing vowels in the blank spaces. When the children had finished,

another adult stepped to the front of the class holding a book and some large black and white photos. The adult proceeded to show and discuss farm photos with the children and read them a story about farms. Some of the children's ideas are recorded. A film about a grain farm is shown to the group. The film promotes further discussion and the adult records a list of the sequence of steps for growing grain. Once finished, the adult suggests to the teacher that the children do some writing about farms. Then he leaves the classroom.

The teacher hands out paper for the children to do some writing. She asks them to write about what they saw in the beginning, middle and end of the film. There is no discussion with the group to clarify her exact meaning of the assignment. I wondered what the purpose of this assignment was, as even I couldn't think of what happened at the beginning, middle and end of this informative film. Perhaps this unrelated assignment was meant to fill in some extra time left before recess. Within ten minutes most of the children had completed their work and they take out books to read on the carpet. There is no sharing of the work they just completed.

After recess, the group meets on the carpet to list words on the board that belong to the "ot" family. The children read the generated list and another group of word cards nearby. The teacher announces that it is writing time and the children must tell her what they will choose to work on: a letter, a story or work in their journal. I am not clear on how this activity relates to the farm theme that occurred before recess. I will ask this teacher specific questions to understand how she uses themes in her classroom. Writing lasts thirty minutes and then the children are asked to line up for gym. When the children return from gym, they are dismissed for lunch.

The afternoon begins with the teacher reading two books to the class. Following this, she hands out colored chipits and papers with ice cream cone shapes on it. She has someone distribute six chipits to each child. They are instructed to arrange some on the first scoop and some on the second scoop of the cone shaped paper. A list of addition number sentences generated by the children are written on the board. The teacher asks the group to eat the chipits they arranged on the top level of the cone. The teacher records a subtraction sentence for each child on the board. The children are

handed cups of chipits and are required to do the same activity individually at their tables. The teacher and the adult circulate among the students.

Once the children had completed their work, they handed it to the teacher and they were allowed to have some time to play. When the teacher had collected most of the children's papers, she sat down to read with an individual on one of the large cushions. She read with him until recess and when the children returned, another child asked her to play sight word bingo with a small group on the carpet. The lights are soon turned off as the signal for clean-up. Similar to the other two classrooms, the children sat down to eat a prepared snack.

As the day ends in this classroom, the teacher is looking over some book order forms with the large group on the carpet. She has asked them which books they would like her to order for the classroom.

Reflections

From my visit in this classroom, I could see that again most of the activity that occurred throughout the day was teacher directed except for the activity choices the children had in the afternoon. From my observation, it seemed the teacher or other adults did stand up and

lecture the group for long periods of time, contrary to this teacher's original belief statement. This was evident in the morning with the farm discussion as well as in the afternoon when the teacher read and did math with the large group. It seemed we did not hear much from the students in this room other than to reiterate the ideas from the film and extend some of the teacher's ideas concerning word families and math sentences. There was no sharing of the children's ideas about the farm film, or any of the writing they did on the film, or any sharing of the writing they did later that morning on their choice of a story, a letter or a journal entry. The children's choice of activities in the afternoon and their resulting discoveries were not discussed by a sharing or a debriefing time. I wondered what Jessica had really meant in our first interview when she explained child centered learning as the child being the main focus rather than the teacher.

With most of the activities in this classroom, the children were all doing the same task at the same time except for the choice time in the afternoon. Two students (obviously special education) seemed to have some difficulty with the tasks required of them. One male child was placed out in the hall for a short period

of time while the female student merely wandered around the classroom, clutching a stuffed animal. Another adult (maybe a classroom aide) who involved herself with a lot of secretarial jobs like filing and repairing books, seemed to be keeping an occasional eye on them. She did work at a separate table with these two students during the math time.

I thought back to Jessica's ideas about developmentally appropriate practices and how she applied her ideas to the children in her classroom. Originally she had told me that she felt developmentally appropriate practices were practices that were going to enhance the student's self-concept. She had said that it was important to give children tasks whereby they could have success, and yet I did not understand the purpose of writing about the beginning, middle and end parts of a documentary film. Was this activity developmentally appropriate for the two special education students in her room? Jessica had said that as teachers we should not expect children to all be doing the same thing at the same time but this is what I had observed in her classroom. I would have to ask Jessica more about these two students and how she provided for them in her classroom.

Although Jessica had said she used themes in her classroom to organize her program I did not see very much integration of this theme with the whole day's activities. The afternoon was free exploration as Jessica had referred to in her earlier dialogue with me. There was no teacher directed structure to these activities as I had observed in Jane's classroom. As she had indicated, the activities such as blocks, water table, paints, sandbox, books, house corner props and art materials were set up and the children were free to do what they wanted. Earlier when Jessica spoke of the purpose of this activity time in her classroom, she spoke about how the materials are used to guide the children's play and guide their discovery of concepts. She felt children needed time to pursue their own interests, and make their own discoveries. Similar to Jane, Jessica did not take the opportunity to observe and interact with the children as they were working with materials. Jessica worked with individual children on large cushions, reading with different individuals for short periods of time. I wondered among other things, how Jessica knew what her children's interests were and what kinds of discoveries they had made. I wanted to know how Jessica decided when it was time to change or

add new materials to her classroom. I wondered if Jessica ever observed and interacted with her students as I thought this was a necessary prerequisite to creating a learning environment.

I feel the full day observation provided a clear picture of this teacher's practices. The practice I really noticed was that after the children completed a teacher prescribed task, they were free to make an individual choice of materials. The old phrase, "after you complete your work, you may play or have some free time", seemed to be a principle of this teacher's practice. This occurred in the morning after the children had finished their assignment about the film (which took some children only ten minutes to complete), and they were allowed to choose a book to read. In the afternoon, after the children had completed their math assignment and gave their papers to the teacher, they were allowed to have their playtime. I looked forward to the interview as I was beginning to doubt whether Jessica actually valued play as a valuable learning mode.

I knew the interview would help me to further clarify and understand Jessica's beliefs and values as she explained the operation of her own classroom.

Perhaps the interview would help Jessica to examine her own variances between some of her beliefs and practices.

Interview with Jessica

The interview with Jessica was structured similar to the two previous interviews. The questions asked allowed an understanding of the specifics of the day observed and provided a perspective of the context from which the teachers operated. The similarity of questions asked of all three teachers provided me with more information to understand the relationship between the teacher's thoughts and actions in the classroom. The interviews following each observation were particularly helpful as they allowed both Jane and Sarah to do some reflective thinking and tie their thoughts to their individual practices. I was hopeful that Jessica would provide more information about her understanding of early years concepts as she had expressed uncertainties earlier about how they could be applied in the class setting.

This was the last individual interview to be conducted and several months had gone by between the first interview and this one with Jessica. I felt at the first interview, that Jessica had felt intimidated

by the responses of the other two teachers. Even though she knew the other two teachers, she did not feel comfortable in voicing her opinions as many times she had responded with a reply of ...I don't know. I think she was trying to assimilate and accommodate their responses into her past and present teaching experience in the classroom as she simply agreed with the other two teachers without explaining her point of view. I wondered if Jessica had been entirely truthful in her belief statements as I questioned some of these articulated beliefs such as child-centered learning, developmentally appropriate practices, work-play dichotomy in my observations of her classroom practices, noting some of the variances. Compared to the other two teachers, Jessica talked less and gave shorter responses to explain herself. Hopefully this next individual interview would help me understand Jessica's thoughts about early years concepts and her perceptions about how to practice them in the classroom.

R: How is your program designed and what are some of the goals (curriculum, developmental) that you have for the students in your classroom?

Jessica (P1):

You're talking about the language arts program?

R: Your whole program. If someone came into your room and said can you tell me about your program. What kinds of things would you say?

Jessica (P2):

I think I would have to describe the language arts and math separately. Both of which I try to follow the curriculum. I've read both curriculum guides and the language arts one is designed on a whole language basis starting from oral preceding to written. I like to start off the beginning of the year with something very familiar to the children like they know... like nursery rhymes. They can match the written word with the oral word. So they feel successful because I really think success is one of the most important components of any program. Success breeds success and if they feel they are reading, they will be reading. I like to start off with simple books that the pictures tell what the words are... like the sunshine books.

R: You say one of your goals for the children are for them to be successful. You feel that's important and you also are saying that your program is based on the curriculum.

Jessica (P3):

I write a message on the board every morning. I feel a lot of teaching gets done with that message. It's repetitive and I allow the children to circle any word they know rather

than me picking the words, they do. It ensures success.
Gradually I make the task harder.

R: In most areas you move from simpler tasks to more complex, difficult tasks.

Jessica (P4):

I try to add the complexity gradually as I feel they are ready for it. The problem is that all the children aren't at the same level at the same time. That's one of the benefits of a whole language program that the children can work at their own level. Those who are more developed can pick the more difficult words to circle. When they are choosing their own books to read... I had one little girl this year who picked a book called baby every time I asked her to read to me. That was all she could do and I didn't tell her she already picked it because I felt that was all she was ready for. She left but I would have encouraged her to pick another book.

R: How is the curriculum approached? Today when I came in I believe I saw language arts in the morning and math in the afternoon. I saw some other activities after the children finished their math. How do you separate your day, do you allow time for certain subjects or do you integrate the curriculum?

Jessica (P5):

I try to integrate it. Like the farm could be a social studies unit and in this way, I feel like I'm integrating social studies and language arts.

R: You're saying then you might pick a topic. If you are integrating the curriculum do you still do some direct teaching in different subject areas?

Jessica (P6):

Yes.

R: Today I think I saw language arts and math. Your day is set up so you do...

Jessica (P7):

In the morning I do language arts and I try to plan my day so there is direct teaching or a mini-lesson. Then an independent learning activity that is assigned to the whole class. Then it's choice time.

R: Let's start again this morning, you had language arts then when the kids arrive in the afternoon, you have reading and then math and after math you had what you called choice time.

Jessica (P8):

Yes.

R: What about other areas, how are they integrated? How about science?

Jessica (P9):

Science is a bit harder but gets integrated with math.

R: For example?

Jessica (P10):

Like mass, volume, melting snow.

R: How do the children contribute to the curriculum?

Jessica (P11):

You mean... do they choose the topics?

R: That's one aspect.

Jessica (P12):

It's a good idea and I may try it but I haven't yet. I pick the topics.

R: You pick the topics based on the curriculum?

Jessica P (13):

Yes. The language arts curriculum is fairly open as far as topics go. Then I try to take the social studies topics and do them as language arts.

R: Most of the topics are chosen from the curriculum?

Jessica P (14):

Yes. I guess science is too, as far as language arts is concerned, because we did mammals. Then we went to the museum to see their display.

R: Do you consider your program to be an activity-based program? Why or why not?

Jessica (P15):

Partly. I took a course last year and they talked about activity-based classrooms being a continuum and where are you on the continuum. I feel like I am definitely not all the way on the continuum. I don't feel like I'm not at step zero, but I feel that the children have activities. I don't expect them to learn passively while I sit and talk to them or have them do workbook pages. I feel like I do active learning. I have activity centers set up hopefully designed for them to be learning.

R: Can you site some specific examples as to why you say... partly? What do you mean when you say you partly run an activity-based program.

Jessica (P16):

Well, I don't feel like they are spending their whole day in activity-based situations. I feel that part of what I do is like old fashioned traditional kinds of things in teaching. I feel as though I have my day divided like I said before, a teaching time and what we used to call in the old days, seat work.

R: Then you are dividing your day as being teacher directed as compared to more child directed.

Jessica (P17):

Yes, when the child has a choice, it's more child directed. Although I have set up the room. They haven't had a lot of input.

R: Now, can you refer to the day I observed and cite an example.

Jessica (P18):

I feel like the math lesson was part of both. When they are manipulating, they have concrete things they are manipulating, that's active learning. When I'm standing and writing things on the board, that's teacher directed. Even within this one lesson, there are both kinds of learning.

R: Do you use themes in your classroom?

Jessica (P19):

Yes.

R: At this time of year, what was your present theme and how was it chosen?

Jessica (P20):

The theme was the farm and it was chosen because we were going on a trip to the farm.

R: It was something chosen from the curriculum?

Jessica (P21):

Yes, it fit in with the science curriculum, living and non living.

R: Do you feel it's important to teach using themes, why or why not?

Jessica (P22):

I think so. I think it makes the classroom more interesting. It provides continuity and substance. I don't think I follow through on my theme as completely as some people do. I don't take it into math. My theme is mainly for language arts.

