Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education:

A Journey in Early Years Assessment

by

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

In early years classrooms in Canada, children are often assessed for specific discrete skills in reading and writing, using tools such as running records and word lists. Through research with children, other tools are emerging to more fully help a teacher understand a child's literacy practices, but the use of these tools requires a shift in ideology regarding literacy and learning. This thesis documents this shift from a more modernist theory of education and autonomous philosophy of literacy to a postmodernist view of education and an ideological view of literacy. Alternative tools for assessment and teaching of children in the form of a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation are presented. Also, pedagogical documentation is used as a methodology for this study. This research suggests a shift in the way educators view children and their literacy practices, and in how they engage in research in the classroom.

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Chapter 1: My Journey with Literacy Education

As a Beginning Teacher

Twenty years ago when I first became a primary teacher in Canada, I began the

year with an agenda, commonly known as a year plan. I worked out what would be

taught and when, almost down to the minute. I had all my programmes in place for

reading and writing. I had my assessment tools ready for quick and easy measurement of

skills and ability. I became comfortable with this pattern of teaching, and although I

planned themes in which I thought the children would be interested and I set up a socially

stimulating classroom environment, in many ways I followed a developmental approach

to teaching. That is, I viewed children as all going through the same stages of learning,

going through a series of levels as they acquired skills. I worked hard to help children

reach "benchmarks".   Professional readings and workshops prodded me to "tweak" my

programming, but essentially much was the same a few years later. Yet, I always felt that

there was a depth of understanding I was lacking in my practise. Wien (2008) captures

what I was feeling with the use of a metaphor of a train at a station, barely stopping

before it moves on (p. 154). I felt as if I was narrowly measuring my students' literacy

learning, then quickly moving on, not stopping long enough to really know my students'

interests and capabilities, not really taking into account their cultural backgrounds, their

home languages and literacies, nor their experiences in their family lives. Biesta (2009)

writes that we often "value what we measure" rather than "measure what we value" (p.

35). This phrase describes how I felt about what I was doing at the time.

Over the next few years, our school division funded Early years literacy

programs, such as Reading Recovery®**.** I was encouraged to leave much of the

assessment of my students' literacy to the newly designated literacy support teachers who were working within my schools, since they held authority as "proven experts" specially trained in early literacy (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, 2012). They generally took the children out of class and administered what I would describe as "skills-based" assessments focused on phonemic awareness, letter and word recognition, and print concepts. Running records were the main assessment tool of choice, and this became standard throughout our school division. An adult would take a "running record" of a child reading a section of text by checking those words that were correctly read and noting errors and the types of errors made. In this "pull out" instruction, "pedagogical text" (Lindfors, p.18) or text designed for purely instructional purposes, as opposed to more authentic text written for literary, aesthetic, and enjoyment purposes was generally used, The child was viewed as coming to school with gaps that needed filling or deficits that needed fixing.

While the children were out of the classroom, they were missing out on whatever our classroom community of literacy learners was engaged with at the time, be it shared reading or "read alouds" of literary text, puppet plays or dramatic retellings, poetry or story writing—all joyful literacy experiences socially situated in our everyday classroom lives. I knew that the children in the classroom were authentically engaged in rich literacy experiences, but in those early days I did not have the theoretical understanding or language to explain *why* these classroom teaching and learning experiences were so valuable, and consequently I felt powerlessness to speak out against children being taken out of the classroom for individualized, remedial literacy work.

Modernism and the deprofessionalisation of teachers. This approach to education in which standardised programmes are instituted into the schools of entire school divisions is not unique to Manitoba. Taking educational decision-making out of the hands of classroom teachers and placing it into the hands of those who are "specially trained", or who know what is "best" for the children, is happening throughout the country and indeed in many English speaking countries of the world. Canada, for example, has Reading Recovery teacher-training centres in every region of the country (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, 2012).

There is also a tendency towards skills-based literacy teaching within classrooms. School districts in the United States are in the process of implementing the CORE standards curriculum in over forty states. Associated with this standard curriculum are standardized reading programs and tests, which "with only a few exceptions, systematically over represent basic skills and knowledge" (Sparks, p.8). Early reading intervention programmes that are not differentiated for particular contexts are ubiquitous as American elementary schools strive to fulfill the requirements of this mandated standards curriculum. As most Canadian teachers are aware, American attitudes and policies in education have a way of drifting over the border.

As in the United States and in other Canadian provinces, the Manitoba Government funds early literacy intervention programs. Most school divisions use a form of Reading Recovery or Early Reading Intervention for Grade 1 and 2 children, in which a small group of the "lowest performing" children are removed from the classroom for daily intensive literacy assessment and instruction. The Winnipeg School Division has also implemented the Comprehensive Assessment Program, or CAP which assesses

reading and writing, among other subject areas, from Nursery to Grade 6 across all of the division's schools. According to a Winnipeg School Division Trustee who spoke recently with CBC Winnipeg, teachers report that they spend up to eight weeks of the school year on these decontextualized CAP assessments of their students (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, May 8, 2012). This represents two months of learning time per year of school. When we look at the early years English Language Arts (Kindergarten-Grade 4) curriculum for Manitoba, we soon understand why school divisions have supported such skills-based assessment and literacy programmes. The Kindergarten to Grade 4 Framework is liberally peppered with the words "skills" and "abilities", giving the message that these are to be emphasised in our teaching and assessment in Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training, 1998).

These assessment and literacy programmes all have a similar theoretical foundation. They are all based on a modernist philosophy of education. Emmanuel Kant, writing from a modernist/humanist perspective in the 18th century, declared that the human being "is the only creature that has to be educated" and "man [sic] can only become man through education" (as cited in Biesta, 2006, p. 4). A child, from this perspective, is not truly a person until fully educated. Piaget built on this view of the autonomous human being by describing cognitive stages of development through which all humans must travel before reaching the final stage of rational autonomy (Biesta, 2006, p. 35). According to this theory, it is the role, then, of educators to draw from children those traits and talents that we believe fulfill our definition of what it means to be human, and to fill in the gaps in children's development with predetermined knowledge, skills, and values so that the children can reach autonomy. Biesta (2006) concludes that "the

problem with humanism is it posits a *norm of humaneness*, a norm of what it means to be human, and in so doing, excludes those who do not live up to or are unable to live up to this norm" (p. 6). Street (2003) describes this imposition of predetermined skills instruction as representative of an "autonomous approach" that entails "imposing western conceptions onto other cultures" or within a country having one class or cultural group impose such instruction on other classes and groups (p. 77). Student diversity is not actually addressed through this instructional model.

How does this cognitive developmental theory manifest in the classroom? The teacher looks at the deficits in the child (those traits which do not fit the expected norm) and seeks to repair them. Carr (2001) describes her early developmental practices this way: "I looked out for the gaps in a school-readiness repertoire, keeping a checklist, and used some direct teaching to do something about them ..." (p. 1). Heydon and Ianacci (2008) write that such practices can lead to a pathologizing of children. For Heydon and Ianacci pathologizing is a process "by which persons belonging to a particular group are seen by a more powerful group as abnormal" (p. 3). In my own experience, I have observed a tendency among literacy specialist teachers to look for what children *cannot* do, rather than beginning with what they *can* do.

In the field of early childhood literacy education, modernist teaching practices often take the form of systematic teaching of letter-sound relationships, word recognition, and other skills with specific standards of achievement for each progressive level (Cooper, 2009, p. 21). The limitation of this model is "in its understanding of how individuals learn to read and write"; reading and writing are not actually learned in isolation from cultural and social forces, "rather, the roles of individuals' social and

cultural environments must be considered" (Davidson, 2010, p. 249). This type of decontextualized, skills-based teaching is, in my experience, pervasive in Manitoba (and other Canadian) classrooms. It has had a significant impact on the literacy programming, and therefore on the literacy learning of the children in schools in which I have taught.

As a More Experienced Teacher: Finding an Alternative to Early Literacy Intervention

When I looked at a running record or a graded word list my school was using, what stood out to me was the identification of a child's deficits, what the child got *wrong*. I heard the child referred to as *only* reading at level D, or *only* knowing six letter sounds. The child then was placed in a programme for "reading intervention", in an effort to address these "deficits". Some of these children eventually became fine readers. But, a few continued to "struggle" with reading (as it was described at the time) from that first assessment forward, and some were "turned off" independent reading altogether. What was problematic about this process?

An alternative to early reading intervention presented itself when one October a young Grade 2 child came into my classroom with a very long list of what was "wrong with her" as a reader (including being described as having an aversion to reading) provided by her previous school. In my early years as a teacher, I would have, with the best of intentions, relayed this child's deficits to the literacy support teacher, who then would have administered a battery of tests and placed the child on a programme of individual instruction (as had happened to this child at her previous school). Now wiser, I chose to ignore the negative information accompanying this child and steadfastly concentrated on looking for positive qualities of this child as a literacy learner. A day or

two after she settled in, I decided to show her our classroom collection of books. She immediately began to choose some for herself: all of her choices were non-fiction and all were about animals. I used an audio recorder to preserve our conversation about the picture books she chose and her own reflections and critical dialogue about the pictures as she turned the pages. I was very conscious to have her control the conversation as much as possible, as Paley (1986), Rinaldi (2006), Vasquez (2007) and Carr (2011) all recommend; in an effort to "balance the power" between the adult and child when engaged in dialogue of this sort.

When I later transcribed and then reflected on our conversation, which had been less than ten minutes in length, I was able to garner a vast amount of knowledge about this child's literacy learning strengths. This child could eloquently express her thoughts and interests. She could make connections to her own past experiences, to other texts, and to the world at large. She could critically comment on what was happening in the pictures and she could express disagreement or delight. In 1970, Friere wrote that, "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking" (p. 149). This child was an advanced critical thinker and meaning-maker, and although she identified herself as a non-reader, she was already engaging in many of the most effective practices for reading, as she strove to make meaning of each page and the whole text. This child brought herself to the text, as Dombey (2010) writes, and uniquely "entered into a different dialogue with the author" (p. 170), as she talked aloud about what she saw happening in each book and speculated on why the author was doing what he/she was doing in each text.

Now that I had made a deeper connection with this child, we had created a space in which to generate further literacy experiences. I now had an idea of the books that would appeal to her, and I planned opportunities for her to use multiple modalities—as she talked and illustrated her own stories (since pictures were so compelling resources for making meaning in both reading and writing). With knowledge of her reading strategies I was also able to better draw her in as a participant in class discussions about what strategies readers use to make meaning. A few weeks later, in another conversation with this child, she casually referred to herself as "a reader". She also made her first attempt at reading a text without adult pressure or direction. By the end of the term, she was joyfully choosing books to read independently. After all the struggles we were told she had previously experienced in literacy learning in a skills-based programme, the process we entered into seemed so very "natural" (authentic and responsive), and it took place entirely within our own classroom.

This experience was a kind of revelation for me. I realised the value of creating a context for conversation with children in the classroom, consistent with what Biesta (2006) writes: "education is not just about the transmission of knowledge, skills, and values, but is concerned with the individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their coming into the world as unique, singular beings" (p. 27). It is by responding with openness to others that we are allowed to perceive their uniqueness. It makes sense, then, that we as educators provide opportunities to respond to children and to support their responding to one another (pp. 27-28). As educators, not only are we creating conditions for valuing and respecting the voices of children, we are also creating nurturing spaces in which children can learn to express their voices and support one

another's expression (p. 36). By imposing predetermined external standards and narrowly-focused assessments and programmes on children, we miss out on opportunities to understand who the children are in our care.

In recent years, I have taken graduate courses, attended conferences and read widely from the professional literacy pedagogical literature, and now feel comfortable discussing alternate ways of supporting literacy learning within the context of my classroom (for example, through literacy circles or collaborative writing projects) with the school's literacy support teacher. Inviting the literacy support teacher into my classroom has resulted in enhanced literacy practices for my students, but I know of no other Grade 1 or Grade 2 teacher in my school division who refuses to have children leave the classroom for early reading intervention. Why do I believe that the invitation to support children in the classroom literacy learning context is so important, and what is the philosophy of education underpinning this authentic alternative to a modernist skills-based programme?

A postmodern perspective. In my quest to understand the differences between where I was as a teacher and who I am becoming, I have turned to the philosophy of education known as postmodernism. Dahlberg, Moss and Pense (2007) describe today's child as living a "postmodern childhood". They explain that "to live in a society that is characterized by postmodern conditions means that individual children have to adjust to a high degree of complexity and diversity, as well as to continuous changes" (p. 54). In earlier generations, the school child's identity was shaped by religion and later by "a supposedly value-free, objective science and reason" in preparation for specific roles in a relatively stable society. We no longer live in that same stability, but rather in a time of

constant change. "If the past no longer provides guarantees for the future then life increasingly becomes a project that you have to construct yourself" (p. 54).

Stemming from postmodernism is a view of knowledge as being socially constructed through the various discourses in which we engage (which differs from the modernist view of knowledge which was seen as a pursuit of universal truth). The postmodern pedagogue is open to children's thoughts and provides space in which children test out their theories. The child takes responsibility for his or her own learning in his or her unique way, and fashions his or her identity along the way. For the child, this requires an "extraordinary" capacity for "learning, self-reflection, communication and open and questioning relationships" (Dahlberg, Moss and Pense, 2007, p. 56).

Modernism posits a universal human (and child) identity within a stable society. Dahlberg, Moss and Pense (2007) describe a postmodernist view of identity in this way:

> Identity... is understood as complex and multiple, fragmented and ambiguous, contradictory and contextualized: we are seen to live in webs of multiple representations of class, race, gender, language and social relations; meanings vary even within one individual (Lather, 1992, p.101). Identities are constructed and reconstructed within specific contexts—contexts which are always open for change and where the meaning of what children are, could be and should be cannot be established once and for all. Postmodern children are inscribed in multiple and overlapping identities, in whose construction they are active participants (Dahlberg, Moss and Pense, 2007, p. 57).

Counter to the structured predictability of modernism, postmodern ideas revolve around a "loss of certainty, control and predictability, openness to the presence of many voices and

views, and the need to engage those other views and explore a world of profound

diversity" (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005, p. 6). In practice, postmodernism is more

concerned with "process, engagement, dialogue and co-construction" rather than with

"routines, noncontexualized prescribed best practices, exclusivity, and the safe haven of

predetermined outcomes" (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2005, p. 6). There is a sharing of

power between adult and child. The "reconceptualist movement" in early childhood

education has its roots in these postmodern ideas.

Reconceptualists draw from many theoretical places, as they "question the

existence of a single truth ... of universality" (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Pence, 2005, p. 7).

Rather than subscribing to a cognitive learning theory model, reconceptualists look to

such writers as Vygotsky, who suggested a sociocultural theory of learning. Vygotsky

"proposed that all human activities take place in cultural contexts.... Development begins

with interactions among people, and it results in socialization as well as in higher mental

functions" (Davidson, p. 249). Dewey (1916) also lends support to this thinking with his

contribution of the concept of the "democratic child" who "has to refer his own action to

that of others to give point and direction" to what he/she does (p. 101). These ideas

suggest a reciprocal relationship between the child and the child's sociocultural

environment. As individuals interact with others, there is a loss of certainty,

predictability and control inherent in the process, but there is also openness to the

diversity of voices and views of others (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2011, p. 5).

The work in the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, embodies many

comparable reconceptualist early childhood education ideas and values. The early years

school in Reggio Emilia is described as:

a place for both the transmission and the creation of culture and values. It is a

place that recognizes children as citizens. It is a place of possibilities, where

knowledge and identity are co-constructed and learning processes are

investigated, always in relationship with others. (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 12)

In the postmodern classroom, the teacher is a co-constructor of meaning with

children as she or he engages in critical thinking and reflection with them, valuing their

understanding and experiences, seeing them as capable learners. John-Steiner and Mahn

(1996) write that the challenge with this model is for the teacher to not look for deficits

but "to value and build on what the child brings to the classroom" (Davidson, p. 252).

Rather than a modernist, often pathological view of children and remedial curriculum,

postmodern perspectives posit an asset-based view in which children's "funds of

knowledge" are acknowledged and built upon (Whitty, 2010, p. 280).   For the teaching

of literacy, this means respecting and inviting home languages, literacies, and cultures

into the classroom, as they become the basis for learning to read and write in English.

The postmodern literacy teacher endeavours to maintain a balance of power between

adult and child by listening and constant reflection and revision of his or her teaching

practices.

From a literacy education perspective, what fits with this educational philosophy

is what Street (2009) describes as an "ideological model of literacy", which:

offers [as opposed to an autonomous model of literacy] a more culturally sensitive

view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another.... It posits that

literacy   is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is

always embedded in   socially constructed epistemological principles. (p. 337)

Literacy learning, rather than being viewed as an autonomous set of neutral "skills" which are taught and remain constant across contexts, is viewed as a "social act" which is grounded in historical, social, political and cultural contexts and which is "always contested" (p.337). We enter into the social practices of literacy with our own view of the world and with our own theories about literacy learning. Street (2005) notes that:

> The nature and meaning of literacy are constructed in the specific social practices of participants, in particular cultural settings for particular purposes. Thus, literacy is more than acquiring content but, in addition, locates reading and writing in the social and linguistic practices that give them meaning. (Street, 2005, p. 3)

Street (2013) further explains that "the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being" (p. 2). In addition, literacy is much more than reading and writing; it encompasses multimodal practices such as visual representation and kinesthetic expression, as well as cultural practices which in the autonomous model are not included within the common western definition of literacy. Rather than one meaning of literacy holding power over literacy practitioners, the ideological view of literacy holds that "reading and writing vary across cultural time and space—the meanings associated with [literacy practices] vary for participants and are rooted in social relationships, including crucially relationships of power" (p. 11).

This ideological view of literacy, in which learning is considered to be socially constructed within various contexts and is unique to the individual as he or she engages

in meaning making, reflects a postmodern theory of education. In both theories, adults

and children are socially engaged in making meaning and are constructing self-identities

along the way. This model of literacy also addresses the rapid changes occurring in our

postmodern world, including the diversity of languages and cultures and the "new

literacies" which are arising.

      Within an ideological perspective of literacy education, Gee (2011) and Lindfors

(2008), among others, write of the ways children successfully learn literacy, through

authentically using language, by reading and writing for a purpose, by turning to

authentic texts, by working within a meaningful literate environment, and through

processes of social interaction. Oral language development, often fostered by adults and

children engaging in conversations, is an important aspect of literacy development in this

model. Most importantly, though, children are supported in finding *value* in their literacy

practices and in finding texts that are *useful* to them. Mills (2004) writes that "our

challenge in the classroom is to create rich contexts in which learning—transformation—

can occur" (p. 52). For me this means that the teacher holds a view of the child as

capable of practicing literacy within those contexts through interaction with peers and

adults without being prescriptively "programmed" or directed from a pre-scripted and

static plan.

New Insights into Literacy Education

      In my teaching practice, it has become evident that in order to enter into a

reciprocal learning relationship with children, I need to always have an image of the

competent child. I need to be open to listening deeply and to respond supportively to the

child. I need to take time with this child. I need to document by keeping a written, audio

or visual record of the learning experience so that the child and I (and significant others) can further reflect upon our shared and reciprocal learning.

The image of the child. In recent years, I began to read about the importance of having a positive view of the child, seeing the child as a capable meaning-maker who possesses a wealth of experiences and interests, and viewing the child as coming to school with assets, rather than deficits; these are all ideas described by the reconceptualist perspective (Dahlberg, Moss & Pense, 1999; Rinaldi, 2006; Wien, 2008) and others who share the beliefs and values of this perspective, including those who preceded this movement in history (such as Dewey, 1929).

I have learned that a teacher will elicit the deepest responses from children if he or she views them as competent and powerful rather than lacking and needy. Rinaldi (2006) writes of an image of a child who is a "competent, active and critical child ... A child who, very early on, is able to attribute meaning to events and who attempts to share meanings and stories of meaning" (pp. 83-84). When we begin with this view of a child, we position ourselves as being open to the child's ideas and wonderings. The child, in turn, is positioned as a capable learner, critical thinker, and as a person who is also open to others' ideas.

The postmodern perspective presents a new way to view assessment and literacy teaching and learning in an early years classroom. The child's literacy practices, both within the context of the classroom as well as those the child brings from home are valued and documented. The child's learning process is valued over end products. In such an educational relationship, the teacher is a listener, a co-constructor of meaning with children, and a documenter of literacy practices. The teacher's understanding of

literacy practices is expanded and there is potential for new literacies to be recognised and for new pedagogies to come into play.

Literacies

Home literacies. The ideological view of literacy (Street, 2009) is culturally sensitive and open to a diversity of languages and literacy practices. Cummins (2000) writes of inviting the children's home culture into the classroom in order to strengthen their self-identities (p. 246). For Cummins (2010):

> Identity is crucial to students' engagement.... When the image that is communicated to the student is one that does not value the cultural and linguistic capital that they're bringing into the classroom and does not construct them as intelligent human beings, then they're more likely to withdraw than they are to invest". (Cummins, video file, 2010, min. 15:00)

Honoring and valuing children's culture, language, and prior experiences are an important part of classroom conversations.

Gee (2009a) draws upon Freire when he writes, "one cannot learn to 'read the word' in some domain unless one has learned to 'read the world' in that domain ..." (p. 6). Dialogue, which can mean reflection as well as conversation, is essential for learning to "read the world" and to "read the word", because it is through dialogue that diverse viewpoints and perspectives are juxtaposed, and we can establish our own position (p. 6). For Friere, "reading the world" is always enacted from "the vantage point of one's individual, sociocultural and sociopolitical positions in that world" (cited in Gee, 2009a, p. 14).

Dombey (2010) refers to a 1984 study by Tizard and Hughes which revealed that young children in nursery classes "were engaged in more sustained and challenging dialogue with their mothers at home than they were" with their teachers at school, regardless of their socio-economic background (p. 174). The children had actively been "reading the world" —*their* world—and could engage in rich dialogue because of it. In my own experience as a teacher I have at times commented to a parent that his or her child was quiet in class, to which the parent responded something like: "That's so surprising. At home she talks all the time." It is possible that we have not always given children an opportunity to read the world of school through dialogue or conversation so that they then can feel empowered to engage in "reading the word".

