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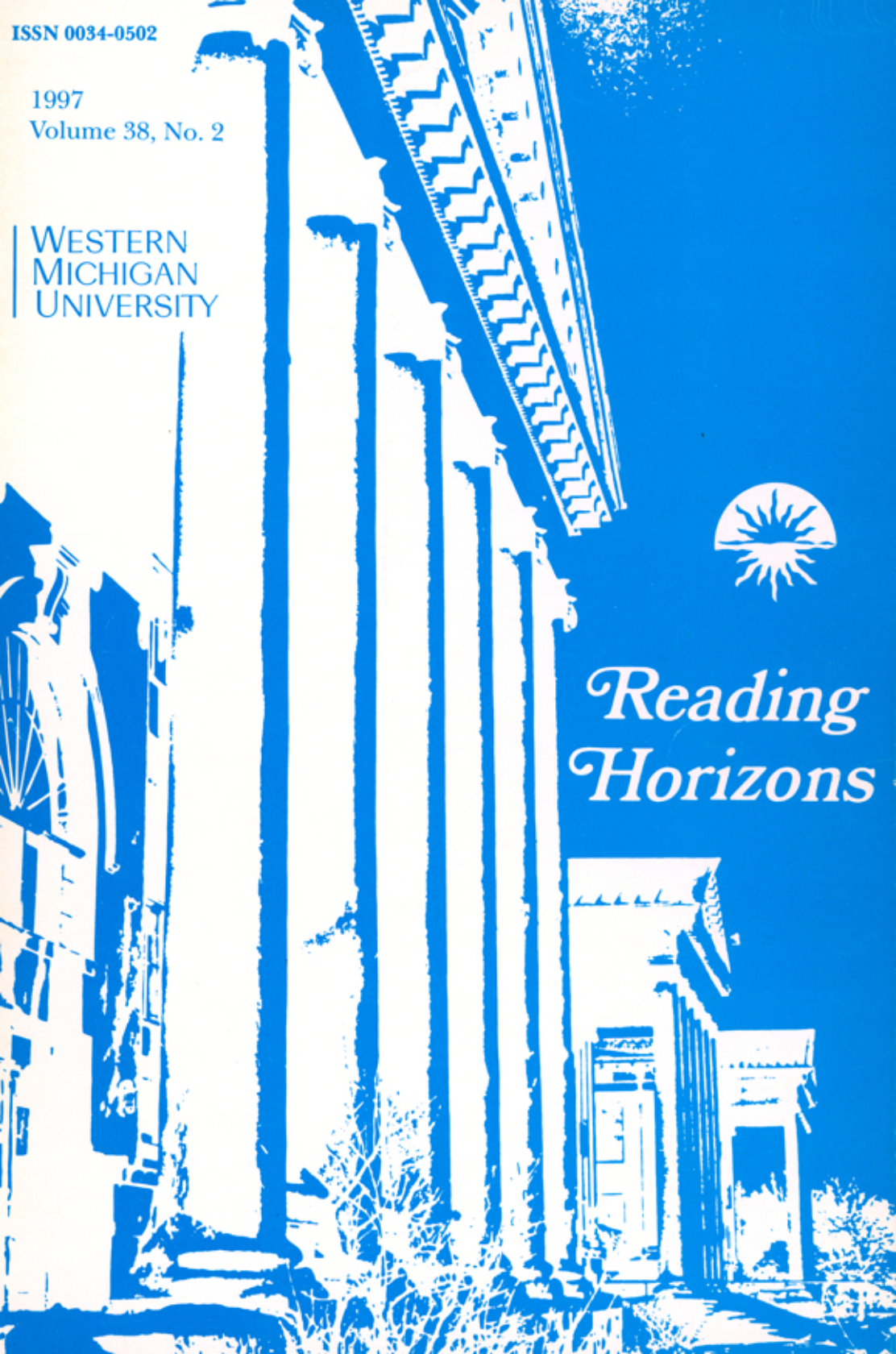
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Volume 38, No. 2

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Reading Horizons





READING HORIZONS:
A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Editors: Karen F. Thomas & Paul T. Wilson
Executive Assistant: Susan Standish

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**There is no more crucial or basic skill in all of
education than reading.**

READING HORIZONS

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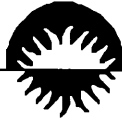
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Literacy Lessons From the Childhoods of Authors

Marcia Baghban

The retrospectives of authors' childhoods can provide courageous portraits for children. Their examples demonstrate how reading and writing helped these professionals not only survive illness, loneliness, and rejection, but also forge meaningful lives. Children need to hear their stories, and so do adults. This piece reviews the role that literacy played in the childhoods of Eudora Welty, Madeleine L'Engle, and Jack London, and contrasts aspects of their childhoods with aspects of contemporary childhoods. The contrast sounds a clarion call to today's adults to assume greater responsibility for how children spend their time.

Retrospectives of authors' childhoods provide unique insights into the connections between childhood literacy experiences and adult literacy experiences. The courageous examples of Eudora Welty, Madeleine L'Engle, and Jack London demonstrate how reading and writing helped these professionals not only survive illness, loneliness, and rejection, but also forge meaningful lives. Children need to hear their stories, and so do adults.

Eudora Welty

As a child, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eudora Welty (1909-) keenly listened to the life around her while in Jackson, Mississippi. Given the rich oral traditions of Southern culture, she had many childhood opportunities to listen for the stories told in daily life. Whenever her parents drove their first automobile on Sunday afternoon rides, they usually invited a neighbor to go along. In their small town it was an affront to go on a ride with an empty seat in the car. As soon as they were on the road, Eudora would command the adults, "Now, talk" (Welty, 1991, p. 14).

Moreover, in those days clothes were sewn at home, and the sewing woman who went from house to house gossiped as she worked. Eudora loved listening to the latest neighborhood stories. She writes:

Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening FOR them is something more acute than listening TO them. I suppose it's an early form of participation in what goes on. Listening children know stories are there. When their elders sit and begin, children are just waiting and hoping for one to come out, like a mouse from its hole (Welty, 1991, p. 14).

In addition to listening for the stories told in family and neighborhood, Eudora listened for the stories from books shared with her parents. Both her parents were avid readers. Eudora's father, an insurance salesman, believed in science and the future and loved non-fiction, but her mother, a former schoolteacher, sank into fiction. She "... read Dickens in the spirit in which she would have eloped with him." (Welty, 1991, p. 7).

When her mother was a girl, her mother's parents believed, as many did at the time, that long hair sapped a child's strength. They offered Eudora's mother gold earrings to let them cut her hair. She refused until they offered her a complete set of Charles Dickens shipped up the river in a barrel to their home. Eudora's mother valued these books even as a married adult. When her own house was on fire, she climbed on crutches with a broken leg to the second floor, threw the volumes out the window to her husband, and only then jumped to safety herself. Eudora knew when she saw the set of Dickens that the books were waiting just for her. As well as books, her mother shared her love of reading by reading to Eudora. Eudora remembers:

I learned from the age of two or three that any room in our house, at any time of day, was there to read in, or to be read to. My mother read to me. She'd read to me in the big bedroom in the mornings, when we were in her rocker together, which ticked in rhythm as we rocked, as though we had a cricket accompanying the story. She'd read to me in the diningroom on winter afternoons in front of the coal fire, with our cuckoo clock ending the story with 'Cuckoo', and at night when I'd got in my own bed. I must have given her no peace (Welty, 1991, p. 5).

Given such immersion in listening to stories from books, naturally she would want to learn to read herself.

Eudora begged her parents to teach her the alphabet, and her mother pressured the principal to take her into the local grammar school when she was five years old. But when Eudora was seven years old, she stayed out of school for nearly a year for what the doctor called, "a fast-beating heart." During the day she occupied her parents' double bed and covered it with storybooks. She credits this extended period of silent reading with the discovery of her own author's voice.

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't HEAR. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. It is to me the voice of the story or the poem itself ... My own words, when I am at work on a story, I hear too as they go, in the same voice that I hear when I read in books. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make my changes. I have always trusted this voice (Welty, 1991, pp. 12-13).

This reader's voice aided Eudora's leap to the development of her writer's voice and the profession she chose when she grew up. She wrote almost exclusively from life situations, and said "... it's living that makes me want to write ... although it's reading that makes me love writing" (Prenshaw, 1984, p. 175). She remained as she called herself, "a writer who came of a sheltered life" (Welty, 1991, p. 114) who chose to live at home to do her writing in a familiar world and who never regretted it (Prenshaw, 1984, p. 131).

Madeleine L'Engle

Observations of daily life and listening for people's stories also started Madeleine L'Engle (1918-) on her journey to become a writer. She was born in New York City to parents who had been married for twenty years before she was born. She and her parents did not have many

common interests, and her parents disagreed on how she should be brought up. Her father wanted a strict English upbringing with dancing, piano lessons, a nanny, and meals on a tray in a nursery. Her mother preferred that she be raised by a circus performer who could teach her to be confident and graceful. Her father won. Fortunately, her nanny and her mother read books to Madeleine. By the time she was five years old, she knew every story in each of the books in her bookcase. Reading, inventing, and listening to stories were very important to this only child who spent many hours by herself.

In the fourth grade, Madeleine had an attack of iritis, a painful swelling of the eye. Several months later, she had a second attack and the doctor warned that a third attack would make her blind. This affliction made her very aware of all the sights and events around her. As a toddler, she had also suffered an illness that left one of her legs shorter than the other so she limped when she was tired. Any sports team she was on in school would lose.

Her unpopularity with her peers was paralleled by unpopularity with her teachers. Her homeroom teacher believed that she was clumsy and dumb. Because she used Madeleine's schoolwork as bad examples for the class, Madeleine stopped doing schoolwork. Her comfort came outside school from reading books and writing stories and poems. She always kept a journal. When she was in sixth grade, she entered a poem in a school poetry contest and won. When her teacher accused her of copying the poem, Madeleine's mother carried a huge stack of Madeleine's writings to school to prove that she loved to write. Madeleine wrote about the incident in her journal, and her parents transferred her to another school.