R: I'm curious about the decision making process in the classroom. You just started to talk about it a few minutes ago. Decisions like room arrangement, materials put out... I wanted to know who makes all the decisions in your room?

Jessica (P23):

Well, basically I do. I tried it years ago when I first started teaching... a grade four classroom... I told the children they could design the classroom. I hated what they had done. The room... there was absolutely no symmetry... they had clumped a few tables here and there. The whole room looked like a maze. I think in order to do that. I think I did it incorrectly because I didn't give the children any input at all. I just said you can design the room and go to it. I think if I were to do that again, I would have some parameters for the kids.

R: What about the materials you put out today, you had sand, water and things put out on each of these tables. How did you decide what materials you were putting out?

Jessica (P24):

Well, I try to put out some materials that I think will promote some kind of learning, like measuring cups and different size buckets and the letter bingo game in the language arts.

R: Then you make most of the decisions in the room?

Jessica (P25):

Occasionally children will make a suggestion. Somebody made a very good suggestion last year that I put... a showing center where they... one of the children suggested a center where they could put things they made or they brought. It was sort of an answer to the lego problem where they make something and they don't want to take it apart. They could keep something in the showing center for a few days. Then they are not so reluctant about taking it apart afterwards. What I did for that showing center was take pictures of what they made. You obviously can't leave an intricate block design there, you don't have the space or materials. I found if I took a picture of it for the showing center, the children liked that. I try to incorporate their ideas, but

I have to say ninety-nine percent of the decisions are made by me.

R: Is it a component you think you might like to incorporate into your classroom? In our original interview we talked about child-centered learning and I just wondered what's keeping you from adapting this kind of approach? What do you think you would need more knowledge about how to bring this into the classroom or more practices, reading... What kinds of things would help you out?

Jessica (P26):

I think it would help me out to have a support teacher to meet with the teachers that are doing that and talk about how to do it. I'm so used to having things prepared first. When I do a unit I don't prepare as I go. I prepare it first.

R: Then you have the unit already organized as to everything you are going to do with the kids? The input or feedback you get from the children after you have done this unit, do you consider that for the next year's group or do you try to incorporate it into that?

Jessica (P27):

Definitely I take into consideration the way the previous children have reacted to it and then I change things as I go along.

R: For the following year's group?

Jessica (P28):

But not every group reacts the same way. I do a lot of switching.

R: What kind of choices are available to your students? Does choice time occur at one hour of the day or are there choices all day? How would you first of all describe choice time?

Jessica (P29):

Well, I think choice is very important in just about all aspects. First of all, they chose whether they want to tell news. The first thing we do is the message and they choose which word they want to circle. I don't say circle the word... how. I say choose a word to circle. Then we do news time. They choose whether or not... I don't even encourage the children to tell news if they don't want to, that's their prerogative. After news time is journal time. They write their news in their journals. The only choice they have.... they don't have a choice at that time whether to write or not write. I don't tell them they have to write the sky is blue. They write what they want to write and they are at totally different levels for writing. Some are very cautious, some are just doing random letters.

R: Do you see choice time functioning all day then?

Jessica (P30):

Pretty well. Not always, because as I say they don't have the choice not write.

R: You have language arts in the morning and math in the afternoon. After math do they have more choices to make?

Jessica (P31):

Then we have what the children always call their play time. No matter what I call it, they call it play time and they love it. They ask about it from the minute they walk in the door... when is play time?

R: I guess I'm confused then, is your choice time occurring all of the day, most of the day or part of the day?

Jessica (P32):

Part of the day and to different degrees. They have the choice to choose what to write but they don't have the choice, not to write. With math they don't pretty well have a choice. No, I don't see any choice. At center time they have complete choice.

R: Is choice time or this center time for everybody? What if somebody doesn't finish something from the morning, do they still have their play time?

Jessica (P33):

I have taken away play time for different reasons.

R: Is this due to something that has occurred in the morning or for something that has occurred during their free choice?

Jessica (P34):

Usually a time out during their free choice.

R: At this time are they allowed to move to different activities or are they to remain with their first choice?

Jessica (P35):

They are totally free. Somebody was suggesting that I have one day that is not free when I assign them to activities. The girls rarely go to the lego. Somebody was saying to me, it might be a good idea. That's the problem, everybody has different ideas or ways of doing things.

R: Then you don't limit the amount of students working with materials?

Jessica (P36):

No, I just tell them that as many as can play peacefully at a center.

R: If you had a problem occurring with ten kids at the sandbox, how would you work it out?

Jessica (P37):

It depends. Sometimes... you know it really hasn't happened. But I think I might suggest the people that were there last, leave and go find somewhere else to play.

R: I wanted to know about the materials put out for the children during this free choice time. How were the things chosen? You said you had lego, sand, some were playing sight word bingo, some were in the water table, there was a few children cutting and gluing, some using colored elastics and geoboards and some children were gluing paper to stick...

Jessica (P38):

Oh, puppets.

R: Can you tell me about the materials chosen to put out this day? Did they relate to your theme or did you put them out to develop a particular skill?

Jessica (P39):

I try I think, to have things on the activity centers that are going to enhance their development. For instance things... we had been talking about puppets so there were materials in the art center for making puppets. I have a painting center for children to paint to enhance their artistic ability. I have a writing center where they can write.

R: I think you had out headphones with a tape recorder.

Jessica (P40):

Yes. I have a listening post and at that listening post they can choose to listen to stories or music.

R: I think you also had a table with plastic plates and cutlery and purses as well.

Jessica (P41):

I have a house center.

R: That stays out all year?

Jessica (P42):

Yes.

R: You had large blocks and lego out too. Do those kind of materials stay out all year?

Jessica (P43):

Yes.

R: Then you're not really changing your materials to suit your themes.

Jessica (P44):

No.

R: During our original interview we talked about learning centers. Did you have any learning centers or interest centers set up- for the children on this day that I came to visit?

Jessica (P45):

No, just the ones I always have set up. My activity centers are just... there.

R: Do you feel like you are covering the curriculum when the children are choosing their activities?

Jessica (P46):

No, absolutely not.

R: Why would you say no?

Jessica (P47):

Because I don't feel like I am covering the curriculum when the children are playing with blocks or playing with the sand. I think I said this before, I don't know how to cover the curriculum using activity centers.

R: But you said when you were talking about activity centers sometimes you are putting things out to develop a particular skill?

Jessica (P48):

Right.

R: Are the skills not then related to the curriculum?

Jessica (P49):

They are related, but it's not planned.

R: Are you saying you're just putting things out to see what they can do with the materials?

Jessica (P50):

No, to develop skills. Like for instance... playing with lego develops fine motor skills.

R: Can you give me an example.

Jessica (P51):

Playing in the water table develops measurement skills.

Playing in the art center develops visual skills.

R: Then you don't particularly put out a lot of materials to develop skills, you're saying if it happens its incidental?

Jessica (P52):

Yes, incidental is the word I'm looking for. I do put out things, materials to develop those kinds of skills. The language arts is designed to enhance reading, but I'm not covering the social studies topic.

R: Why do you think choices are important to the children?

Jessica (P53):

I think choice is important for everybody because we have our heart more into something that we've chosen ourselves. We are going to be more motivated to do something we've chosen ourselves. We are going to put more of ourselves into it. We are going to appreciate it more. We have some control, some power.

R: So you feel the choice the children make in the afternoon is a way of children getting power in the classroom.

Jessica (P54):

Having some control... not everything imposed by me.

R: Would you consider the sand table, water table and blocks to be learning centers?

Jessica (P55):

Yes.

R: In our first interview many of us referred to goals and objectives as we discussed the learning centers. What specific goals or objectives did you have for your students at these centers? In your sand table you had three shovels and sand pails. What were the particular goals and objectives you had for the children?

Jessica (P56):

Okay... the goals for the sand table? Okay, number one is enjoyment. The children seem to enjoy the sand. They develop visual motor skills. They develop comparison skills, comparing the different sizes of things. They develop dexterity, building things. They develop cooperation. They learn socialization skills, cooperation skills.

R: How about the water? You had two boats and two plastic containers in your water table that day.

Jessica (P57):

Actually there are other things. Those were the things the children chose to put in. There's a large box of sand toys and water toys that the children are free to take and put in. So what you're seeing is what the children put in.

R: So you didn't set this center up?

Jessica (P58):

No.

R: So then you're able to comment on the particular skills and objectives.

Jessica (P59):

I'm just thinking what they might have been learning from those things they chose. I think if they chose boats, they were probably doing imaginative play.

R: What about the large blocks, what particular goals and objectives did you have in mind?

Jessica (P60):

For those... I think the same kind of things. They learn spatial relationships which enhances their mathematical ability. They learn geometry later. They learn dexterity, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, cooperation because they are usually doing it themselves. I think probably with the large blocks, the most important thing they learn is the spatial relations, dexterity...

R: In the sand and water areas you picked out materials for a box, how did you select what you... were there certain concepts you had in mind for the kids to explore with these materials?

Jessica (P61):

Well there are pails and shovels and measuring equipment. Under imaginative play, there are... sometimes they build

roadways in the sand, and they have little cars. Sometimes they get stolen.

R: At choice time this afternoon you read with children and then you played sight word bingo with a group of students. What do you usually do when the children have this choice time?

Jessica (P62):

I usually use that time to teach reading because I feel it's so important for them to learn to read. It's the basis of their future in school. They have to read to do social studies, science, math, so I generally read with kids during that time.

R: I think you mentioned earlier you also do reading assessment at this time?

Jessica (P63):

Yes.

R: How would you describe your teacher's role in the classroom?

Jessica (P64):

I feel my role as a teacher is to motivate children to want to learn how to read, learn how to do math, to make it interesting for them, to make it possible for them, to make it interesting for them.

R: So you would say your role is...

Jessica (P65):

... a facilitator of learning.

R: A facilitator in which way... in regards to the curriculum?

Jessica (P66):

I have to, that's my job. I would get fired if I didn't.

R: So your role is to help students develop skills?

Jessica (P67):

I have to cover the curriculum. That's my job.

R: I feel the term facilitator of learning has been overused
and I just wanted you to clarify the term for me.

Jessica (P68):

I mean teaching, to cover the curriculum to the best of my
ability. Hopefully they can learn to read and write and do
math to the best of their ability.

R: At the choice time in the afternoon, how do you deal with a
child who is throwing sand or wandering around and basically
not participating?

Jessica (P69):

Throwing sand, they have to sit out and wandering around not
participating, I gently guide them into something.

R: How do you promote social and emotional development in your
classroom?

Jessica (P70):

By role model. Sometimes with the help of the guidance
counselor.

R: How would the guidance counselor help?

Jessica (P71):

Well, I have a little boy in my room who is very emotionally disturbed. He has no idea of how to play with the children. She is going to take him and another child. She asked him to pick a friend. He picked me. She told him to pick a child friend. She's going to take him and more directly teach him to take turns.

R: What about the other students in your room, how do you provide for them?

Jessica (P72):

I talk about it. I talk about getting along. I talk about being friends and sometimes do a unit on friendship usually around Valentine's Day. I try to treat the children respectfully, and hopefully by that they will learn to treat each other respectfully. If they don't there is a consequence.

R: Like a time out which you mentioned before?

Jessica (P73):

Yes. If they physically hurt somebody, then they have to go to the office.

R: How do you motivate the students in your classroom?

Jessica (P74):

Hopefully by making the work something they want to do, something they can succeed in. Occasionally, there is some extrinsic motivations not stickers, but cookies or whatever.

R: So they would get treats for doing a good job?

Jessica (P75):

Yes, or I try to use a lot of positive reinforcement, a lot of verbal, positive reinforcement.

R: What about the interests of the children - how do you develop that?

Jessica (P76):

By listening to them and seeing what they are interested in and trying to incorporate that into the program.

R: Like you said earlier about the showing center, but they had given you that idea the previous year?

Jessica (P77):

No, I did it that same year. As soon as somebody suggested it. I said, "oh what a wonderful idea, why don't you make a sign?, and we did it right then and there.

R: So you're basically listening to the children's ideas and if you see potential you help them develop that idea?

Jessica (P78):

Yes.

R: But it's up to your judgment?

Jessica (P79):

Oh, of course.

R: I wanted to know how you deal with individual or developmental differences in your classroom. Today when I came to visit, I saw most of the children doing the same task at certain parts of the day. I just wanted to know if anyone was experiencing any difficulty with any particular task? One example I saw was when the children were doing take-aways at math time.

Jessica (P80):

Except two children (names them) were not doing math.