School literacy traditionally has entailed mostly reading and writing text, while today home literacies can encompass a number of additional modalities. These modalities can range from cards with print and images used in a game to "apps" utilizing icons and other textual features on a smart phone or tablet. A child may be "reading" and interacting with print text, icons, logos, video, hypertext, pop-ups, speech bubbles, graphics, multimodal games, and so on, before he or she ever comes to school. This familiarity (and often proficiency) with various text modalities from home is generally developed through personal interest and exploration. These multi-modal resources are part of the new literacies continuously evolving in our world.

New literacies and multiple literacies. Furthering the ideological view of literacy, Albers, Vasquez and Harste (2008) write of the tension between traditional literacies in school and the "new literacies that the students bring with them to class daily" (p. 3). They suggest that by using multi-media and multi-modal texts in school,

the teacher can bridge the gap between home (popular culture) and school (pp. 3-4),

increase student engagement in literacy activities, and open the door to students' use of

critical literacies (p. 7). Albers, Vasquez and Harste's stance draws upon Street's (2009)

call for the need to prepare students for "new literacies". He suggests that literacy

practices need to include what the participant brings to the event, be it culture or "multi-

literacies" (Street, 2009, p. 142). Multiple literacies is defined by the New Literacy

Studies group as literacy practices "across different cultural contexts and recognizing the

plurality, therefore, of the literacy experience" (p. 137).

Inviting children's multiple literacies and expertise into the classroom leads to

deeper, richer understanding of both language and the world. This understanding is

developed when children engage with multiple literacies, while they engage in play

(action) and as they dialogue with their peers. These multiple literacies, often originating

in children's home literacies experiences, became evident in the documentation in this

study as they enhanced the children's language practices and deepened their engagement

with text.

Pedagogies

In order to uncover the literacies and social practices of the children in my

classroom, and as another dimension of this study, new pedagogies have come into play

in my teaching repertoire. I have looked to these pedagogies as tools which support the

postmodern philosophy of education and which provide approaches that open up spaces

in which the postmodern child can explore and grow.

Pedagogy of listening. The act of listening is an essential aspect of sociocultural

theory—which refers to a child's literacy development being bound up with the

particulars of the child's social and cultural context and especially those individuals and groups with whom the child interacts. Jerome Bruner (1996) writes that intersubjectivity is the "human ability to understand the minds of others whether through language, gesture, or other means" (p. 20). "Listening," broadly defined is the process through which intersubjectivity is made possible. It is through the "pedagogy of listening" (Rinaldi, 2006) that an educator can come to more fully know a child—can glimpse the meaning a child makes of his or her world, can note his or her self-identity and can perceive his or her hopes and dreams. Rinaldi (2006) writes that it is the pedagogy of listening "that takes the individual out of anonymity, that legitimates us, gives us visibility, enriching both those who listen and those who produce the message" (p. 65). Listening validates the speaker and informs the listener. Paley (1986) describes her reaction after beginning to truly listen to her kindergarteners for the first time: "And I, their teacher, who thought I knew the children so well, was ... astonished" (p. 123).

> Paley (1986) goes on to say that curiosity is the key to listening closely:
> As we seek to learn more about a child, we demonstrate the acts of observing, listening, questioning, and wondering. When we are curious about a child's words and [when we voice] our responses to their words the child feels respected. The child *is* respected. (p. 127)

Listening involves:

> being open to differences, recognising the value of the other's point of view and interpretation.... It requires a deep awareness and at the same time a suspension of our judgements and above all our prejudices, it requires openness to change. (Rinaldi, 2006, p.65).

In the context of the classroom, the adult listener is patient and respectful of the child's need for time to gather thoughts or to find the words he or she wants. Dombey (2010) writes of the findings of a study which determined that a slower pace of teacher questioning correlated with an increased number of responses from the students (p. 167). The teacher may provide materials such as compelling literature or artifacts to help open up the dialogue, but he or she values the child's control over the dialogue, and provides the necessary affirmations and prompts to keep the conversation going. Carr (2011) refers to this as "conversation oil" (p. 266).

Carr (2011) goes on to say that throughout the conversation, the adult is responding to the child, questioning where appropriate, co-constructing meaning with the child and enjoying the shared experience, which could focus on a book or artifact (pp. 266-267). The conversation may be very short, but much can be learned from a short time spent with a child when the conversation is recorded and reviewed later. In addition, after a balanced conversation between the teacher and a child or a group of children or among the children themselves, the participating child or children gain a feeling of power and identity (Carr, 2011, p. 268). This is particularly true for children talking with other children, for when they are not trying to appease an authority they come to appreciate much more what others are saying and learn to freely explore other perspectives (Gee, 2009a, p. 20).

Children are wonderful listeners, as is evidenced by the fact that they gain an extensive oral language within the first few years of life. But children also have a voice, and they desire that their voices be heard. They "want to be listened to" (Rinaldi, p. 67). Paley (1986) notes that "passion made the children eloquent" (p.124). The more

interested and engaged children were with a story or topic under discussion, the more time they actively spent in conversation. Connecting to the interests of children can take them higher and deeper in understanding. A pedagogy of listening benefits both the teacher and the student, as the adult learns about the child and the child is taken into new spaces of learning (Gee, 2009b, p. 4).

Timing: slowing down to listen and learn. In the process of listening closely to the children, slowing down the pace of teaching is a worthwhile accompanying practice, for getting to know one another and giving children space to "read the world" takes time. Reading the writings of Fraser (2005), Malaguzzi, (1998), Mills, (2004), Paley (1990), Rinaldi (2006), Routman (2003), and Wien (2008), among many others, has confirmed these practices for me, as they have given me new insight into how children learn. Time, or timing of events, is a concept that has been explored by reconceptualists. Rose and Whitty (2010) write of "disrupting cultural orientation toward clock time" (p. 269). Children not only need time to explore, inquire, and problem-solve independently and collaboratively with other children, they also need time to engage in literacy practices.

Levy (2011) described a study in which children moved from nursery into regular school, and somehow by the age of 6 years old had lost their prior emerging self-identities as "readers" over a year. That is, after one year of regular school, they no longer viewed themselves as readers. Levy suggested that the children's shift in self-identity occurred "because they believed they were unable to fulfill the demands of the school discourse on reading", which was focused on decoding text (Levy, 2011, p. 63). I might guess too that some of my students have experienced the same phenomenon when the demands of early literacy interventions focused their attention on print before they

had been immersed in experiences in the world to which the print referred. Based on my long experience as a teacher of young children, I believe they need time just to be with books, to enjoy telling the stories from the pictures and other textual information that has meaning for them, and to spend time in conversation with others about the meanings they are making.

My own son did not begin reading independently until he was well into Grade 2, the year he discovered Jane Yolen as an author/illustrator and fell in love with "good" (engaging) stories—especially stories that appealed to his sense of humour. He came into reading in his own time, and he continues to be an avid reader to this day. I can imagine that had he been "drilled in decoding" in Grade 1, he may not have developed this early love of stories and conceivably may not have become the engaged reader he is now.

Based on my experiences as a teacher and as a parent, it is my professional and personal belief that in Manitoba and Canadian schools where we have begun direct reading instruction early in children's school lives, and where such instruction has been focused on skill development divorced from children's experiences in the world—using standardized reading programmes and standardized assessments—we may well be discouraging children's passion for reading. In my experience, formal reading intervention often begins when the children are in Grade 1, after only a half-year of education if we consider that Kindergarten is often half-days. I believe that this should be a time when young children are provided with many opportunities to enjoy listening to stories, looking at the pictures in picture books, and retelling stories or telling them in their own words. Certainly some children are interested in focusing on print and should be supported in their efforts to do so. Others come into Grade 1 already reading print.

But I believe that early reading instruction should also include many opportunities for children to delight in listening to stories and to enjoy looking at the pictures, acting out stories, creating their own story versions through their play, and so on.

In 2003 the *British Journal of Psychology* published a cross-cultural European study which found that children taught to read at the age of five had more reading problems than those who were taught at age seven (Seymour, Aro & Erskine, p. 165). Cooper (2009) comments on research in 2007 that found that programmes in early years classrooms that emphasised instruction in early literacy sub-skills (recognition of alphabet letters, letter sounds, sight words, etc.) over a classroom environment focused on play resulted in 90 percent of children leaving kindergarten with beginning reading skills. However, follow-up research identified that the skills gained were not necessarily maintained over time, and by the end of Grade 1 the children were no further ahead of the children who had not been formally exposed to reading sub-skills instruction. In fact, there was a negative impact on formally instructed children's *desire* to learn to read (pp. 25-26). If direct literacy instruction at an early age results in children losing their enthusiasm for learning, then this is surely a call to re-examine the nature of such early literacy interventions.

Pedagogical documentation. Documentation is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2013) as "material that provides official information or evidence or that serves as a record".. Pedagogical documentation encompasses much more than the above definition suggests. Children and adults are actively involved in meaning making and making decisions about what is occurring. From a socio-cultural/reconceptualist view, the adult is a co-constructor of meaning with the child. When an adult listens to a child,

the listening is enhanced through documentation, which among other things is a visual record of the child's oral expression: "[Pedagogical] documentation, therefore, is seen as visible listening.... It makes visible the nature of the learning processes and strategies used by each child" and enables an adult to read, revisit, and assess the child's language and literacy in "time and space" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 68). Through documentation, a teacher can listen deeply to a child by revisiting the record of his or her dialogue about the text, the child's reading processes, and who the child is as a literacy learner. Through the ongoing study of this documentation, the teacher and child/children's teaching and learning are informed. Pedagogical documentation provides more than just a tool for documenting the activity of a child, it also provides "a tool for reflecting on pedagogical practice" (Dahlberg, Moss and Pense, 2007, p. 142.) Documentation, understood in this way, becomes a tool for assessment of both the child's and adult's practices; albeit a non-standardized tool, but a powerful one.

An example of pedagogical documentation that occurred in my classroom was when the children were engaged in a photography study. They were using cameras to document their perspectives of the environment around the school using different camera techniques. After each session of picture-taking, the children returned to the classroom to share their photography with the class. One young boy was shy about speaking in a large group context because it was difficult for others to understand his speech. He could not bring himself to express his thoughts about his photography during our group sharing sessions. However, one-to-one with an adult, this child had no such reservations. I recorded the words he shared with me about his photography and I was intrigued by how much he had to say and how very insightful it was. When his words were transcribed and

posted with his photography for all to see, his voice, his thoughts, and his insights

became visible to the entire class. From that small piece of documentation, we all

learned so much about this quiet child.

When children view documentation of their own learning, it becomes even more

powerful. Later in the day, that same boy showed the documentation of his photography

to his mother when she came into the school, and together they shared a moment of

wonder and pride. Carr (2011) reminds us that "one of the reasons for enabling children

to reflect on their learning is to contribute to their developing views about how they learn,

and their identities as learners" (p. 258). Sharing with children all that we have noticed

and have documented about their literacy practices is empowering for them.

I want to share what I have learned about the reconceptualist view of the image of

the child, about the ideological view of literacies, about the pedagogy of listening, and

about pedagogical documentation with other early years educators, but I recognize that

changes in pedagogical practices do not arise from simply offering information. I believe

that I can best enter into a professional dialogue with my colleagues through a process of

sharing pedagogical documentation that at the same time reveals underlying theories of

literacy and literacy learning processes, and by inviting my colleagues to participate in a

similar process in their own classroom contexts. With this in mind, I realized that I

needed to do some in-depth literacy process documentation before I would be in a

position to share my literacy education learning and teaching practices with my

colleagues. I elected to do this in another teacher's classroom context where I would be

able to engage in this kind of learning and research as my singular focus.

Purpose of this Study

The main purpose of this research is to provide a context in which children can express their understanding, their thinking, and their power to use language and literacy in a multitude of ways. Starting from an ideological view of literacy, I will invite the children to share their home literacies and everyday culture in the process of our conversations. This data will then inform the significant adults in their lives and, hopefully, in turn, empower the children.

Similar studies involving young children's conversations have revolved around storytelling and play (Levy, 2011; Paley, 1981, 1986), critical literacy (Vasquez, 2007), children's project work (Carr, 2011) and exploration of story books (Lindfors, 2008). But, while these studies have used documentation in the form of voice recordings and transcriptions, the processes of documentation and the documentation itself has not generally been the focus of these studies. Also, these studies do not specifically focus on using documentation (based on data gathered) to guide literacy teaching and learning.

This study will proceed from a view of literacy education that runs counter to the much more widely practiced autonomous approach to literacy instruction and assessment currently operating in much of our Canadian school system. As the autonomous literacy education model has its limitations (as described above), this research is intended to offer an alternative methodology for assessing children's literacy based on reconceptualist early childhood education and ideological literacy education ideas, which value process, engagement, dialogue and co-construction, as well as an openness to diversity (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2011, p.5).

The Research Questions

In my research study I explore the pedagogies of listening and documentation in order to better understand how they support children's engagement in multiple literacies experiences in a Grade 1 classroom, and, thereby enhance their learning and their sense of their own self-identities as literacy learners. My overarching research questions are:

- How can a "pedagogy of listening" and pedagogical documentation make children's literacy learning processes (including home literacies) visible to the teacher and to the children themselves?

- In what directions do the children's literacy learning experiences lead as a consequence of children's and teachers' engagement in a "pedagogy of listening" and pedagogical documentation?

- What does the teacher learn by providing a context in which the children connect their "reading of the world" with their "reading of the word" (Gee, 2009a) through this "pedagogy of listening" and pedagogical documentation process?

These research questions will be addressed through a qualitative study that uses pedagogical documentation as its methodology (explained in detail in the next chapter).

It is my hope that this study will help to generate thinking about new ways of assessing and understanding children's literacy learning in an early years classroom. Vygotsky (1978) wrote that children have a capacity for learning that exists in an area he referred to as the "zone of proximal development", or the space between what the child has already learned and what he or she could potentially learn with support from others (p. 84-86). If we are to support children in their literacy learning, I believe that it makes

sense for us as teachers to listen to the children and to caringly document their literacy

practices today so that we can support their literacy learning tomorrow.

Chapter 2: Design and Methodology

Participants

This research took place in a classroom in Winnipeg outside of my own school division. I approached a Grade 1 teacher outside of my school division so that my colleagues would not feel pressure to participate in the study, and so that I would be more likely to have voluntary participation as well as greater anonymity of the participants. This teacher was a teacher in her second year of teaching who was familiar with the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education and who attended Manitoba Reggio-Inspired Coalition of Educators (MB RICE) events—this is an organization devoted to furthering knowledge of Reggio-Emilia inspired philosophy and practices. I met her through a colleague and found out she was interested in practicing pedagogical documentation and was familiar with the philosophy behind it and the practices involved. I explained my research focus to her and she responded with great interest and readily accepted my invitation to participate in the study.

The Grade 1 class was composed of 17 children; 5 boys and 12 girls. Ten families gave consent for their children to be participants in this research. The classroom teacher and I documented all 17 of the children's literacy practices throughout the 12 weeks of this study. The classroom teacher used all of the documentation for her own teaching practices and for reporting to parents. We decided it was important that whether or not the children or their families chose to participate in this research study (which determined whose data could be included in this study), that all of the children would benefit from participating in the processes of a pedagogy of listening and in pedagogical documentation. For this thesis, I used only the documentation gathered from the 10

children who had assented and whose families had given consent to participate in this study.

As I was a visiting researcher rather than the children's classroom teacher, I was not in a position of power when I contacted the children's families for consent. Since I was not in a position to make any independent decisions about the children's instruction or summative assessments (all my observations and interpretations during the pedagogical documentation processes were shared with the classroom teacher for the purposes of her professional decision-making) the children's families should not have felt any pressure to have their children participate in this study. Precautions were taken to ensure anonymity of the participants in this study; pseudonyms were used in the transcriptions of data and in the writing of this thesis document and faces and actual names of children are absent from photographs. Only data from the children who assented to be part of the study and whose families gave consent were included in this research.

The Learning Context

The school in which I conducted this research is situated within a diverse community in a mixed socio-economic urban area. The majority of the families of the children in this particular classroom were from various Aboriginal backgrounds, including Ojibway, Cree, Oji-Cree and Metis. There were also children with multiple Asian and Middle Eastern cultural backgrounds, all of whom spoke English as an Additional Language. Two of the children were of European-Canadian descent.

When I first arrived at the school after the children had gone home for the day, I received a welcoming greeting at the office. Renee, the classroom teacher, was there, and

she introduced herself and took me down to her classroom, stopping along the way to visit the other early years classrooms and to introduce me to any staff we encountered. The following is an excerpt from my personal reflections about the school and Renee's classroom after this first visit:

First Impressions

My immediate reaction to the school was how welcoming and inviting all the spaces were. The music room was large and impressive. The classrooms I saw in the early years area obviously followed the Reggio philosophy of the classroom environment being a third teacher *(see explanatory comments below).*

Renee then directed me into her own classroom. It was set up in small spaces. She had several lamps, but no exterior windows, just windows into the hallway. The room had a cozy, comfortable feel.

I noticed that Renee had arranged little nooks for sitting and reading or writing. She had a painting area, art table, sand area, several kinds of blocks in baskets and a small classroom library near a small carpet. A second larger carpeted area, with a rocking chair, was situated beside a large white board. There were two computers, a printer and a ceiling mounted LCD projector near the back of the room. The children had created the wall alphabet for the classroom. They had formed the letters, drawn the pictures of items beginning with those letters and had coloured them in (Field Notes, October 22, 2012).

Renee's classroom brought to mind words of Lella Gandini (2008), a North American liaison to the philosophies and practices of Reggio Emilia, Italy:

This is a place where adults have thought about the quality and instructive power

of space. The layout of the physical space fosters encounters, communication and

relationships. Children learn a great deal in exchanges and negotiations with their

peers; therefore teachers organize spaces that support the engagement of small

groups. (Gandini, 2008, p. 25)

Meeting Renee and seeing her classroom, I sensed immediately that we could

work together. We had a conversation in which I described in greater detail the proposed

research I wanted to do. Renee in turn spoke about her own teaching philosophy and the

way she created a context for learning in her classroom. She described her day and

spoke about the children in her class. We both talked about literacy and assessment, and

how we attempted to document children's learning processes. I told her of my previous

experiences using an audio recorder to record children's voices. We had a rich,

beginning conversation.

From this conversation, I knew that I would have to make adaptations to my

research methodology. Renee told me about the literacy learning happening during

Explorations (a choice time, where children pursue inquiries of their own design or

inquiries designed with other children or the teacher) when, for example, one child was in

the process of creating a picture book for the class to colour and read. I knew then that

my documentation could not be created only during formal literacy learning times in the

day, such as during reading and writing workshops, but that it would be important to

capture informal literacy learning times during Explorations when the children are

engaged in pursuing their own learning interests through the context of play using various

materials (blocks, paints, sand, and so on), and during Morning Meeting when the

children are sharing news, reading the morning message and discussing the calendar and agenda for the day. The children's literacy learning processes were to be the focus of this study throughout these times, and literacy, including multi-literacies (meaning-making and sharing in multiple modes and languages) and home literacies (the literacy practices the children engage in at home and with their families), was to be the lens through which we would view and document the children's learning. When I entered the classroom for the first time when the children were there, I immediately took note of how quiet they all were:

> October 24, 2012 Meeting with Renee: We discussed how there were a number of very quiet children in the class, at least 8 who did not say much. I spoke of using more visual documentation rather than audio recording for these children and I showed her my video flip camera.

This conversation signaled another change in methodology: I would now focus on what the children were showing me visually as well as through their dialogue with each other. I would take still photographs of their works in progress. I would use video to record their shared literacy experiences with each other, individually or with an adult. When I first conceptualized this research, I had imagined that I would be having conversations with the children and audio recording those conversations. As many of the children were shy with adults, I realized that their own literacy practices and conversations with one another were what we needed to document. Renee and I felt that we did not want to create an artificial context for conversation. Instead, we decided to document the children's literacy learning as they went about their day, being part of whatever activities they were doing at the time and supporting them in the process.

Eventually the children, even the quietest of the group, however, would open up to us adults and talk about books or act out a story or express their thoughts about literacy, but it took some time to gently build this trust and comfort level.

The Documentation Process

In Chapter 1 I referred to pedagogical documentation as a tool for assessment. It can also be viewed as a methodology, as there is an underlying philosophy (postmodernism) accompanying the practice. As opposed to other methodologies which involve observation, when practicing pedagogical documentation, the teacher is situated as a participant who is engaged in listening and interacting with the child rather than as an observer who simply takes notes. Pedagogical documentation is different from simply observation, as it is not about "mapping some universal and objective social reality," but is instead "a process of construction embedded in concrete and local situations" (Dahlberg, Moss and Pense, 2007, p. 142). While observation is generally focused on categorizing children in relation to a general schema, developmental levels and stages," and is mainly "about assessing whether a child is conforming to a set of standards," pedagogical documentation focuses on learning processes (p. 143). Pedagogical documentation "is mainly about trying to see and understand what is going on in the pedagogical work and what the child is capable of without any predetermined framework of expectations and norms" (p. 143).

I chose pedagogical documentation as a methodology over observation because it contains within it flexibility, as it focuses on learning processes in a variety of contexts, and it provides space for reflection and the co-construction of meaning between children and adults. It is not tied to a set of standards or stages of development, but it is a way to

understand the child's capabilities without need for specific expectations (p. 143). It

reflects the concept of openness to diversity as is embraced by a postmodern philosophy

of education.

I was well aware as I began to use pedagogical documentation as a methodology

that the documentation would never be separate from me as a person. By the very

choices I made regarding what to document, I was involved in the process. Pedagogical

documentation is "selective, partial and contextual" (p. 144). As we engage in

participating in the learning process and co-construction of meaning with children the

resulting documentation "tells us something about ourselves and how we relate to

children" (p. 144).

During the weeks that Renee and I documented the children's learning processes

we kept revisiting the documentation to deepen our understanding of what we were

learning with and about the children. On a daily basis we shared with each other what we

were noticing about the children, what literacy learning process patterns were emerging,

and what steps we could be taking to create a context that would further their literacy

learning. As these patterns and ideas for changing the learning context in the classroom

emerged, we would often act upon them, so that there was a constant deepening of the

literacy practices taking place in the classroom.