Madeleine's father was in constant poor health because of his exposure to mustard gas during World War I. The family moved to Europe, hoping that the mountain air of the Alps would help his deteriorating lungs. Her mother, never robust herself, was often an invalid. They put Madeleine in boarding school where she was miserable and could never

find time to write. She was fourteen years old before she returned to the United States and was able to resume her writing.

Madeleine continued to write into her adulthood. She read books on how life could be made better for people all over the world, and she read theology to think about questions of good and evil. She did research on physics and space. Such varied interests confused publishers about how to categorize her manuscripts. Her best-known book, *A Wrinkle in Time*, was rejected by more than thirty publishers before publication and before winning the Newbery Medal for children's literature. In addition to library research, Madeleine did fieldwork. To experience the settings for *The Love Letters* and *Arm of the Starfish*, she traveled to Portugal. Like Eudora Welty, Madeleine explains that she writes like a listener.

Everything I do, everywhere I go, everybody I meet — I see story. Story springs from experience, and then the storyteller goes on. When I actually start to write, I listen to the characters; I listen to the story (Gonzales, 1991, p. 102).

Stories saved Madeleine. Unlike Eudora Welty, she had more than one period of intense solitude in her childhood, and Madeleine's solitude was coupled with the loneliness of an only child with physical problems and distant, frail parents.

Jack London

Loneliness coupled with the need to escape extreme poverty led Jack London (1876-1916) to literacy. His mother, a spiritualist, conducted seances at home. She yelled when possessed, and, in one session, put six-year-old Jack on a table that levitated. He was never accepted by his mother nor his natural father (Sinclair, 1977). His mother, however, did teach Jack to read when he insisted upon it. Reading matter was scarce and he was grateful for whatever fell into his hands.

The first book he owned was Ouida's novel *Signa* which he had found by the side of the road. Jack identified with this tale of an illegitimate child his own age who dreams of escaping the drudgery of peasant

life through his ability to play the violin. He read it again and again (Sinclair, 1977).

Jack loved books as much as he loved reading them. Once he borrowed Washington Irving's *The Alhambra* from the school library. He was so impressed by Irving's book that he built an Alhambra (the palace of the moorish Kings at Granada, Spain) of his own from an old chimney. When the towers and terraces were complete, he wrote inscriptions to mark the different sections (Kingman, 1979; O'Connor, 1964). When he returned the book in poor condition and the school librarian would not loan him another, he cried all the way home (Sinclair, 1977).

At the Oakland Public Library, Jack met Ina Coolbrith, head librarian, who guided his reading. She was poet laureate in California and a hostess of her own literary salon. Jack knew her when she was in her early forties. Twenty years later he wrote her that she had been a goddess to him when he was a child. She was the first person to praise him for his choices in reading (O'Connor, 1964).

Jack left school at age 13 to work in a cannery. As a young man, he bought a boat with borrowed money. After some time on the waterfront as a pirate and a lawman, he joined a road gang of homeless boys who rode freight trains. Delinquency and alcohol had nearly killed him when, at 17, he signed up as a seaman on a ship bound for Japan. He took his books with him and cleared a small space for his reading. After a despised seaman died, he ignored the superstition of the sailors that he would not live to the end of the voyage if he slept in the dead man's bed. Jack occupied the man's bunk so that he could be near the light in order to read (Sinclair, 1977). His description of an episode from this voyage became a short story that won a newspaper contest and launched him as a serious writer.

So What Have We Learned?

The lives of Jack London, Madeleine L'Engle, and Eudora Welty are three literary success stories. They were not only interested young observers, listeners, and readers, but they were readers of stories who made

the leap to become writers of stories. They entered the literary world fueled by need: Jack to survive emotional rejection and poverty; Madeleine to combat shyness and loneliness; and Eudora for entertainment during an extended illness. With reading, they could leave their daily lives and visit any one or any place. Reading became, "a ritual space in which other possibilities might be entertained" (Hedrick, 1982, p. 21).

Writing time was when they were happiest. They were not afraid to shut the door and confront themselves for, "Writing is ingoing ... Writers must be comfortable with aloneness ... The theme is solitude" (Murray, 1991, p. 16). Jack London, Madeleine L'Engle, and Eudora Welty were comfortable with their aloneness. In fact, they craved the solitude of their reading and writing experiences because the time away from reality helped them cope with reality. And as children, these authors had time.

Some of today's children have time. However, the nature of their time alone has changed. More than a decade ago, a quarter of the children in kindergarten through sixth grade were left unsupervised after school (Long and Long, 1982). In 1990, the National Child Care Survey conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the United States Department of Education found that 44 percent of school-age children with working parents had no supervision after school. This represents nearly a doubling in eight years of the number of children alone after school (Chira, 1994). Unsupervised children often use their time alone to watch endless hours of television or to play video games. Reading is not often the activity of choice.

Some of today's children do not have time. After school and on weekends, harried adults may shuttle children from one activity and one location to another. These children do not have great periods of time to themselves to observe, listen, and think. If they choose to read, they may be interrupted.

Experiences with literature do not happen without long attention spans. How else will children know what it is like to begin a book, look up

at the clock, and find they have been lost in that book for hours? How else will they experience the sadness that comes with knowing the ending of a wonderful book is just a few pages away and the worry that another book by the same author might not be so wonderful? How else will they remember the enthusiasm that comes with recommending a great book to a friend or the bond that comes from finding someone who has enjoyed the very same book?

As children read, they decide whether reading will play an active part in their lives. They make connections between what they understand of life at that moment and what the text offers that is new. From characters with good conduct and characters with poor conduct, they learn how to behave with other people. Through stories of strong and weak humans, they learn courage, and they learn whether they would exhibit such courage under similar circumstances. They encounter foolishness, wisdom, miserliness, jealousy, patriotism, passion, love, hate, death, and the myriad aspects of feelings and thought that make them human. All the time they are reading about others, they are making decisions about themselves. These decisions relate not only to the kinds of people they want to become, but also to their conduct in a wider world.

Reading can offer children entertainment and learning, and it can offer them sanctuary. Many of today's children have terrible problems in their lives. Their emotional needs are as great, if not greater, than those of Jack London, Madeleine L'Engle, and Eudora Welty. Through reading, they too can escape unhappy lives and find examples of people and strategies to help them handle their lives. Adults determine children's schedules. As the adults in their lives, we must step back from our frazzled daily lives and evaluate how we are spending the time we have and how our children may be passing their childhoods. Restructured time and encouragement to spend that time reading can provide literary experiences to help more children find clearer paths to adulthood.

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Marcia Baghban is a faculty member in the Department of Elementary Education at Queens College, in Flushing New York.



Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Literacy Education

Wayne M. Linek
Timothy V. Rasinski
Donna M. Harkins

Parent involvement appears to hold great potential for the improvement of literacy education. Without the coordination and support of the classroom teacher, however, the effects of such involvement may not be maximized. A question central to the development of parent involvement programs is, "Do teachers recognize and support parent involvement as a significant component of children's education?" The purpose of this informal study was to describe perceptions of parent involvement in literacy education. Over sixty teachers from a cross section of schools in a Midwestern metropolitan area were interviewed in depth about their attitudes toward parent involvement in reading. A structured interview combining closed and open-ended questions was used to gather data. Results indicated that teacher perceptions of what constitutes parent involvement differed by grade level. Over 90 percent of the teachers recognized the importance of involving parents. Less than 5 percent, however, supported involving parents as partners. Teacher perceptions of the role of parents appeared to restrict involvement and limit dialogue.

Introduction

Parent and family involvement in children's learning has long been recognized as a key to assisting children in overcoming learning difficulties (Dewey, 1898; Huey, 1908; U.S. Department of Education, 1987). Research on early readers (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Teale, 1978) has also recognized the importance of parents in children's literacy learning. For example, Durkin found that early readers tended to have parents or family members who: served as literate models, read aloud to the child,

took time to interact with the child, and provided reading and writing materials. Henderson (1988) reviewed 43 studies on the subject and found that almost any form of parent involvement appeared to produce measurable gains in student achievement. Thus, a well-respected research base has been established to support parent involvement in the development of literacy.

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"Get parents involved" is, therefore, a cry often heard mandated in many government sponsored and initiated programs. However, educators' views on what constitutes appropriate parent and family involvement have varied throughout the major historical periods of American education (Sturtevant and Linek, in press). Since the inception of the War on Poverty and Head Start, past practices of one way communication from school to home and asking parents to monitor homework are being replaced by models of family literacy (Silver and Silver, 1991). These models recognize the importance and validity of the home and community as centers for literacy learning and of true partnerships between home and school.

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Thus, parent involvement in literacy education of children has gained considerable support and direction in recent years (Anderson, et.al., 1985; Fredericks and Rasinski, 1990; Rasinski and Fredericks, 1989a). Parent involvement can range from home supplementation of instruction that is delivered at school to working with children in classroom settings (Rasinski and Fredericks, 1989b). However, regardless of the great potential that is apparent in parent involvement in literacy education, without the coordination and active support of classroom teachers, the effects of such involvement may be minimal.

Research by Baruth and Manning (1992) found that similar valuing systems are held by parents and teachers regarding the importance of education and literacy. Studies of teachers' willingness to support parent involvement efforts specifically in reading education, however, have not been forthcoming (Linek and Rasinski, 1991). Most work has focused on parents' willingness to involve themselves in the reading education of their children.

Work by Walde and Baker (1990) revealed that teachers do not feel parents are sufficiently concerned to support their children's general education adequately. They argue that parents are the problem because they are uncaring, lack basic skills, and are irresponsible. They document this perspective with poor attendance at conferences, minimal time spent with offspring, and not meeting the physical needs of children. They argue that problems encountered by teachers in dealing with parents lead to negative teacher perceptions of parent involvement.