R: And they were doing?

Jessica (P81):

They are special education kids and the aide modifies the task for them. Instead of take-aways, they would just count... and say I can eat three.

R: Most of the children were doing the same task?

Jessica (P82):

Yes.

R: How about the writing?

Jessica (P83):

The writing automatically accounts for individual differences because one child could write a whole page, while another could write two sentences. One child could be

using random letter spelling, another child could be using standard spelling.

R: What about a child who is not writing?

Jessica (P84):

They can all write or draw pictures if they couldn't write anything. By April I didn't have anyone who couldn't put down anything, but certainly there were differences in quality and quantity in what they were putting down. For the children who need more help, I spend more time with them.

R: You said earlier in the year you have children who are not able to a certain task, what do you do then?

Jessica (P85):

I just give them more help.

R: Do you switch the tasks and let the children do different tasks?

Jessica (P86):

No.

R: Usually then the children all do the same task and you might give them more help?

Jessica (P87):

Yes, like for instance... say the children are doing a task where they have to cut sentences and put them in the right order. Some kids can do it easily and other kids have a lot

of trouble. I try to spend time with the children who are having trouble. I help them with it. Sometimes I don't get there quickly enough and they have just glued it upside down.

R: So you still sit with them and persevere to let them do this?

Jessica (P88):

If I realize the task is beyond them, I just accept the paper the way it was given to me. The next time I will go to the child and work with them, if there is a similar task. I would never say to a child... you did this wrong, do it over again, because it would be foolish if the child wasn't developmentally ready for that.

R: So are you saying that if you feel a child is not developmentally ready, you just give them more help next time?

Jessica (P89):

Yes.

R: So they can still accomplish that task and be successful, even though that task may have no meaning for them because they are not ready for it?

Jessica (P90):

It has meaning if they are helped with it.

Jessica (P91):

We were talking about giving different tasks to children at different levels. I think what you get into if you do that is what we used to have in the old days. Where we used to have the low group, the high group, and the middle group. At that time the children were doing different tasks. The high group was working in another workbook. Sometimes they were working in the same workbook but at different places. The high group may have been at page forty-one, while the low group was on page ten. That was very bad for children's self-concepts. I learned a lot over the years from isolated incidents watching children. I remember one kid when I was teaching grade four, and he had an absolute tantrum... throwing chairs around. I think what he was saying was I'm so tired of being dumb. I've been in the dumb group all the time. Every year I'm in the dumb group. He was so frustrated. I really try hard to avoid that.

R: Giving different tasks?

Jessica (P92):

Yes. I think if you give the children the same task and just help those who need the help, they feel better about it, rather than being given a simplified task. Even (child's name) who is developmentally delayed, wanted to have what other kids had. She very happily did what she could do with it. Sometimes I gave the children a task

where they had to fill in the missing words. She would just take a felt marker and color the whole paper. There was no way she could do something like that. Another thing children are very good at is adapting things to their own level. I used to have a game called perfection where the children had to put in little pieces, and there was a timer. The pieces popped out. The kids didn't like the idea of the pressure the timer provided. Yet they liked the pop. I thought they were so clever what they did. They first put it together, and after it was all done then they turned the timer on. Another time I was at a child's birthday party and this little boy was playing with a rubber horseshoe. He was standing very close and he was throwing it and getting it. He was having a good time. His father came along and said you're not doing that right. You're supposed to stand fifteen feet away. He took the kid and backed him up. Well... the kid threw it fifteen feet and he couldn't do it, he was three or four years old. Within two minutes he was gone from that activity because he wasn't having any success with it. I thought what did it matter if he wasn't doing it right, the way the father... he was still getting something out of it. He was doing it his way and he was adapting it to his own level.

R: How do you evaluate the students in your classroom?

Jessica (P93):

By observation. What I do is I pick five kids each day. I write their names on my hand so I don't forget who they are. Those are the kids I watch that day. Then I have a book in which I write up those five kids. Everything I see about them and those are the five kids I listen to read that day. I made up for myself, a reading evaluation sheet.

R: Then you are evaluating reading and...

Jessica (P94):

Math, I just write on that particular day everything I can think of that they have done or said, social issues, parental issues... anything that's happened with that child that day. And if something significant happens on a day that I am not observing that particular kid, I write it in anyway.

R: You're evaluating the children throughout the day then. What about when they are having their play time, are you evaluating them then?

Jessica (P95):

That's when I'm doing the reading and the reading assessment on individuals.

R: How do you report this progress to parents?

Jessica (P96):

Through the reporting system we use, which I hate.

R: Is that a checklist? Do you write as well on the children?

Jessica (P97):

Yes, I write a lot, a whole page each reporting time.

R: In your evaluation of the children, do you ever ask them to reflect on what they have learned?

Jessica (P98):

Yes.

R: How do you do this?

Jessica (P99):

Just by... I had a journal and after playtime I gave them the journal to write what they felt they had learned from that experience. It didn't work out very well though. I think I would try later on in the year when the children are able to write a little more. I think... I've also tried something... a regrouping session after the center time where they share, talk about what they have done.

R: What about your theme. You said you are presently doing a theme on the farm. Do you ever ask them to reflect on what they have learned about the farm?

Jessica (P100):

Yeah, I guess so. When you get back from the farm, you talk about what you saw there, what you did.

R: Then you are asking them to relate their experience? Your evaluations are more oral.

Jessica (P101):

Yes, I try to get them to write it too, but it's hard for them to express themselves in writing at this point. If I was teaching an older grade I would do the reading response journals...

R: Is that where you ask them to respond to something they have read?

Jessica (P102):

Yes.

R: What do you say to parents or others inquiring about the purpose of the children having playtime? How do you validate what the other children are doing at this time while you are doing your reading assessments.

Jessica (P103):

Well, I think what I told you before... that they are learning in centers, they are being in power. There has to be some enjoyment in school.

R: Are you saying that this is the time I do reading so I allow the children to play at this time?

Jessica (P104):

Yes. The only reason I do reading at that time when maybe I should be going around to extend their play is I seem to be able to just fit it in at this time.

R: How many students are in your class?

Jessica (P105):

Twenty-one.

R: What was the ratio of teacher/support teacher to the ratio of the children?

Jessica (P106):

I have a support teacher, myself and an aide which works with me every afternoon. This morning I had the librarian work with me and then a support teacher. In the afternoon there are always two adults with the children.

R: How would you like to see the early years classrooms grouped, by age, different ages?

Jessica (P107):

I think different ages might be good. The older children could help the younger children.

R: Is grouping by chronological age more favorable to your practices in the classroom?

Jessica (P108):

I think my practices would work either way.

R: In reviewing your information sheet, I see you have a Bachelor of Education degree. How was the early years approached in your training?

Jessica (P109):

I wasn't trained in early years.

R: You were trained in elementary practices?

Jessica (P110):

I was trained in grade five.

R: How do you feel you were prepared to teach in an early years classroom?

Jessica (P111):

I worked in early years classrooms. I started off in grade five and worked my way down, grade five, grade four, grade three, grade two and grade one. But I never formally had any training in the early years. A long time ago, there was a support group, ABC, I used to go to that and I found that was very helpful. I went to CEL (Children Experience Learning) courses and I found these were very helpful. But as far as university goes, I didn't get any training in the early years.

R: So you feel your different experiences in working with different ages prepared you to teach at this level?

Jessica (P112):

Yes.

R: Two teachers in our group have taken additional courses related to the early years. I think you were one of them. You took the activity based one, you mentioned. Why did you take the course?

Jessica (P113):

Because I would like to know more about early years teaching and I would like to learn more about active learning. I really do think it's the way to go.

R: You believe in this approach?

Jessica (P114):

Yes.

R: At this point in the year do you feel your practices are congruent with those beliefs?

Jessica (P115):

Not entirely. I feel that my practices and beliefs don't entirely match. The reason they don't is that I don't know how to do it that way. I've been teaching for twenty-three years and when you've been teaching in a certain way, it's not that easy to switch.

R: Can you give me an example of a belief that doesn't match your practices?

Jessica (P116):

I believe more learning should be choice. Yet there is a lot of my day that isn't choice, it's teacher directed. I would like to know how to cover the curriculum and I don't. I would like to know how to cover the curriculum through centers.

R: So for you that's really important.

Jessica (P117):

Yes, and I was hoping that I would have learnt that... not entirely, but at least to a greater degree through the active learning course I took last year. I was quite disappointed because I didn't learn that.

R: Since this year is your first year in the grade teaching after being a resource teacher, I wanted to know how your practices have changed over the school year? Has anything influenced your thinking about early years classrooms?

Jessica (P118):

Probably, I can't think of anything off-hand. I was also in a former position of working in grade one classrooms. You know how people observe in other classrooms. Well I had been observing in four other classrooms for seven years. I picked up a lot of ideas from other teachers that I incorporated. I'm sure things evolved over the year.

R: You feel then that your practices changed over the year?
Why?

Jessica (P119):

Yes, partly because of the active learning course. I used to think children should stay in one center, that's one specific example. Years ago when I was teaching grade one, I insisted the children stay in the one center they chose. At the beginning of the year I insisted that too. If they picked art, that was where they would go and stay there a

half hour or longer. Now I just let them go wherever they want to go. If they are at art for ten minutes and they decide to go to blocks, that's okay. Also, I think part of the reason I made that change is not only people suggested that, but it was a source of conflict. I had to say you can't do that, you have to stay there. This is one less thing for me to have conflict over.

R: Then your practices have changed in working with the children?

Jessica (P120):

Yes. I observe a lot of classrooms and I could take things from all sorts... I'm not saying everything traditional is wrong either. I like the active learning theory but I don't think I would throw away everything traditional I learnt.

R: Then your practices have become a combination of your experiences and new ideas?

Jessica (P121):

Yes.

R: You're always open to new ideas, is this what you're saying?

Jessica (P122):

Right. I would like to do the active learning better.

R: Thank you for the interview.

Reflections

Jessica, similar to Jane and Sarah, organized her program around themes but as she stated her theme was mainly used for language arts. She felt it was important to use themes as "it makes the classroom more interesting and it provides continuity and substance" (p.265, p.22). In discussing the organization of classroom themes, she indicated a preference to organize her themes or units ahead of time and to select topics based on the curriculum guide. She made no mention of the interests or needs of the children in her classroom. Although she said she took "into consideration the way the previous children had reacted to it and I change things as I go along" (p.267, p.27). Similar to Jane, the curriculum was outside the classroom in a predetermined form. When asked about her role in the classroom, she said, "I have to cover the curriculum. That's my job...I would get fired if I didn't..." (p.278, p.66 & 67). She felt strongly that her teacher's role was "to cover the curriculum to the best of my ability" (p.278, p.68). Like Jane, Jessica felt very accountable for her classroom and felt it was her job to follow and cover the issued curriculum guide. What about the students in the class?

When asked how the children contribute to curriculum and decisions about their learning, Jessica responded that she listened to the children's ideas but she judged whether there was any potential in helping them to develop those ideas. She summed up her thoughts about the children's input to decisions as she replied, "I try to incorporate their ideas but I have to say ninety-nine percent of the decisions are made by me" (p.266-67, p.25). I was curious then, as to how she motivated the students in her class since she had said, "we are going to be more motivated to do something we've chosen ourselves...we are going to put more of ourselves, our heart into something that we have chosen ourselves" (p.274, p.53). Her reply was that she hoped she could make the work into "something they want to do" (p.280, p.74). Occasionally she said there is some extrinsic motivation "not stickers but cookies or whatever" (p.280, p.74). Jessica did not seem to value the needs and interests of her students as part of the curriculum in the classroom. She allowed her students to make choices or decisions about their free time or play time in the room, but all of this remained a separate entity from the developing curriculum in the classroom.

Throughout this interview Jessica expressed several dichotomies: between work and play, teacher directed and child directed, total freedom and power indicating she had some difficulty accommodating the value of play for young children. Her uncertainties were expressed as "I have activity centers set up hopefully designed for them to be learning" (p.263, p.15). "I try to put out some materials that I think will promote some kind of learning...(p.266, p.24). "I don't feel like I am covering the curriculum when the children are playing with blocks or playing with the sand "(p.273, p.47). When asked about what the children were learning when they were interacting with each other and the materials in the classroom, this teacher had difficulty verbalizing her knowledge. "I'm just thinking what they might have been learning from those things they chose" (p.276, p.59). Basically, she said she did not change the materials in her room, the materials that were out enhanced development and she felt that incidental learning occurred. As I probed her knowledge of the value or purpose of play, Jessica said, "they are learning...they are being in power...there has to be some enjoyment in school" (p.288, p.103). Through these statements, I now felt I understood Jessica's beliefs

about play. Jessica believed in play for recreational purposes to keep the children happy and busy, but didn't actually value it as a tool in which any valuable learning such as reading, writing or math could occur.