Once I had transcribed my documentation I would give it to Renee for her use, for

reporting to and conferencing with the parents, as well as for planning instruction. This

documentation would include both transcribed recordings and transcribed field notes

(organized chronologically for each child so that there was a separate written record of

the daily literacy practices of each individual child in the class). This organization would

allow us to view the process of each child's literacy learning over time. I would also later add personal reflections from my field notes along the side of the literacy learning practices that I had documented.

With the documentation in this format, it would be possible to see patterns within individual children's literacy learning. It would soon be evident which patterns were repeated for individuals and which patterns were connected to similar patterns for other children in the study. It would also be possible to see how very unique each child was as a learner and specifically as a literacy learner, and how new identities were being constructed.

Throughout the collection of documentation, Renee and I would study the notes, photographs, artifacts, and transcriptions of children's conversations. Anything that became immediately apparent to us would be shared that same day. Other patterns that emerged over time would also be shared when they were discovered in the documentation.

Renee and I would respond to the documentation in a variety of ways. Some of the documentation, particularly photographs of children engaged in learning processes would be posted in the classroom, accompanied by transcripts of children's articulated ideas. These transcripts might be of words children spoke in class for example about a shared story, or they might be of children later

Figure 1. Some documentation in the classroom.

telling an adult about the activity in the photograph accompanying the transcription. This documentation would be made visible to the children in the classroom as well as to adults visiting the classroom, including parents who came for parent conferences.

We would also take action in response to literacy learning patterns found in the documentation. If, for example, we noticed that children might benefit from a change in writing materials in the classroom, or a different choice of media for representing stories, or added materials for Explorations, Renee or I would make them available to the children in a timely fashion. We would make note of how the children interacted and we would make grouping suggestions for partner reading accordingly; for example, so that a quiet child would not be overwhelmed by an outgoing child, but would feel comfortable to express him or herself with a gentle friend. Renee and I would also particularly note which ideas the children might benefit from discussing during reading or writing mini-lessons. These mini-lessons were short instructional periods in which Renee often modeled specific literacy practices, such as predicting what might happen in a story or writing about a personal event, followed by a class discussion and leading into the children's own reading or writing time. More than anything else, Renee and I were interested in more deeply knowing the children—their interests, their home literacies, their questions, and the connections they were making as literacy learners.

Research Instruments

As a research methodology I elected to use a "pedagogy of listening" and pedagogical documentation with the children in Renee's class. My intention was to digitally audio-record the children's oral discourse about texts as the children were engaged in literacy learning experiences, respecting and noting their home literacies as

opportunities arose in my conversations with the children.   Children would be invited to discuss and share their home literacies and other meaning-making modalities with me and with their classmates during our discussions.

It soon became apparent that a number of the children in this class were reluctant to speak, particularly with adults. Yet their actions and reactions within the classroom also revealed information about their literacy practices. In order to make these actions and reactions "visible" documentation was created using visual recording technology rather than just auditory recordings. Visual recording equipment was used along with written field notes and children's own artifacts, which we had parental permission to share within the context of the classroom. Renee, the children's classroom teacher, was part of this research as well, and she also engaged in similarly recording the children's literacy practices. She had permission from the children's parents who had signed a general release form to take photographs and visual recordings of the children in her classroom for her teaching purposes. These photographs and video recordings were often shared with the children within the classroom. I received permission from the parents when they signed the consent form for this research to transcribe the auditory conversations within visual recordings and to write reflections on the conversations. It was made clear that no visuals of their children would be shown within this thesis document or outside of the classroom in any way. Any artifacts used (as those pictured in this thesis document) would contain pseudonyms and the children who created the pieces would remain anonymous. The research documentation encompassed such literacy practices as a child reading a picture book with a partner, or illustrating a story,

or writing a note to a parent, or orally responding to a shared story, or circling a word on the morning message (these are just a few examples).

I transcribed these auditory or visual recordings of the children's literacy practices at the end of each day, noting the children's literacy practices and home literacies. The transcriptions involved first typing up my field notes, then transcribing any auditory or visual recordings of children speaking with each other or to an adult throughout the day. I arranged the typed field notes into individual chronologically-arranged documents for each child, with my observations on the left and my reflections in a column on the right (see Appendix A). Into each child's document, I inserted relevant sections of transcribed conversations from the auditory and visual recordings. I then studied the transcripts of the children's words and actions and looked for recurring patterns in the children's learning and literacy processes which were embodied and articulated during their conversations or activities.

All data were shared with Renee, the classroom teacher, on an on-going basis. Renee was already a practitioner of pedagogical documentation, which she typically shared with the children. After I shared this data with the classroom teacher she and I discussed how our documentation could be shared with the children and what we could provide within the context of the classroom to help further the children's learning processes. As pedagogical documentation is meant to be shared back with the children, we selected photographs Renee and I had taken of the children's writing, play activities and artwork as well as selections from the children's own words drawing from the transcribed dialogues, that would deepen our understandings of the literacy discussions we were having. We then shared this documentation back with the children in order to

make their literacy learning processes visible and shareable with the other children and children's families.

Drawing upon this documentation, Renee and I discussed and explored ways in which we could support and extend the children's literacy. This support included the provision of new resources, literacy strategy instruction, and new play-based literacy learning opportunities that honoured and promoted the children's use of their home literacies, multi-literacies, and critical literacies (through which attempts are made to identify issues of power in literacy use), in ways that we predicted would help the children connect their "world to the word". Our actions were as simple as providing print materials on a topic of interest, providing materials and guidance for creating puppets for a story telling and retelling, and providing three-part paper and envelopes for story and letter writing. What the children's dialogue and literacy practices and the documentation of that dialogue and practice presented to us determined the path we took to support and extend the children's literacy learning.

Just as the children were in the process of learning, this research was very much a process, and the methodology evolved with this process. We changed the research instruments in order to obtain a more visual record of learning. We changed the context in which the data was collected to include informal play and transition times of the day. The data was collected from conversations the children were having with each other, rather than just conversations involving adults. This data was arranged by individual child as well as by the patterns in learning, as both seemed equally significant.

In the process of documenting the children's literacy practices, time was taken to engage with the children, to listen closely to them, and to provide feedback based on

what the children were saying or showing. In this sense, there was a perceptible slowing down of time in the classroom. Extra time was also provided within the context of the day when children's particular interests in an activity or practice kept them engaged beyond the usual amount of time, as when partner reading or puppet dramatisation was extended. The children's interests and practices were taken into account with respect to time.

The timeline of this study was approximately three months. It took approximately one month to become familiar with the children to establish trusting relationships with them, and to begin to document their learning. We began to reflect upon and respond to the documentation. It took another month for the quieter children in the class to begin to open up and show a wider range of capacities (which were not previously as visible) through their oral language alone. Within this time, much was occurring within the classroom as the documentation reveals in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Documentation

The Individual Children

Of the 10 children for whom I had permission to include in this study, I chose 6 to discuss in this thesis. These 6 were chosen because they reflected the greatest diversity in languages, cultural backgrounds, and home environments. They also attended school most regularly of the 10 children, so there was continuity in the data. The data I gathered from these 6 children was quite vast, and any more would have been much more than I needed for this study. Two of the children were boys and four were girls. I made a point of including both talkative and quiet children in this study in order to present the range of literacy practices of the children and the associated challenges involved in documenting their literacy learning.

The following profiles drawn from the children's documentation include a general description of each child, particular examples of the child's literacy practices and interpretations Renee and I made of what the children were showing us about their learning. I have also included some description of the ways Renee and I responded to each of the children's literacy learning so that we could pedagogically support them on their journey. I decided on the specific content after looking at the collection of documentation and noting the patterns presented by the children. I then selected relevant samples that represented these patterns from the pedagogical documentation, for example, you will note that Victoria came to writing through her own drawings. I have selected examples to illustrate this pattern in her literacy learning. There were some specific times when suddenly the child took a leap in learning, as though a new

realization came to the child, and those specific times have also been selected, as when

Victoria took the leap to invented spelling.

Victoria. For several days in the classroom, I didn't hear Victoria's voice.

English was her second language and she was understandably hesitant to speak in large

group meetings. She generally "passed" when it was her turn for sharing in the meeting

circle, during which time she often sat very close to one particular child, even hiding

behind her somewhat when approached. Victoria quietly made her own drawings during

writing and Explorations. During reading, she silently matched pictures in the *I Spy*

books she selected to read, books in which children hunt for items in the illustrations after

reading picture or word clues. If I asked her something or greeted her in the morning, she

looked back at me with her big brown eyes without replying. If there was something she

really needed to say, she whispered it into the ear of a friend, or into Renee's ear, such as

when she read a word on the morning message. This was a message that Renee wrote on

the large whiteboard that ran along the wall next to the large group meeting area. The

message generally contained a greeting and a brief description of the anticipated events

of the day. (The children often approached the message as they entered the classroom in

the morning and, using dry erase markers, circled a word or two that they were invited to

read aloud when the message was shared at the morning meeting.) As time went on, I

noticed that Victoria did speak quietly to a few, select classmates; those with whom she

appeared to feel most comfortable. Renee noticed all this, as well, and we wondered how

to document the literacy learning of a child who was so quiet, particularly at a time when

she was just beginning to use written language for her own purposes.

We decided that when documenting Victoria's literacy practices, it made sense to record her actions or what she presented visually, rather than just her spoken words. We used a video camera, took photographs, and looked at any artifacts she may have worked on. We soon discovered that Victoria came to school with much to offer in her quiet way. The following piece of documentation names the literacy event then details the literacy practices used in that event:

> Group gathering for a writing mini-lesson: Victoria sharing a comfortable chair with a classmate quietly says: "This is a 'c', this is an 'a', this is a 'g'". Victoria makes the letters with her fingers by putting her two hands together (Field notes, Hilary November 8, 2012).

This was a spontaneous moment caught in the documentation of Victoria playing with literacy. She had made a game out of the formation of letters and was sharing it with a friend while the class was settling in for their lesson on the big carpet. It shows her interest in letters and learning language. It also shows her willingness to share her interest with others and to teach them something they may not have known.

Documentation of Victoria's actions during the reading workshop also showed us how she used literacy:

> 09/26: Partner reading with a classmate the Mo Willems book *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay up Late*. Victoria turns the pages from left to right, looking carefully at the pictures. She scans the entire page, pausing to take in the details then she silently appeals to her classmate to help with text. *I Spy an Apple*. Victoria silently puts her finger on a picture in the list then puts a finger from her other

hand on the matching item on the opposite page (Field notes, Hilary November

16, 2012).

While reading, Victoria didn't just flip through the pages of books. She studied each

page carefully, taking it all in, pointing to both pictures and print. She invited help from

her friend as she strove to make meaning from the text.

Further documentation showed that Victoria listened closely during Renee's oral

reading of a story, smiling when she found something to be humourous. She drew

carefully detailed and highly representative pictures for her own stories and she printed

her letters carefully and beautifully. Victoria also wrote for a purpose, making cards and

letters for her family and friends, including words such as, "To Mom, I love you". In the

following documentation Victoria was working on a diary entry:

Diary writing: Victoria drew herself and her sister in their bedroom and added the date. She had told me earlier that she and her sister played with Barbies on the weekend, in response to me asking yes/no questions and

Figure 2. Victoria's first Barbie story.

asking yes/no questions and
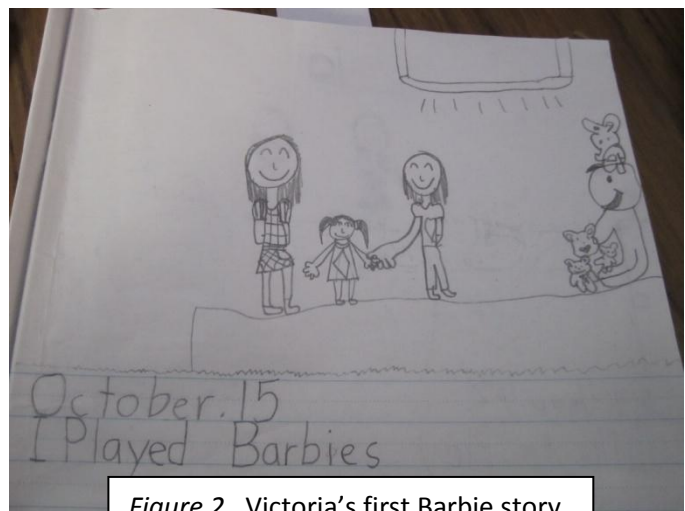
her nodding, as in, "Is that you? Is that your sister? Are you in your bedroom?

Are you playing with dolls? Are they Barbie dolls?" and so on. Victoria wrote

"pl" for "play" underneath the drawing then erased it before handing in the

booklet (Field notes, Hilary November 15, 2012).

Victoria later added the date and had help from an adult to spell *I played Barbies*.

A few weeks later, Victoria wrote a similar story:

Diary writing: Victoria is humming as she works on an entry in her diary. She is

adding words to her story: I Love to Paoy my Barbaa wef my frieds. She is using

both conventional and invented spelling (Field notes, Hilary November 14, 2012).
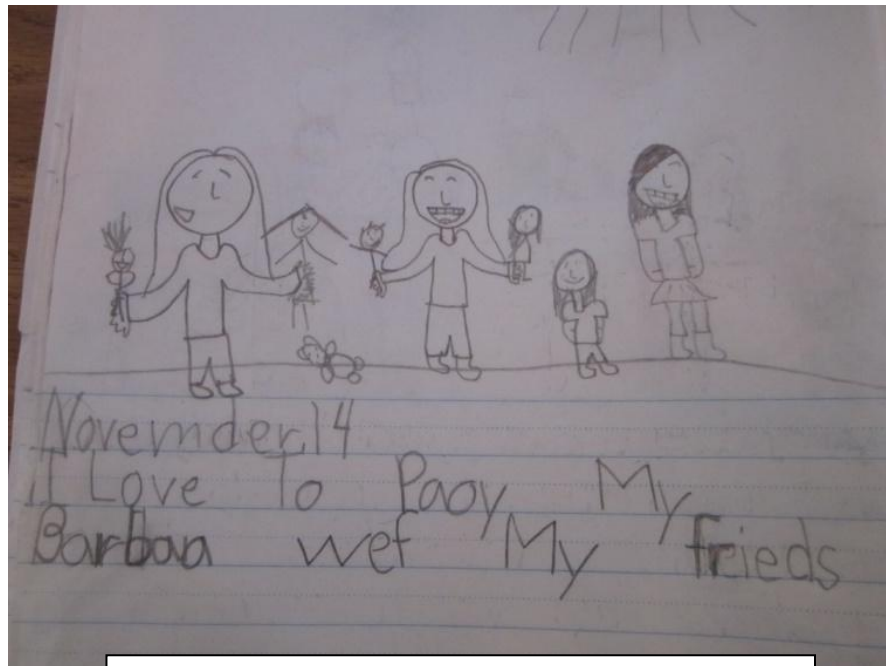
Figure 3. Victoria's second story about playing Barbies.

Although this second story came much later, it was similar to the first. What was most

significant was that Victoria showed she was writing using invented spelling (meaning

she spelled words according to how they sounded and how she thought they might be

spelled), and her writing expressed a feeling (*I love to...*), it was highly personal, (*I, my,*

my), and it was coherent (made sense and matched the picture) and readable

(recognizable words and letters). She was expressing herself through her writing as well

as her drawing. Victoria also expressed a feeling of happiness by humming as she

engaged in the process of writing, perhaps pleased with herself as a writer and feeling confident. Victoria's identity as a writer was made visible through this documentation.

Victoria presented herself as a capable literacy learner, once Renee and I focused more on what she presented to us visually. When we documented what we saw, Renee and I realized that Victoria was studying and taking in her environment, as when she carefully scanned the pictures in storybooks. She already possessed a huge capacity to learn, as well as the resources to teach others in her own quiet way which was evidenced when she showed a classmate how to make letters with her hands or helped to read words. Victoria came with strengths, particularly in her drawing and printing of words. It was very evident that she was a powerful literacy learner.

In my documentation of Victoria sharing books with a partner (she was shy about reading with adults), I discovered that she read many words, she made predictions, she self-corrected, she looked carefully at the letters in words to figure them out, she responded critically to text, she recalled and retold stories and events in her life, and she had a teasing, playful personality. Her voice remained quiet however, as she practically whispered to her friends, until we made puppets.

Looking at the pedagogical documentation, three months after the start of school, Renee and I introduced puppets, mainly for the quiet children in the class. We wanted to see if these children would find their voices through their own puppets. We invited Victoria to make a puppet, which she did during Explorations. She chose to make a cat, which she designed herself, and when she put the puppet on her hand, a very loud "Meow" came from the puppet. The following is transcribed from a video of Victoria and Desirae acting with their puppets:

Victoria and Desirae are at the curved table, shaped like a horseshoe. *(Renee generally uses this table when she is working with a small group of children.)*

Victoria has her cat puppet on her hand. "Meow, Meow," she voices quite loudly as she moves her puppet towards Desirae.

Desirae, speaking in a squeaky puppet voice through her rabbit puppet, "I'm going to bite your eye!" Her puppet chomps on Victoria's cat puppet.

Victoria, laughingly, "Hey!" Victoria's puppet bites back.

Desirae still in puppet voice, "Hey, you don't do that no more!" Her puppet hits Victoria's puppet.

Victoria laughs and says a loud, "Oww!" She moves her puppet away and says a very cat-like "Meow, Meow."

Victoria moves back and has her puppet bite Desirae's rabbit, "Meow, meow!"

Figure 4. Victoria's cat puppet.

Desirae says through her puppet, "No, you don't bite me!"

Victoria says loudly, laughingly, "Yes!"

Desirae, smiling, "No!"

This back-and-forth play goes on for a while (Video transcript, Victoria & Desirae, December 6, 2012).

For the first time in my experience with her, Victoria engaged in dramatic play and she was highly animated and vociferous. At the same time, her confidence to speak aloud with adults and classmates appeared to increase during other parts of the day. She began to read several words in the morning message aloud to the class in an audible voice and she read a story to me with expression and evident enjoyment for the first time just before the winter break in December:

> Victoria chooses a *Pete the Cat* book. I ask her if she would like to read it to me.
> I tell her if she comes to words she would like me to read, she can simply pause
> and I'll read the word. Victoria nods her assent, and she begins by reading the
> entire title, *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes*. Victoria is familiar with the
> story, and she reads most of the words easily, using a sing-song voice when the
> story comes to his song, "I love my white shoes, I love my white shoes ..." She
> reads commonly known words, such as "the, so, much, loved, this, no, in, a, did"
> as well as words which were key words that were repeated in the story, such as,
> "Pete," "goodness," and "shoes". Victoria used the pictures for cues, especially
> for colour words. She reacted to the humour in the story by smiling (Field notes,
> Hilary December 12, 2012).

It was wonderful to hear Victoria's voice and witness her enjoyment as she read this story. She later read the same book with a partner, a girl with whom she did not often read:

> Partner reading with Fatima, reading *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes*:
> Victoria and Fatima take turns by reading aloud alternate pages. Fatima reads the
> chant while Victoria loudly and clearly reads the next page that presents more of a

challenge. She reads the words until she pauses at one particular word. Fatima

helps her figure out that the word is "bowl". Then they chant the rhyme together.

On the next page Victoria reads, "Did he cry? Goodness no!" with great

expression! (Field notes, Hilary December 12, 2012).

Victoria's voice could now be clearly heard in the classroom during reading times,

whether she was with an adult or a classmate.

Renee and I knew that for Victoria to be a full participant in the classroom, it was

important for her to express herself orally, as well as visually, and it was evident from the

documentation that earlier on she was refraining from doing this. We chose puppets as a

possible vehicle for oral expression because the puppet takes the attention away from the

person (puppeteer), which often is less intimidating for the child. The introduction of a

puppet creation area to exploration time and the ensuing dramatic play led to a

blossoming of Victoria's speech and language in other literacy learning contexts, such as

shared reading, and contributed to a visible change in her identity within the classroom.

She was a fully participating co-constructor of the culture within our classroom

community.

This is the power of pedagogical documentation, for the quiet children in the class

are made visible and the teachers of those children find ways to help children become full

participants in the classroom based on what the documentation is showing.

Jim. Jim was a child who spontaneously expressed his thoughts and ideas as they

occurred to him. He often gave an emotional response to what he heard, read, and wrote.

He was inquisitive, often wondering what things meant and why things were the way

they were. He connected text with personal experiences and he was confident in what he

knew. Jim used his imagination to interpret and create stories. He showed a particular interest in numbers as he counted things in storybook illustrations and read page numbers. The following was the first time I sat down with Jim as he looked at books:

> Reading: Jim takes a book from his book bag. "I'm picking the Frog book". He opens the book. "Oh look at the baby. He's chewing the lion's bum!" (laughs) "That's funny!" He turns some pages until he sees "Penguins!" He continues to a bat page showing bats hanging upsidedown. "Is he licking his face?" I say that it looks like it, but why is the bat upsidedown? Jim says "bats hang from their feet from the ceiling. I saw them at the zoo. That's how I know it". He then looked at an *I Spy* book, quickly locating the images and counting them (Field notes, Hilary November 9, 2012).

Jim reacted emotionally to the pictures in the book (that's funny!) and displayed enthusiasm for what he was reading. He showed an interest in non-fiction material. He also showed himself to be an inquirer as he wondered why the bat was upside down. He connected the book with his own experience at the zoo. He displayed confidence sharing what he knew. I gained much understanding of Jim as a literacy learner from this very short time with him.

Jim's first reading of print in Grade 1 appeared to involve environmental print, as he read the words *lunch* and *recess* on the morning message (which the teacher wrote on the whiteboard describing the anticipated day's events to the children), and the agenda (which listed the day's upcoming activities), and he read children's names in the class. Jim would check words on the day's agenda then find these words on the morning message and read them to the class. Other words like *Jim*, *we* and *mom* were already

known to him. He chose non-fiction and fiction books which often featured animals.

When reading fiction, he paraphrased the story, predicted what would happen in the story

and made meaning from the pictures. Jim recalled events in a story and he retold these

events with confidence.