Similarly, Williams and Stallworth (1983-1984) found that while school personnel were generally in agreement with the proposition of greater parent involvement in education, they felt that appropriate roles for parents were in tangential, non-instructional activities such as PTA, fund raising, and booster clubs. Parents, on the other hand, wanted substantive involvement in assisting in, assessing, and evaluating their children's learning and the educational decision-making process. In essence, parents wanted to be co-learners and partners with educators.

Thus, despite growing recognition of the importance of involving parents in general education, teacher support for such involvement is not necessarily forthcoming. This study, therefore, focused specifically on elementary and middle school reading teachers' perceptions of parent involvement in literacy education.

Method

This descriptive study was conducted over a period of two semesters. Questions guiding this study were: 1) Do teachers perceive parent involvement in literacy education as important? 2) How do teachers actually involve parents in reading instruction? 3) How satisfied are teachers with their attempts at parent involvement in reading curriculum? 4) How do teachers view the role of the parent when it comes to making decisions about reading instruction in their own schools and classrooms?

The initial pool of subjects were teachers who had volunteered to allow preservice teachers to complete a reading diagnosis and assessment field experience in their classrooms. To gather data, subjects were interviewed in depth about their perceptions of, applications of, and attitudes toward parent involvement. Subjects were also observed 2-1/2 hours weekly for a 10 week period and conversed frequently with one of the authors.

Interviewer/observers were preservice teachers enrolled in a reading diagnosis and assessment course. The researchers used preservice teachers as interviewer/observers so as to elicit a less guarded view of parent involvement than the researchers themselves might have evoked. All interviewer/observers had completed at least two prior literacy methodology courses. The researchers instructed, modeled, and provided guided practice for the interviewer/observers on how to ask questions and probe using a scheduled standardized interview. Interviewer/observers were also instructed on how to seek consistency between self-reported data and observed behavior.

Overall, subjects were observed a minimum of 10 times, at least two times prior to the interview and at least 4 times after the interview. At the end of the semester, interviewer/observers submitted all notes from the interview they conducted, a summary of the interview, and a summary of their observations. They also submitted a paper analyzing whether or not the data collected in the interview was consistent with subject behavior. Only subjects whose interview answers were considered consistent with observed behavior were included in this study.

The final pool of subjects included 64 teachers from a cross section of schools in a Midwestern metropolitan area. Of the 64 teachers included, 38 taught primary grades, 22 taught middle school grades, and 4 were specialists working with both primary and middle grades (Mean = 3.18, SD = 2.04, $n = 60$). Years of teaching experience in the sample ranged from 0 to 36 (Mean = 15.78, SD = 8.95, $n = 64$).

During the interview, subjects were asked to rate the importance of parent involvement in the reading instruction occurring in their own classrooms and discuss their reasoning. Subjects were also asked if they currently involved parents in their classroom reading curriculum and, if so, how. If they did not involve parents, they were asked to elaborate on why they chose not to. Subjects were then asked to rate their satisfaction with past parent involvement in their classroom reading curriculum and to provide a rationale for their rating. Finally, subjects were asked if parents should have a say in the way reading is taught in their school or classroom and to provide the reasoning behind their thinking.

Ratings data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data were also blocked and reported by grade level (primary and middle). Qualitative response data were analyzed using a constant comparative method (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). Responses were searched for emerging themes. Themes were supported by categorized and elaborated responses included in the results section.

Results

Results are divided into four sections. The first section reports on perceived importance of parent involvement. The second section deals with actual involvement of parents by teachers. The third section discusses teacher satisfaction with parent involvement. The final section reports on the issue of teacher beliefs related to parent empowerment in literacy education.

Importance of Parent Involvement. When teachers were asked how important parent involvement was in their classroom reading curriculum about 90% responded that it was important or very important, about 10% were neutral, and none perceived it as unimportant (see Table 1). There were no apparent differences by grade level.

Table 1

Ratings of Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Parent Involvement in Classroom Reading Curriculum Blocked by Grade

Rating	Primary	Middle	Total
Very important	83.9	89.5	86.2
Important	6.5	0	5.2
Neutral	9.7	10.5	8.6
Somewhat unimportant	0	0	0
Very unimportant	0	0	0

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

When teachers were asked why they had responded as they did (see Table 2), the majority who saw involvement as important (55.8%) cited affective factors such as parent expectations influencing student attitudes, motivation, and performance. Approximately 33% viewed parent modeling of literate behavior as a key issue and 25% believed that reinforcement of reading skills and understanding the process of reading was a key issue. Less than 10% of all teachers cited parents as providers of reading materials. Middle school teachers, however, were more likely to cite affective factors than primary teachers. Primary teachers were more likely to cite reinforcement of skills and understanding the reading process as key issues than were middle school teachers.

When the small number of teachers who had neutral perceptions of parent involvement were asked why they felt that way (see Table 2), primary teachers cited a lack of parent reading and writing skills. Middle school teachers mentioned changing parent priorities (less focus on children as they become older) and prior experiences with parent involvement that had been both positive and negative.

Table 2

Reasons for Teacher Ratings of the Importance of Parent Involvement

Reasons	Primary	Middle	Total
Teachers who rated parent involvement as important or very important cited:			
Affective factors	40.6	80.0	55.8
Role models	31.3	35.0	32.7
Reinforcement of skill & understanding the process of reading	34.3	10.0	25.0
Providing reading materials	6.3	10.0	7.7
Teachers who gave parent involvement a neutral rating said:			
Parents can't read or write well themselves	66.2	0	40.0
Can be positive or negative	0	50.0	20.0
Parents less involved at this age because of changing priorities	0	50.0	20.0

Note: Results are reported in percentages.

Current Parent Involvement. When teachers were asked if they currently involved parents in their classroom reading curriculum about two-thirds answered yes (see Table 3). Surprisingly, close to 50% of the primary teachers answered no, but only slightly less than 16% of the middle school teachers gave such a response..

Table 3

Current Teacher Involvement of Parents in Classroom Reading Curriculum

Involves Parents	Primary	Middle	Total
Yes	50.0	84.2	65.6
No	47.1	15.8	32.8

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

When those teachers who involved parents were asked how they involved parents (see Table 4), over one-half said that they sent homework or reading materials home and close to 30% said that they had in-class volunteers. Although middle school teachers were less likely to have in-class volunteers, they mentioned other types of involvement not specified by primary teachers. For example, middle school teachers involved parents by: 1) communicating study progress through report cards, interim reports, telephone calls, and notes; 2) having parents take their children to the library; and 3) having their classrooms open to parent visits.

Table 4

Types of Parent Involvement Currently Used

Types of Current Involvement	Primary	Middle	Total
Why teachers answering "yes" involved parents:			
Send homework or reading materials home	55.6	57.9	56.8
In-class volunteers	38.9	21.1	29.7
Communication	0	26.3	13.5
Take children to library	0	5.3	2.7
Open door policy (most choose not to come)	0	5.3	2.7

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

When those teachers who did not involve parents were asked why, over 40% said that there were no parents who could serve as volunteers at school (see Table 5). Surprisingly, only primary teachers gave this answer. Over 30% of all teachers cited a lack of parent interest in children. Some teachers cited a lack of parent time due to work or being a single parent. Others cited too much teacher preparation time as being a factor in not involving parents. Less than 10% of all teachers cited previous bad experience with in-class volunteers, but 33% of middle school teachers cited this reason.

Table 5

Reasons Why Teachers Did Not Involve Parents

Reason	Primary	Middle	Total
Why teachers answering "no" did not involve parents:			
No volunteers at school	47.4	0	40.9
Parents not interested in their children	31.6	33.3	31.8
Parents work	15.8	33.3	18.2
Too much time to prepare for in-class volunteers	15.8	0	13.6
Single parent families	10.5	0	9.1
In-class scheduling problems	5.3	33.3	9.1
Previous bad experience with in-class volunteers	5.3	33.3	9.1

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

Teacher Satisfaction. When teachers were asked how they felt about past parent involvement in their classroom reading curriculum, a high degree (over 60% indicated dissatisfaction or ambivalence (see Table 6). Primary teachers (over 45%) were more likely to respond that they were dissatisfied. Middle school teachers (over 47%) were more likely to be ambivalent.

Table 6

Ratings of Teacher Satisfaction with Past Parent Involvement in the Classroom Reading Curriculum

Rating	Primary	Middle	Total
Very satisfied	9.1	10.5	8.5
Satisfied	27.3	21.1	30.5
Neutral	18.2	47.4	28.8
Somewhat dissatisfied	30.3	10.5	20.3
Very dissatisfied	15.2	10.5	11.9

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

When asked why they felt as they did, teachers who were "very satisfied" focused on parent attitude and interest. For example, three teachers cited parent openness to conferencing and willingness to help when needed. One teacher said that parents called to find out what was due or to clarify assignments; another stated that in-class volunteers wanted to be there and did not undermine what was taught. One teacher thought that, in general, there was lots of parent interest.

Teachers who were "satisfied" cited 4 reasons why they were less than "very satisfied". Four teachers mentioned that they wanted more parent involvement but that changing lifestyles had limited parent time and interest. Four teachers said that sometimes cooperation was not apparent because it depended on the group of students and parents that made up the class. One teacher stated that parents of students in top groups showed concern but many parents of students in low groups did not. Finally, one teacher cited a bad experience with a previous volunteer's behavior and language in the classroom.

Those teachers who were "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" fell into two categories according to the grade level taught. The only reason cited by primary teachers for ambivalence toward parent involvement was that they did not have a volunteer at school. Middle school teachers noted six reasons for their ambivalence. Two teachers mentioned a lack of teacher time to set up a program and prepare for a volunteer. One teacher said that her satisfaction depended on the reading ability of the parent and the child. Another cited a bad past experience. One said that too many parents were working; another said that a minority of parents set good examples for their children. Finally, one teacher cited an instance in which parents had lied so that their children could get credit in the Pizza Hut Book It Program.