Jessica reveals images (Elbaz 1983) in her above statements of how she understands teaching and learning should be. Any concepts, skills or curriculum must be taught for students to learn it. Although she accepts the views and beliefs of early years philosophy, she is not sure of her role in the children's individual learning experiences and does not value play as a vehicle for promoting learning. When we discussed evaluation, I wondered if she participated or talked with the children during their "playtime" as she called it. I was interested in how she discovered the unique needs and interests of the children in her class. She replied, "I usually use that time to teach reading... that's when I'm doing the reading and the reading assessment on individuals" (p.277 & 286, p.62 & 95). Here we see a rule of practice (Elbaz 1983) "teach reading" that reoccurs through the dialogue. To justify her practices during the children's playtime, she says "the only reason I do reading at that time when maybe I should be going around to extend their play as I seem to

be able to just fit it in at this time" (p.288, p.104). The statement reaffirms the idea that she sees her role as a teacher who must "teach reading" and she values reading over "playtime".

As mentioned above, Jessica enunciated rules of practice in areas of concern to her, reading being one of them. In the beginning of the interview, Jessica describes "success" as one of the most important components of any program. She associated "success" with reading in the following statement. "Success breeds success and if they feel they are reading, they will be reading" (p.259, p.2). In describing the purpose of the morning message, reading activity, when she has children pick words they know she adds, "it ensures success" (p.260, p.3). In justifying her practices of teaching reading during playtime, she says, "it's the basis of their future in school...they have to read to do social studies, science, math...(p.277, p.62). In describing her role as a teacher in the classroom she explains her role..."is to motivate children to want to learn how to read...to make it interesting for them" (p.277, p.64). In clarifying the term facilitator of learning she say "hopefully they can learn to read and write and do math to the best of their ability" (p.278, p.68). The rules

of practice "success in reading", "basis of their future in school", and her acknowledgment that she "teaches reading" during playtime together formulate this teacher's practical principle that reading is an important skill, that must be taught directly and practiced in the early grades to insure future success in school.

Before this interview ended, I wanted to ask about how this teacher provided for the two special education students as well as other children whom were having some academic difficulty in her classroom. Her earlier belief statements regarding developmentally appropriate practices indicated she had signed out the book with the same name from the library but as she said she didn't have a chance to read the theory of it. Defining the term from her own point of view, she had said she believed these were practices in which teachers accepted whatever a child could do as long as they did their best. Applying this belief to her practices, Jessica said that most of the students in her room are required to do the same task except for the special education students. The aide modified most of the tasks for these two but of course they did the same activity at a more appropriate level. She pointed out that they were doing

math with the chipits but it was simply counting as opposed to subtraction. With other students who are having difficulty Jessica, indicated she sits with them and gives them more help. As she explained, "If I realize the task is beyond them, I just accept the paper, the way it was given to me... and... the next time I will go to the child and work with them" (p.283, p.88). Jessica felt it was important for all children to be given the same task to complete even though at times they were not able to do it. I did not see the purpose of this as I understood each child is an individual having individual differences, needs and interests. As teachers, I felt that our role was to assess where children are at in their development and always challenge them to move ahead, evaluating their progress. My own understanding of developmentally appropriate practices was much different from Jessica's. Her justification for this response was her past experience with children who were in the high, middle and low groups. She felt it was damaging for a child's self concept to be given a different task from his/her peers. My thinking of this concept was different from Jessica's, as my knowledge was based on child

development theory and the application of these theories through educational training in the early years.

As the interview with this teacher ended, I found her to be critical though accepting of her own work and knowledge. "I feel that my practices and beliefs don't entirely match...the reason they don't is that I don't know how to do it that way" (p.291, p.115). Clearly Jessica wants to understand her own functioning as a teacher when she describes the differences between her beliefs and practices. "I believe more learning should be choice...though a lot of my day isn't choice, it's teacher directed. I would like to know how to cover the curriculum and I don't" (p.291, p.116). She reveals she has not had any formal training in the early years. Jessica's image (Clandinin 1986), or perception of herself and her teaching, is organized as a result of her many years of teaching experiences. "I've been teaching for twenty-three years and when you've been teaching in a certain way, it's not that easy to switch" (p.291, p.115). She explains her background experiences in the following manner..."I like the active learning theory but I don't think I would throw away everything traditional I learned" (p.293, p.120), Here Jessica acknowledges that although she beliefs in early years

concepts and likes the theory, she relies on her background experiences to guide her thinking. Similar to Jane, Jessica is experiencing a gap between her beliefs and practices.

The essence of this gap as discussed earlier, is a lack of understanding of how early years theory relates to and can be applied to a classroom. Both Jane and Jessica had experienced this frustration in our interviews together. They had both articulated certain beliefs and then there were variances between their belief statements and their practices , indicating a limited knowledge of theory. As the individual interviews had ended, I wondered if all three teachers were thinking about early years concepts and questioning their practices. It seemed Jessica's image of herself and her teaching style were undergoing some kind of scrutiny or reflective pondering.

Group Interview No.2

For the last group interview, we met at one of the teacher's homes as compared to the school where we met for our first group interview. The change in atmosphere provided a very relaxed setting to begin our last discussion. Before the tape was set to begin, the teachers expressed a general sadness that our

discussions would soon be coming to an end. One teacher said she had really enjoyed the intellectual discussions as she rarely had time in her teaching schedule to discuss her ideas and practices with her colleagues. Another teacher said she felt really good about our discussions, as they required her to do some thinking about what kinds of things she was presently doing in her classroom. She also felt the discussion allowed her to put her whole program into words. She was happy she had the chance to articulate all her thoughts and concerns. She knew now, she would not have any difficulty explaining her program to others.

Similar to the first group interview, I had asked each teacher to think about the concepts of: play, learning centers, child-centered learning, activity based learning and developmentally appropriate practices, we had discussed in our first interview together. This time I told them they would be asked to comment on whether they felt there was any variances between what they said they believed in and what they were presently doing in their classrooms. I wondered what they would say as they had reflected back on all our conversations together. Would they respond more openly and honestly about their thoughts and practices?

What concepts or information about theory would teachers want to know more about? What kinds of changes would the teachers want to make to their present practices? Would I see any professional growth in their responses?

R: How are your beliefs congruent to your practices in terms of the concepts: play, learning centers, child-centered, activity-based and developmentally appropriate? If your answer is yes, how? If your answer is no, not entirely, and there are some differences between what you believe in and what you are presently doing... be prepared to discuss the variances in terms of the concepts already mentioned.

Jessica (P1):

Not entirely. I would like to be able through play to cover more of the curricular objectives.

R: Are you saying you have a variance between what you presently believe in and your practices?

Jessica (P2):

Yes, right now in my mind I seem to separate play from work. The children have to work first and play later, like that old Protestant work ethic. I would like to know more about how to get the children to learn through play. I would like to be able to take a course that would help me. I mean I know the children are learning when they go to the block center. I've read a whole book about what children learn at

the block center. But I would like to learn more about how to teach the social studies curriculum, the reading curriculum, the writing curriculum through the use of play. At this point I don't know how to do that.

R: Originally, in our first interview, you said play was a way of exploring and discovering using material. You felt that children should discover concepts and the teacher's role was just to guide the play by providing the material. That's your original belief?

Jessica (P3):

Yes.

R: You're still saying you believe this can be done, but at this point you're not doing this?

Jessica (P4):

That's right.

R: But you still practice play in your classroom?

Jessica (P5):

Yes, but only after they finish their work.

R: Can you elaborate more on how you feel your practices are different from your beliefs.

Jessica (P6):

I feel a lot of the instruction for reading and writing is teacher directed and is done together as a group. Also, it is compulsory... but there is a certain amount of choice in

it but it's still compulsory. For instance, in the writing the choice is a choice of topic but not a choice of whether or not to write.

R: I'm confused... please remind me of your definition or belief of play?

Jessica (P7):

Play is where... to me... they don't have to go to the block center. I don't say that every child has to go to the block center every day. Whereas, I say every child has to write every day.

R: So you're saying that you believe play is children making choices and that the teacher should be providing materials to teach concepts reflected in the curriculum?

Jessica (P8):

Yes.

R: Presently then you don't feel the children are learning...

Jessica (P9):

... in their play centers.

R: You would like then to have more activities planned that help children discover concepts and reflect the curriculum?

Jessica (P10):

Yes.

R: Does anyone have anything they want to add to the discussion at this point?

Jane (P11) :

I'd like to say something about play. I think my beliefs are congruent to my practices in my classroom. My practices are still very teacher directed and they are not as child centered as maybe they should be or I want them to be. I don't feel the kids I have would make those intelligent choices about what they were going to explore. If I don't put out a certain material and make sure they are measuring and weighing, discovering something... I don't feel right about it. Even though I have play I guide it. It's still very teacher directed. I can't seem to get past that. Even my water table I only put out certain things that I hope they will explore the materials in the way I imagined that they would. Even if they don't, I will go to that center and I will say what could you do with this. I try to still guide them to get those curricular skills that I feel it's my job for them to get. Although my practices are congruent with my beliefs, it's still very teacher directed.

R: You originally said in our first interview that you believed that play doesn't always have to be teacher directed?

Jane (P12) :

Yes, and I would like to get to a point where I feel more comfortable in not directing it. Right now my choice time and play time is very teacher directed. I will put out a

certain material or even have a task card... like when you are at sand... this is what you should do. I will direct the class and say when you go to choice time today... this is what you will do. I can't seem to let go of that because I want to make sure of covering these. It still isn't as child directed.

R: Let me get this straight... in your first interview on beliefs you believed that play is not always teacher directed.

Jane (P13):

Okay.

R: Now you're saying in your practices when you allow the children to make choices... you are teacher directing it?

Jane (P14):

For the most part.

R: Is there a difference then?

Jane (P15)

Yes. There is.

R: You would like them to do more discovery on their own but you're directing all the activities or the things that they will do when they get there.

Jane (P16):

Yes.

R: Is that correct... with the task card?

Jane (P17):

Yes.

Jessica (P18):

But I think you said you're basing it on the children in your class. If you were in a different class you would do it differently.

Jane (P19):

Yes, I said, I don't think the kids that I am teaching right now would be able to do that on their own. Then I guess... if I think about what I said before, they are not congruent.

R: There is some variance between what you believe about play and what you actually do in the classroom?

Jane (P20):

Yes. I have one center which is not teacher directed like writing. The materials are there they use them which ever way they want to use them. That's really about the only one. So I guess my answer is not entirely.

R: Sarah, do you want to reflect your thoughts about play?

Sarah (P21):

I would think my practices are not entirely congruent with my beliefs at this stage. Like Jane, I feel that many of my centers, learning centers, activity centers are far more teacher directed than I would choose... than I believe is ideal. I found I've had to modify many of my expectations,

many of my practices to meet the needs of the children we have in our classes. Also to meet some of the social needs of the children in the classes. I am probably running a far more teacher directed program than I have ever run before. But I'm dealing with children who do not have the same focused attention and self discipline and range of academic interests of the children I have taught before.

R: I'm going to interrupt you and remind you of your opening belief statements of play. You said you felt play was necessary to develop self-esteem and self-concept. It helped children to achieve success and mastery of new skills. It helped them to experiment. You felt that you directed the materials. You thought it promoted problem solving, emotional and social development.

Sarah (P22):

Absolutely, that is my philosophy. I believe all that but I find under my present teaching circumstances, I am modifying a lot of the activities. They are more teacher directed because the children do not have the same intellectual curiosity without some direction. That doesn't mean my directing their activities entirely, that means I participate more in the groups by asking open ended questions. I try to direct the thinking in activities to do more problem solving.

R: Then your practices are not much different than your original beliefs? Are they?

Sarah (P23):

No, except that I find that under my present circumstances I am doing more directing... and perhaps even more controlling of what goes on in the centers.

R: Just in the materials or just questions you are asking? What exactly?

Sarah (P24):

Partly, like Jane, I have had to curtail some of the materials I've put out for free exploration because of the destructive behavior and using the materials in less constructive ways. There isn't... I find that because of the nature of the children I'm teaching at present... I'm having to do more intervention to make sure that the conceptual development and the understanding and the learning from the play experiences comes about. I see that many of the children would be happy to continue playing at the same level they enjoyed in nursery and kindergarten without making those changes to more intellectual pursuits or pursuing more academic kinds of learning and discovery.