When writing, the documentation revealed that Jim's stories often involved action which was evolving:

Figure 5. Jim's *Apple* story.

Writing in Diaries: Jim is telling the story as he draws: "There's a thing to climb on and the house and the old T.V. And this is the new T.V. in the attic. There is snow because it's winter. This is a triangle window. I'm throwing apples outside (counts) 1 apple, 2 apples ... 9 apples. I close the window (erases the window opening). Smoke is rising. There is water putting out the fire (erases the fire). We put out the fire. It was night (adds a moon). There is a tap." He writes ABC Recess TV under the drawing (Field notes, Hilary November 15, 2012).

Jim is thinking aloud, adding and erasing as different events happen in the story,

reminiscent of animation or comic strips. He is showing how he likes action in his stories,

and pictures that are evolving with the story. Counting appears in his story.

Jim continued this evolving storyline type of writing in the following example:

Writing: Jim describes his drawing of his story: "This is Thad and me (two figures are standing on the ground). We were climbing up a tree. We climbed ladders to go up in the tree" (he draws ladders, then draws them going up the ladders). Then he gets up, saying, "I need my book for *Thad.*" He gets his diary and turns to a page with a drawing labeled *Thad*.

Figure 6. Jim's *Tree* story.

He copies the word onto the lines under the drawing he is working on today. Then he writes *Jim*. He says, "I want to spell *moo.*" I say *moo* slowly, dragging out the sounds and he writes M-O-O. Then he says, "How do you write *lot*?" He sounds out L-O-T with me and writes it down without me telling him the letters. He has written: *THAD JIM MOO LOT*. Then he reads his writing, "Thad and Jim Moo a lot." He adds *ABCD!* underneath and says he is done (Field notes, Hilary November 13, 2012).

Because of this documentation, Renee and I talked about providing materials that might provide room for Jim's evolving stories. We spoke of story boards which generally consist of larger paper divided into boxes for illustrations with room for brief description under each box, similar to those used by film makers. We also spoke of possibly using Photo Story which is a computer program that enables children to create a series of slides containing their own photographs or illustrations as well as accompanying

text or audio narration. Both ideas would give Jim a vehicle for presenting a sequence of events. In the short term, Renee provided paper which was divided into three parts as an option for the children's writing. Jim immediately went for it, and created a story:

> Jim chooses the three-part paper. He tells me about the first frame, "This is a bowl of soup. I did it last night". He points to the second frame, "Here is the morning. Here is my van and here is us—me, my mom, my brother and my sister. We helped
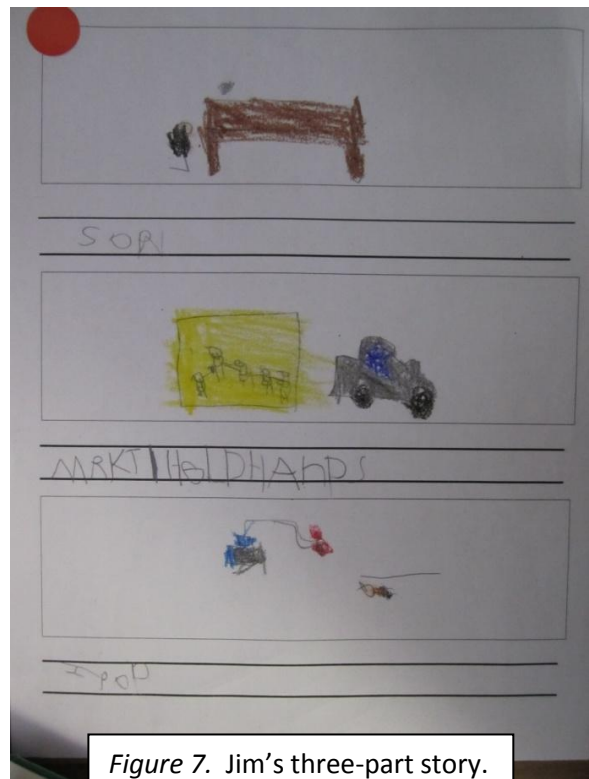
Figure 7. Jim's three-part story.

my dad getting money. Here's my little baby brother. I'm going to draw the arms close 'cause we were holding hands. So we don't get lost." He starts to draw in the third frame. "And I played my iPod. How do you draw an iPod?" Desirae says, "I know how". She helps him. Jim says, "I don't listen to music on my iPod. I just play games". Jim decides to write words for his drawings. He often refers to the names of the children in the class when thinking of the letters he wants to put down, for example when he is spelling "market" he puts MRKT, saying "M-that's in Mom, R-Ronnie, K-Kaitlyn. Oh, I know T." (Field notes, Hilary November 20, 2012).

Jim's three-part story showed a chronology of events which he could not portray with one blank page. His story had details (*I'm going to draw the arms close 'cause we were holding hands. So we don't get lost.)* He enlisted help from his peer and from an adult. He used his experience in the world as a reference for his writing and now engaged in invented spelling. He demonstrated how he made connections to the names of people in his life when thinking of letters and the pattern of sounds to which they are related.

Jim's first attempts at writing words involved Jim writing the alphabet under his drawings by copying the letters from a chart. As Renee modeled using functional spelling (spelling to get the word down without taking time to check if the spelling is conventional) to write a sentence during writing mini-lessons, Jim began to write his own sentences with his own invented spelling to go with his drawings. He also included environmental print, such as the M from the McDonalds logo, and STOP, a word he had learned from his world experience.

Jim began to write for his own purposes when he created a drawing for a classmate during Explorations and added both her name and his own name to the paper. There were many documented incidences of Jim exploring literacy on his own time, as in the following example:

Explorations: Jim goes to the white board saying, "I'm playing school". He asks children to join him, but everyone is busy, so he asks me to be in his school. I sit on one of the chairs he has set out. He writes a long string of letters on the board, SHOTBPMOMJEZYOMOMU—WEMOM ("That says *we, mom,*" he tells me.)—NOIZEOTK—YOUXS. He looks at the alphabet mats and letters on the

board for ideas of what to write. Then he tells me to read what he has written

(Field notes, Hilary November 8, 2012).

Jim was incorporating words he knew into his play (*we, mom*) as well environmental

print (*shot* from the Canon Power Shot camera*, you* from the morning message). The fact

that Mom appeared three times in his message leant significance to the word (Mom was

important to him). He drew from both his own experience with school (teacher using the

white board to write the morning message) as well as his imagination (children sitting on

chairs in a row) to create his school scenario.

Not only did Jim's stories contain activity, he was also physically active, and he

expressed particular enthusiasm for recess and play times. He identified with all things

active. During exploration times, Jim often chose active play involving blocks, cars or

sand, and he moved from centre to centre throughout the period, just as his written stories

moved from scene to scene. He often created stories during play, for example, when he

was building with blocks and playing with toy cars.

Jim also identified himself as a learner and he presented himself as open to

learning from others. He created a dragon puppet when he saw Efren's choice of puppet,

adding wings when Efren realized dragons should fly, then flew it around the room with

Efren. He asked Desirae for support with his writing and echoed her reading when they

were sharing a book together. Jim, in recognizing the capabilities of others, helped build

their identities as teachers of others, and he contributed to the co-construction of the

classroom community in this way.

Documentation of Jim's literacy learning revealed that Jim is a powerful maker of

meaning and connections. He connected words, stories and play to his own experiences.

He noticed the smallest things, such as B-E-T making a word even though the letters were vertically listed on the board, or that *Recess* on the agenda was the same word as *recess* in the morning message. Jim worked and created in constant motion. His stories contained action which evolved as he wrote, his play moved around the classroom, and his creations (buildings, puppets) changed as he thought of new things.

Brooklyn. Brooklyn had an active imagination that came out in her stories and in her dramatic play. She was an only child living with one parent. She demonstrated great interest in popular music, as when she decided her puppet would be Lady Gaga:

Explorations: Brooklyn adds more hair to her puppet then she plays with it. She talks through her puppet to me: "My name's Lady Gaga. I like Britney Spears, Maroon 5, Enrique Ingesias, and Justin Bieber". She proceeds to sing *Romance* by Lady Gaga (Field notes, Hilary December 7, 2012).

On another occasion, Brooklyn hummed and danced "Gangnam Style" for the class. Brooklyn displayed confidence when expressing herself through drama or sharing her ideas with others. She often took the lead during dramatic play with other children, pretending for example to be the "artwork teacher". At home, Brooklyn said she liked to play video games, particularly Mario, or watch movies.

Brooklyn often wrote for a purpose, making cards and letters for others and reading aloud her stories to the class or to a partner. Brooklyn recalled a sequence of events when she drew and wrote about her experiences and she added descriptive details to her stories. The following example documented Brooklyn's verbal expression of her thinking as she wrote:

Writing in diary: Brooklyn is talking aloud as she draws: "I can't wait until it's

summer again because at my daycare I can go swimming and I can swim underwater. My eyes are very gorgeous (she is drawing her face). I have shine in my eyes. (She draws another person). My Nana has very short hair, to her shoulders. Nana looks gorgeous with those eyes. Look, I'm at the store, see? (Brooklyn draws a young woman behind a counter). She turns back to her drawing. "I'm going to draw my dad because he's so great. He does fun things with me". Brooklyn finishes her drawing, colours it and writes words: *I wet to the sor wf NANA and Dad*. She re-read her writing several times before she finished the sentence, realizing she missed out "with" and going back to add it as well as changing the ending, which originally had a 2 (for *too*, perhaps) (Field notes, Hilary November 9, 2012).
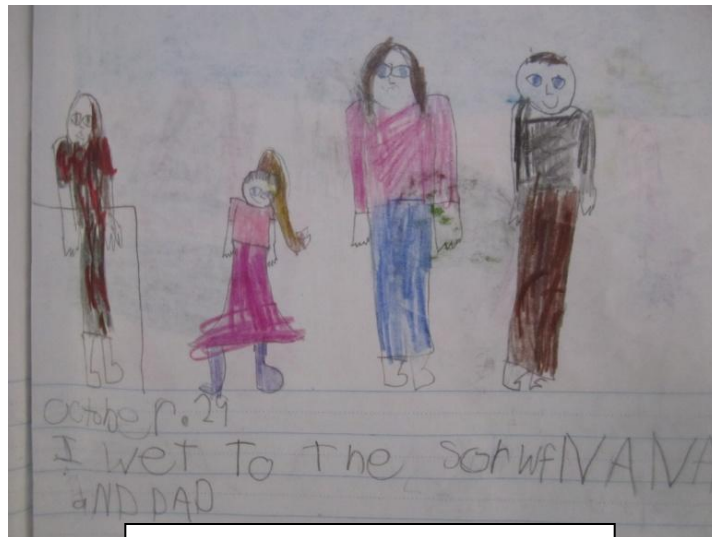
Figure 8. Brooklyn's shopping story.

Brooklyn was thinking aloud as she drew and wrote.

Brooklyn showed several things about herself as a writer. She had a sense of story and paid attention to detail (*My Nana has very short hair, to her shoulders*). She knew how words went together (she adds a vowel to *went—wet*). As she used invented

spelling and wrote some words conventionally, she was beginning to revise her work, adding and deleting in process. Brooklyn re-read her writing several times, usually after each word she added to her sentence, which was an effective strategy for keeping her on track. Brooklyn said she liked to write during one of her writing times and she identified herself as a writer.

Brooklyn expressed an interest in swimming as well as personal reflections about herself and her family (*My eyes are very gorgeous ... I'm going to draw my dad because he's so great. He does fun things with me*). Although Brooklyn rarely saw her father, he showed up in her writing on a number of occasions, as in the next example:

> Brooklyn shows me a book she made at Explorations yesterday. "It's a book about a little girl called Elizabeth and her dad died. I don't have a dad, either." Brooklyn looks at the pages of her book, "Once upon a time there was a girl called Elizabeth. Elizabeth's dad had a broken heart." (Field notes, Hilary November 20, 2012).

Brooklyn showed a deep connection between her own experiences and her fictional writing. She was acting like a genuine author! Brooklyn's writing was very much from the heart.

Brooklyn read aloud many words on the morning message, as well as environmental print. She often chose books that were humourous and which were popular among the children. In the following example Brooklyn displayed a number of strengths when she reads *Yes Day!*:

> Brooklyn (reads the book title): *Yes Day, Yes Day.*

Brooklyn (asks Hilary to read the first page then points to each word as she reads): *Can I please have pizza for dinner* – I mean *breakfast? Can I use your hair gel?* Ooh a strawberry (pointing to the page). Eww (points to the boy on the page just wearing underwear). *Say cheese* (then quietly to herself looking at the words again) *Say cheese. Can I clean my room tomorrow? Can I pick all the sugar stuff* (paraphrasing)? *Can we get ice cream* (reads and points again) *ice cream? Can I eat lunch outside? Can we have a food fight* (she chuckles)? Can we...

Hilary: invent

Brooklyn: *invent our own game? Can we invent our own game? Can I have a piggyback ride? Can Mario come over for dinner?* And the last part. This is the last, last part. *Can I stay up late? Can I stay up really late? Yes! Does the day have to end? Yes. The end for ... of Yes Day.*

Hilary: Do you read books at home, Brooklyn? (She nods) What are your favourites?

Brooklyn: Uh, I read *Cinderella* and *Chester* but I lost it.

Hilary: Do you like to read books about things, like animals?

Brooklyn: Yeah, I have a book about Winnie the Pooh. (Time is up for reading.)

Brooklyn: "Thanks. That was fun!" (Transcribed audio recording, Hilary, November 30, 2012).

The following is an entry from my field notes of this interactive reading time spent with Brooklyn:

When Brooklyn read *Yes Day*, she read the words on the pages for the most part, and was comfortable enough with the story to add expression as she read. She corrected herself, re-reading parts on occasion, and she responded to the story by chuckling or saying "Eww" when something was unpleasant to her. She pointed out and commented on the illustrations at times, as she referred to both words and illustrations for making meaning. At the end, I asked Brooklyn if she read at home. She said, "I read...." She sees herself as a reader! (Field notes, Hilary November 30, 2012).

Based on this documentation and many other examples of Brooklyn reading, we noticed she used a variety of strategies for making meaning, such as looking at the text illustrations, connecting the text to herself, to the world or to other texts, finding letter patterns in words or finding small words in larger words. Brooklyn predicted what would happen in a story based on the story so far or on her own experiences, and she revised her prediction with new information. She paraphrased and retold stories expressively and in detail. Brooklyn identified herself as a reader and enjoyed shared reading experiences.

Brooklyn also knew what a character in a story was and she demonstrated critical thinking in her description of characters. She often expressed her opinion about things and sometimes corrected people. At the same time, she regularly changed her own opinion about things. She referred to herself as liking "to change things a lot", and she demonstrated this when she changed an entire story she was writing, and when she changed the hair and name of her puppet several times. Brooklyn was a co-constructor of our classroom community as she shared her knowledge and love for popular music and culture with her classmates and she in turn gathered ideas from others.

Margaret. Margaret was a child of First Nations heritage living in a loving foster home with two brothers. She often received extra adult support at school. She came and went with an adult to and from the classroom at times throughout the day. When she was in class she was at times an active participant, particularly during Explorations time. For Margaret, connecting with other children presented a challenge, and she often sat on the fringes of the classroom community, preferring to wear headphones while she played on the computer, or to engage in solitary play while other children were interacting in their various centres. Renee regularly invited Margaret to join a group or to take part in class activities and Margaret would accept Renee's invitation on some occasions. These occasions appeared to occur with higher frequency as time progressed, or as Margaret appeared to become more comfortable with her classmates. As time went on, Margaret began to share her literacy practices with others, as in the following documentation:

> Margaret brought a "Toys R Us" catalogue to school today (the catalogue contains colourful pictures of toys with accompanying prices for purchase from the Toys R Us store). She shows it to Jim saying "you can pick out what you want. I'm getting a pen to circle it". She goes to the art table to retrieve a thick marker. She circles Jim's choice with a green marker then announces to the class "I have Toys R Us mail. Who wants a toy?" (Field notes, Hilary November 14, 2012).

Margaret shared her home literacy experiences with her classmates. She knew that the catalogue contained pictures of things you could obtain, and she was eager to show this to the other children. She demonstrated a sense of her own power as she announced her

"mail" to the class. The Toys R Us catalogue found its way into her book box and she often pulled it out at reading time.

Margaret also chose books about animals. She was particularly drawn to books about cats and pigs. She knew familiar stories, such as *The Three Little Pigs*, and she would choose to act out a story with toy animals or puppets, sometimes instead of drawing or writing a story.

> Reading: Margaret says "I'm good at reading cat books". She gets the basket of animals out saying "I want to read a story about three little pigs". She gets pigs out of the animal basket. "But I need a wolf". She moves to another table. "Now I need to build the pigs a home" (Field notes, Hilary November 15, 2012).

Margaret saw herself as a reader who was "good at reading cat books" and she understood that books tell a story. I noticed that Margaret, rather than choosing a book to read, chose to dramatize a story she knew. She demonstrated knowledge of the characters in the story.

On another occasion, Margaret paraphrased a picture book about cats for the class, incorporating much detail in her description of events and referring to the pictures for support.

> Book sharing: Margaret shares her book *Prudie Finds Out* with the class. The story is about a cat. She turns the pages and tells the story in great detail using the pictures: "They found a black cat and they took the baby cats ... Then they said, 'Yay, we got out!'" Margaret used expression and description when telling the story (Field notes, Hilary November 19, 2012).

Margaret told this familiar story from the black and white pictures. She was sitting in the teacher's chair as she turned the pages and read. Her reading was expressive and followed the pictures closely. She did this calmly and confidently.

In another piece of documentation, Margaret used her panda puppet to dramatize a "reading" of an entire chapter book, again a book about cats:

Explorations: Margaret has her panda puppet on her hand. She talks to Kaitlyn's puppet. "Panda doesn't know you. Panda never "seened" you before. He already knows me cause [he knew me when he was] even a baby. So Panda knows me. Now he's a kid now. Panda's no baby any more. Panda's three now." Margaret speaks through her puppet now to Kaitlyn's puppet, "Want me to read a book to you?" Kaitlyn's puppet says, "Okay". Margaret says, "Panda can read. Yeah. Better than me. But you don't hear Panda. He doesn't talk. He just talks quiet."

Margaret has a cat book that is mostly text with very few tiny black and white ink drawings. "The story about the cat," she says. Margaret proceeds to move the panda puppet along the pages, one by one, moving the
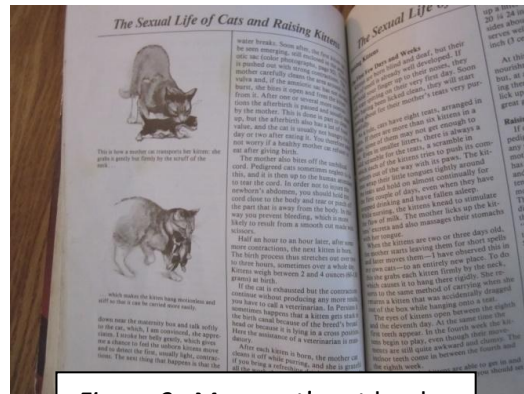
Figure 9. Margaret's cat book.

panda's mouth, but making no sound. Kaitlyn moves off to do something else, but Margaret keeps going page by page until the entire 145 page book is read by the puppet.

When she is finished the book, Margaret comes to me and tells me her puppet is a good reader because he's in Grade 2. She asks me how old you are in Grade 2. I

say seven. So she says, "Panda's seven" (Transcription of video of Margaret and

Kaitlyn, December 10, 2012).

Margaret's panda character came alive! She described him to Kaitlyn in detail.

Then Margaret chose to "read" using her puppet to move from left to right and top to

bottom of the page, throughout the entire book. The book was old, tattered and mostly

words. She silently moved the puppet's mouth as he went along, as though he was saying

the words silently. She was completely in her panda's world and she continued even

after Kaitlyn moved away.

Margaret showed through this dramatic play her perception of literacy and of

readers. She had experience watching proficient readers and has internalized their

actions. It is interesting to note that Margaret has given her panda the power of being a

proficient reader ("Better than me", she says), as though reading is something very

powerful. Margaret has given her puppet an identity as a highly competent literacy

practitioner, just as she identifies herself as a reader.

During writing time when the children were invited to draw their stories and write

some letters or words to go with it, Margaret chose to engage in other activities, until one

day she wandered over to the chalkboard and drew a picture of a butterfly then signed her

name. She said the drawing was a birthday present for Fatima. Margaret showed an

interest in writing and drawing, just using different media. After that, she was given

media options for writing time, such as whiteboards and markers. She began to write

more stories, and it was soon discovered that she had a great imagination and much to

say. Margaret recalled the details of her personal stories and she showed confidence

when sharing them with others, as is demonstrated by the following documentation:

Writing. Margaret is drawing apples on paper. "This is me and my mom picking apples and I didn't wanted to pick apples. I just wanted to eat one and I ate it. I went inside and my mom went outside to pick more apples".

She draws on another paper. "This is my job to water plants. It's a toy watering can. It's not big, it's small, so I can water the plants and it's not too heavy for me." Margaret is moving all the while she is telling her story, going through the motions of lifting and moving the can (Field notes, Hilary November 16, 2012).

Margaret recalled events and related the details of a personal story, expressing her feelings at the time. Her drawings were relatively simple, but they matched the story she was telling. There was much description in her telling of the story. Margaret was often in motion, providing actions to accompany her telling. She appears to learn well through activity, such as drama.

Writing Workshop: I ask Margaret if she would like to write a story with me today. She says, "yes" so I ask her what she would like to write her story on: paper, or white board? She chooses the white board and markers. I ask her what she would like to write her story about. She says, "Pig, but I don't know how to draw a pig." I ask if she would like my help drawing a pig. She says, "yes", and I tell her to begin with a circle. She follows my oral instructions without much difficulty until she has a pig. Then she quickly draws herself next to the pig, saying, "This is me and piggy holding hands. We're outside (she adds a sun above). Me and Piggy are painting. Piggy was trying to paint me as a picture." (She adds a letter *P* above). "There. *P* for Peg and Piggy," she says (Field notes, Hilary November 20, 2012).