Teachers who were "dissatisfied" cited a variety of reasons for their dissatisfaction. Seven said that there was little parent interest in or involvement with their own children. Four teachers stated that parents did not give their children enough encouragement. Two said that the parents

had refused to take their own children to the library for research projects. One said that parents were just too busy and another said the in-class volunteers lacked the skills really needed to help. All of the teachers who were "very dissatisfied" said that there was a general lack on parent interest, concern, and response.

Probing of teacher reasoning in the dissatisfied categories revealed two limitations. First, most of the teachers admitted that between 80-85% of the parents were interested and helpful so their dissatisfaction was based on a minority of parents. Second, dissatisfaction was mainly based on communication through students rather than direct communication with parents. For example, one teacher cited an instance where a child told the teacher that her research project was not completed because her father had refused to take her to the library. The same teacher, however, admitted that she had not called the parents to verify the information.

Parent Empowerment. When teachers were asked if parents should have a say in the actual way reading was taught in their school or classroom, the majority had no opinion (see Table 7). Of the 40% who had opinions, the ratio was 4 to 1 against letting parents have a say.

Table 7
Teacher Opinions on Whether or Not Parents Should Have a Say in the Reading Curriculum

Opinion	Primary	Middle	Total
Yes	2.9	15.8	8.1
No	31.4	36.8	32.3
No opinion/undecided	65.7	47.4	59.7

Note. Results are reported in percentages.

When asked why they answered as they did, only two of the teachers answering "yes" did not qualify their answers. One said that parent input was important because it got children involved. The other stated that if there was a problem parents should have a say in how to fix or improve the situation, but that parents should also help in implementing the program at home. These two teachers appeared to perceive parents as partners.

The remainder of the teachers who answered "yes" or were "undecided" qualified their answers. Most prefaced their statements with the

words "only if" during probing. Nine of the teachers said that suggestions were okay but that they reserved the right to make all final decisions and three said that they would accept parent input only if they as teachers agreed with the idea. Probing revealed that there were two distinct categories: the first open to suggestions and the later closed. Five of the teachers stated that parents should have input only if they were knowledgeable in all aspects of teaching and reading. Four believed parents should have input only if there was a problem with which the teacher needed help, such as, gaining the child's interest. Two thought parent input should be limited to censoring what their child was reading. Two others thought that input should be limited to the right to request a retest if parents disagreed with reading level placement. Finally, one teacher said, "Only if they are unhappy with their child's performance. Finally, one teacher said, "Only if they are unhappy with their child's performance." Overall, this group appeared to accept the idea of parent input but believed in maintaining teacher control and power.

The overwhelming reason 29 out of 64 teachers answered "undecided" or particularly "no" to letting parents have a say was that they believed parents were unqualified because they lacked the knowledge and training of an educated teacher. Two teachers believed that parent input would be harmful to the professionalism of teachers. Two teachers said that parents should help at home, not at school. Two said, "Parents can't tell me how to teach, but I'll listen to helpful suggestions." One teacher believed that parents should only reinforce what the teacher had taught at school, and one stated that parents should have input only if they were educated professionals. Overall, this group appeared to believe in maintaining teacher superiority and for the most part rejected the idea of parent input.

Discussion

Overall, teachers appeared to perceive parent involvement as important particularly for the purpose of modeling and motivation. More teachers tended to involve parents than not. Perceptions of what constituted parent involvement, however, appeared to differ by grade level.

Although primary teachers were more likely than middle school teachers to involve parents in their classrooms, they were more likely to say that they did not involve parents. They appeared to have a perception of parent involvement that was often limited to in-class volunteers. Middle school teachers actually involved parents less in class, but believed that they involved parents more because of an expanded definition of parent involvement.

The finding that primary teachers appeared to place more of an emphasis on involving parents with reinforcing skills and understanding the reading process was not surprising. It was not surprising because deciphering the graphophonemic system works is often the focus of reading instruction in primary grades. Middle school teachers, on the other hand, tended to believe that parent involvement was important for affective reasons. For example, modeling enthusiasm for reading and encouraging children to actively participate in reading activities like the Pizza Hut Book It Program were mentioned.

Overall, a majority of teachers were dissatisfied or ambivalent about past parent involvement. Reasoning for this negative perception, however, was often grounded in a focus on a minority of parents and indirect communication filtered through children. Close to one-half of the teachers also believed that parents should not have a say in the reading curriculum because they lacked the knowledge and training of an educated teacher.

The current findings appear to be fairly consistent with the findings in general education (Walde and Baker, 1990; Williams and Stallworth, 1983-1984). That is, teachers believe parent involvement is important and beneficial, but that many parents don't care or have the time to be involved with their children. Teachers believe that parents should be involved, but that they should be ready to respond and be involved on teacher's' terms. Some teachers believed that problems they had encountered in dealing with parents had led to their negative perceptions, yet admitted that those perceptions were based on a minority of parents.

Are these negative perceptions and lack of implementation totally due to, as Walde and Baker (1990) suggest, problems encountered by teachers in dealing with parents? We think that this is just one tiny slice of the parent involvement pie.

Overall, there appeared to be a high level of dissatisfaction and lack of involvement. For example, only 2 of the 64 teachers in the study viewed parents as partners. The remainder appeared to preclude meaningful dialogue with parents on the teaching of reading with "only if" qualifications, or responding that parents should not have a say in the reading curriculum. The vast majority therefore, appeared to prestructure a negative WE-THEM interactional context. Collaboration was accepted only if the teacher needed help or if parents had complaints. Thus, the overwhelming majority of teachers appeared to support systematic professional exclusion of parents from the decision-making process.

Parents, on the other hand, have appeared to want substantive involvement in discipline and evaluation/assessment of their children's learning, to be included in decision-making, and to be viewed as co-learners with educators (Williams and Stallworth, 1983-1984). The current study and previous research (Bricklin, 1970; Lightfoot, 1978), however, support teacher and parent anxiety and role expectations from prior experience affecting relationships and blocking effective communication. Thus, to what extent are parents not involved because they feel rejected and/or alienated from school because they are not the "experts" in education and literacy? To what extent might teachers' own definitions of and beliefs about what constitutes appropriate parent involvement erect barriers and be factors in their own anxiety and frustration?

Should we therefore bash teachers the way Walde and Baker (1990) bashed parents? No, we view that response as a release of frustration that attempts to shift blame rather than provide a mode of investigation that attempts to determine and change factors influencing the situation. Our research had led us to believe that the underlying factors and professional

barriers that have been erected go much deeper. Often parent involvement has been ignored while negative views of parents have been ingrained in many teacher education texts and courses for at least the last century (Sturtevant and Linek, in press).

Should we bash teacher education and teacher educators? Again, the answer is no for two major reasons. First, societal needs focusing the purpose of American education have changed with history. For decades many public schools were preparing immigrants and blue collar Americans for our expanding industrial workforce (Sturtevant and Linek, in press). This model has guided research, influenced the writing of texts, shaped teacher education, and continues to mold much of the teaching in our schools.

Thus, the question remains, how can teachers come to see parents as partners in literacy education? How can we, as a profession, begin to see parent input as an opportunity to educate parents about reading, literacy, and literacy learning? At the turn of the twentieth century, Huey commented on children's literacy learning and what he saw as the reality of home and school situations by saying:

[A] good home is usually a better place ... [than school for literacy learning] ... provided parents can give them a little time every day and can have proper instructions about assisting with home learning. But many parents do not have the time or the intelligence, and the schools are not yet prepared to assist them effectively. (1906, p. 336)

Will educators be prepared to meet Huey's challenge as we enter the twenty-first century? The findings of this study evidence: 1) a continuing gap between the value teachers attach to parent involvement and what actually occurs; 2) barriers to communication with parents; and 3) a lack of knowledge about how to effectively involve and educate parents in literacy development. Thus, to prepare for the next century, it appears that instead of bashing anyone, what we need to do is recognize where we are, why we

are there, figure out how to move forward, and identify the barriers to change.

Today, we have begun accepting the value of multiculturalism while moving away from the deficit model of education which blames the victim. Inservice facilitating this shift will help us to move forward with parent involvement because it permits valuing of knowledge and understanding outside the narrow world of formal education. A barrier, however, is the continuing focus by many on the limited, Euro-centric view of education, history, and how those values are translated into everyday life as being the "right" view.

Today, many educators, businessmen, and the general public have come to recognize that learning to think and solve problems is more important than remembering specific information. Inservice focusing on interpersonal communications and portfolio assessment that collaboratively involves parents and students in assessment and evaluation will help. These vehicles will reduce the anxiety and role expectations that stifle communication and create turf battles while providing a positive environment for parent involvement. A barrier, however, is the continuing general acceptance of traditional standardized testing systems focusing on skills and factual knowledge for evaluation and comparison.

Today, we are recognizing that to break the cycle of under achievement we must provide literacy experiences that benefit all members of the family. Models of parent involvement, such as the Family Reading workshop model (Goldsmith and Handel, 1990; Handel, 1992), the paired reading project (Rasinski, et.al., 1991), or family support teams (Slavin, et.al., 1990) could be developed. Inservice and increased prominence, time, and space in teacher education texts and literature should be given to successful models of family literacy to expand teacher perceptions of parent involvement and literacy education. Barriers, however, are limited by funding for teacher inservice at local levels, perceptions by some teachers that their responsibility begins and ends with teaching children at school,

and turf battles among social service agencies generate a scramble for funding.

Can we change Huey's view of the reality of home and school situations by the year 2000? We have barriers, but we have identified the means and we have the time to further break them down in the next few years. The challenge for the immediate future is to help education professionals evolve their perceptions of parent involvement so that they view parents as partners in the twenty-first century.

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Wayne M. Linek and Donna M. Harkins are faculty members in the Department of Elementary Education at East Texas State University, in Commerce Texas. Timothy V. Rasinski is a faculty member in the Department of Teacher Development at Kent State University, in Kent Ohio.