R: Aren't you practicing the same things as you already said you believed in?

Sarah (P25):

Yes I am, I am in my present teaching situation. I have not always in teaching in different social circumstances, I have not always been as directive. I have been able to confidently leave the children to play and learn from play... explore. Give them the freedom to make those... learning... and to be able to transfer what they learn from the play experiences to other situations. I find that without some teacher direction which can often come through open ended questions, that transfer of learning does not come about so readily.

Jane (P26) :

I think what all three of us have mainly said, this is what we believe and this is what we would like to be able to do. We seem to be at a place where we have to structure things because there doesn't seem to be that curiosity, that motivation to find out... why! A lot of the kids don't really care why... it's just the type of students that we have because they've never been challenged or they lack the experiences that a lot of other children come to school with. No one has talked a lot to them. I find when I sit down with a group who are at sand or water or at the science center, when you ask them a question, they don't want to answer you because they know you're going to ask them another question. That's not what they want, they just want

to play. I think we try to structure it so that we know there is some end result to their play.

R: It seems like what I am hearing is your beliefs center around the notion that play should be child initiated, however, you are expressing some concerns that in many cases your practices of play are very teacher directed.

Sarah (P27):

I would like to say here if I were teaching nursery age children, I would feel compelled to intervene, to insure the learning and the conceptual development takes place. I could then give them time. In kindergarten I could still be quite relaxed about letting them explore freely and do as much as they are interested in doing in each center. I feel by grade one and grade two, I have a responsibility to make sure that the play develops their understanding and their intellectual development.

Jane (P28):

I guess the whole idea is that play is so acceptable in the classroom. When I started to teach grade one, there was no such thing as play time, it was sit in desks and do worksheets and do workbooks. If you get this workbook done, we'll move on to the next one and you'll get all these three done by the end of grade one. You didn't have time to play. The math curriculum was just full of concepts and skills you

had to get through in grade one. I guess this idea of play being acceptable is just so new that although we believe one thing, we still have a lot of other things hanging over our heads that we know we have to do.

R: Is it a problem that there's no set definition or that play is so wide open in theory that no one really knows how to practice play in the classroom. You believe in it for children to explore and learn through materials but there is no set ideas of what exactly children should be doing or what the teacher should do to ensure his/her practices provide valuable learning experiences to the children.

sarah (P29):

I'm not sure that that's the problem so much as this tremendous sense of accountability and teacher conscience that we have from the time we have done our training.

Jane (P30):

And the curriculum, that's a really big weight on the shoulder. When you have to justify every little thing you do. You wonder... is that in the grade one curriculum? You always have that cloud over your head. I think to get in those curricular things, we structure the play.

R: Jessica, do you have anything to add to this discussion?

Jessica (P31):

I said that too, I feel my practices and beliefs don't entirely match and the reason is... is I've been teaching for twenty-three years in a certain way. It's not that easy to switch.

R: Play for the primary grades then you are saying is a relatively new concept that teachers need more information about?

Jane (P32):

There's a lot of information about play but I think it's just the accountability that we feel?

Sarah (P33):

I think my practices have changed more because of the kinds of needs the children I'm teaching now bring with them each day rather than any change in my philosophy. I haven't changed my beliefs but I have modified my program somewhat over a twenty-year period. I'm now teaching children who have vastly different needs and they are children who don't necessarily make those progressions in learning and mastery of concepts and skills.

Jessica (P34):

To me the most important thing that I can do for the children in grade one is teach them the language skills, how to speak properly, how to read, how to write, how to listen and I don't know how to do that through play.

R: That's why you said you feel there is a variance in terms of your practices or it's a concern you have.

Jessica (P35):

The language arts aspect takes up almost three quarters of my day.

Jane (P36):

I think that in order to be able to do the reading and the writing and math through play you need more than one adult for twenty students. You cannot possibly... I mean you could do a lot of things with play in language, reading and math, but you can't... if you have twenty different children doing twenty different activities... you couldn't possibly get to them all.

R: Maybe let's move on and talk a little about learning centers. Who would like to talk about this concept and start the discussion?

Jessica (P37):

To me learning centers are synonymous with play because that's where the children play at the learning centers.

R: Would you say your beliefs of learning centers are reflected on your practices. You said you believed in learning centers, is your room set up or function with learning centers?

Jessica (P38):

My answer for this question on learning centers is exactly the same as my answer for play.

R: The learning centers is something that you believe in. You said it's free exploration with materials, it's not structured to meet any curricular objectives, it's free choice...

Jessica (P39):

No. I didn't say I believed that, I said that's how mine worked. I would like to know how to structure them to meet curricular objectives.

R: But you believed in them? I know you said children make their own discoveries... this is what you said in your first interview.

Jessica (P40):

What I'm saying is that I don't know how to set up my learning centers to meet the curricular objectives but I would like to. That's why I feel my children don't spend enough time at the learning centers. I'm worried that at the learning centers, they are not meeting the curriculum.

Jane (P41):

I have learning centers in the classroom. I believe in learning centers and I practice learning centers. Some of them are very teacher directed and some are open ended. The materials are out there and they use them the way they see

fit. I guess it's not entirely congruent with what I believe, but as I said before when talking about play, I don't trust the kids to make those wise choices that will meet the curricular needs. We keep coming back to that because that's what governs...

Jessica (P42):

That's our job. We would get fired if we didn't do it.

R: You also said that you felt the role of learning centers should meet specific goals and objectives?

Jane (P43):

Yes.

R: You said earlier each activity placed in a center should have a goal and objective. You feel a learning center had a bunch of hands-on activities and there were numerous activities in each center. You felt you were practicing learning centers when I came to visit?

Jane (P44):

Yes. I still feel that I am. I believe in them and practice them, but I guess that some are more teacher directed than I wish they were.

R: I would like you all to reflect on what you would like to do in your classrooms and what you are doing. I know it requires some real searching and I'm trying to provoke you to do this.

Sarah (P45) :

Well, I'm much more confident that's what's happening in the classroom is congruent with what I believe about learning centers, learning center activities.

R: Can you give us some examples? Please include how you are meeting the curriculum through these learning centers as the others are concerned about this.

Sarah (P46) :

The learning centers tend to be set up to do exploration, experiments and discover about the things laid out in the science and math curriculum. Lots of the measurement in math is what goes on in a learning center. Lots of the development of science, science concepts can be done in small groups at the activity center. It can be self directed too.

Jane (P47) :

One thing I would like to say at this time is I guess another part of the learning center is when I do teacher directed to meet a curricular need such as math... I put out certain materials. I will say, today I want you to use these materials and make some patterns. I will put things for recording or I'll set up something at the science center that has to do with matter or living things at the science center. No one chooses to go there!

Jessica (P48):

That's what I was going to say.

Jane (P49):

So then you can't meet those curricular skills and concepts because nobody goes to that center. It seems children seem to gravitate to the center that are more play oriented. The water and sand are popular areas. Sarah and I are taking turns with the computer and blocks. No one has played with the blocks. Not one person and to think the principal was going to order me a set for eight hundred dollars. What a waste of money. No one chooses the blocks. They want the play things where maybe I won't come and ask them things. It's like... well maybe if I play here... she won't come and ask me anything.

R: Jessica, I think you look like you want to say something?

Jessica (P50):

I find the same thing. I find that the children don't choose the more academically oriented centers. Nobody ever goes to the math center, the reading center or the writing center. They like to go to the blocks center. They build these roadways and they run these little cars. They like to go to the sand, the painting center. I'm thinking part of the reason is that we do so much of that outside the learning centers that they've had their fill already. They

don't want to do any more reading. They've already been reading. They don't want to do any more math as we have already done math. I don't know if this is the reason or... but I find those centers don't get used.

Sarah (P51):

I think that all but a few of my children will go to the writing center and do a few more of the science experiments. The rest would happily divide themselves between the dolly center or dress-up center and the lego. It's exactly the same children, all the girls will go to the dress-up center and about one quarter of the boys will alternate between the dolly center or dress-up and lego. The science experiments they really love when it's capacity, blowing bubbles and doing things with magnets where they can see how many magnets it takes to pull a chair across the room. But once they've done that... they of course go back to the lego or the dress-up centers.

R: Everyone has said some very interesting comments. I wonder... are you switching materials at your learning centers to keep children's interests, or are you just concerned that children are making choices that you're not comfortable with? Does anyone want to add to this discussion?

Jane (52):

It's not so much that I'm not comfortable with their choices. Maybe because they don't get a chance to be creative at home. They have no outlet at home for building with lego and dressing up and playing house. They can't have those kinds of materials at home. The science and math isn't as creative. It's more directed and at the lego they're free to build whatever they want, as long as they can think up. That's allowing them to be very creative. If you want to get curricular things out of that you would have to sit with them at lego, and do some counting but you can't do that as one person to twenty. I don't think it's the materials but the children that we have are not academically oriented. They lack experiences that a lot of kids have before they enter school. Our kids have never been given one hundred lego blocks. Maybe they just sit in front of the television.

Sarah (P53):

That's very interesting, what you say. Today two of my little girls told me with great delight, they had gone to play together after school and they had played house and school. It brought back lots of memories. I remember teaching in Calgary in an area that was composed of families with one parent working. Probably the general education background of the parents was grade twelve. They were a lot

of semi-skilled workers amongst them, with very few having post-secondary education. The children in my classroom absolutely loved playing school as a center. They set it up and they said to me, could you go and ask those other teachers if we could have those worksheets. They would love it. They would take turns being the teacher and being boss. They did not learn about doing worksheets in my room. That was a favorite center. I felt wonderful because I did use worksheets that other people were using to consolidate the understanding of skills and concepts they practiced with each other. I don't think that children just happen to play at each other's homes. I don't think any of my class or any of the classes I've had in four years at this school are children who have decided to play school.

R: Just to get back on track, it seems one of the concerns raised is the need to integrate more of the curriculum into the learning centers...

Jessica (P54):

And how to motivate the children to use the learning centers.

R: Let's talk about child-centered learning as it occurs in the classroom. Let me remind you again to please compare your individual beliefs with your practices in relating your examples or experiences.

Jane (P55) :

Well, I think I said something that children should be given choices. I still believe children should have some choices but I guess I'm at the point I was last year. I know I said I wanted to go further on the continuum... giving the children more freedom of choice but I guess I still can't give that up. I still don't trust them. I gear the activities to be more child-centered but as Jessica pointed out when we do reading we all do it. When we do writing we all do it, you don't have a choice. We are writing now, you are writing now. I would like to somehow give them a little more choice.

R: You said you believe child-centered learning is the children just making choices then?

Jane (P56) :

Yes, making choices.

R: But you don't think you are really giving them choices?

Jane (P57) :

I'm not really giving them choices. I call it choice time and that's when they choose but they have to choose what is there. They haven't chosen to put those things out, I have chosen them. I have chosen what centers we will have. I have never said to them... what center would you like? I

guess my practices are still not congruent with what I believe. I would like to give them more choices than I am.

R: Then you would like more child input, more decision making from the group?

Jane (P58):

Yes, but the activities I think of are child-centered in that respect.

R: You mean they are appropriate for that age level... that's what you're saying?

Jane (P59):

Yes.

R: But child-centered learning in terms of letting them make decisions, you're not giving them those options.

Jane (P60):

I'm still more teacher-centered than child-centered.

R: Who would like to comment on this?

Jessica (P61):

I felt the same as Sarah. I've been to inservices, one of them was E.C.E.C. (Early Childhood Education Council) where they had a woman speaking about children picking topics and children developing the whole theme and she showed slides/examples of a hospital theme. The children brought all the materials from home. The children did the whole theme. They chose it, they developed it. There was

absolutely no teacher input at all. I would like to know how to do something like that but up until this time, I have never.

R: So you would say you believe in this but are not presently practicing child-centered learning. It's something you would like to learn more about.

Jessica (P62):

Yes.

R: Did you want to comment, Sarah?

Sarah (P63):

I think that as far as the children are interested and able to generate the ideas. My program is always based on a central theme. The theme is generated as much as possible through the children's ideas. But they do not come up with as creative and innovative ideas as I would like. I begin to understand more and more because they have not had the experience from which to draw. When we introduce a new theme we discuss the kinds of centers they would like, what materials they would like me to provide and discuss what they can bring too. It's not a great deal that they have to bring to share.