Margaret made decisions about writing materials and story topic. She asked for help as needed. She followed oral suggestions for drawing the pig. She added a word and made a connection between her name (she often went by the name Peg) and "Piggy". Her story evolved and was imaginative. She added details, such as the paintbrush and sun.

Figure 10. Margaret's *Piggy* story.

Margaret had an understanding of letters and sounds and she had a sense of story. Margaret knew cat begins with C and pig began with P, as did her nickname, Peg.

Margaret demonstrated a keen interest in cats and pigs in her writing and oral expression. The following excerpt from the documentation reveals the depth of her interest.

> Explorations: Desirae is drawing roads on chart paper. Then she starts adding vehicles from a basket. She calls to Margaret. "Margaret, you can come help me. You can race cars with me."
>
> Margaret picks out cars, "I have a baby car. Here's another."
>
> Desirae draws a box next to the road. "I'm going to make a zoo. Renee, look! We're making an animal place—a zoo!"
>
> Margaret places animals from the basket around the roads drawn on the chart paper, saying their names and placing them in groups that are the same. Margaret asks, "Do we need a pig in a zoo?"

Desirae says, "Yes."

Margaret keeps adding animals and

talking about the animals.

Desirae draws pens for all the animals:

giraffes, lions, elephants, kangaroos,

etc. She (Desirae) asks me if deer go in

Figure 11. The zoo.

a zoo. I say, sure, so she adds the deer. Margaret says she thinks it's a moose.

Margaret says, "a tiger. They have to be with lions." She places the tiger in the

lion pen. "I know foxes. They're wild dogs and I know jaguars. They're wild

cats and they're dangerous." I notice that the figures of domestic cats and dogs

are not included in the zoo (Transcribed video, Margaret and Desirae, November

16, 2012).

Margaret showed critical thinking during this exploration. She made decisions about

which animals should be included in the zoo, and asked other people when she was not

sure. She based her choices on her own prior knowledge regarding wild animals,

demonstrating she knew, for example, that one of the cats was a jaguar that "they're wild

cats and they're dangerous". She "classified" the animals, putting the wild cats together,

for example.

This documentation showed Margaret had vast knowledge of and interest in

animals and she could sort and classify them. She inquired about them, she knew about

vets and species of animals. She liked to arrange animals according to the type of

animals they were. Margaret developed an identity as the "animal expert" in the

classroom and it was through this expertise that she became an active co-constructor of meaning within the classroom.

Margaret also liked to use dramatic play to portray animals, such as her panda character. She gave these characters life by creating personalities and life stories for them, and was eager to share them with other people. The day Margaret joined a group of children to engage in dramatic play with their puppets seemed to be a turning point for her, as she began to take a greater interest in class activities after that point.

At the beginning of the morning, three girls took their puppets and began to play with them. Margaret generally goes on the computer at this time, but chose to watch the girls as they turned a bookshelf into a puppet theatre, crouching down and animating their puppets with their hands. She went to get her own panda puppet and asked to join in. Desirae included her in the play:

Margaret is smiling and laughing along with the other girls who are pretending their puppets are sinking. She sinks her panda puppet with them then pops up, "I'm okay. I'm a panda, panda, panda. I'm a panda. Let's have a party!" The other children cheer with their puppets. Margaret bounces her panda puppet up

Figure 12. Margaret's panda puppet.

and down, and uses a squeaky puppet voice (Field notes, Hilary December 5, 2012).

This time of day Margaret habitually played on the computer with headphones, in effect isolating herself from others. This was probably the first occasion when Margaret joined in with other children and followed their play. When she did play, she often played on her own or waited to be invited by others to join them. She was genuinely having fun with these girls and she even suggested how the story might proceed (*Let's have a party!*); a suggestion that was favourable to the other children.

Margaret's dramatic play with toy animals and puppets as well as her confidence-building sharing of books and her own stories helped to bring her socially into the classroom.

Desirae. Desirae was a child of First Nations heritage who lived with her parents and siblings. She had a strong capacity for making connections. She connected stories with her own life, the world and with other texts. She connected words with other words she knew and she connected literacy at home with literacy at school. Desirae's capacity for making connections became evident early on in the documentation. In this first example she made a connection with people in her life:

> Desirae chose books for her book bag; *Oops* by David Shannon and *Swim,Swim*
> by Lerch. She commented on the cover of the David Shannon book saying "my
> baby brother looks like that" (Field notes, Hilary November 15, 2012).

Desirae made a connection to another text in this second example:

> Reading aloud a Mo Willems *Pigeon* book, Desirae comments on the story "that's
> like the other Pigeon book" (Field notes, Hilary November 16, 2012).

She also made connections among events in the wider world:

Sharing weekend events: When Renee shares that she went on a walk for breast cancer Desirae says "Oh, that's like Terry Fox" (Field notes, Hilary November 19, 2012).

Desirae connected home and school literacy when she used strategies she had learned at school in her own writing at home:

Desirae brings in four pages of paper and says, "On Thanksgiving my grandpa and me were writing words." Renee asks if her grandpa told her the letters and she wrote the words or did she know these words. Desirae replies, "No, I stretched out the words". Renee says, "So you're using your school strategies at home." Two of the pages have words and small drawings to illustrate the words, such as, *pig, apple, cat*. The words are circled, as the words the children circled on the morning message. The other two pages have numbers in sequence 1-100 (Field notes, Hilary November 21, 2012).

As already noted, Desirae was often trying to make sense of things by connecting them with her own experiences and her understanding of the world. She gave emotional responses to stories, laughing or showing her displeasure. She demonstrated a desire for understanding as she questioned what words meant and how they should be spelled. She thought about meaning and what sounded right as she read, then she self-corrected if the text did not make sense to her.

Desirae displayed an active imagination in her play and in her story writing. She also chose to dramatise stories and she acted out with puppets. Her stories contained a sequence of events and much descriptive language.

Figure 12. Writing
Workshop: As Desirae
draws, she tells me her
story: "I'm playing
games in the kitchen. I
played Dance Off. You

Figure 13. Desirae's *Dance Off* story.

sing in a microphone." She

writes with minimal support: *IM Playing gamz in z kn. Dans of*

(Field notes, Hilary November 12, 2012).

Desirae wrote about playing a popular game, showing an interest in music and dance.

She used invented spelling with several letters per word. She knew how to spell *play*,

and added the *-ing* ending. As with Jim, Desirae's stories evolved at times. She chose

three-part paper to help her write the following story:

Desirae chooses the three-part paper.
She has drawn in the first two frames.
She tells me what is in the first frame,
"I watched the football game". In the
second frame she has written, "Then I
went outside. Here's our big hill that
my dad made, and me and my sisters
made a Mom, dad and baby
snowmen." She then tells me that she

Figure 14. Desirae's three-part story.

went to bed at the end of the day [the third frame]. (Field notes, Hilary November

20, 2012).

Desirae drew a sequence of events from her life. She used descriptive words when telling

me about them. Later she wrote words for the story: Me AN MI DAD AN MOM AN I

WT TO GO PALA. Her spoken words of her story told much more than did her eventual

writing.

Desirae understood what "character" meant and she thought critically about the

characters in stories, demonstrating empathy for them and making descriptive statements

about them:

Reading Workshop: Renee reads aloud *The Mitten*. Desirae asks, "What's a

Baba?" As Renee reads, Desirae makes predictions, "The bear's coming next.

Then the mouse. The little tiny mouse." She appears to know the story. When in

the story the Baba notices the mitten is badly stretched, Desirae surmises, "She

probably thinks I don't want to knit mittens no more" (Field notes, Hilary,

December 4, 2012).

Desirae asked questions when she wanted clarification (*What's a Baba?*). She wanted to

understand. She also made predictions during the story. Desirae imagined how the

characters in the story felt and what they were thinking. Desirae showed herself to be

capable of empathizing with a character in a story; that she could put herself in the

character's shoes (*She probably thinks I don't want to knit mittens no more*).

Desirae chose a variety of book genres, including fiction, non-fiction and song

books. In the following example, she was reading song books:

Reading Workshop: Desirae is reading by herself. She is not feeling well, but I spend time with her and she goes through *Itsy, Bitsy Spider* singing the whole song from memory, but turning the pages where appropriate so her words matched the pictures. She moves on to *You Are My Sunshine*, again singing along to the last page. She asks me to read the last page aloud, confirming for her that she had got it right (Field notes, Hilary, November 21, 2012).

Desirae's love of music gave her the impetus to read songbooks, even when she was not feeling well. On another occasion, she read with Jim:

Partner Reading with Jim. Desirae reads her story first: *Caillou: It's Me!* Both Jim and Desirae are familiar with the story. Desirae begins by paraphrasing the story using the pictures, then she corrects herself as she looks at the words for confirmation. Jim looks at the pictures and gains meaning that way, as well as by listening to Desirae's story. He supplies some of the vocabulary, such as, "nose, mouth" at appropriate times in Desirae's oral reading

When finished *Caillou*, Jim and Desirae look at Jim's Piggy and Elephant book by Mo Willems *Can I Play Too?* They know this one too, using their own vernacular speech to paraphrase the dialogue in the text. Jim and Desirae take turns pointing to the words as they paraphrase, moving their fingers left to right along the print as they speak (Field notes, Hilary, November 30, 2012).

This documentation showed Desirae engaging in oral reading, paraphrasing a story, reading the pictures, self-correcting, checking words to see if she was on the right track, supporting Jim with his reading, and accepting the vocabulary he supplied.

Documentation of Desirae's literacy activities revealed that she read many words, knew rhyming words and she was aware of strategies for figuring out words, such as looking at the illustrations in a story, thinking what made sense in the sentence, and stretching out the letters in the words. Desirae often read words from the morning message to the class, including challenging words like "awesome".

Desirae shared much about her home literacy and interests. She engaged in imaginative play at home, for example, she built a "haunted tent" and she pretended to sing on a New York stage. Desirae mentioned singing popular music and dance as interests. Desirae wrote a story with her parents and made a list of words (using invented spelling) with illustrations and numbers. When in school, Desirae often wrote for a purpose as she chose to write cards and letters for friends. She wrote using invented spelling and she referred to environmental print. Desirae often took the lead in dramatic play. She organized games in class and took on the leading role, for example she was usually the teacher when the children played "school". She invited others to be part of her play, generally being inclusive and showing empathy for her classmates. Desirae came up with problems and solutions in the storylines that were enacted and she made interesting suggestions for play scenarios, such as "dancing in space".

Desirae was a child who had a strong identity of herself as a learner and teacher of others. She encouraged and supported the children around her by including them in group play and offering her help with reading and writing. She also questioned and accepted the help of others. Desirae was an active co-constructor of meaning within our classroom.

Efren. Efren was often quiet during whole group lessons, and would usually "pass" or quietly say one or two words when it was his turn to share or give a response. When playing with a friend during Explorations time, Efren was generally much more talkative. He also interacted with his reading or writing partner if he was with someone he usually played with. Efren and his parents spoke Filipino at home.

The following documentation was of Efren's writing at a table with Jim:

Writing: Efren and Jim are at a table together. Jim is drawing. "I'm at McDonald's," he says. He draws a sign outside of the building. Efren says the sign needs an M on it. So Jim

Figure 15. Efren's *Jelly* story.

makes the M. I ask what colour it is. Efren says "yellow". Efren is drawing people then puts circles around each one. "We're in jelly balls," he says. I ask who the people are in his drawing. He says, "Me, my baby and my dad." "What are you doing in the jelly balls?" I ask. Efren says, "Eating". Jim says, "Oh, you're eating your way out." Efren draws more, "Look! I made a grenade. It's gonna blow the jelly!" He labels himself and his dad, and asks for help with "baby". I say *baby* slowly. He writes *BAB* (Field notes, Hilary, November 9, 2012).

Efren has an interesting imagination, which came out in his writing. His story had a problem (*We're in jelly balls*) and a solution (*I made a grenade. It's gonna blow the*

jelly) and it reminded me of video game plots. I wondered if he played video games at home. He had an action sequence in his story which was not apparent in his drawing. He was familiar with logos, as in the McDonald's logo, and gave a suggestion to his friend. He also knew letters, the words "Dad" and "Efren", and was beginning to use invented spelling.

During exploration time, Efren often played with Lego or wooden blocks. Renee noticed that when the children were playing with blocks, they tended to spend their time building, often as individualized, parallel play, but there was seldom much dramatic play. We discussed how the introduction of toy cars might inspire more drama in their play with blocks. Renee introduced a set of cars. Immediately Efren's play became animated and involved much action. The following documentation captures one of these times:

Figure 16. The blocks structure.

> Explorations: Efren and Brandon are at blocks. They are making a tunnel, then ramps for their cars. Brandon takes the lead and Efren follows, putting blocks where he is told to do so. Efren says they need gas. Efren goes to the animal basket to look for something while Brandon keeps building. Efren and Brandon finish their structure. Brandon says, "all cars can go through this. Efren asks, "Where's the gasser guy?" (the figure he found in the animal basket). Brandon hands it to him. Efren asks, "Where's the bumblebee car?" I ask what it looks like. Efren

says, "yellow and black". I notice a yellow car with black stripes. Efren says,

"That's it! I'm outta gas." He gasses his car up at the gasser guy. "I'm gonna

sleep now. It's bedtime."

(Field notes,Hilary, November 13, 2012).

During his time playing with Brandon with wood blocks and cars, Efren was happy to let

his friend take the lead in the building of the structure. Brandon did seem to have

experience and confidence in this area. Efren, however, was the one who suggested the

storyline for the play, introducing a problem and solution as well as bringing the story to

a close. Efren showed an imagination for creating stories and an understanding of what

makes a story interesting and fun.

Efren's creativity appeared to blossom during these play times. When he created

a dragon puppet during Explorations time, he chose uniquely interesting colours and he

redesigned the puppet by adding wings when the story he created had the puppet flying.

He dramatised unusual and entertaining story lines with it.

Efren knew logos, such as the Lego City sign on toys. He read words on

the morning message that were meaningful to him, such as *skating* and *Explorations*.

Some words he knew from home, such as SONIC and he could also spell them from

memory. This is evidenced in the following example of Efren's diary writing:

Large group sharing of news (children pass a ball around the meeting circle to

take a turn to share their news from the weekend):

Efren says: "I played Sonic."

Writing in diaries: Efren sounded out "played" with some support from me. He

put down letters as I said the word slowly, "PLAD", then he wrote the word

"Sonic" entirely from memory, using conventional spelling (Field notes, Hilary, December 10, 2012).
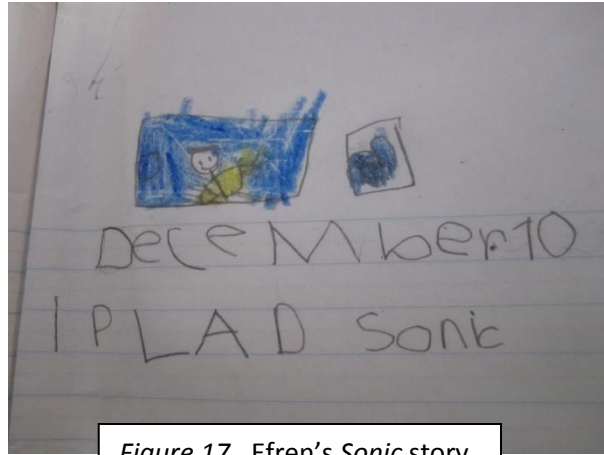
Figure 17. Efren's *Sonic* story.

This was an example of Efren bringing his home literacy experiences into the classroom. When he shared that he played Sonic, a video game, it seemed to confirm that the earlier story about the jelly balls and the grenade might have been inspired by a video game.

When listening to a story or reading a story with a partner Efren responded to text and he showed much appreciation for humour. In the beginning, Efren displayed little interest in reading by himself, as he would flip quickly through books then look around at others as they read.

Efren had definite preferences for certain things. He almost always played with blocks and Lego at Explorations. Renee, recognising his and other children's interest in building, brought out some books from the Lego series. These books sparked an interest in independent reading for Efren, as was evidenced by this example:

Reading: Efren reads to self. I ask if I can join him. He chooses to read *All Aboard!;* a book about trains. We talk about the pictures then Efren points to the words *Lego City* on the train and reads them. He points to the green building saying, "I like that". I ask if he likes buildings. He says, "Yes. I like that one, too." Efren points to a blue building. Then he points to the picture on another

page and asks, "What are those, those lines?" I tell him they are the rails the train rides on. They are part of the railway tracks. "I went on a train." He tells me. I ask where the train was, "Was it here or far away?" He says, "Far away. In the Philippines." I ask what he saw on the train ride. He says, "Lots of chairs." I ask if he saw buildings from the train. He says, "Yes. Lots of buildings." On another page there is a forklift unloading the train. "I have one of those at home," he says (Transcribed video recording, Efren, December 12, 2012).

This brief conversation about a picture book told me much about Efren. He had been on a train, he had been to the Philippines, he liked buildings, he wanted to learn the English names of things, he owned a toy forklift, he read print which was familiar in his environment, such as *Lego City*. Efren was probably the first child I came across who pointed to buildings in the background of a picture and said he liked them. But that made perfect sense because one of Efren's favourite things to do during Explorations was to build with blocks.

Efren related the story to his own life and past experiences. Efren also made predictions and revised them with new information from the story. He recalled and retold stories, looked critically at the pictures and asked what things were called. Efren paraphrased stories when he read and he acted out stories with cars. Efren was crafting a storyteller identity as he was known as one who knew characters in popular culture and who could draw and enact stories with them.

Patterns in the Documentation

The pedagogical documentation of the literacy practices of each child also gave a picture of the "individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their coming

into the world as unique, singular beings" (Biesta p. 27). Each child took up literacy in her or his own unique way. They came with their home literacies and their own experience with multi-literacies. They had their own interests and ideas. Renee and I came to know the children deeply and in a relatively short space of time through a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation, which made their learning visible and shareable. Renee and I regularly reflected upon this documentation and discussed how we could support the children further in their learning.

As Renee and I looked at the individual children's documentation, we also noticed that there were patterns between and among the children within the classroom, that children sometimes had common interests and ways of practicing literacy that led to co-construction of meaning within the classroom. As we reflected upon these patterns in literacy practices and interests, Renee and I noted ways in which we could support groups of children within the classroom by introducing new learning materials or strategies, and making changes to the context in which learning took place. The following are three areas where Renee and I noticed patterns among the children: voices, play and connections.

Voices. Listening involves:

Being open to differences, recognising the value of the other's point of view and interpretation ... It requires a deep awareness and at the same time a suspension of our judgements and above all our prejudices, it requires openness to change (Rinaldi, 2006, p.65).

By practicing a pedagogy of listening, Renee and I became attuned to the children's voices, valuing and giving meaning to what they revealed to us. We became

conscious of keeping our adult voices to a minimum so that the children's literacy practices, thoughts, and ideas were foremost in the documentation. As Biesta suggests, as educators we made an effort to be open and respectful of children's voices (p. 36).

Jim's voice needed no encouragement to be heard. Jim expressed his thoughts aloud whether someone was listening or not as he wrote, played and just went about his day. Jim's voice was strong in the classroom, adding a cheerful, enthusiastic sound to our community:

> Jim chooses the three-part paper. He tells me about the first frame, "This is a bowl of soup. I did it last night". He points to the second frame, "Here is the morning. Here is my van and here is us—me, my mom, my brother, and my sister. We helped my dad getting money. Here's my little baby brother. I'm going to draw the arms close 'cause we were holding hands. So we don't get lost." He starts to draw in the third frame. "And I played my iPod. How do you draw an iPod?" Desirae says, "I know how". She helps him. Jim says, "I don't listen to music on my iPod. I just play games". Jim decides to write words for his drawings. He often refers to the names of the children in the class when thinking of the letters he wants to put down, for example when he is spelling "market" he puts MRKT, saying "M-that's in Mom, R-Ronnie, K-Kaitlyn. Oh, I know T." (Field notes, Hilary November 20, 2012).

Margaret used her voice within the classroom to express her own thoughts and feelings about things, but generally not in a way that engaged other children in what she was doing, until this event:

Margaret brought a "Toys R Us" catalogue to school today (the catalogue

contains colourful pictures of toys with accompanying prices for purchase from

the Toys R Us store). She shows it to Jim saying "you can pick out what you

want. I'm getting a pen to circle it". She goes to the art table to retrieve a thick

marker. She circles Jim's choice with a green marker then announces to the class

"I have Toys R Us mail. Who wants a toy?" (Field notes, Hilary November 13,

2012).

Desirae's voice often came out during large group meetings in which stories were

shared and discussed:

Reading Workshop: Renee reads aloud *The Mitten.* Desirae asks, "What's a

Baba?" As Renee reads, Desirae makes predictions, "The bear's coming next.

Then the mouse. The little tiny mouse." She appears to know the story. When in

the story the Baba notices the mitten is badly stretched, Desirae surmises, "She

probably thinks I don't want to knit mittens no more" (Field notes, Hilary,

December 4, 2012).

Desirae's words add to our collective understanding of the story when she makes

predictions and shares her ideas about what the Baba is probably thinking.

As previously stated, several of the children in this group were generally quiet in

class. Of the 17 children, at least 8 were quiet most of the time, but particularly when the

whole class met together on the meeting carpet. This happened several times during the

day, as there would be group sharing times, mini-lessons or large group activities (such as

shared reading of a story). At these times, children would be invited to help read the

morning message, share, respond, make predictions, give insights, ask questions, and so

on. This was a time when the children's literacy practices could be documented.

However, many voices were missing from the documentation. The postmodern child, as

Dahlberg, Moss and Pense (2007) are quoted in Chapter 1, requires an "extraordinary"

capacity for "learning, self-reflection, communication and open and questioning

relationships" (p. 56). In other words, the children need to find their voices and use them

in a postmodern world. Renee and I discussed how we could help to make these other

voices visible in the documentation.