"Daddy, Read to Me": Fathers Helping Their Young Children Learn to Read

**Robert W. Ortiz
Laurie L. McCarty**

Parents' involvement in their young children's early reading development is reported to be an important prerequisite to school success. Much of the research on parents' contribution to early literacy development has focused on mother-child interaction. Less is known about the role of fathers. Fathers, however, report that they want to be involved with their children's literacy development when given opportunities to do things they feel are interesting and capable of doing. Studies indicate that fathers' involvement with early literacy activities range from reading recreation-related materials to assisting their children with school assignments. This paper provides background information concerning research into fathers' involvement in early literacy development and offers various suggestions on encouraging fathers to become involved with their children's early literacy activities.

Parent involvement in their children's early literacy development is a crucial component to success in the classroom (Salerno and Fink, 1992; Greenwood and Hickman, 1991). We know that when parents help their children with homework, social class disappears as an academic achievement factor. We also know that parent participation in their children's schooling is associated with higher test scores, better attendance, and stronger cognitive abilities. Because literacy skills are essential components of academic success, many researchers have sought to isolate early literacy factors that are associated with reading achievement (Cazden, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Rogoff, 1990). Studies completed in home settings have shown that frequency of parent-child reading during the preschool years is an important determinant of children's readiness to benefit from

formal literacy instruction (Clark, 1975; Goldfield and Snow, 1984; Wells, 1985). Home literacy experiences that appear to be associated with early reading achievement in school include children having their own books, being read to frequently, using the library, and having parents model literacy activities (Mason, 1992; Teale and Sulzby, 1986).

Approaches to looking at familial literacy, though, have tended to focus on maternal contributions to children's early language and literacy development. Because of the historic emphasis on women as primary care givers, mothers have often assumed the responsibility of teaching their young children to read and write (Dickinson, De Temple, and Smith, 1992; Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda, and Brody, 1990; Williams, 1991; Backett, 1987; Sparling, Berger, and Biller, 1992). Less information has been collected on early reading development and the fathers' role. Fathers, however, report that they want to be involved with their children's literacy development when given opportunities to do things they feel are interesting and capable of doing (Whittenmore, 1992; Ortiz, 1992; Ortiz and Stile, 1996).

Fathers and Early Literacy Activities

Mothers have played a traditional role in the education of young children. They are often perceived as having a major impact on children's early literacy and language development (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990). Even as late as the 1970's, when the inclination was for professionals, educators, and researchers to view both parents as "learners and teachers" of their children, the literature of this period contained almost no reference to the role of fathers in their children's early literacy and language development (Turnbull and Turnbull, 1990). Despite the lack of research in paternal early literacy experiences, studies on family literacy patterns suggest that parental participation in these activities vary between families and family members. Reese, Goldenberg, Loucky, and Gallimore (1989) found that mothers and fathers who assisted with their children's literacy development tended to have more education than those who did not. Reese (1992), in examining the reading achievement of fifth grade students, found a family history of literacy for high achieving students.

Other studies show an array of literacy practices engaged in by parents of low, middle, and high economic backgrounds (Ada, 1988; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Ortiz, 1992). The literacy activities observed in these homes included reading for entertainment, reading as part of daily living, reading for general information, reading for religious purposes and reading materials besides books.

There have been some attempts at investigating father-child early literacy practices. Studies suggest that paternal early literacy activities range from fathers who rarely read with their children to those who establish consistent reading and writing routines (Ortiz, 1992, 1994; Laosa, 1982; Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, and Goldenberg, (1991). In an early attempt to measure the influence of fathers and mothers on young children's reading achievement in elementary school, Durkin (1966) made an effort to interview both parents regarding their roles. Durkin found it extremely difficult to get fathers to attend the interview sessions to discuss their roles in early reading activities. Their absence at these meetings were often reported as the result of "being on the road," "working during the day and going to school at night," "spending long hours at the office," and "having two jobs." This phenomenon prompted Durkin to bring to mind the term "The vanishing American father," referred to in so many titles of popular magazines at the time. Durkin did find that the few fathers who were interviewed tended to have some positive influence on their children's early reading achievement. In a later study, Taylor (1983), in looking at the ways that parents shared their literacy experiences with young children, found that through the interplay of personal biographies and educative styles of fathers, comparable childhood literacy experiences were mediated in different ways. That is, although some fathers had very similar literacy experiences as children, these same fathers had evolved different styles in working with their own children — an idiosyncratic process that Taylor feels can result in varied reading experiences for individual children.

Laosa (1982) examined the linkages between parental schooling and behavior toward their children's academic development. He found that although fathers spent less time involved in early literacy practices than

their spouses, they often read with their children on a regular basis. Laosa attributed parent-child early literacy practices to increased years of parents' formal education. Ortiz (in press) investigated the reading activities of a sample of Mexican American fathers and their children. The children were enrolled in grades K, 1st, and 2nd. He found that demographic variables, such as generation status, education, and income had a minimal impact on joint early reading and writing practices. Instead, early literacy experiences were found to be associated with marital relationships, in that, fathers who "shared" child rearing duties with their spouses, as opposed to "dividing" these tasks, were more likely to read with their children. Other studies suggest that a positive relationship exists between the amount of literacy fathers engage in for their personal use and their children's academic reading tests' scores (Gallimore, Reese, Balzano, Benson and Goldenberg, 1991). Finally, recent findings indicate that fathers who assist their spouses with their children's home learning help create conditions in the home which are supportive of academic achievement (Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, and Goldenberg, (1991).

What Fathers Read With Their Children

Various researchers have looked at the kinds of reading materials that fathers have shared with their children (Ortiz, 1992, 1994; Ortiz and Stile, 1996; Taylor, 1983). These data suggest that many joint father-child early literacy activities do not, necessarily, include books per se or take the form of formal or structured reading activities. For instance, Taylor (1983) found that fathers read various things to their children including newspaper comic strips, children's magazines (e.g., *Ranger Rick*), and the instructions for board games. Ortiz (1992) found that fathers shared literacy activities through a variety of subject areas. For example, recreational related literacy activities were extremely popular. Fathers and children read print found on board games (e.g., Monopoly; Chutes and Ladders; Life; etc.), played the word-game "hangman," and read personal letters from relatives. Fathers often read to their children the print on video boxes and taught them how to read and calculate the batting averages of their favorite baseball players. Working on crossword puzzles and reading cereal boxes were also sources of enjoyable reading time together.

Additional reading interests included religious and occupational subjects. For instance, some fathers read the weekly church bulletin to their children. Other fathers, while reading the Bible during church services, sat next to their children so that they could act as literacy role models. Parents read to and with their children during family prayer time at home, often encouraging them to read simple passages. And, other fathers read to their children various brochures and newsletters from their jobs describing company products and upcoming social events.

Lastly, and interestingly, many of the fathers reported engaging in reading activities which were school related, such as reading homework instructions, notes sent home by teachers, and cafeteria menus. This finding was surprising, in part, given that mothers are generally viewed as the academic "educators" of their young children (Backett, 1987).

What Educators Can Do

The information highlighted from the studies above sheds some light on paternal participation in early literacy activities. Encouraging parents to read with their young children at early ages can enhance high interest levels in text and print once children enter school. Efforts to involve parents in early literacy practices have been one of the primary goals to improve the academic achievement of students (Bowman, 1994).

How can educators encourage parents to participate in and/or continue engaging in early reading practices? The following suggestions provide a framework for inviting parents, especially fathers, to become active participants in their children's literacy development.

1. Allow parents to suggest the types of reading materials and writing activities they would like to share with their children. Engaging in activities that one enjoys is often more productive — and rewarding — than participating in activities that stimulate low interest levels.

2. Encourage parents to start with informal and simple activities which may involve only parent and child, such as reading the weekly comic strip section together or television commercials on subjects children find interesting. The assumption often made is that the entire family must read together to instill in young children the importance of learning to read. Some parents may find group reading activities uncomfortable, particularly in households where reading does not occur as frequently or where parents work late-night or varying shifts.

3. Ask parents to take advantage of spontaneous and incidental reading activities that occur within the home. Such activities include the reading of mail, T.V. guides, newspapers, magazines, labels, instructions, phone books, letters, comics, etc.

4. Suggest that parents capitalize on environmental print. Children who are learning to read are often curious about familiar signs, logos, and billboards they see on their way to school or the market. Parents can read these signs to their children so that they begin to understand that print not only has meaning but that it serves a function.

5. Most important, remind parents to be patient. Allow children to become comfortable in a world filled with print. Children constantly observe others engage in an activity they do not yet fully comprehend — reading. As a result they will ask many questions. Respond with answers they will understand. It takes but a few seconds to help a child make sense of the print around them. The rewards are lifelong.

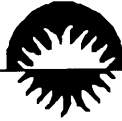
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Robert W. Ortiz is a faculty member in the Department of Special Education/Communication Disorder at New Mexico State University, in Las Cruces New Mexico. Laurie L. McCarty is a faculty member in the Exceptional Education Department at Buffalo State College, in Buffalo New York.



Children, Storybooks and Computers

Susan Talley
David F. Lancy
Thomas R. Lee

This study was designed to test the use of CD-ROM storybook programs' effects on preschool aged children's emergent literacy. 73 four-year-old children, divided into three study groups (experimental, control and well-read-to control) all enrolled in a Head Start program were given the opportunity to use CD-ROM storybooks during their free-choice time for approximately eight weeks. At the end of the trial period, the experimental group was compared with the control group and with their well-read-to peers. Results indicated that CD-ROM storybook programs may have a significant effect on the emergent reading skills of those children who are not as well-read-to prior to entering school.