R: You're feeling confident then that your beliefs are current with your practices in terms of child-centered learning?

Sarah (P64):

Yes.

R: What about the activity-based learning?

sarah (P65):

I would say just looking at our grade one classrooms at our particular school that we are all running an activity-based program.

Jessica (P66):

I like to use the term, active learning rather than activity-based.

Jane (P67):

I think all of our beliefs, we are practicing.

R: Is this a consensus then, you feel your beliefs are implemented through your practices.

Jessica (P68):

Yes, but only if we use the term active learning.

Jane (P69):

I think we all believe children learn best by doing. That's how we run our programs.

Jessica (P70):

Activity based to me is synonymous with learning centers where active learning...

Jane (P71):

Active learning is a broader spectrum than learning centers.

R: Yes, Jane, you said you were concerned with activity based learning as you indicated in your individual interview. You said you were concerned that there's no record for the children to turn in, there's no products so it's hard to assess or evaluate what the children are actually doing.

Jane (P72) :

Did I say that?

R: You were saying that some people would be concerned...

Jane (P73) :

Oh yes, but I'm not concerned.

R: Because you felt there's no record to turn in as to what they know.

Jane (P74) :

A lot of it is anecdotal what I observed. There's not a paper that goes home with a lot of red slashes and circles saying what the child knows. A lot of it is observation and I do keep any pencil and paper task, any record keeping they have as follow-up. It goes into a folder. Some people, whether it's administration or parents, say show me what they know. It's not a concern for me.

R: I think you had mentioned at one point something about report cards in reference to active learning in the classroom.

Jane (P75) :

Yes, I don't think our report cards go with an active learning, child centered approach. There are so many things to write paragraph form that give more information than the initials in a category.

R: It seems to me, Sarah, that you too believed there should be a checklist of skills or some progression and understanding of concepts laid out for the different things children are doing and learning in an active learning classroom. You felt that evaluation was a problem too.

Sarah (P76):

If we could have a checklist like we have for the math curriculum in other areas, I think we could give far more relevant reporting to parents that better reflects what's going on in the classroom. Do you think that?

Sarah (P77):

I find that every time I go to the report card, February or April, whenever. For example understands a variety of written materials, does that mean they understand italic and bold faced print? Does it mean they can understand from a book, print? It tells you nothing. It's not specific I guess.

R: With activities, do you find it's hard to see exactly what everyone is doing all the time, is that fair to say?

Jane (P78):

Yes.

Sarah (P79):

I think one of the areas I have most concern about is the consolidation of what goes on in the learning centers each day. Not only for evaluation for me of the children. But for the children in terms of them being able to get meaning from what they've done. If you look at the whole approach of activity based learning and learning centers based on the Montessori approach of developmental period of children doing activities, then having a period at the end of each day when they discuss, report or reflect on what they've done. So that what they've learned, they can make sense of. I don't find I'm doing that nearly as proficiently as I have done previously. I think there is a real concern with the kinds of programs we are running. That's probably where the whole problem lies with play. I don't think children ever make sense of what they have learned or done unless they have had a chance to verbalize, discuss or share it. I think that by the very act of articulating what they've seen or learned or done, they begin to commit it to their memory. It either fits in with what they already know or extends what they already know. It becomes part of their understanding so that the things they have already done in a particular center, they can make the transfer to other

areas. I know, I don't allow the time at the end of the day or free choice activity time for children to come together, almost like show and tell, for the children to show, discuss and more importantly explain to others what they have done and what they have learned. I really believe that if you don't provide that opportunity then the play isn't really meaningful or constructive enough to warrant the amount of time you spend on it each day.

Jessica (P80):

It's hard to really know if the children are doing what we intended. I remember seeing a child at a measuring center. She was supposed to be comparing and writing down how many of the little jar fit into the bigger jar. Well, she wasn't filling the little jar, she was taking a scoop. The little jar was half empty and she was pouring it into the big one. Each time, she would take a little bit and it took her twenty-five scoops to fill the big jar. She wrote it down. She was learning incorrect. She was learning that concept incorrectly. There were not enough adults in the room at the time, for somebody to go over. By the time I got around to her, she had already done a whole page that way.

R: Was that perhaps at the developmental level she was at?

Jessica (P81):

Yes, but she was putting into her brain that way, whereas if somebody had just pointed out to her a simple thing like... you're supposed to be filling this jar to the top.

R: She was filling it only half way you say?

Jessica (P82):

Sometimes half full whatever she happened to scoop up. I mean that's only one small example where a child can be learning something just totally... we could be setting them up or confusing them.

Jane (P83):

We make assumptions as adults... that when we say a container holds twenty of these. We assume you mean a full cup. Children don't make those assumptions.

Jessica (P84):

Right.

Jane (P85):

Somehow you have to guide them. Well, was your cup completely full? Show me how you were scooping. You don't have the time when there are twenty other children at a variety of activities, to ensure their play is meaningful, constructive and coming to some kind of conclusion. This container is twenty times bigger than this one because...

R: Let's talk a little about developmentally appropriate practices and different levels of children within the

classroom. Perhaps they are not all at the same level even though they are all grouped in the same classroom. Whatever task they do they will interpret differently depending on the level they are at.

Sarah (P86):

I thought about this. There is an enormous difference in our particular circumstances between developmentally appropriate and age appropriate and grade appropriate.

Jessica (P87):

I think there are certain instances where it doesn't matter if you're not doing it exactly the way the product is set out to do. But I think there are certain instances where it defeats the purpose if you are not doing it. I think in this case, it defeats the purpose. In certain cases... I used to have this game perfection where the children had to set a timer, put pieces and then it popped up. The children didn't like the pressure of having it pop and be timed. They would put the pieces in and then set the timer. They got the challenge of doing it at their own speed and seeing it all pop up. I thought it was fine and I had no problem with it. But with the little girl measuring incorrectly, I don't think that has anything to do with developmentally appropriate practice. I think for these children doing the perfection game that was developmentally appropriate because

they were not quick enough. They weren't ready for the pressure. The other case was just needing more guidance.

R: So, you believe developmentally appropriate practices are when not all children are doing the same thing at the same time, and you felt it was important that there are tasks that children could have some success, you said these things in your original belief statements. You felt these practices were more important than the curriculum.

Jessica (P88):

Yes. If it's not developmentally appropriate what's the point of doing it?

R: Do you feel that your beliefs are congruent with your practices?

Jessica (P89):

I think so, because if they're not, I'm not succeeding.

R: Remember, you have to compare what you originally said and what you feel that you are doing. You have to really look at your programs, objectively:

Jane (P90):

In ninety-nine point nine percent of my program, I am doing developmentally appropriate practices. In writing for example, there are students who I expect know how to write words, you write it the way a six-year old would write it, you write it the way you would write it. I have other

children I scribe for because I know they can't write. They can't form the letters. They can tell you that begins with a "t" but they don't know what a "t" is. I might scribe for them. I have other kids who might copy. They will use a model. Other kids know they can go to his dictionary and they can find the word they need. So yes, the children are all at the developmental level, they are at. Math is the same. If I know someone can extend something I'll say, okay, now go and do this. But maybe in some instances, I'm not.

Jessica (P91):

That's why I said I hope so.

Jane (P92):

When I hear Jessica say the little girl said the container was half full, maybe developmentally she wasn't ready to fill the container to the top. Maybe she wouldn't have understood that if she has been given guidelines. She might have been ready to fill the container but maybe she wasn't developmentally ready to see there was a difference between a random scoop and full container. Although we believe we are doing it, you would really have to sit back every single time that you do one thing and say, now is this developmentally appropriate for every person in this classroom?

R: Just to get back on track, in your original belief statements you said, you believed there were individual differences between students. Furthermore, you said we should accept as teachers where a child is and then try to build on that.

Jane (P93):

But what I'm saying is... maybe in some instances, we have an expectation that everybody should be able to do this. Maybe, developmentally speaking if we're looking at that, maybe there are not kids who are developmentally ready for that particular activity. Maybe I don't always make those allowances. That's why I am saying ninety-nine percent.

R: Are you saying then you feel you practice your belief or you don't?

Jane (P94):

I do.

R: Do you want to add to this discussion?

Sarah (P95):

What is our responsibility as teachers in regard to those children who at seven years old would still most happily go to choose to play with the dollies from 9:00 to 3:30 p.m. These are children who would never on their own make any moves towards any academic learning or mastery of any skills/concepts that are considered developmentally and age

appropriate. I think we need to nudge our children a little more than they prefer to be nudged.

R: Your original comments were that the teacher brings in materials the children are able to use. There is individual expectations of the children's ability and there is different levels of involvement with themes. There is different expectations in final products and that everybody is participating in the group.

Sarah (P96):

I haven't changed at all with beliefs and my practices, but I do see more that there are those children who have to be nudged to make any type of participation. I'm thinking that we were interviewed at the end of the grade one year and we have to reflect back on the beginning part. There's quite a difference.

R: How do you all feel about your beliefs and practices now that we've spent so much time talking about them? Is there a certain concept that you would like to know more about? Is there a practice that you would like to work on developing in your classroom?

Jane (P97):

Well, one thing as we've talked this evening, I kind of have this doubt in my mind... about what I really believe in and what do I think I should believe. I really started to

question... do I really believe that the classroom should be child-centered? Do I honestly believe that?

R: Are you thinking that's a belief you should have because somebody else says so?

Jane (P98):

Yes, because I don't know if I would ever feel totally comfortable if I give the kids control. Maybe that's a concept I would like more information on. I know there are teachers who let the kids set up the furniture in the classroom. I feel though... what if I don't like it and that's the same for themes they might choose. What if I didn't know any information about that, but I guess it would force me to find out about it. I'm really starting to doubt what I believe.

Sarah (P99):

I've seen two classrooms where the teacher has said she let the children do it. I looked and though... well they didn't do much.

Jane (P100):

I have to work and live in that classroom too. I think if I'm not comfortable in that environment...

R: Then you're saying you don't really believe it can be done.

Jane (P101):

Maybe I don't believe it can be done in grade one because they don't have the experiences. I guess I don't trust them because I've lived longer than they have and know more than them. I can't relinquish my control.

R: It's a practice you might like to develop or see in action?

Jane (P102):

I guess I would like to see it in action. Find out more about it.

R: So you would like to see how children participate as decision-makers in the classroom?

Jane (P103):

Yes, and how do they come to these decisions as a group. I know how to cooperate as a group never mind twenty coming to a consensus. Maybe it's not even something that should be done in grade one. But that's one concept I would like more information on.

Jessica (P104):

I did this when I taught grade four and it was a disaster. I said to the kids, here's the furniture, design the room any way you want. I sat back and watched, it was horrifying. The room was a maze and it looked awful. The caretaker had a fit when he came in. He said this is a fire trap. I had to go back on my word to say the room doesn't fit or meet fire regulations. I think you have to know how

to guide the children. They can't have reign because that's anarchy.

R: Is this a belief of yours or a practice you want to work on? Or are you not sure of whether you believe in the children making decisions in the classroom?

Jessica (P105):

I believe in it but I believed there has to be a way to do rather than what I did.

R: It's a practice you would like to develop once you got more information?

Jessica (P106):

Yes.

R: Any more comments or concerns about the concepts we've talked about, such as play, learning centers, etc.

Jane (P107):

I think something we discussed was play and learning centers, how to work the curricular skills and concepts into that play.

R: That was a practice, Jessica, that you said you were interested in development in your classroom.

Jessica (P108):

Yes, I had hoped to learn that when I took that four-day workshop last year.

R: Jane, I think you were concerned with your practices of learning centers as well.

Jane (P109):

I said when I was talking about learning centers, most of my learning centers were teacher directed and I feel that comes into child-centered learning again. That's what I want to work on and develop. More of my learning centers, I want to be less teacher directed and still get those same concepts across to the children without me putting out specific activities. This is really the concept I want to know more about.

Sarah (P110):

The whole concept about ownership and responsibility for learning. I would like to know how you set up the play activities for the children to take ownership for going beyond entertainment. I guess I want to know more about how to motivate the children to want to try to do things more creatively innovative ways, to build on what they already know and make experiments, try things on their own to expand their knowledge, to go beyond play as a recreational activity without as much teacher direction as I feel my children have in my classroom.

R: Your concern is how to motivate children through play?

Sarah (P111):

Yes, I had that drive, interest in small groups within my classrooms over the years.

Jane (P112):

I would like to observe in someone else's classroom for a whole year. A one-day visit doesn't give you a total picture.