First of all, we looked through our documentation for other ways in which the

voices of the children had been
coming through. We noticed
that the children's drawings told
us something of them as artists.
Victoria, for example, drew
several drawings of her family,
telling us that family was
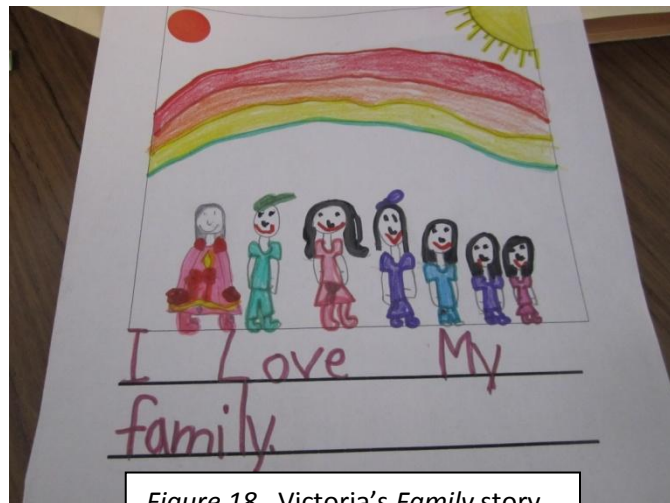
Figure 18. Victoria's *Family* story.

important to her. The smiles on her family members' faces portrayed a feeling of

happiness. She eventually wrote her first sentence, which was, *I love my family* (She

knew *I love my* and looked up *family* on the bulletin board). Later on when Victoria drew

herself asleep in bed, her face looked unhappy in the picture. She wrote, *aem shipe* (I'm

sleepy), which was her first sentence using invented spelling. Some of Victoria's voice

came through these two examples, and Renee and I thought perhaps writing in addition to

her wonderful drawings would bring out her voice in the classroom.

Renee and I also looked for ways we could provide a context for increased interaction within the classroom. Renee noted that during Explorations time there was quite a bit of parallel play occurring, where the children played alongside each other but did not engage with one another. First, Renee thought it could be because Explorations was scheduled for late afternoon, so she moved some of the Explorations times to the morning, just after the opening day meeting, when the children would have more energy for play. She immediately noticed some increase in interaction with the change of Explorations to the morning.

Renee also said she would like to see more dramatic play during that time. We noticed that at the blocks centre, the children were building things but not really interacting with each other to create storylines. Renee said that could be because there were no vehicles with which the children could act out stories. She brought in a set of cars and added them to the blocks centre. We also noticed that many of the quieter children were independently engaged in making crafts. I suggested that a puppet-making centre might give the children a tool for dramatic play, as well as pique their artistic interests. Renee agreed with this idea, and together we gathered materials for a sock-puppet making centre.

Finally, Renee and I listened closely to the children and documented their voices in a variety of contexts and groupings throughout the day. We documented the children's language and literacy learning when they first walked into the classroom and were bursting with news from home or chatting with friends. We documented their learning processes at the white board, circling morning message words to read during the morning meeting, or reading the question and signing their names on the Venn Circles survey (a

poster Renee set up each day on which children signed their names in the section of the

Venn Circles that best answered a question e.g., *Do you like skating or swimming?*). We

documented the children's learning during Explorations time when they were playing

"school" or making cards. And, of course, we documented the children's learning as they

read and wrote independently or with partners.

It was often during the informal times of the day when the children's voices came

through, for example, when Efren exclaimed, "I'm outta battery!", or Hannah said,

"We're making presents for Santa so we don't get on the naughty list", or Margaret

proclaimed, "I have Toys R Us mail! Who wants a toy?"

There are endless examples of the children's voices, as they recalled events in

their lives, retold stories, expressed interests and ideas, engaged in inquiry, gave

instructions, offered opinions, made connections, imparted knowledge, described

drawings, shared feelings, made predictions, thought aloud, evaluated, inferred,

corrected, invited, supported, read aloud, paraphrased, sang, created, voiced a character,

generated problems, and provided solutions. This is not a comprehensive list, but it

provides a sense of the scope and depth of the literacy learning processes we

documented.

Some highlights from the documentation of the children's voices were: Jim's

voicing of remarkable enthusiasm for learning, interest in animal books, personal stories

with a series of actions, and a capacity for making connections; Brooklyn expressing

interest in popular culture, engaging in singing, using imaginative and descriptive

language, and using her voice to lead and teach; Margaret lending her voice to toy or

puppet characters, expressing deep knowledge of and interest in animals, and openly

expressing her opinions; Desirae expressing curiosity, ideas and opinions, using playful language, making connections, singing, and telling personal stories; Efren voicing problems and solutions during play, describing humourous scenarios, identifying logos and environmental print, and expressing humour in response to stories; and Victoria singing, humming and joining in on choral readings or chanting, expressing feeling through artwork and drawing, and using playful language when interacting with peers. Drawing upon a pedagogy of listening, it readily became apparent how unique each individual child is in this small group.

I will conclude this section on voice with the following reflections: Children tended to be quiet during large group meetings, but interacted more with a partner with whom they felt comfortable (generally a child, not an adult), such as during partner sharing of stories. Children interacted more during Explorations time if their chosen activity leant itself to interaction, for example, when Victoria moved into Lego one day, her voice was heard, and when children began to play with puppets and cars, their voices became powerful, confident, and assertive. As children interacted more during Explorations, their interest in interaction within the class spilled over into other areas, such as when reading with adults and sharing in the large group. The more children's voices were heard, the more there was a co-construction of meaning within the classroom and the culture in the classroom evolved into one of interaction and sharing.

Play. "I believe that the school must represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighbourhood, or on the playground" (Dewey, 1929, p. 293).

Vygotsky (1978) wrote of play as a "leading activity" and asserted that play provided children with situations in which they could use or practice language and learn by engaging in role playing. He believed that play created its own zone of proximal development, as children were in a reciprocal relationship of learning with others. (pp. 84-86)

When looking at literacy learning in a Grade 1 classroom, the tendency, I believe, is to focus on reading and writing activities, and indeed when I first began this study, I thought I would be spending most of my time documenting children's learning during their reading and writing workshops. It was soon apparent that their most powerful literacy learning came out of their play experiences, for this was a time when children were engaging in literacy practices *for their own purposes.* They practiced their writing strategies as they wrote notes to parents and they developed their sense of story as they acted out dramatic play scenarios, and the list goes ever on. Looking at the documentation, Renee and I noticed pronounced patterns in the realm of the children's play. For the purpose of this paper, I have categorised these patterns as: Dramatic Play, Play at Home, Interests in Play and Purposeful Play.

Dramatic play.

Above all, I think, the continued observation of children at play demonstrates the importance of make-believe as the thinking tool children use. The reality is that most social, linguistic, logical interactions are usually better explained and understood in terms of these imaginary themes—Vivian Gussin Paley (cited in Dombrink-Green, 2001).

Renee noticed an increase in dramatic play within the classroom towards the end of the study. This is also borne out in the documentation, where it can be noted that children spent more time in dramatic play contexts during Explorations time after the introduction of cars to the Blocks Centre in November and with the creation of a puppet-making centre in early December. When we look at the following dramatic play with puppets, we cannot help but think that the culture in the classroom is changing as the children become more engaged with each other:

> Victoria laughs and says a loud, "Oww!" She moves her puppet away and says a very cat-like "Meow, Meow."
>
> Victoria moves back and has her puppet bite Desirae's rabbit, "Meow, meow!"
>
> Desirae says through her puppet, "No, you don't bite me!"
>
> Victoria says loudly, laughingly, "Yes!"
>
> Desirae, smiling, "No!"

This small bit of dramatic play between Victoria and Desirae added to the general co-construction of a literate culture within the classroom as more and more dramatic play took place which in turn led to storytelling between children as well as flourishing story writing.

From the documentation, we noted that dramatic play expanded beyond these centres at this time, to include the sand table and a corner table that became a restaurant area. There were some other dramatic play moments, as when Margaret dramatised the retelling of a story of watering plants and Desirae was dancing in "hot lava" in space. "School" was generally played at the white board, and this was the only dramatic play that the children engaged in from early on, although for brief amounts of time.

After these experiences with dramatic play, Renee reported that the quieter children in the class seemed to gain the confidence to speak up. This increase in the children's use of oral discourse was noted even after the winter break, when the children returned to school and continued to dramatise with puppets. Renee also noted that the children's own story writing became more interesting and descriptive. Finally, children who were socially on the fringes of the classroom community were interacting with the other children on an ongoing basis. Children like Margaret were now fully participating in the classroom.

Play and home.

Children may draw upon characters, themes, plots, and images from sports media, radio, video games, cartoons and TV shows; all cultural material that may be drawn from their experiences enjoying and enacting narratives (Dyson, p. 235).

The children's home literacies found their way to school. Video game-type storylines found their way into the children's writing. Popular music found its way into the children's dramatic play. Zombies and Super Mario became characters in the classroom. The children and adults shared and wrote about their home activities and interests, giving everyone a more complete understanding of each other. Brooklyn's play with "Lady Gaga" her puppet provides a glimpse of her home literacies:

Brooklyn adds more hair to her puppet then she plays with it. She talks through her puppet to me: "My name's Lady Gaga. I like Britney Spears, Maroon 5, Enrique Ingesias and Justin Bieber". She proceeds to sing *Romance* by Lady Gaga (Field notes, Hilary December 7, 2012).

Reciprocally, school learning also found its way home, as when Desirae wrote lists of words at home by "stretching out the sounds", just as she had learned in school. Items the children produced at school, such as cards, notes, and artwork they had created during Explorations time, found their way home. At the same time, drawings and writing found their way from home to school. Learning from classroom activities such as reading and writing mini-lessons often found its way into play. Play was a place to practice what they had been learning and to consolidate that learning so that it became part of their repertoire. When Jim chanted the ABCs and Margaret wrote the initials of all the children in the class on the whiteboard, they were practicing what they had been shown in class. Our classroom culture was becoming one of purposeful literacy users.

Interests in play. The documentation shows the children to have interests in building with blocks and Lego, playing cars, creating drawings, painting, engaging in puppetry, making crafts, writing notes, making cards, creating games, labeling envelopes, writing words, writing letters, playing with sand to create mountains, castles and cakes, creating zoos and jails for animals, playing computer games, and singing and dancing to popular music. The following example shows Efren and Brandon's interest in playing with blocks and cars:

> Explorations: Efren and Brandon are at blocks. They are making a tunnel, then ramps for their cars. Brandon takes the lead and Efren follows, putting blocks where he is told to do so. Efren says they need gas. Efren goes to the animal basket to look for something while Brandon keeps building. Efren and Brandon finish their structure. Brandon says, "all cars can go through this. Efren asks, "Where's the gasser guy?" (the figure he found in the animal basket). Brandon

hands it to him. Efren asks, "Where's the bumblebee car?" I ask what it looks

like. Efren says, "yellow and black". I notice a yellow car with black stripes.

Efren says, "That's it! I'm outta gas." He gasses his car up at the gasser guy.

"I'm gonna sleep now. It's bedtime."

(Field notes,Hilary, November 13, 2012).

The two boys are playing together, but are expressing interest in different areas, Brandon

is interested in building the structure with blocks, Efren is interested in acting out a story

with the cars. They bring themselves to their play and by doing so add to the culture in

the classroom.

The children also expressed their home interests at school. We found out that at

home, the children were playing with Barbies, playing video games, making tents,

building snowmen, going fishing, dancing to popular music, playing with stuffed

animals, playing with siblings, building puzzles, climbing trees, playing marbles, playing

hide-and-seek, making candy, watching football, and taking photographs. These home

interests found their way into the children's storytelling, play and writing at school.

Purposeful literacy through play. During their play, the children often engaged

in purposeful literacy activities outside of dramatic play (which has already been shown

to have a powerful purpose in the classroom.) Children made gifts and cards to give to

friends and family almost on a daily basis. Children wrote to Santa for various reasons.

Margaret's letter was to ask for a blue rocking horse. Brooklyn and Hannah labeled

envelopes creating artwork for Santa "so we don't get on the naughty list". Hannah

wrote down a classmate's phone number then asked for help writing her friend's name.

She made sure to take it home. Brooklyn wrote a heartfelt story, Jim made a book.

Drawings were labeled with the names of the people represented. Name cards were constantly being taken from their pockets to be copied onto envelopes or cards.

A large number of incidences of literacy learning occurred during the documentation of play. Many of them were very small moments, when children were writing three words down, as Jim did on the whiteboard one day. It may not seem to be much, but these were three new words and they joined with the words he had already written to provide a more complete picture of him as a literacy learner. Play and literacy are symbiotic in the early years classroom. One leads to the other and the results of this relationship are significant.

Connections.

"For researchers," writes Anne Haas Dyson (2009):

> this movement of material across practices and social worlds implies that child writing cannot be studied only by examining child texts or by studying child participation in one kind of writing genre. Rather, children's participation in any one practice is linked to their experiences with other communicative practices. (Dyson, p. 235)

Jim's sharing of a story with me illustrates the importance of these connections to meaning making for the child:

Reading: Jim takes a book from his book bag. "I'm picking the Frog book". He opens the book. "Oh look at the baby. He's chewing the lion's bum!" (laughs) "That's funny!" He turns some pages until he sees "Penguins!" He continues to a bat page showing bats hanging upsidedown. "Is he licking his face?" I say that it looks like it, but why is the bat upsidedown? Jim says "bats hang from their feet

from the ceiling. I saw them at the zoo. That's how I know it". He then looked

at an I Spy book, quickly locating the images and counting them (Field notes,

Hilary November 19, 2012).

The literacy lines between home and school are often muddied as popular culture

and home literacies find their way into dramatic play, sharing and writing. Efren's

literacy learning documentation provides an example of home and school literacies

coming together.

Efren made a dragon sock puppet. His puppet had

eyes, ears, scales, and mouth. He drew his puppet dragon

and nam ed him Toothless, after the dragon in the film

How to Train Your Dragon. Efren then drew and wrote a

story about his dragon flying to help people. The dragon

in his picture had wings. When he looked at his puppet, he
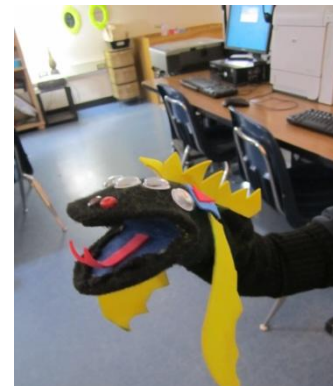
Figure 19. Efren's dragon.

realised his own dragon needed to have wings so that it could fly, too. Efren then added

wings to his dragon puppet and he immediately began to fly his dragon around the

classroom. If I were to diagram this relationship, it might look something like this:

Home Literacy	School Literacy	Home Literacy	School Literacy
Efren is familiar with a film, *How to Train Your Dragon* and its character Toothless.	Efren designs and makes a dragon puppet.	Efren uses the film character Toothless as reference for drawing and naming his dragon puppet. He draws his dragon flying.	Efren realises his dragon needs wings. He adds wings to his dragon puppet. He dramatises his puppet flying.

Figure 20. Efren's journey with literacy

There is an emerging symbiotic relationship between home and school literacy here. It is interesting to note that until Efren put wings on his dragon, his puppet lay quite idle. Wings gave his dragon life, and represented Efren's reconceptualisation of his knowledge of the film *How to Train Your Dragon*. It is possible too that he referred back to the film as he played with his puppet and acted out storylines. Efren also contributed to the co-construction of knowledge within the classroom, as Jim noticed Efren was adding wings and asked how to do it so that he could make his dragon fly, as well.

Brooklyn made similar connections with her puppet and popular culture, only her connections initially involved the popular singer Lady Gaga, and later a video game character named Princess Peach. Brooklyn made changes to her puppet by adding longer hair so that it would look more like Lady Gaga. Then she had her puppet perform concerts and sing popular songs, such as Lady Gaga's *Romance*.

When drawing and writing about her puppet, Brooklyn changed her puppet's name to Princess Peach from the Nintendo games. Her storyline involved Princess Peach being caught in Bowser's 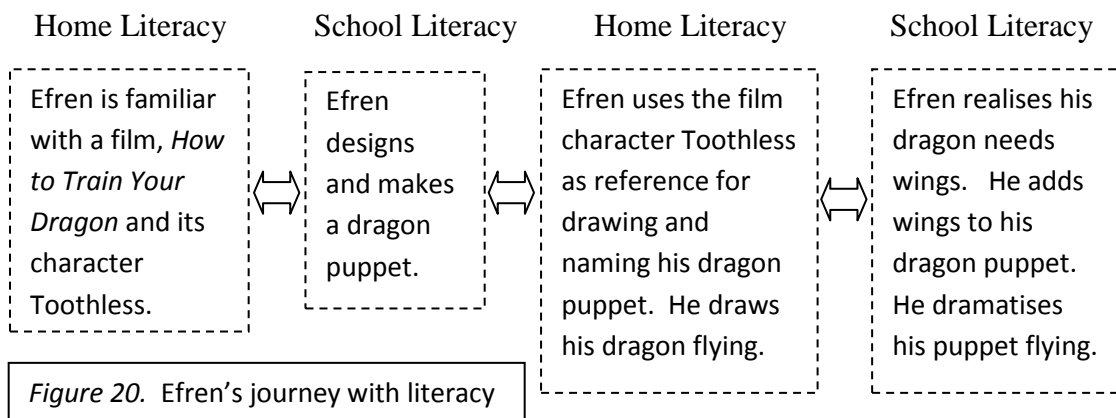cage. A classmate's p uppet was named Bowser, also a Nintendo character. It is possible that hearing the name Bowser gave Brooklyn the

Figure 21. Brooklyn's puppet.

idea to name her puppet Princess Peach. Brooklyn connected her home interest in and knowledge of popular music and video games with her dramatic play, drawing, and writing at school. She also connected with her classmate's choice of character, perhaps feeling that she could better join in with her classmate's play if her puppet was also a

Nintendo character. Together, the children created a culture among their puppets of popular culture icons

Margaret made connections to home when she wrote a story about her stuffed toy pig:

> Writing Workshop: I ask Margaret if she would like to write a story with me today. She says, "yes", so I ask her what she would like to write her story on: paper, or white board? She chooses the white board and markers. I ask her what she would like to write her story about. She says, "Pig, but I don't know how to draw a pig." I ask if she would like my help drawing a pig. She says, "yes", and I tell her to begin with a circle. She follows my oral instructions without much difficulty until she has a pig. Then she quickly draws herself next to the pig, saying, "This is me and piggy holding hands. We're outside (she adds a sun above). Me and Piggy are painting. Piggy was trying to paint me as a picture." (She adds a letter *P* above). "There. *P* for Peg and Piggy," she says (Field notes, Hilary November 14, 2012).

Margaret's toy animals from home found their way to school both literally and figuratively; literally, when her actual stuffed cat became the central figure in her dramatic play in the blocks centre, and figuratively, when her stuffed animal, "Piggy" (which was at home), became the central character in her sharing and writing. There are a number of further examples of home and school connections from the literacy learning documentation. Desirae said the baby in David Shannon's book *Oops* reminded her of her baby brother. Victoria strongly connected her family with her drawing and writing at

school, as she not only created stories about them, but she also, almost daily, crafted artwork and notes to give to her family when she went home.

These examples illustrate how home literacies and connections can become the powerful forces driving the children's authentic literacy experiences at school. It can be argued that children benefit immensely from the valuing by their teachers of these home literacies. Renee validated and invited the sharing of home interests and literacies when she modeled writing about her own home life, when she shared her own interests during writing mini-lessons, and when she encouraged the sharing of home activities by the children in the room. Renee co-constructed meaning with the children within her classroom and supported a classroom culture where home interests and literacies were shared and accepted.

The documentation also shows that children made valuable connections within the classroom between words, letters, symbols, and sounds. Jim, for example, connected the *i-m* in his name with the *i-m* in Fatima's name. He connected his writing of a word, *Thad*, in his story with the same word he had previously written in his diary. He connected the word *lunch* on the morning message with the word *Lunch* on the agenda and read it aloud to the class. When he saw the vertically listed letters B-E-T on the whiteboard, Jim noticed they made up a word. He connected letters he needed to write with the first names of people he knew (M—Mom, R—Ron, K—Kaitlyn). And, when he made a letter "A" out of straws, Jim connected his letter with the musical ABC game, playing the *A* song as he held up his letter.

These are all brief examples of very tiny connections, yet together they create an image of Jim as a capable child, one who is highly interested in making sense of his

world. He is an active participant in his literacy learning, as he engages in literacy

practices and makes connections throughout the day. One gets a sense that Jim is always

thinking and adding to his repertoire of understanding. His practice of making

connections was recognised by Renee when she told Jim that finding a word in the

classroom environment was a good strategy for reading and writing after he read the

word *lunch* on the morning message by looking at *Lunch* on the agenda.

Our literacy learning documentation shows that the children also made text-to-text

connections (*That's like the other Pigeon book –Desirae*), text-to-world connections

(*That's like Terry Fox –Desirae*) and text-to-self connections (*I have a Baba, too –*

Brooklyn). Children most often made connections to their own personal experiences.

Connections were made between literacy modalities.   Speaking, reading, writing,

and drawing were often naturally connected, as when Brooklyn read and copied a

classmate's name from her name card onto a drawing she had made for her. Reading and

drama were connected when Margaret dramatised her panda puppet "reading" a chapter

book. Drawing, writing, and drama came together when Margaret used actions to

dramatise her written story of a watering can. Music connected with reading when

Desirae sang aloud her songbooks. And, music connected with drama when Brooklyn's

puppet performed a concert.

Conclusions from the Documentation

Reading, writing, speaking, play, video, drama, numeracy, music, and more were

interwoven within the classroom, creating a tapestry of creativity and collaborative

thought among children and adults alike. It is through the documentation that these

connections became visible. As well, each child's individual literacy journey became

apparent through the organisation of the documentation into chronologies of each child's

learning experience. Through listening openly, recording, and reflecting on each child,

his or her unique voice came to be heard.

Chapter 4: Completing the Circle

In this study, our pedagogical documentation repeatedly revealed how the children learned from each other, from the environment around them, as well as from the adults in their world. It was this interplay—within this web of connections that the children were making—that children deepened their understandings. We documented how the children learned so much more than just discrete literacy skills. They also made meaning in a variety of ways, as when Efren connected his dragon story with his home literacy, popular culture, and dramatic play. They learned through purposeful play, as when Victoria wrote cards to her family. The children learned from the environment around them, as when Jim used the names of children to recall letters for spelling words. And there was no set "normative" skill sequence or established pace for these learning experiences. There were no predetermined levels to attain or specific skills to be mastered as a collective group of students. It became highly evident very soon in the documentation that each individual child came to literacy learning in his or her unique way.