"C.J." is, quite literally, bouncing off the walls, as we lead our six charges from their regular classroom to the multi-purpose room where three computer stations have been set up. Each trip we try a different tactic (playing "train" where children are coupled together by a yellow rope) or exhortation ("We use walking feet.") — to no avail. In the carrel with his partner Matt, C.J. doesn't take a seat; he barely touches the edge of the chair. He grabs the mouse and begins frantically pushing the buttons. One of us fits C.J. with headphones, and Matt gently places his hand under C.J.'s and uses the mouse to start the story. As the story begins, C.J.'s attention is riveted, his death grip on the mouse relaxes; he slides on his seat. Then, as the story nears its conclusion, C.J.'s spring rewinds, and he struggles to keep it coiled until Matt rides the mouse onto the pages of the next story which again, mesmerizes his partner.

C.J.'s experience was only the most interesting of several unexpected effects that emerged from our 6 month-long trial of CD-ROM storybook software (IBM's Stories and More). CD-ROM storybooks have proliferated in the last few years and we were interested in discovering whether their use in a Head Start setting might serve to compensate for some children's low level of prior experience with storybooks. First, we define the scope of the problem, then describe the setting and our approach and, finally, offer encouraging conclusions.

Background to This Study

Recent studies indicate that the child's first reading experiences in the home are critical to his/her eventual success in school. The research literature yields the conclusion that children who learn to read early or easily are read to at home (Durkin, 1966; and Teale, 1978). Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995) analyzed 33 studies in this general area and concluded that: "Our data ... particularly support the assumption that parent-preschooler reading is a necessary preparation for beginning reading instruction at school" (p. 17).

However, a survey conducted in 1993 (National Educational Goals Panel, 1994) found that fewer than 2/3 of preschool-age children are read to at home. This figure must be set against a decade of media bombardment and a plethora of new programs (e.g., "Running Start," Lancy 1994a) promoting family reading with young children.

In recent years, preschool and primary teachers have embraced the philosophy of reading aloud to their students. Evidence of positive effects is growing (Box and Aldridge, 1993); however, many questions remain. Story reading in a group setting may not be completely effective in replicating the effects achieved in one-on-one reading as practiced at home (Morrow, O'Connor and Smith, 1990). Teachers seem to employ a range of strategies in reading aloud to their classes which have a different impact on emergent literacy (Dickinson and Smith, 1994). Preschool "Children ... vary in their tendency to 'pick up' story language from read aloud sessions, a difference ... related to how familiar children are with book

reading in their homes" (Elster, 1994). Lastly, literacy activities, including read aloud sessions, were largely absent until recently, in the very setting (Head Start classes) where they were most needed (Dickinson, 1989).

We believe that, as valuable as group reading sessions are, they may not close the gap between children who are "well-read-to" (up to 1000 hours of at-home, before attending school, storybook reading, according to Adams, 1990) and those whose exposure to stories and print have been more limited. It is our premise that personal computers may offer a partial solution. Despite an initially negative reaction by early childhood educators, computers in preschool have recently earned a cautious endorsement (Waxler, 1994). With respect to reading and literacy in particular, Strickland, Feeley and Wepener (1987) suggest that the use of computers in reading instruction is often a powerful motivating force in and of itself. Until recently, however, the only programs available matched the "readiness" as opposed to the "whole language" or "emergent literacy" reading instruction paradigm (Lancy, 1994b).

CD-ROM Storybooks

The invention of CD-ROM storybooks (Parham, 1993) has changed all that. The basic genre is a classic picture book with accurately reproduced illustrations and a corresponding soundtrack. A mouse-based interface permits children to "turn the pages" and select titles from a menu. Furthermore, there are features of the CD-ROM storybook experience suggesting more of an adult-child reading session as opposed to the teacher-led group session. There is greater interaction: the child controls the pace at which pages are turned; s/he selects which book to read and/or re-read; s/he may do a word by word or line-by line reading; and there are "help" buttons.

It is important to note that, while there is a growing number of CD-ROM storybooks, we have chosen to use IBM's *Stories and More*. Unlike many of the popular storybooks that are widely available, *Stories and More* was designed for classroom use and provides a variety of stories all on one disk. There are several features that provide the teacher with a

great deal of flexibility. First, the teacher determines whether the program will allow the child to either pick a story from a menu randomly or to have the stories read sequentially. Second, the teacher can assign a specific story the child will read at his/her next visit to the computer. Finally, the computer keeps track of how much time each child has spent on a particular story or activity.

Many CD-ROM storybooks provide activities for the child to do on each page of the storybook. These entertaining features may detract from the actual story, causing the child to lose track of the plot and the sequence of story events. *Stories and More* provides activities for the child to participate in before the story begins. For example, in the classic tale *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, children may create their own version of the troll. They have a choice of three heads, three bodies, and three feet that they may mix and match. Then, the next screen allows the children to create a sequence of events. First, the children move the goats (starting with the smallest Billy goat) onto the screen before it actually begins. Then they may build a bridge and put water under the bridge. The story itself is not subject to manipulation. This feature provides an opportunity for the child to think about the story before they actually read it ... much like an initial question, answering, and predicting session that some parents or teachers would use prior to reading a book with their children.

The software may be set so the child hears an actor reading the story or it may be set for the child to read independently, with the option of allowing the child to highlight difficult words for the computer to read individually. Following the story, children may try the "Thinking About" and "Going Beyond," activities; however, we found these too advanced for 4 year-old children and deleted that option from the program.

Intuitively, *Stories and More* seemed appropriate for the 4 year-olds in Head Start, but the program was originally developed for somewhat older children. For this reason, IBM Eduquest could offer us no anecdotal evidence that it had been tried successfully with preschoolers and we found no published literature to guide us — aside from a very brief anecdotal

report on another CD-ROM storybook program (Miller, Blackstock and Miller, 1994). The proximal goal was to determine whether the logistical obstacles could be resolved so that a CD-ROM storybook "center" would mesh with existing centers in the classroom. Our more ambitious and distal goal was to obtain at least a preliminary indication of whether such a program might have a positive impact on children's emergent literacy. In order to adapt the program to this age group, we used developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) to guide our decisions and carefully tried out the program in the Bear River Head Start in Logan, Utah. These practices will be discussed in more detail by describing the setting and methods of the study.

Methods

Setting and Population. Head Start is a nationwide program aimed at providing school readiness and health and welfare benefits to four-year-old children from low income families. This participating Head Start is located in Northern Utah near the State University. This provides an unusual setting in that the client population is predominantly of the "Mormon" faith which places a premium on family literacy and many of the participants are children of students at the university, although there were also children of migrant farm workers and of working class families that attended the program as well.

There were eight classes of children; four classes in the morning and four in the afternoon. A total of 73 children participated in the entire study (85% of the total Head Start Center population 36 girls, and 37 boys). The remaining 15% were lost due to attrition. Only one parent refused to let her child participate in the study. All of the children were four years old by the start of school in September. The children were predominantly of European-American descent, although there were a few families who had recently immigrated from Mexico and were learning English as a second language.

Three computers were given by Eduquest to the Head Start program and placed in the Family Literacy Center rather than the classrooms for

three reasons: 1) to ensure a random sample was drawn from the entire Head Start population rather than limited by classroom; 2) to limit contamination of the study by controlling access to the CD-ROM storybooks; and 3) to ensure that all the children had the opportunity to use the computers.

Measures. We used three measures to assess the child's emerging literacy level: 1) *Print Awareness Test*; 2) *Concepts About Print*; and 3) *Picnic*. The *Print Awareness Test* (Huba & Kontos, 1985) was designed to identify the child's level of print awareness in the everyday environment. This test was developed specifically for this age group and was ideally suited to preschoolers because of its relatively short time to administer and minimal verbal response. The second measure, *Concepts About Print* (Clay, 1979) assesses children's familiarity with print conventions. The instrument is a replica of a typical picture book but with errors, such as text being printed upside down on a particular page. Finally, *Picnic*, (McCully, 1984) is a popular wordless picture book which has been developed into a clever test by Lynne Putnam (1994) to measure a child's understanding of story structure and sequence. In this measure, the child is asked to "read" the book and a protocol for scoring these readings reflects the child's emergent literacy development.

In each of the measures, children received a point if they got the item correct. For example, in the *Picnic* measure, if the child recognizes that the mouse family is leaving one little mouse behind and the family doesn't know it, the child receives one point. If the child is able to point to the correct picture in the *Print Awareness Test*, then the child also receives one point. This scoring method allowed us to aggregate the scores on all three measures making dichotomous variables into continuous variables.

Procedure. The project was divided into three phases. Phase one began at the start of the school year when the principal investigator introduced the project to families at the annual orientation meeting. We described the project to parents, asked them to sign a letter of informed consent, and administered a parent questionnaire designed to assess the current

amount of reading each child has already received in the home. All children who had been given permission to participate in the project were then administered the series of reading assessments by asking children to "come and play a game" with the project staff. We administered each assessment to the children either in one session or over a series of sessions, depending on the child's interest and attentiveness to the "games." After initial measurements were completed, children's scores were aggregated to determine the top third of the children who were assigned to the well-read-to group (N=13). The remaining two-thirds of the children were randomly assigned into either an experimental (N=28) or control (N=32) group.

Phase two involved taking only the experimental group to the computers (approximately six at a time — two per computer) for a twenty minute session using the CD-ROM storybook program. During the children's free-choice time, parent and grand-parent volunteers and graduate students from the Department of Family and Human Development the university took the experimental group from their classrooms to the computer centers where the children were allowed to use the computers for as long as the children wanted to remain (according to DAP). Volunteers kept field notes at each of the stations documenting what children did at the computer and providing anecdotes of the children's experiences each time they participated. At the end of phase two, all children received the same measures as a posttest.

During phase three, the remaining children (well-read-to and control group) were taken to the center and were given the same amount of time at the computers as the experimental group. At this time, we analyzed the data and gave the parents a brief description of the results of the study and a summary of the child's progress on the computers at the end of the year.