Sarah (P113):

I think more and more to have the kind of environment where children make their own decisions, develop their own ideas and have innovative approaches, you have to have incredible teacher organization that you don't actually see. It doesn't appear to be directive or controlled but it takes tremendous structure.

R: For it not to appear teacher directed?

Sarah (P114):

Yes.

Jessica (P115):

In all actuality, you're saying it has to be teacher directed?

Sarah (P116):

Yes. I'm beginning to feel less apologetic in no matter which activity I set up, how much free reign I give the children to experiment... I know the skills I would like them to develop. Behind the scenes, I tend to manipulate

things so the kind of learning can take place. Maybe that's not all bad, maybe that's the way it's done. Master teachers who know what they are really doing through play and activity based learning. it doesn't just happen. I guess what I'm saying is I would like to know more how teachers who use this approach, structure the activities in the classroom so that kind of learning happens.

R: That the children build on their own experiences?

Sarah (P117):

The children build on their own experiences and develop their own ideas. Sometimes I feel that nothing much happens in the classroom unless I predetermine that it's going to happen. Do you see great quantum leaps of understanding in your children? (Asks others).

Jane (P118):

No.

Jessica (P119):

No.

Sarah (P120):

All the choices are there in my classroom. I guess my question is how do you make the difference between children who play and enjoy all the activities and materials set out and those who take advantage of all the learning and equipment set out for them. I guess I'm concerned that

children do not choose to go to centers where there is a lot of thinking required. They are very quick to sort out which centers are recreational and which are learning centers.

R: I'm a little confused about what you're saying. Would you like them to take more ownership of their learning and what they are doing?

Sarah (P121):

I guess to make the kinds of choices in activities that extend their existing knowledge and try new things.

Jane (P122):

I see your point. My class is not big risk-takers. They would rather go back and experience with what they know than try new things.

R: The concerns raised are then motivation of the group, ownership of ideas and responsibility for learning and cognitive development of the children. Another concern is integration of the curriculum in concrete activities.

Jane (P123):

See what happens is that in grade one we are very accepting of where children are but when the children go on, others are not. The question is why the children can't read, write. How come other teachers don't accept children where they are? We feel pressured as to all the things we have to do.

R: Are you concerned about the time you feel you are sitting back, watching children and not doing any direct teaching. Is this a big concern?

Jane (P124):

Yes.

Sarah (P125):

Yes.

Jessica (P126):

Yes.

Sarah (P127):

The children are doing enough. Decision making cooperation, negotiation... compromise... the social learning is of paramount importance and so are the academic skills.

R: Then creating the balance in the classroom becomes the challenge for the classroom teacher.

Jane (P128):

Yes.

Sarah (P129):

Yes.

Jessica (P130):

Yes.

Reflections on Group Interview No.2

As mentioned, I asked the three teachers to reflect on their past constructions of thought regarding early

years concepts and their present day practices. As Solomon (1987) suggests... "reflection mediates between past experiences, actions, personal theorizing and understanding of received theories... a re-exploration of past experiences... value lies... in the slow construction of personal knowledge and meanings" (Day, Pope & Denicolo 1990, p.60). As I had reflected on the three teachers, I felt this interview would allow teachers the opportunity to reexamine what they had said, what was being done in their classrooms and to think analytically about what they needed to know to achieve, goals, or actions, in their classrooms.

Jane, in her reflections, described her practices as being very teacher directed. "My practices are still very teacher directed and they are not as child-centered as maybe they should be...even though I have play, I guide it...it's still very teacher directed" (p.307, p.11). This was one point of variance that I cited in my observations of Jane's classroom. Finally Jane admitted she was not really giving the children choices in her program. "I will direct the class and say when you go to choice time today...this is what you will do... it still isn't child-directed " (p.308, p.12). She began to analyze her thinking..."do I really believe

that the classroom should be child-centered" (p.338, p.97)? She decided that she needed to know more information on how children participate as decision makers in the classroom.

Sarah, similar to Jane, felt her practices were more teacher directed than she would choose. However, in explaining teacher-directed, she said she has "had to modify many of my expectations, many of my practices to meet the needs of the children.." (p.309-10, p.21). Sarah felt her practices have changed over the years due to the changing needs of the children. To her way of knowing, teacher-directed meant she was participating more with the children in their activities by asking open ended questions. Sarah believed she had to do more intervention with the children in her classroom..."to make sure the conceptual development and the understanding and the learning from the play experiences comes about" (p.311, p.24). Sarah expressed an interest to know more about ownership and responsibility for learning. She stated "I want to know more about how to motivate the children to want to do things more creatively in innovative ways, to build on what they already know and make experiments, try things on their own to expand their knowledge, to go beyond play as a

recreational activity without as much teacher direction"...(p.341, p.110). Her interest was generally to know more about how to motivate children through play. For some reason, Sarah felt insecure about interacting with the children and asking them questions during their play. I think she felt this way because the other two teachers were discussing their polarized views of teacher directed and child centered.

Jessica spoke of the dichotomy that had formed in her mind and was evident in her practices. This was something I had noticed in my observation of her classroom. "Right now in my mind I seem to separate play from work...the children have to work first and play later" (p.304, p.2). As she explained, the children play but only after they finish their work. She was doubtful that the children were learning in their play centers. She was adamant that she needed to know more about "how to get the children to learn through play" (p.304, p.2). Jessica felt that she had a responsibility to "teach them language skills, how to speak properly, how to read, how to write, how to listen and I don't know how to do that through play" (p.315, p.34).

All three teachers expressed some concern over the issued curriculum guide as they sought to justify their practices. Jane referred to it as "a really big weight on the shoulder and a cloud over your head" (p.314, p.30). Jessica indicated she was worried that when the children were playing at the learning centers in the classroom, "they are not meeting the curriculum" (p.317, p.40). To her the curriculum guide was her job..."we would get fired if we didn't do it" (p.318, p.42). Sarah felt that with a play curriculum there is a "tremendous sense of accountability and teacher conscience" (p.314, p 29). For Jane and Jessica the issued curriculum guide directed all their thinking and planning in the classroom. For Sarah, the curriculum consisted of her students and the play she provided for them to discover and to learn new ideas or concepts.

As the last interview ended, I felt these teachers had been open and insightful about their practices. They had openly discussed variances between their beliefs and practices that I had commented on in my reflections. They had grown professionally since our first interview together, as now they had a chance to reflect on their own thinking and on the thoughts that they used to make sense of the world. Some of the

teachers were critical of their practices, but all three inquired into their own abilities and looked to research their further advancement. I felt the interview process had benefitted all three teachers as it had helped each teacher to clarify her ideas and communicate more clearly.

As Dewey (1938) explains it, as these teachers reflected on their knowledge and practices, they seemed to be reconstructing their experiences, assimilating new knowledge and trying to fit their new knowledge into already established patterns of thought (Piaget 1962).

Summary of the Findings

As all of the interviews showed, the teachers held images of themselves, followed rules of practice, and operated from practical principles. In essence they each had a complex, set of understandings or constructs called personal practical knowledge by which they used to shape and direct their teaching.

Jane's image of herself was one of a "decision-maker", "teacher directed" or director of learning, and "responsibility for learning". Her rule of practice seemed to be to follow the goals and skill orientation laid out by the issued curriculum guide. The practical principle underlying this teacher's practice indicated

her view that the teacher controls and is the center of the learning process.

Sarah's image of herself as a negotiator of learning made her continue to "discuss", "plan", "mediate", "question", "predict", "hypothesize", and "negotiate" to establish a community of learners in her classroom. Her rule of practice of communication surfaced as the means by which she encouraged interaction among students, materials and herself. Her practical principle of using play as a mode of instruction for her classroom to learn together was evident in her practices.

Jessica's image of herself as "teaching skills", "having power", "having control", "taking responsibility for learning" constituted an approach to her practices. Similar to Jane, Jessica's rules of practice revolved around the issued curriculum guide as the means by which to organize the curriculum in the classroom. Like Jane, Jessica's practical principle based on her past experiences, indicated a view that the teacher's job is to instill new knowledge such as reading, writing and math in her students. Under this view, the teacher is in control of the learning process

and all new learning occurs as a result of the direct teaching of skills.

Throughout the interviews, the individuals were communicating personal messages to each other. Boulding (1956) further elaborates on the notion of messages. He describes messages as structured experiences, which impact upon the framework of an individual's knowledge or image. The meaning of the message, interpreted by the individual produces changes in the image. The last interview shows the individuals were experiencing some conflict with their image. They knew what they believed but they had begun to question their beliefs, thoughts and practices through the learning process in which they were involved. Early years concepts and principles were like messages that each teacher received and tried to fit into the way they organized their knowledge.

Sarah possessed more early years principles and knowledge of play and child development theory than the other two teachers. She revealed in her numerous statements the application of theory to explain her classroom practices. As the data from Table 1 (p.49) shows, Sarah was the only teacher who had some educational background or training in early year's education. As a result, Sarah was very articulate in

discussing early years concepts as she had previously received these messages and had made sense of these messages through all her years of teaching. The theoretical knowledge and the training in early years education provided a link for her between her beliefs and practices. The education and training helped formulate Sarah's image of herself as an early years teacher and helped her develop a teaching style or a practice conducive to early years concepts. As the interviews showed, Jane and Jessica struggled to fit the new knowledge of play theory into their already established patterns of thought. As Jane said in our last interview, "I guess this idea of play being acceptable is just so new that although we believe one thing, we still have a lot of other things hanging over our heads that we know we have to do" (p.313, p.28). Both Jane's and Jessica's dialogues showed discrepancies between what they said they believed in and what they actually did in their classroom practices. In Sarah's responses, thinking, theory and practice were all entwined while Jane and Jessica were still thinking about how the theory could be applied to their practices. For Jane and Jessica the gap was their lack of teacher training in the early years to link up or

apply the theory to the practices in the classroom.
Although they believed in some of the early years
concepts they were unsure or uncertain of how to apply
them in lieu of their background teaching experiences.

Chapter V

Conclusions

As the study ended, the three teachers evaluated their practices based on their beliefs and they admitted there were some concepts they needed to learn more about. Jane acknowledged that her practices were indeed very teacher directed and that she was not really giving children the opportunity to make choices in her room. Jane felt she needed to find out more information about how children participated as decision makers in the classroom.

Sarah thought that her practices were perhaps too teacher directed. However, her idea of this was different from Jane's use of the term. Sarah felt guilty for asking her children too many open ended questions during their play. In her mind, the questions were like directing the play. Sarah decided she wanted to know more about how to motivate children through play, without as much teacher direction.

Jessica realized that throughout the interview she had maintained a dichotomy between work and play. She spoke of the separation she had made in her mind that children have to work first and play later. Jessica felt that she needed to learn more information about the

concept of play, especially how children learn through play.

As a researcher and a teacher, I felt the discussions in this study benefited all three teachers. One teacher (Sarah) who presented a unified personality between her thoughts and actions, said she would miss our valuable discussions about teaching in the early years. Two other teachers (Jane and Jessica), became aware of the inconsistencies or variances in what they had said (beliefs) and what they actually did in their classrooms (practices). Compared to Sarah who had early years training and knowledge, Jane and Jessica had a very limited knowledge of the discussed concepts: play, learning centers, child-centered learning, activity-based programs and developmentally appropriate practices. Throughout the study, they were struggling to understand these concepts in view of the issued curriculum guide. As both Jane and Jessica stated, they were not confident that children would learn what they needed to know through play. Their statements indicated they were unfamiliar with the theory of play and did not value play as a learning mode.

As Dewey (1938) points out for change to come about one must have an open mind and a willingness to learn.

As this study ended, I wondered what changes each of these teachers would make in their present practices. Would Jane and Jessica be committed to furthering their knowledge of early years theory? Would the three teachers continue to meet to articulate new concepts and ideas as they relate to the early years? What plan of action would each teacher take individually to further her knowledge of teaching and learning in the early years?

Discussion and Suggestions

Much learning had occurred since our first interview together. Pinar (1981) viewed learning as a journey, while early years educators viewed this learning as a cycle (Rosegrant & Bredekamp 1992). We had all become involved in a journey to search for a vision that would help us to understand our thoughts and actions. We had all entered into a cycle of learning to become links in the chain of knowledge.