Revisiting Postmodernist Theory

As stated in Chapter 1, postmodern pedagogies are open to children's thoughts and provide space in which children test out their theories. Renee and I viewed the children as capable learners who were in the process of literacy learning and we made a point of being consistent with postmodern views "open to the presence of many voices and views", made visible through the vehicle of pedagogical documentation (Pacini-Ketachabaw and Pense, 2005, p. 6). The child was indeed one who was "constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which he or she [participated]"

(Davies, cited in Pacini-Ketachabaw, Kummen, Thompson, 2010, p. 341). We documented children moving from being very quiet and very much working on their own, to their expressing themselves in multiple modes and in social relationships with others. We documented how children moved from individual play to group dramatizations of stories, and we witnessed a corollary growth in their agency and confidence as literacy users. As Rinaldi (2006) describes Reggio Emilia early years educators, Renee and I were co-constructors of meaning with the children in the classroom as we invited and welcomed their understanding and experiences—always seeing them as capable learners. We valued and built upon what each child brought to the classroom (Davidson, p. 252), for example we created a context for the children to uniquely appear and to engage with others when we provided them with materials and time for dramatizations and evolving stories. By responding to what the children were showing us through our documentation, Renee and I were acknowledging their "funds of knowledge" and trying to build upon these resources (Whitty, 2010, p. 280).

Adopting a postmodern perspective of education opened us up to the fullness of each child's learning experience and children's collaborative learning within the classroom. We began to question the artificial borders between home and school literacies and interests. And we tried to break down the barriers that had previously been established with respect to when and where literacy learning took place in the daily, classroom schedule. This, in turn, led to changes in what we felt we should be documenting, as we listened deeply to the children and became more and more aware of the many home-school connections they were making and the interests they were exhibiting.

Children had space to explore, reflect, question and communicate with others, and they fashioned their individual and social identities along the way. Children began to identify themselves as readers, writers, storytellers, and dramatists. They identified themselves according to their expertise and knowledge of areas of interest, such as in animals, popular singers, and video games. Children layered in new identities that became evident through their discourse and play. Brooklyn, for example, identified herself as a reader, writer, performer, and popular culture expert.

Revisiting Literacy Theory

Gee (2009a) and Lindfors (2008), among others, wrote about how children learn literacy. A key point they noted is that literacy is learned through authentically using language. A second significant point is children learn literacy by reading and writing for a purpose. In this study, children were engaged most authentically in the use of language during their play experiences in the classroom. This was when they were engaged in literacy practices, including reading and writing, for their own purposes. It makes sense, then, that creating a context for play in the classroom is highly beneficial to literacy learners.

Gee (2009a) and Lindfors (2008) also write that children learn literacy by engaging with authentic texts and by working within a literate environment that has meaning for them. Renee's classroom offered rich storybooks, *I Spy* books, song books, and non-fiction texts that the children were drawn to. She made sure she brought in books of interest to particular children, such as the Lego books that caught Efren's attention. Several times a day Renee read aloud the   stories that engaged the children. She spoke with the children about authors and illustrators during mini-lessons, and the

children often selected these familiar authors for their independent reading book boxes. The documentation helped us to appreciate that when the children were truly engaged in reading with an adult or partner that there was a high level of excitement about literacy learning and active reciprocal participation, along with a palpable joyfulness that pervaded the experiences.. The documentation of the children's interest in literature was displayed around the classroom in the form of comments or reflections about books which were transcribed and posted next to pictures of books. The children also created a classroom alphabet and posted their own selected and illustrated words under the letters. The classroom environment was in every sense meaningful to the children, and served as the children's "third teacher" as they referred to the books and words around them for reference and inspiration.

Finally, children learn literacy through social interaction. Street's (2009) ideological view of literacy education as "a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill" (p. 337) was something that Renee and I grew to embrace. We knew that oral language was an essential ingredient of literacy learning and as we documented the children's literacy practices we became aware of the need for social contexts in which children could practice oral language. Renee had already arranged her classroom into spaces where small groups could play and work together. She had embedded time in the school day for whole group activities, such as morning meeting and mini-lessons, and small group activities, such as partner reading and Explorations. When we noticed how quiet many of the children were, we worked to create further contexts for social interaction by introducing puppetry and cars to Explorations. As the social interaction

grew, so did the dramatic play, and from here the story writing began to flourish within the classroom. The children were learning literacy through social interaction.

Revisiting Pedagogical Theory

A pedagogy of listening, as described by Rinaldi (2006), which takes "the individual out of anonymity, that legitimates us, gives us visibility" (p. 65) served to open our eyes and ears to the children in this classroom, including the quiet ones (those who are often missed). Pedagogical documentation served to drive the learning process forward, for example in the blocks centre, where the learning proceeded from children engaging in parallel play to the introduction of cars which led to interactive, dramatic play. It was not just a research tool; pedagogical documentation became a powerful instructional and assessment tool as well.

I believe that when I first transcribed the notes and recordings gathered in this study, I had the same reaction that Vivian Paley (1986) had when she first genuinely listened to the children in her Kindergarten classroom many years ago (p. 123). I was "astonished" by the wealth of interests, understandings, and capabilities the children were showing me, and the depth and breadth of the literacy practices which took place within one small classroom. I was especially amazed at the literacy practices that took place during informal times of the day and during Explorations. These children were seemingly constantly practicing literacy. How could I as a teacher ever think that assessing discrete skills was enough to know about a child's literacy learning? This study has opened my eyes to a new way of thinking and refined my understanding of teaching and learning.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter of this thesis, I would like to revisit the research

questions which began this journey into exploring "new pedagogies" for teaching and

assessing literacy learning with Grade 1 children.

Children as Learners

What are children's literacy learning experiences as a result of a "pedagogy

of listening" and pedagogical documentation?

The documentation of the children's literacy learning processes reveals how

children each approach literacy learning in a unique way. Some children engage in

imaginative play, creating stories that present problems and offer solutions naturally and

fluidly. Others find their way into reading and writing through art and drawing. For

other children literacy learning encompasses a series of mini "aha moments" as they

make connections within their environment. Still others explore literacy through song or

dance. For all of the children there is an interweaving of all or most of these elements as

they engage in the process of literacy learning.

Learning cannot be contained within one context or one subject or one type of

literacy or one area of interest. Subjects, interests, literacies, and contexts interweave

within the classroom to create a complex tapestry of learning. Dramatic play, video

games, writing, and learning and living at home all came together for one child's learning

in given instances in the classroom.

These findings, which show literacy learning as being much more than reading

leveled books in a little room outside of the classroom, prompt me to think that there has

been a tendency to narrow the literacy learning in our local context and beyond

Manitoba. Questions arise about whether such remedial experiences can be purposeful or

meaningful from the children's perspective. Documentation as a resource for assessment

and pedagogy and as a methodology in this study illustrates how rich and diverse literacy

teaching, learning, and assessment can occur in a responsive and interactive classroom

that inspires inquiry and multiple opportunities for literacy use through children's play.

Documentation is also a record of children's thought processes as they enlarge their

understandings through a process of dialogue and continuous revision in their thinking.

Using Pedagogical Documentation for Assessment and Pedagogy

> **In what directions do the children's literacy learning experiences lead as a**
> **consequence of children's and teachers' engagement in a "pedagogy of**
> **listening" and pedagogical documentation?**

> For Reggio Emilia founder Loris Malaguzzi,

> a determining contribution to children's construction of knowledge is the
> involvement of the adult, not only because the adult legitimizes children's
> curiosity and knowledge, but also because the adult values and addresses
> children's investigations with supports and suggestions as well. (cited in Rankin,
> 2008, p. 38)

Renee and I were certainly looking at the documentation of children's literacy practices

as a tool which could inform us in our support of their learning. It provided a larger

picture of what was needed to support literacy learning in the classroom in general, such

as scheduling changes and creating a context for dramatic play. It provided us with a

picture of individual children and their interests, which led us to provide reading materials (Lego and princess books), writing materials (three part paper, envelopes for letters and cards) and play materials (cars, art supplies). The documentation also helped us see patterns in the learning so that we could encourage talk within the classroom (through puppets, partnering) and validate home literacies and connections.

In a more fine-grained way, the documentation also revealed the strategies of literacy learning which the children were using, such as making meaning from text and pictures, connecting words with other words, writing words with invented spelling or using some sort of decoding strategy to figure out a new word. Renee and I honoured the children's literacy practices by displaying, sharing, and discussing visual documentation of their learning processes in the classroom, engaging in shared reading and conversations about text, supporting their invented spelling or by discussing how we used literacy for sharing meanings in group meetings. Through these interactions, the children's learning processes were made visible to everyone, including the children themselves. Often this resulted in our knowing the children in new ways and in them viewing themselves in a new light—with new identities they were growing into.

There is of course much more in the documentation, but it is sufficient to say that a wider range of literacy learning was revealed through this practice of a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation than would be made apparent using simply observation and other assessment instruments that were less open to drawing upon children's fuller lives as learners and their uniqueness as human beings. So many very tiny events were recorded throughout the day, which joined together to create a much larger and far more complex picture of each child's literacy learning.

The documentation also provided traces of individual children's rich and diverse experiential histories in relation to their literacy learning journeys. We saw children change from being quiet to being highly interactive, from reading pictures to reading both pictures and words, from drawing a single picture story to recording a sequence of events, and from parallel play to collaborative dramatic play. Renee maintains that these journeys have continued as she has continued her practice of pedagogical documentation within the classroom beyond the completion of this study. Renee says our time together awakened her awareness of new ways of noticing and creating room for the children's multiple and diverse literacy practices.

Time

If this school had had a literacy support programme in which children were withdrawn from the classroom for daily reading assessments (using running records) and reading (using leveled books), as has been my experience in my school division, some of the children in this study would not have had the opportunity to reveal their unique and effective ways of taking up literacy, before being "identified" as in some way deficient and slotted into a remedial program intended to address their literacy learning shortcomings   In being pulled out of the classroom these children would have missed out on many of the rich Explorations, shared reading, and drawing and writing workshop times the children in this study experienced, and which revealed their multiple strengths and diverse identities as literacy learners. Indeed, these children were already coming to reading and writing in their own way and in their own time. Who knows what missing time away from their peers would have meant for them.

How I Now Look at Literacy Teaching and Learning

What does the teacher learn by providing a context in which the children connect their "reading of the world" with their "reading of the word" (Gee, 2009a) through this "pedagogy of listening" and pedagogical documentation process?

Carlina Rinaldi describes the role of teachers working with young children, as follows: "Teachers are the ones who construct and constitute the interweaving and connections, the web of relationships, in order to transform them in significant experiences of interactions and communications" (Rinaldi, 2008, p. 53). Pedagogical documentation reveals most clearly these interweaving connections, just as other assessments are designed to identify children's reading "errors".

I have changed in the way I view literacy education after this rich experience of listening and documenting children's literacy practices in a Grade 1 classroom. The following is a summary of some of my thoughts regarding the assessment and teaching of literacy, gleaned through the practice of a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation.

Through our documentation I have come to realise that small literacy events in the classroom, when taken together, can have great significance in a child's learning process. When these small events are made visible, and seen in relationship to one another, they reveal patterns of connections and contribute to the larger picture of a child's learning. These events need to be documented so that they are not forgotten. As a teacher, it is not possible to notice everything that happens, but when I do notice something small but

significant, I now know the value of paying close attention and documenting it in some way.

In the beginning of my teaching career, I knew that children's literacy practices which occurred during play were important, but I could not explain why this was so. Now I can see through the pedagogical documentation we created during this study how visible the connections are between children's play and literacy learning, and how authentic these literacy practices can be during play.

I have always known that purposeful literacy practices occur when the children are engaged in their own self- and socially-inspired pursuits, especially at Explorations time. I did not realise to what *extent* these practices occurred until I created the documentation for this study. I think back to what Biesta (2006) wrote about the importance of teachers creating space in which children can learn to express their voices (p. 139). Explorations time provides space in which authentic literacy practices flourish and children's voices are heard. It is of great benefit to both child and teacher to take time to document more of these literacy practices, and to protect the time devoted to Explorations.

Our documentation also revealed how the children's home literacies were a powerful impetus for further literacy learning. I have a much better sense now of how to honour the child's home literacies and connections within the classroom. There have been times when I did not recognise the connections children made between their own interests in the multi-literacies at home (such as video games, popular music and film) and school literacy. I feel I am now more in tune with this, as these are times when

children may be highly engaged in their learning, and it is in this "connected space" where in turn I can learn much about them.

I welcome the support of literacy support teachers in a new way, as co-documenters of children's learning within the classroom. I have engaged the support of literacy teachers to help with writing projects or literature circles within the classroom, but never to engage in pedagogical documentation. The rich discourse that occurred between Renee and me throughout this study was a powerful experience. We were both constantly learning as we reviewed the documentation and shared our findings. I would welcome such a professional relationship again.

Limitations as a Teaching Practice

A teacher who wants to engage in the practice of pedagogical documentation may encounter some limitations. Time to document children's learning throughout the day and then to study the documentation might mean that a teacher will need to make this a priority over other teaching and assessment practices. This could be difficult to do if the school where s/he teaches has already established, standardised literacy programs and assessments in place. Teachers might find it best to start off small with their documentation, looking at only one activity or event in the day as a focal point for their recording and reflecting.

Documentation does not generate tidy results expressed in a standardised, numerical format. This is not a form of large-scale summative assessment; there are no word scores or reading levels. The results of this assessment practice may not present data that meet school or school division goals if they are cast in assessment language, such as, "90% of the children will improve their reading by one grade level per year"

(which is not unusual to see in school plans). There is also no formula involved, no neat checklist or linear "recipe" to follow. The teacher chooses how she or he documents learning; the tools he or she uses, how s/he interprets the data, and how s/he organises the data are determined by the children s/he is with, the learning context and learning purposes, and his or her own experience.

This may require a major shift in thinking about power relationships within pedagogy, as a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation focus on reciprocal child-child and child-adult learning processes and situate the child in a more powerful position of dynamic reciprocity with her or his peers and teacher. For the teacher, practicing a pedagogy of listening requires a measure of risk-taking, openness, and a shift from focusing on children's deficits to focusing on children's capabilities and curiosity. Not every teacher would be comfortable seeing him or herself as listening to and learning from the children as they explore literacy learning in their own unique ways.

Since many school divisions are implementing programs that involve children leaving the classroom for decontextualised literacy instruction, teachers trying to adopt a more holistic and responsive approach to literacy instruction may feel like fish swimming upstream. They may feel isolated and unsupported within their own schools and find it difficult to proceed. It is important that as teachers we open up a dialogue about literacy learning, and tell our own stories as professional early years teachers, across grades and between schools.

Decisions need to be made about what to document since it is not possible to document everything that occurs within a classroom. These decisions may be difficult at first but become easier with practice. In our experience, sometimes it was simply a

matter of focusing the documentation on a child who was back in the classroom after a long absence. At other times, we documented a particular activity in which the whole class was engaged, such as children sharing their writing. We got to know when it was an appropriate time to turn on the video camera or take photographs.

Limitations of this Research

In this study, I was a visiting researcher in Renee's classroom for a limited amount of time, which means I could not explore the depths of pedagogical documentation in the way I would in my own classroom. It would add immensely to the body of research if a classroom teacher-researcher published his or her own pedagogical documentation with children as they engaged in literacy learning practices; as this is ideally how the methodology would be used.

This research does not necessarily use pedagogical documentation to its fullest extent. Renee and I did try to focus on the process of learning. However, much of what was recorded could be considered simply observation, as we were often focused on more conventional literacy practices we recognized, and we may not have been paying as much attention to the social co-construction of meaning in all its varied forms, happening within the classroom. If I were to do this within my own classroom, I would pay closer attention to how the children are co-constructing knowledge and co-constructing culture, along with constructing and co-constructing their own identities in such a diverse range of ways. I would look more closely at where their shifts in thinking occur and how they are reimagining their worlds. I would also be more reflective as I engaged in pedagogical documentation, not just reflecting on what the children are showing me, but also being more critically reflective of my own understanding of children and pedagogies.

Pedagogical Documentation as a Research Methodology

I believe pedagogical documentation is a viable research methodology. As in the example of Jim (Chapter 3) thinking aloud to tell his story of throwing apples out the window as the story unfolds, pedagogical documentation reveals the self-talk of children while they are in process, revealing their depth of thinking. When using that documentation to effect change in the classroom (as when Renee provided Jim with three-part paper), the documentation allows the researcher to grow with the research (Renee thought of a new way to support the literacy learners in her classroom), to evaluate while in process both the researcher's methodology (using video recorders) and pedagogy, and to maintain that reciprocal relationship of learning with and from the children.

There is a place for this form of assessment and teaching in early years classrooms, and some provinces outside of Manitoba are beginning to recognize its merit. The Ministry of Education in British Columbia has recently completed the Early Learning Framework, a curriculum document which encompasses preschool as well as primary years of elementary school. The accompanying document *Understanding the Early Learning Framework: From Theory to Practice* (2013) invites educators to see themselves as researchers and to use "pedagogical narration", which includes taking field notes, photographs, video and audio recordings and collecting children's artifacts, to document "ordinary moments" in a child's school day. The teacher-researcher then reflects upon this documentation to plan ways to drive the children's learning forward. Should educators accept this invitation, the rich learning environment of their classrooms has the potential of becoming, as Malaguzzi said, "the place theory and practice touch

like the magic moment when night becomes day" (Malaguzzi, cited in Bredekamp, 2008, p. 49).

My own professional identity has been influenced by this study. I now see myself as a teacher-researcher, one who listens, documents, reflects, and responds to the children in my classroom. We enter into a reciprocal relationship of learning with each other, and we participate in an amazing journey together. My hope is that early years teacher-researchers will embrace this methodology of a pedagogy of listening and pedagogical documentation as they uncover the literacy learning processes of the children in their care.

Concluding Thoughts

This research provides an alternative literacy instruction and assessment tool and a philosophically inspired methodology that challenges current instructional, assessment, and research practices in common use in many Canadian early years classrooms and studies. The practice of listening, documenting, valuing the child's voice and the child's language and literacy resources could potentially result in children not only developing stronger and more flexible literacy practices, but also in children, teachers, and researchers developing a stronger sense of themselves as meaning makers. I believe it is a journey worth taking.

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Appendix A: Sample pedagogical documentation from "Brooklyn"

10/9: Read aloud: Renee reads, *Just Helping My Dad.* Desirae asks what a parking ticket means. Brooklyn says "if you get a parking ticket, you might not be parking safely".

She has an understanding of the world around her.

10/11: Morning Meeting: Brooklyn circles: "Hilary" and "morning".

Reads larger words.

Reading mini-lesson: Brooklyn demonstrates how to "read to self". The children notice that she is going slowly and looking at the pictures. Brooklyn asks what "comprehension" means again.

She is the teacher here. Brooklyn is an eager learner. She clarifies her understanding and is not afraid to ask.

Sharing a character in a book, Brooklyn says "Little Critter. He's going to catch a cow."

Describes character's actions.

10/15: Sharing with ball: "I stayed up late and watched The Walking Dead and played my video game, Mario. I went fishing with my uncle. We didn't get anything. We went to A&W. I had a burger and Dr. Pepper."

Brooklyn has a sense of story as well as a great memory for details and events.

Writing in diary: Brooklyn is writing her words first. *I wt to go at siyd,* "Oh, wait, I didn't go outside (erases), I watched T.V." She writes instead *I M en mi rom pld wf mi ksn love*. Then she draws herself and her cousin in her room.

Brooklyn is conscious of the importance of her words matching her ideas and her drawing. She was willing to erase all of her work so that this would occur. Her invented spelling has several letters per word.

10/16: Morning Message: Brooklyn circles "squirrel".

10/24: What I like to do in Grade 1: Brooklyn says "write stories".

Likes to engage in literacy.

Reading mini-lesson: prediction at beginning of story "it's going to melt" (the ice cream).

Prediction based on evidence from the story so far, and possibly her own knowledge of/experience with ice cream. Adjusts prediction with more information from the story

Prediction during story: "Piggy was lonely and elephant was thinking about sharing. Piggy's going to share it, too."

10/25: Morning Message: Brooklyn circles "you, day, before".

Retelling the story: Brooklyn says, "He thought he would buy another ice cream for Piggy".

Prediction

10/26: Morning Message: Brooklyn circles "on, the, super day".

Knows a variety of words now.

> **Appendix B: Research Ethics Approval Certificate and Consent Forms**

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | **Research Ethics and Compliance**
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-8880
Fax +204-269-7173

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

November 8, 2012

TO: **Hilary Carey**   (Advisor W. Serebrin)
           Principal Investigator

FROM: **Stan Straw, Chair**
           Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2012:099**
           "Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2).   **This approval is valid for one year only**.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

-      If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency   and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.

-      if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval;   otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

262 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

November 8, 2012

Good morning (Teacher),

I have received permission from the Seven Oaks School Division to conduct a qualitative study involving Grade 1 children in your classroom. I am writing to request your support for this research.

This research is a classroom-based study which I will begin in October or November 2012 titled: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education. The research would take place during the fall term, with completion occurring no later than December 14, 2012. This research is part of the requirements for a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy Education through the Faculty of Education: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department at the University of Manitoba. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Serebrin. You may contact my advisor at (204) 474-9024, e-mail: serebrn@cc.umanitoba.ca regarding this study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the process of listening and documenting children's literacy learning practices can be used as a valuable process for assessment and instruction as we provide a context in which children can express their understanding, their thinking and their power to use language and literacy in a multitude of ways. Working with you, the children's classroom teacher, I will invite the children to share their ideas, home languages, literacies and everyday culture during conversations which occur during their daily literacy activities. These conversations may occur during book talks, reading workshops, writing workshops, and explorations times. The children's conversations will be recorded and transcribed by me. Associated writing and artwork will be also collected where it is relevant to the data collection. You and I will interpret the data together and meet once a week for an hour after school to discuss and plan. This data will then inform you about the children's literacy learning practices and will be used to assist you in fostering literacy learning through providing authentic and intentional instruction for the children. This research will happen as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom.