Analysis. Reviewing the field notes of the children at the computer, we found that the children required very little assistance from the volunteer once they learned the basics of using the menu and the mouse. Some of them already had some experience in computer use; however, there were other children who had a difficult time trying to master the hand-eye

coordination. By using the mouse and watching the screen, many of the children improved their fine motor skills. For example, the field notes indicated that Bethany had a difficult time trying to place the cursor where she wanted it to be and then keeping it there while trying to push the mouse button at the same time. Over time, she resolved this problem by using two hands — one position the mouse, the other to click on the mouse button.

Children spend approximately 12-15 minutes on the computer actively engaged in each learning session. The total average time from "Please enter your name" to "Stop for today," was 20-35 minutes. Each child visited the computer an average of 12.4 times with a range between 6 and 20. The total time the children logged on the computer ranged between two and six hours. Children read an average of 45 stories with a range from 22 to 83. Of their own volition, children were read several of the stories more than once.

We designed the parent-questionnaire so that a higher score indicated greater exposure to print (e.g., number of books in the home, how many people read to the child, etc.). Because our population was not a "typical" Head Start population, questionnaire results (directed a storybook reading in the home) more closely resembled the mainstream. That is, the mainstream had been read to often and from an early age. Despite this ceiling effect, those children who had received the highest aggregate score on the questionnaire, also made the highest aggregate score on our three measures of emergent literacy, forming our "well-read-to" group.

Mean scores at pretest indicated higher scores on all three measures for the well-read-to-group. To test significance, we used the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure at time 1 (pretest) to determine if there were any significant differences between the three test groups and our dependent measures. The main effects were significant for the *Print Awareness Test* and the *Concept About Print* test, but we didn't know if one group was significantly different from the others. The Least Significant Differences (LSD) post hoc test for multiple comparisons indicated that

the experimental and control groups were not significantly different from each other, but they were significantly different from the "well-read-to" group as we expected (see subscripts "a" and "b" on table 1). Even though the main effects for the *Picnic* measure did not show significance using the ANOVA ($p=.07$), we did find a significant difference between the well-read-to group and the two control groups using the LSD procedure.

Table 1

ANOVA on pre-test mean scores by group.

Assessment	Experimental Group		Control Group		Well-Read Control Group		P
	n = 28		n = 33		n = 13		
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd	
Pretest							
Print Awareness Test	6.71 _{4a}	3.95	5.06 _a	3.97	11.15 _b	4.95	.00
Concepts About Print	3.33 _a	1.59	4.00 _a	2.61	7.00 _b	3.63	.00
Picnic	6.75 _a	3.62	7.63 _a	4.53	10.1 _b	5.04	.07

Means that share a subscript are not significantly different at the .05 level using a LSD multiple range test.

By posttest, the main effects for both the Print Awareness and Concepts About Print test still showed significance using the ANOVA ($p=.07$), we did find a significant difference between the well-read-to group and the two control groups using the LSD procedure.

By posttest, the main effects for both the *Print Awareness* and *Concepts About Print* tests still showed significance using the ANOVA procedure, but the LSD procedure indicated that the experimental group and the control group were no longer similar. In fact, the experimental group and the well-read-to groups were both significantly different from the control group (note the change in subscripts "a" and "b" on table 2). Once again, the *Picnic* scores did not show significance using the ANOVA procedure, but there was a significant difference using the LSD procedure.

Table 2

ANOVA on post-test mean scores by group.

Assessment	Experimental Group		Control Group		Well-Read Control Group		P
	n = 28		n = 33		n = 13		
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd	
Posttest							
Print Awareness Test	7.21 _a	4.06	4.90 _b	3.74	7.71 _a	3.20	.02
Concepts About Print	4.06 _a	6.69	5.18 _b	3.18	8.81 _c	4.48	.00
Picnic	9.21 _a	4.49	8.21 _b	3.81	10.92 _a	3.71	.11

Means that share a subscript are not significantly different at the .05 level using an LSD multiple range test.

To examine if there were significant differences by group pretest (time 1) to posttest (time 2), we used the paired t-test (see table 3). The experimental group's scores on the *Concepts About Print* measure showed the most significant changes over time even though mean scores increased on all three measures. The fact that there were significant gains across all three groups on the *Concepts About Print* measure suggests that these concepts are some of the critical elements included in the Head Start curriculum or that the improvement in scores on this measure is due to maturation (Chill, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990).

The mean scores on the *Concepts About Print* measure was the most significant in the experimental group more than in the other two groups indicating that something else was affecting these scores besides the regular Head Start curriculum or maturation effects. *Picnic* also indicated significant changes from pretest to posttest ($p < .05$) but only for the experimental group. There was no significant gain in scores over time on the *Print Awareness Test*, nor did we expect there to be. The *Print Awareness Test* measures awareness of environmental print rather than

knowledge of literacy text. Furthermore, it is appropriate that the well-read-to group's scores were higher than the other two groups and further substantiates the literacy rich environment in their home. It should be noted that mean scores for the well-read-to group were still higher than the control or experimental groups on all three measures.

Table 3

Paired t-test scores: Pretest (time 1) compared to Posttest (time 2).

Assessment	Experimental Group n=28					Control Group n=32					Well-Read-To Control Group n=13				
	time 1		time 2			time 1		time 2			time 1		time 2		
	x	sd	x	sd	t	x	sd	x	sd	t	x	sd	x	sd	t
Print Awareness Test	6.7	4.0	7.2	4.1	-.7	5.1	4.0	4.1	3.7	.2	11.2	4.9	8.1	3.0	3.1*
Concepts About Print	3.3	1.6	6.9	3.4	-5.7**	3.7	2.6	5.2	3.2	-3.5**	7.0	3.6	9.2	4.3	-2.5*
Picnic	6.7	3.6	9.2	4.4	-2.9*	7.6	4.5	8.2	3.8	-.8	10.3	5.0	11.2	3.6	-.8

- * indicates statistical significance at the .05 level
- ** indicates statistical significance at the .005 level
- *** indicates statistical significance at the .0005 level

Discussion

As the anecdote that began this article suggests, virtually every child in this Head Start was able to adjust comfortably to the program. During the year following our trial, the computers have been integrated into classrooms and have become just another "center." The computer stations now require much less direct adult supervision than we found necessary when using the multi-purpose room. We established that a range of Head Start students are willing and able to interact with a program that reads classic storybooks to them. The benefit to those children in the control group seems clear.

It would appear that CD-ROM storybooks may have a role to play in providing "at-risk" children with an immersion in the kind of "storybook culture" that other children experience from birth. Many preschool programs that serve youth at-risk do have the means to purchase the necessary computer hardware and software, at least in the U.S. These programs are largely foolproof, requiring no computer expertise from the teacher. The

typical preschool instructional arrangement using the various learning centers lends itself to the integration of one or two computers as centers. Children are almost universally attracted to computers and to storybooks so getting them to use the CD-ROM storybooks should never be an issue. Because of the interactive, multimedia nature of this "genre," children with disabilities may be aided by CD-ROM storybooks, as opposed to more traditional media.

Our proximal goal was to determine the feasibility of using a CD-ROM Storybook in Head Start. This we did. Things ran smoothly and continue to do so after the study's completion. Our distal goal was to probe the usefulness of CD-ROM storybooks in closing the "readiness" gap between preschoolers with lots of prior exposure to storybooks and those with much less experience. Our results are promising but limited. Our population was somewhat atypical (offspring of middle class, but temporarily low-income students attending the local university). A more typical Head Start population might have yielded more dramatic results. The scale of the study was also modest in terms of sample size and duration. A larger scale replication is called for. However, measures of emergent literacy aren't very robust, so an ideal study would follow students at least into the third grade when measures of "real" reading could be employed.

A note of caution should be added. Using CD-ROM storybooks in a preschool setting does seem to have a very positive effect, but it does not replace a literacy rich environment in the home. Given the importance of early reading experiences, we believe that providing computers and CD-ROM storybooks in the preschool environment is one way to provide more exposure to books and print for those children who have not had that opportunity at home.

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Susan Talley is a faculty member in the Department of Educational Psychology, Research and Social Foundations at the University of Toledo, in Toledo Ohio. David F. Lancy is a faculty member in the Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology and Thomas R. Lee is a faculty member in the Department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University, in Logan Utah.



Constructing Meaning from Literature: Examining Discourse in Departmentalized, Multidisciplinary, and Interdisciplinary Contexts

**Joyce E. Many
Lisa Nicklow
Rebecca Hutchingson**

This naturalistic study examines the literary discourse which occurred in a sixth-grade language arts classroom within a departmentalized, a multidisciplinary, and then an interdisciplinary context. Audio tapes and accompanying field notes of all literature discussions surrounding three novels served as the primary data source. Secondary data sources included informal and formal interviews with the participants. Using a constant-comparative approach we identified elements of discourse and organized these elements into the following broad themes: 1) the text and the story world; 2) the reader and the story world; and 3) discipline knowledge and the story world. The literary discussions within the three contexts differed in terms of the overall approaches used, the elements which were emphasized, and the students' processes of constructing meaning. In particular the findings raised new questions regarding the use of literature within interdisciplinary units. Integration across the curriculum has often been seen as crucial in helping students overcome the fragmentation that is pervasive in schooling. However, we saw that when the unit topic becomes the force of attention, the literary experience itself can become fragmented. Thus as teachers move to interdisciplinary perspectives, they may wish to monitor their own use of literature and the role literature is to play in the unit.

In *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, the Carnegie Task Force (1989) calls for a movement toward interdisciplinary curriculum approaches. Arguing against traditional

departmentalized approaches, the committee contends approaching information subject by subject results in a "... fragmented array [which] does not allow students to connect new and old ideas or to construct their own meaning of the information" (p. 43). Instead, students should confront themes across clusters of subjects, thus allowing for inquiry, associations, and synthesis across content areas.