At the first interview the teachers became aware of their beliefs, values, past experiences, child development and play theories, decisions and judgements, they thought and practiced each day. In essence they became aware of and had to articulate their own practical knowledge. Since the interviews were not

scheduled close together, the teachers had time to explore, assimilate or construct their meaning in understanding each day in their classroom. By the second group interview, the teachers were reflective or inquiring of their own thoughts and practices. They were asking questions of themselves as they sought to accommodate new knowledge to prior learning. By the last interview, I felt the teachers had changed and grown in their professional development. They had distanced themselves from their practices and in doing this, could reflect and think about their own thinking that they were implementing each day in the classroom. As the last interview ended, the teacher's spoke of concepts they would like to know more about. I was hopeful these teachers would seek out further opportunities to foster their learning and utilize their knowledge.

I began this study to learn more about how the curriculum initiative called play became part of an early years teacher's personal practical knowledge. The reason I chose this was because I had begun to question my own beliefs and practices related to the content of curriculum, conditions of teaching and learning within my own classroom. By viewing other early years

classrooms, I could not account for the differences in tone, atmosphere and curriculum that was so evident between several early years classrooms, my own included. I studied these teachers as a researcher and in doing this, I investigated myself as an early years teacher, exploring and reflecting upon my own beliefs and practices.

As a result of my participation and reflection, I grew more than Jane, Sarah and Jessica, as I attended every interview and observed every class. Throughout the interviews, I concentrated on my own learning as well as theirs, but overall became more thoughtful about myself as a learner in my classroom. I discovered that inquiry can and should be a way of life. As teachers, we should constantly ask questions of ourselves, our students and our colleagues. I found the answers to my questions were not as important as realizing how important the questioning process is in the professional development of ourselves as teachers and the education of our students. The questioning I had experienced and the questions I posed to the participants in the study, provoked a constant evaluation of the teacher's existing program as it relates to students. After this study, I realized that both teaching and learning are dimensions

of inquiry. As teachers we should always raise questions and participate in discussions with colleagues about new ideas, new theory as we try to make sense of these in our practices. In working with students, as teachers we should invite investigations and questions from our students to make them think about how to contribute to the curriculum and to the learning atmosphere of the classroom.

As this study showed, each of us has developed a personal practical knowledge (Elbaz 1983) or a way of thinking and believing about the world from the messages (Boulding 1956) we have received, from theory, from past and present experiences. Dewey (1938) supports this view and speaks of it in terms of a continuity of experiences which help us to deal with situations that follow. Early years educators call this view a constructivist view. Knowledge has been constructed by us through our experiences and the sense we attribute to it. Our knowledge is changed when our old constructs are challenged and we cannot make new experiences fit. Both Dewey and early years educators speak of interaction with others and the environment in which we live to enable the learner to construct further knowledge.

This study provided teachers with the time and

opportunity to interact, to become aware of their images and own personal practical knowledge: beliefs, teaching experiences, feelings, values and conditions of learning and teaching. As Calgren (1990) points out "thinking and acting are two sides of the same coin" (Day, Pope & Denicolo, p.201). Information alone does not bring about change in practices. Opportunities to utilize or experience the new knowledge or implement the new knowledge allows individuals to reconstruct their images of teaching and learning. Professional growth requires reflection upon knowing-in-action. As reflection is practiced, it becomes a part of experience, re-shaping the individual's personal sense of knowing.

In view of the data in this study, the process of articulation and interaction lead individuals to self-understanding and reflection of personal practical knowledge. As part of the process for refinement of practices, teachers need to critique and adapt theory to their own specific practice. However, they also need to explore their own assumptions and beliefs, to acquaint themselves with their own personal practical knowledge. The whole process of becoming aware of private beliefs, concepts and responses to theory and sharing these ideas with colleagues, allows teachers to

act with greater knowledge and control over their own practices.

Suggestions for Improving Teaching and Learning

For the practitioner, the processes of interaction and reflection reshape an individual's personal knowing. Professional growth and development cannot be administered through a workshop or a one day inservice. Individual growth and knowledge results as individuals engage in self-evaluation, reflection and ultimately criticize their own practice.

The opportunity to interact and reflect may manifest itself in different forms. First it requires an intellectual commitment of the practitioner whom is motivated and committed to participate or take ownership of their own learning. Many educational groups formed outside the parameters of a school meet to discuss their educational beliefs, new literature, new theory and overall acquaint themselves with the dynamics of their own personal practical knowledge. When beliefs and thoughts are shared between practitioners, messages are extended to include another's understanding. Often classroom visitations occur among practitioners to view other thoughts in action.

Besides the commitment of the individual

practitioner, administration must provide time for individuals to discuss, reflect and confront their thinking and practices. Built in time during the working day for individuals to meet and share their knowledge with fellow practitioners would be beneficial and helpful. Being aware of individual thoughts and concepts as well as sharing those concepts with others, allow practitioners to act with greater authority and control over their practice. Any time permitted during the school day including whole school staff meetings for the sharing of new ideas or collaboration among practitioners needs to be supported by administration.

For change to come about and professional growth to occur, the model of teacher professionalism must include a supported means by which the practitioner may utilize their knowledge. Opportunities such as team teaching or extra classroom support for the practitioner to experiment with new ideas of curriculum or concepts would provide the means for individuals to reflect both "on" and "in" action.

At a higher level, above practitioners and administrators, superintendents need to support interaction and educational growth. Superintendents need to monitor the number of years practitioners and

administrators spend in the same building. Every five years practitioners and administrators need to interact with new peers and colleagues to gain access to new ideas and to share their knowledge with other individuals.

Superintendents need to support professional development days for practitioners and administrators. These individuals can become experts of their own thoughts and actions through days they plan, to share and communicate with others. Groups of practitioners in similar grades can meet to share knowledge through the school year and collaborate to plan their professional development days based on the needs and interests of the groups. This development would help individuals to play an active role in their teaching and learning.

Superintendents need to provide educational leaves, every five to ten years for practitioners and administrators to be aware of new educational research, theories and ideas. It would be ideal if early years educational training was a prerequisite for teaching in the early grades, however these credentials are not valued by all. All practitioners teaching in the early school years need to have time to research educational theory and return to implement their learning through

their teaching. Administrators working at elementary schools need time to learn theory and assist practitioners in applying it.

Descriptive research used to explore theory and knowing allows explorations and experimentations to take place. Unless individuals develop strategies to construct and critically evaluate their own interpretations of texts, concepts, and new ideas; unless individuals develop and clarify their understandings, they remain dependent on others to do their thinking for them. Hopefully more practitioners will be involved in research to develop a sense of ownership, a sense of voice over their own professional growth and intellectual development. We need to continue to tell stories to link theories and practice, beliefs and contextual considerations, curriculum as a planned program and curriculum as a journey whereby the individual plays an active role in developing and learning. We must continue to think, question and articulate our theories of practice.

Appendix A

Box 31, Group 355, R.R.3
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2E7

Dear Superintendent:

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the area of early childhood education. I am doing a Master's thesis called, "Play: Teacher beliefs and practices". I am inviting the participation of three grade one teachers who all presently teach at Sister MacNamara School.

There has been a great deal of attention focused on "activity-based" learning and programming in the early years (Nursery to grade four). Research by the NAEYC (National Association of Young Children) and other groups has been directed toward evaluating appropriate practices implemented by teachers in early years classrooms. Many studies have focused on nursery and kindergarten program, but few have focused on the primary grades. Although there has been a great deal of attention focused on early years classrooms, very little research has been collected from the teachers responsible for them. I would like to find out more information regarding teacher beliefs and practices

concerning the role of play in the classroom.

To conduct this study I would like to interview three teachers and observe their classroom practices. I would like to meet with these teachers in a group interview for the purpose of discussing their beliefs of concepts such as play, learning centers, child-centered learning, activity-based learning and developmentally appropriate practices as they relate to the education of young children. Following the group interview, I will want to visit each teacher's classroom (one to two times) for a full day to observe their classroom practices (arrangement of classroom, classroom scheduling of activities, approach to the curriculum...). After each observation, I will need to meet with the teacher to discuss these observations with them. At the completion of the individual interviews, one final group interview will be scheduled to discuss similarities/variations in teacher's classroom practices.

All interviews (group or individual) will last no longer than one hour. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Tapes will be kept fully confidential, and transcriptions will not include the teachers' names. Tapes will be destroyed once the transcription has been

completed.

The participation of the teachers in this study is voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Information received and names of participants will be strictly confidential. All data collected will be made available throughout the study to the participating teachers. Once the study has been completed, all participants will receive a summary of the results.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me at work 942-6965, or home 669-0508.

Yours truly,

Penny Morka

Appendix B

Box 31, Group 355, R.R.3
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2E7

Dear Principal:

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the area of early childhood education. I am doing a Master's thesis called, "Play: Teacher beliefs and practices". I am inviting the participation of grade one teachers in this study and some of your staff have expressed an interest in participating in this study.

There has been a great deal of attention focused on "activity-based" learning and programming in the early years (Nursery to grade four). Research by the NAEYC (National Association of Young Children) and other groups has been directed toward evaluating appropriate practices implemented by teachers in early years classrooms. Many studies have focused on nursery and kindergarten program, but few have focused on the primary grades. Although there has been a great deal of attention focused on early years classrooms, very little research has been collected from the teachers responsible for them. I would like to find out more

information regarding teacher beliefs and practices concerning the role of play in the classroom.

With your permission, I would like to interview three teachers and observe their classroom practices. I would like to meet with these teachers in a group interview for the purpose of discussing their beliefs of concepts such as play, learning centers, child-centered learning, activity-based learning and developmentally appropriate practices as they relate to the education of young children. Following the group interview, I will want to visit each teacher's classroom (one to two times) for a full day to observe their classroom practices (arrangement of classroom, classroom scheduling of activities, approach to the curriculum...). After each observation, I will need to meet with the teacher to discuss these observations with them. At the completion of the individual interviews, one final group interview will be scheduled to discuss similarities/variations in teacher's classroom practices.

All interviews (group or individual) will last no longer than one hour. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Tapes will be kept fully confidential, and transcriptions will not include the teachers' names.

Tapes will be destroyed once the transcription has been completed.

The participation of the teachers in this study is voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time. Information received and names of participants will be strictly confidential. All data collected will be made available throughout the study to the participating teachers. Once the study has been completed, all participants will receive a summary of the results.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me at work 942-6965, or home 669-0508.

Yours truly,

Penny Morka

Appendix C

Box 31, Group 355, R.R.3
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2E7

Dear Primary Teacher:

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the area of early childhood education. I am doing a Master's thesis called, "Play: Teacher beliefs and practices", and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

There has been a great deal of attention focused on "activity-based" learning and programming in the early years (Nursery to grade four). Research by the NAEYC (National Association of Young Children) and other groups has been directed toward evaluating appropriate practices implemented by teachers in early years classrooms. Many studies have focused on nursery and kindergarten program, but few have focused on the primary grades. Although there has been a great deal of attention focused on early years classrooms, very little research has been collected from the teachers responsible for them.

With your assistance, I would like to find out more information regarding your personal beliefs and

practices as they concern the role of play at the grade one level. To learn about your personal beliefs and practices, I would like to interview you and observe your classroom. The interviews will consist of group teacher interviews (total of three participants and researcher), and individual teacher interviews (participant and researcher). During the initial group interview you will be asked to define terms such as play, learning centers, child-centered learning, activity-based learning, and developmentally appropriate practices. You will be asked to relate your beliefs of these concepts to teaching an early years program.

Once the initial group interview has taken place, I will want to arrange to visit your classroom (one to two times) for a full day to observe your classroom practices (arrangement of classroom, classroom scheduling of activities, approach to the curriculum...). Following each observation, I will need to meet with you individually to discuss these observations with you. At the completion of individual interviews, one final group interview will be organized to discuss similarities/variations in classroom practices.

All interviews (group or individual) will last no

longer than one hour. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Tapes will be kept fully confidential and transcriptions will not use your real name. Tapes will be destroyed once the transcription has been completed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Information received and names of applicants will be strictly confidential. All data collected throughout the study will be made available for your viewing and feedback. In addition, all participants will be provided with a summary of the results once the study has been completed.

Thank you for your consideration of this project.

Yours truly,

Penny Morka

Appendix D

SAMPLE TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET		
Date:		
Name:	School:	
Cultural Background:	Languages Spoken:	
Number of years teaching in early years settings:		
What levels have you taught? (Mark the levels indicating the number of years at each level).		
Nursery		
Kindergarten		
Grade 1		
Grade 2		
Grade 3		
Grade 4		
Other		
Educational Background		
University/College Attended	Location	Degree
Specialization		
Early Years	Elementary Education	Specify Other
Professional Courses, Activities attended within the past two years related to "activity based" learning/play.		
Course Work	Lectures/Seminars	

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