This study is in an area which I have long been researching. It is inspired by the work of Vivian Paley (1981, 1986), Margaret Carr (2011) and Carlina Rinaldi (2006). All of the above hold a view of the child as competent and believe that we seek to ascertain and build upon children's strengths. The child actively participates in his/her learning, gaining understanding by interacting with people and materials within the environment. In addition, Carr, Paley and Rinaldi view the teacher as a listener and documenter of the child's learning practices. The

teacher is a co-constructor of meaning with the child and she is open to that which the child brings to the classroom, including home cultures, literacies and languages.

The children and their parents will be informed of the benefits and risks associated with the study. They will be offered the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Documentation of the children's conversations will be used only after informed and signed consent is provided by the participants. It is my hope that you would choose to document literacy learning process conversations with children for whom I have not received consent/assent. This way, the children who have not assented/consented to participate in the study will still benefit from the literacy learning process conversations that will be taking place in the classroom with me. I will be clear that there will be no negative consequences should any child or family decide not to give assent/consent to participate in the study. Data gathered will be kept confidential and participants' names, their schools and school division will remain anonymous. The research data will be stored in a secure file. All stored data will be deleted as of June 30, 2014. The results of this study will be made available to you and the parents of the children upon completion.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your support in this research.

Regards,

Hilary Carey

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

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Consent Form (Teacher)

Project title: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education

Principal Investigator: Hilary Carey, Graduate Student,
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba
Phone: (204) 256-1548, e-mail: careyh@cc.umanitoba.ca

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor,
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba
Phone: (204) 474-9024, e-mail: serebrn@cc.umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

You are invited to be a participant in a classroom-based research study which I would begin in October or November 2012 in your Grade 1 classroom titled: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education. This research is part of the requirements for a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy through the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the University of Manitoba. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Serebrin. You may contact my advisor (see contact information above) regarding this study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the process of listening and documenting children's literacy practices can be used as a tool for assessment and instruction as we provide a context in which children can express their understanding, their thinking and their power to use language in a multitude of ways. Working with you, the children's classroom teacher, I will invite the children to share their home literacies and everyday culture in the process of our conversations. These conversations may occur during book talks, reading workshops, writing workshops, or explorations. The children's conversations will be recorded and transcribed by me. Associated writing and artwork will be also collected to add to the data. You and I will interpret the data together. This data will then inform us about the children's literacy practices and will be used to assist us to foster literacy learning through providing authentic and intentional instructional experiences for the children.

This study is inspired by the work of Vivian Paley (1981, 1986), Margaret Carr (2011) and Carlina Rinaldi (2006). All of the above hold a view of the child who is competent and who has strengths. The child is understood to actively participate in his/her learning, gaining understanding by interacting with people and materials within the environment. In addition, Carr, Paley and Rinaldi view the teacher as a listener and documenter of the child's learning practices. The teacher is a co-constructor of meaning with the child and she is open to that which the child brings to the classroom, including the child's home cultures, literacies and languages.

For this study, I plan to spend two weeks during regular school hours as "settling in" time, getting to know the students and staff at the school, as well as familiarizing myself with the classroom and school environment. This will be a time when the children and adults become used to my presence in their classroom. I plan to spend at approximately three days a week in the classroom, depending on your schedule. I will also dialogue with you, the teacher, about how we will proceed with the study. These conversations would take place after the school day for approximately one hour per week.

After the initial two weeks you, the classroom teacher, and I will spend six weeks recording the students' dialogue around literacy experiences in the classroom, with an adult or in a small group, as they go about their regular day. I plan to audio record conversations with each of the students who have given their informed consent (and assent), as well as conversations you and I have as we reflect on the pedagogical documentation we have created. I will also collect samples of artwork and writing to add to the data. This research will occur as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom. You are invited to document literacy learning process conversations of children for whom we have not received assent/consent. This way, the children who have not assented/consented to participate in the study will still benefit from the literacy learning process conversations that will be taking place in the classroom. I will be clear that there will be no negative consequences should any child or family decide not to give assent/consent to participate in the study.

When the data is transcribed and interpreted, you, the classroom teacher, and I will provide materials and instructional scaffolding to the children for supporting their continuing literacy learning. I expect the total study to last 6 weeks, in addition to the 2-week "settling in" period. I intend to complete the final thesis growing out of this study by the end of January, 2013.

Please note that any audio recordings or photographs of you or the children will not appear in the final thesis nor be shared publicly. The documentation I collect will be used to help frame my theory of assessment and instruction and may be described in my thesis using pseudonyms (fake names), however the actual pieces of documentation, or audio recordings will not be shared. Any transcripts of conversations involving you or the children that I have transcribed will also be referred to using pseudonyms in my thesis and in any subsequent presentations or publications.   The identities of people to whom you or the children may refer in the recorded conversations will be masked in the thesis.

In the written report of this project, my thesis, I may refer to your conversations with students and your reflections or your comments on the pedagogical documentation. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the

purposes of the research. Therefore, I am requesting your permission to use the documentation I collect for my Master's Thesis.

In accordance with the University of Manitoba's standards for ethical research, the identities of all adults and students will be protected. Any examples of children's work, responses, or comments used in this study will be anonymous and pseudonyms will be used for the people and places in the report. I will transcribe interviews and, in the process, remove all personal identifiers. Anonymity will be maintained.

All information will be kept strictly confidential. Documents related to the interviews will be stored on my password-protected personal computer. Memory cards containing voice data, hand-written notes and work samples, if any, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home until June 2014. At this time all documentation will be destroyed. Only copies of the transcribed conversations using pseudonyms and copies of anonymous work samples, along with written descriptions of the documentation as part of my written thesis will exist after this date. Results of this study will be used in my Master's Thesis, and may also be used in subsequent research articles. At the conclusion of the research, only I will have access to any information which might include any identification of the child.

Your permission to use as data documentation of your reflections and comments must be given voluntarily. I want to assure you that no consequences will arise from giving or withholding your permission. Please return your consent form directly to me.

If you decide to withdraw your consent you are free to do so at any time by contacting me (see above contact information). If permission is not given, or is withdrawn, no documentation of your reflections or comments will be used or referred to in my thesis report. There are no known or anticipated risks to you associated with giving consent for your participation in this study.

I have informed the school principal, and designated divisional superintendent of my intended research, which they have granted me permission to undertake. Should you feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, you are free to contact the principal, _____ (204 --- -----), Dr. Wayne Serebrin (204-474-9024), or the human ethics secretariat at the University of Manitoba (204-474-7122) to have your concerns addressed.

This research may have the benefit of helping you understand the literacy practices of the children in your classroom using the process of pedagogical documentation. The children may then benefit from a literacy instruction that is designed to foster the children's further growth in literacy, by beginning with an image of the child as competent, by listening closely to the child, and by documenting the child's literacy learning practices. If you decide to give consent for your participation in this study and for me to use documentation pertaining to you for the purposes of my study, I will provide you with a summary of the study if you so desire. A copy of my completed thesis will be left at the school and the school secretary will be informed when it is available to be viewed by interested parties.

I will be available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have (see contact information above). You may also contact my supervisor, Wayne Serebrin (see contact

information above) or the human ethics secretariat at the University of Manitoba (204-474-7122) to verify the ethical approval for this study or to raise any concerns you might have. Your signature of consent indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and agree to participate. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent/assent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.   Please return one copy of the assigned consent form directly to me, and keep the other form for your records.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at (204)-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hilary Carey
Graduate Student
University of Manitoba

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box. If you do not agree, leave the box blank:

I have read or had read to me the details of this consent form. ☐

My questions have been addressed. ☐

I, _____ (print name), agree to participate in this study. ☐

I agree to allow my literacy conversations with Hilary to be audio-recorded and transcribed. ☐

I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further permission is required after the study has begun. ☐

I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations and writing) from this study published or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity or the identity of my school. ☐

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings?   Yes ☐   No ☐

How do you wish to receive the summary?   E-mail ☐   Surface mail ☐

Address/e-mail: _____

_____   _____   _____
Participant (print name)   Signature   Date

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

262 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

November 8, 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Hilary Carey. I am an experienced teacher. I am also a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. I am currently working towards a Master Degree.

I will be conducting research in your child's classroom in the coming months. The research is in relation to literacy learning practices, assessment, and instruction, particularly as they relate to the areas of reading and writing. This research will happen as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom. I will be part of the classroom, talking with children, listening to their ideas and their learning needs, assisting their teacher with assessment and instructional planning. I am looking forward to this being a rich and fruitful experience.

As this research focuses on children's ideas and interests regarding reading and writing, I need to keep records of conversations and use samples of the children's work. In order to do this research, I am requesting your permission to use this documentation. All documentation will be kept anonymous. There are no known risks to your child.

Please read through the attached consent form. If you agree to consent to this research, please explain it to your child, then you and your child sign (the child will print his or her name) the bottom. Your consent is completely voluntary and there will be no negative consequences to you or your child if you choose not to assent.

This research is intended to add to our understanding of how children learn literacy. It is intended to benefit educators of young children, and most importantly, the children they teach.

Sincerely,

Hilary Carey

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
262 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

Consent Form (Parent)

Project title: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education

Principal Investigator: Hilary Carey, Graduate Student,
                    Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba
                    Phone: (204) 256-1548, e-mail: careyh@cc.umanitoba.ca

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Wayne Serebrin, Associate Professor,
                 Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba
                 Phone: (204) 474-9024, e-mail: serebrn@cc.umanitoba.ca

      This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your child's participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully.

      Your child is invited to be a participant in a research study which I will begin in October or November 2012 in your child's classroom titled: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education. This research is part of the requirements for a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy through the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Manitoba. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Serebrin. You may contact my advisor (see contact information above) regarding this study.

      The purpose of this research study is to explore how listening to and documenting children's literacy practices can be used to support the teaching and learning of literacy. Working with the children's teacher, I will invite the children to talk about the kind of reading and writing they do at home and at school and what they think about reading and writing. These conversations may occur during book talks, reading workshops, writing workshops, or explorations times. The children's conversations will be recorded and transcribed by me. The children's writing and artwork will be also collected. The teacher and I will look at all of this documentation. We will use it to learn about the children's literacy practices and to help us plan subsequent lessons.

      This study is inspired by the work of Vivian Paley (1981, 1986), Margaret Carr (2011) and Carlina Rinaldi (2006). All of the above hold a view of the child who is capable and who has strengths. The child is understood to actively participate in his/her learning, gaining understanding by talking with people and using materials in his or her world. The teacher is a

listener and documenter of the child's activities. The teacher learns along with the child and values what the child brings to the classroom, including the child's home cultures and languages and literacy.

For this study, I plan to spend two weeks during regular school hours as "settling in" time, getting to know the students and staff at the school, as well as becoming familiar with the classroom and school environment. This will be a time when the children and teachers become used to me being in their classroom. I plan to spend about three days a week in the classroom, depending on the teacher's schedule. I will also talk with the teacher about how we will proceed with the study. These conversations would take place after the school day for approximately one hour per week.

After the first two weeks, the classroom teacher and I will record the students' talk around literacy experiences in the classroom, one-to-one with an adult or with a small group of children, as they go about their regular day. I plan to audio record conversations with each of the students who have given their informed consent. I will also collect artwork and writing samples. This research will happen as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom.

When the data are transcribed and studied, the classroom teacher and I will provide materials and support to the children for ongoing literacy instruction and learning. I expect this part of the study to take about 6 weeks. I intend to complete the final thesis of this study by the end of January, 2013.

Please note that any audio recordings or photographs of children will not appear in the final thesis nor be shared publicly. The documentation I collect will be used to help explain my theory of assessment and may be described in my thesis using pseudonyms (fake names), however, the actual samples of documentation, or audio recordings will not be shared. Any written copies of conversations including your child that I have transcribed will also be referred to using pseudonyms for the children, in my thesis and in any presentations or publications. The identities of people they may refer to in conversation will be masked in the thesis.

In the written report of this project, my thesis, I may refer to children's theories, comments, work samples or artifacts represented in specific pieces of documentation. The University of Manitoba requires that permission be sought for the use of any information for the purposes of the research. Therefore, I am requesting your permission and your child's permission to use the documentation I collect for my Master's Thesis.

In accordance with the University of Manitoba's standards for ethical research, the identities of all students will be protected. Any examples of students' work, responses, or comments used in this study will be anonymous and pseudonyms will be used for the people and places in the report. I will transcribe interviews and, in the process, remove all personal identifiers. Anonymity will be maintained.

All information will be kept strictly confidential. Documents related to the interviews will be stored on my password-protected personal computer. Memory cards containing voice data, hand-written notes and work samples, if any, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home until June 2014. At this time all documentation will be destroyed. Only copies of the transcribed conversations using pseudonyms and copies of anonymous work samples, along with written descriptions of the documentation as part of my written thesis will exist after this date. Results of this study will be used in my Master's Thesis, and may also be used in

subsequent research articles I write. At the conclusion of the research, only I will have access to any information which might include any identification of the child.

Your permission to use as data documentation related to your child must be given voluntarily. I want to assure you that no consequences will arise from giving or withholding your permission. Your child's teacher will document literacy conversations of children for whom we have not received consent. This way, the children who do not have their family's consent (and children's assent) to participate in this study will still benefit from the literacy conversations that will be taking place in the classroom.

If you decide to withdraw your consent or your child decides to withdraw his/her assent you are free to do so at any time by contacting me (see above contact information). If permission has not been given, or is withdrawn, no documentation regarding your child will be used or referred to in my thesis report. There are no known or anticipated risks to your child associated with giving consent for your child's participation in this study.

I have informed the school principal, and division superintendent of my intended research, which they have granted me permission to undertake. Should you feel that there are pressures or unanticipated consequences as a result of participating or not, you are free to contact the school principal, Verland Force (204-633-5641), Dr. Wayne Serebrin (204-474-9024), or the human ethics secretariat at the University of Manitoba (204-474-7122) to have your concerns addressed.

This research seeks to help a child's teacher understand the literacy needs of a child using a process called documentation. Drawing upon this documentation, a child may then benefit from a literacy instruction that is designed to better meet the child's individual literacy learning needs. Documentation begins with seeing all children as competent, with listening closely to the child, and by carefully documenting the child's literacy learning practices. If you decide to give consent/assent for your child to participate in this study and for me to use documentation and work from your child for the purposes of my study, I will send you a summary of the study if you so desire. A copy of my completed thesis will be left at the school and the school secretary will be informed when it is available to be viewed by people who are interested.

I will be available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have (see contact information above). You may also contact my supervisor, Wayne Serebrin (see contact information above) or the human ethics secretariat at the University of Manitoba (204-474-7122) to check on the ethical approval for this study or to raise any concerns you might have. Please discuss this letter with your child and decide whether he or she agrees to give assent. I have attached a simplified list of what this research involves to help you explain this process to your child. Your signature of consent and your child's assent as indicated by his/her printed name, show that you and your child understand the above conditions of participation in this study and agree to allow your child to participate. You and your child are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. Feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the study. Please return one copy of the consent/assent form in the attached envelope directly to the school secretary or to me, and keep the other form for your records.

The University of Manitoba may look at your child's research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at (204)-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hilary Carey
Graduate Student
University of Manitoba

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box.
If you do not agree, leave the box blank:

I have read or had read to me the details of this consent form. ☐

My questions have been addressed. ☐

I, _____ (print name), agree to my child's participation in this study. ☐

I agree to allow my child's classroom literacy conversations to be audio-recorded ☐
    and transcribed (typed).

I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further permission is ☐
    required after the study has begun.

I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations and work samples) from ☐
    this study published or presented in a manner that does not reveal
    my child's identity or the identity of his/her school.

Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings?   Yes ☐   No ☐

How do you wish to receive the summary?   E-mail ☐   Surface mail ☐

Address/e-mail: _____

_____   _____   _____
Parent of Participant (print name)   Signature   Date

Please talk about this with your child and if they assent, *have her/him sign the form by printing their name on the line*.

I have asked my child, _____ who has agreed to have Hilary Carey use voice recordings of my child's conversations about reading and writing learning processes and samples of his or her work in Hilary's Master's Thesis for the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Manitoba. My child understands Hilary's written thesis may include written conversations using pseudonyms, and anonymous copies of his/her work. My child understands that Hilary's thesis will not include photographs or video footage identifying him/her.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Student   Signature of Student (Print)   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Possible Script for Parents of Grade 1 Participants

➢ Hilary Carey is a teacher who is coming into your classroom to work with your teacher. She is doing a project called a study for the university.

➢ Hilary's study is about what children say and think about their learning about reading and writing and about the world. She thinks that children know a lot about stories and the world, and that they have many ideas to share. Hilary thinks that the more we share with each other, the more we learn. She wants to use your sharing of ideas to help you learn more about how you learn to read and write.

➢ Hilary will be spending time in your classroom listening and talking with all the children and your teacher, while you go about your day. She will sometimes write things down or use a recorder to record what people are saying. She will sometimes make copies of your writing or artwork. She will share what she learns with you, your classmates, and your teacher all through the study.

➢ Hilary will use the recordings and pieces of work to help other teachers understand about teaching children reading and writing. She will write a story called a thesis about this time in your classroom.

➢ In order to use some of your work and your voice recordings for this project, Hilary needs your permission. You can say yes or no, either is fine. You will not be "in trouble" if you say no. If you say yes but want to say no later, that is okay, too. Just tell Hilary and she will just not use any of your work or ideas for the study.

➢ If this sounds okay to you and you want to give Hilary permission to use your voice recordings and your work for her study, you have to sign the consent form by printing your name on the line on the form. I have to sign the form, too, and then we will hand it in to Hilary or to the school secretary.

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

262 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

November 8, 2012

Dear (Principal),

I have received permission from the superintendent to conduct a qualitative study involving Grade 1 children in your school. I am writing to request your support for this research.

This research is a classroom-based study which I will begin in October or November 2012 in a Grade 1 classroom titled: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education. The research would take place during the fall term, with completion occurring no later than December 14, 2012. This research is part of the requirements for a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy through the Faculty of Education: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department at the University of Manitoba. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Serebrin. You may contact my advisor at (204) 474-9024, e-mail: serebrn@cc.umanitoba.ca regarding this study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the process of listening and documenting children's literacy learning practices can be used as an valuable process for assessment and instruction. Working with the children's classroom teacher, I will invite the children to share their ideas, home literacies and culture during conversations which occur during their daily literacy activities. These activities may include book talks, reading workshops, writing workshops, and explorations times. The children's conversations will be recorded and transcribed by me. The classroom teacher and I will interpret the data together and meet once a week for an hour after school to discuss and plan. This data will inform the teacher about the children's literacy learning practices and will be used to assist the classroom teacher to foster literacy learning through providing authentic and intentional instruction for the children. This research will happen as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom.

This study is in an area which I have long been researching and is inspired by the work of Vivian Paley (1981, 1986), Margaret Carr (2011) and Carlina Rinaldi (2006). All of the above hold a view of the child as competent and believe that we seek to ascertain and build upon children's strengths. The child actively participates in his/her learning, gaining understanding by interacting with people and materials within the environment. In addition, Carr, Paley and Rinaldi view the teacher as a listener and documenter of the child's learning practices. The teacher is not one who sits in judgment of the child's deficits, but rather looks at the assets the child brings to the classroom, including the child's home cultures, languages, and literacies.

The teacher(s), children and parents of the children will be informed of the benefits and risks associated with the study. They will be offered the option to withdraw from the study at

any time. Documentation of the children's conversations will be used only after informed and signed consent is provided by the participants. Data gathered will be kept confidential and participants' names, their schools and school division will remain anonymous. The research data will be stored in a secure file. All stored data will be deleted as of June 30, 2014. The results of this study will be made available to you and the participating teachers and children upon completion.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your support in this research.

Regards,

Hilary Carey

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

262 Education Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9014
Fax (204) 474-7550

November 8, 2012

Good morning (Superintendent or Other Designated Official or Body),

I am writing to request permission to conduct a qualitative study involving a class of Grade 1 children in your school division. This research is a classroom-based study which I will begin in October or November 2012 titled: Pedagogical Documentation in Literacy Education. The research would take place during the fall term, with completion occurring no later than December 14, 2012. This research is part of the requirements for a Master of Education degree in Language and Literacy Education through the Faculty of Education: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department, at the University of Manitoba. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Serebrin. You may contact my advisor at (204) 474-9024, e-mail: serebrn@cc.umanitoba.ca regarding this study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the process of listening and documenting children's literacy learning practices can be used as a valuable process for assessment and instruction. Working with the children's classroom teacher, I will invite the children to share their ideas, home languages, literacies and everyday culture during conversations which occur during their daily literacy activities. These activities may include book talks, reading workshops, writing workshops, and explorations times. The children's conversations will be recorded and transcribed by me. The classroom teacher and I will interpret the data together and meet once a week for an hour after school to discuss and plan. This data will then inform the teacher about the children's literacy learning practices and will be used to assist the classroom teacher, to foster literacy learning through providing authentic and intentional instruction for the children. This research will happen as the children go about their day at school and will not take them away from their regular practices in the classroom.

This study is in an area which I have long been researching and is inspired by the work of Vivian Paley (1981, 1986), Margaret Carr (2011) and Carlina Rinaldi (2006). All of the above hold a view of the child as competent and believe that we seek to ascertain and build upon children's strengths. The child actively participates in his/her learning, gaining understanding by interacting with people and materials within the environment. In addition, Carr, Paley and Rinaldi view the teacher as a listener and documenter of the child's learning practices. The teacher is not one who sits in judgment of the child's deficits, but rather she looks at the assets the child brings to the classroom, including the child's home cultures, languages, and literacies.

The teacher(s), children and parents of the children will be informed of the benefits and risks associated with the study. They will be offered the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Documentation of the children's conversations will be used only after informed and signed consent is provided by the participants. Data gathered will be kept confidential and participants' names, their schools and school division will remain anonymous. The research data will be stored in a secure file. All stored data will be deleted as of June 30, 2014. The results of this study will be made available to you and the participating teachers and children upon completion.

Thank you for considering this research proposal. I look forward to your reply.

Regards,

Hilary Carey