Such thematic or unit planning, then, is a primary curricular consideration of junior high schools in evolution to a middle school philosophy. Drake (1991) describes three stages a faculty goes through as they struggle to move to a more integrated curriculum. Most faculties begin in a departmentalized or discipline based (Jacobs, 1989) structure in which content subjects are taught in isolation with little or no deliberate attempts to show relationships among the fields of study. Initial collaborative efforts result in multidisciplinary approaches. Within this framework the entire school staff focuses on a theme or topic. Each teacher plans activities that address that theme. At the next phase, teachers coordinate units using an interdisciplinary approach, with learning experiences correlated across subjects. Content begins to overlap with less distinction between subject areas. In the final phase, described as transdisciplinary, teachers use block time and/or self-contained classes. Content and theme are fused, driving the entire curriculum, with no real division into subject areas.

Middle school educators are not alone in voicing support for an integrated approach to teaching. Language and literacy educators have emphasized the value of involving children with literature through an integrated approach (Norton, 1991; Pappas, Kiefer, and Levstik, 1990). Research has also underscored the importance of intertextual connections in the meaning making process (Beach, 1990; Rowe, 1987; Short, 1987). Little is known, however, about how students' construction of literary meaning might differ in these diverse organizational contexts. This naturalistic study examined the literary discourse in a language arts classroom within a departmentalized, a multidisciplinary, and then an interdisciplinary situation.

Method

The School

This study took place in a sixth-grade reading/language arts classroom in a middle school. The school serves a racially mixed population of white, black, and Hispanic students of primarily low to middle socioeconomic status. Traditionally the school used a departmentalized approach to the curriculum. However, as part of a collaborative teacher preparation project with a local university, the sixth-grade teachers planned and taught a six-week thematic unit. Finally, as part of a block of field-based teacher preparation courses, preservice teachers working with the sixth-grade teachers and the university faculty prepared and taught an interdisciplinary unit.

The Participants

A mentor teacher, Mrs. H., 19 sixth-grade students, four preservice teachers, and two university researchers were involved in this study. Mrs. H., the third author, is an experienced language art's teacher who uses a literature-based approach to reading and English instruction. The sixth-grade students (37% white, 37% black, 19% Hispanic; heterogeneously grouped) were assigned to Mrs. H. for a two period reading/English block. The four preservice teachers were students involved in the block of field-based methods courses. The first author was responsible for the language arts component of the middle school block and the second author was a doctoral student studying language, literacy, and culture.

Data Collection and Analysis

Audio tapes and field notes of discussions surrounding the three novels served as the primary data source. These were collected by the university researchers using participant observation techniques. Secondary data sources include informal and formal interviews with the participants; dialogue journals among the first author, Mrs. H., and the preservice teachers; and photocopies of students' written work about the novels. Phase I data collection occurred across a two-week period before the sixth-grade teachers began their thematic unit. Thus the literary discourse

surrounding the first novel, *Stuart Little*, was set within a departmentalized context.

Phase 2 data collection occurred during the teachers thematic unit. According to the teachers and professors involved in the project, this unit would best be described as multidisciplinary. All subject areas focused on a common theme (oceanography) but little coordination existed across the learning experiences in the content areas. Data was collected in Mrs. H.'s room as she focused on a condensed version of *Treasure Island*.

Phase 3 data collection occurred at the end of the semester when Mrs. H.'s preservice teachers taught their thematic unit, which focused on environmental issues related to the students' selves and their world. The preservice teachers correlated learning experiences with preservice teachers in the other subject areas in an interdisciplinary approach. Two literary works were used during this unit, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* and *The Talking Earth*. Students were allowed to choose the book they wished to read and discuss. All whole class literature discussions and the small group discussions surrounding the novel, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* were recorded.

Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection using methods recommended by Bogdan and Bilken (1982). Preliminary perceptions were often discussed between the university researchers and the classroom teacher at the end of a day's data collection. Audio tapes were transcribed and analyzed by the two researchers. To triangulate data analysis, initial assertions were discussed after each unit with Mrs. H., the sixth-grade student key informants, and the preservice teachers.

Transcripts of literature discussions were divided and cut into segments of one or more teacher or student turns relating to the same purpose. A data-driven categorizing system was generated through a recursive process, moving from transcript segments to research examining literature discussions (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Marshall, 1989; Rowe, 1987), research examining content area discourse (Alvermann and Hayes, 1989),

and writings on general classroom discourse (Stubbs, 1983; Dillon, 1984). Final categories were the result of a search for disconfirming evidence and a rechecking of meaning of unique incidents. Secondary data sources were used to corroborate or contrast trends found in the data. Peer debriefing also occurred throughout the study with a colleague in language and literacy.

Elements of discourse were organized into the following broad themes: 1) the text and the story world; 2) the reader and the story world; and 3) discipline knowledge and the story world (see Table 1). The categories within each theme were similar in the source of information (text, reader, discipline knowledge) which was prevalent as meaning was constructed. In the following sections we summarize the teachers' approaches, describe the patterns that emerged, and discuss the meaning construction during each phase.

Approaches, Patterns and Discussions

Phase 1

Approach to the novel. A consistent approach was evident each day in Mrs. H.'s approach to the Phase I novel, *Stuart Little*. This novel focuses on the adventures of Stuart, a two-inch tall mouse, who is the son of an otherwise normal American family. The novel was read orally by the students and teacher with discussion occurring after each reading segment. According to Mrs. H., while some of her other classes preferred individual silent reading, this class enjoyed oral reading and she believed these students would not read the book independently (Interview notes, Jan. 7). On most days attentiveness was apparent and students actively volunteered to read (Field notes, Jan. 6, 7, 10— second half of class, 13, 14). When attention did wane during the reading (Field notes, Jan. 8, 10 — first half of class), Mrs. H. would walk around the class, call on non-volunteers, and read segments herself with dramatic expression. After finishing a chapter, students discussed a series of questions, usually writing answers as they were discussed. After writing, students were often asked to share their individual responses. Only one lesson (on action and auxiliary verbs) unrelated to the novel was conducted.

Table 1

The Major Themes and Categories of Elements of Discourse

The Text and the Story World

What the story is about

Vocabulary

Paraphrasing

Connections within the text

Understanding character emotions/motives

The Reading and the Story World

Predictions within the story world

Evaluating/judging

Self in character's shoes

Using life experiences to understand the text

Text to life connections

Discipline Content and the Story World

Literary elements

Text as a springboard for literacy activities

Subject matter connections

Intertextual connections

The pattern of meaning construction. In discussing *Stuart Little* Mrs. H. and her students worked to build a threshold of understanding and to move from that threshold to entertain complexities of the story world. Discourse within the categories of what the story was about, paraphrasing, and vocabulary played a crucial role in the construction of meaning. Discussion of what the story was about often took place at the beginning of a class as the students and teacher reconstructed what had happened thus far in the story. To further their basic understanding, Mrs. H. encouraged students to imagine what had just happened or to describe characters or locations in the story. During reading, exchanges often focused on paraphrasing and on vocabulary to clarify textual information. Paraphrasing also served as an opportunity for Mrs. H. to model reactions to aspects of text by using voice intonation as she elaborated, thus alerting students to key points and to possible affective responses. At the end of a chapter, Mrs. H. again encouraged reiteration of the basic story events,

helping students to develop their own sense of what the text had to offer to their understanding of the story world.

Students used the shared knowledge gained from discourse related to paraphrasing, vocabulary, and what the story was about as a threshold from which they explored and made judgments regarding the story world. After summarizing chapter events, students reflected on character's motives and emotions. The focus in these segments was the textual evidence that supported the inferences; however, divergent answers were both accepted and invited. Occasionally, students were also asked to draw from their personal views to judge character's behavior or events (as right or wrong, logical or illogical, an advantage or disadvantage, etc.). Although not a common focus, this discourse allowed students to exercise their evaluative skills as they considered their own opinions.

Finally, students also gained a more complex understanding of the literary world by making intratextual connections across events in the novel. Such connections allowed students to explore character growth and development, to make valid predictions, and to view new events as understandable or important through comparison with past events. Consequently, these exchanges aided students' syntheses across chapters and helped them to reflect on the novel as a coherent whole.

A second thread was the major role student predictions played in the discourse. When discussing predictions, the focus was on the reader's imaginative construction of what might happen in the story world. Predictions occurred before reading a chapter (with predictions motivated by the chapter's title), during reading, and after reading. After reading predictions often led to writing activities with readers describing what might happen next in the story, posing alternative solutions to characters' problems, and composing alternative endings to the story. Students shared their written predictions and often worked together through peer conferencing and collaborative authoring. A high degree of student participation was evident in prediction segments (Field notes, Jan. 7, 13) and these

segments were often more lengthy than discussion focusing on other categories.

A third major thread that emerged daily in the discussion was an emphasis on making associations between the students' lives and the story. By asking students to "put themselves in the story," Mrs. H. involved the students in the literary work. Within these segments, students frequently commented or reacted to what other classmates said. Similarly, the discussion segments in "using life experience to understand the text" engaged students in drawing on general knowledge gained from life experiences. Such discourse, particularly the connections to similar events individuals had encountered, aided the students in personalizing the story experience. For example, in the following excerpt Mrs. H. tries to have Edward draw on his own experiences in explaining why someone might run away: (Student and teacher turns not separated by spaces were said at the same time. An "S" is used when the identity of the speaker could not be determined.)

Edward:	He might be bored.
Mrs. H.:	Is that a reason to leave home?
S:	(softly — at the same time) yea
Mrs. H.:	Have you ever been bored?
Edward:	Yeah
Mrs. H.:	Did you run away?
Edward:	Almost
SS:	(Short laugh)
Mrs. H.:	Honestly? (pause) Where would you go if you decided to run away?
Edward:	To my friend's house
S:	I wouldn't
Jerry:	I'd go far out of state
Zerrick:	You're stupid. You wouldn't go to your friend's house or your mama woulda called there and bring you home.

Thus, Mrs. H. used personal ideas from the readers to aid the students in their construction of the secondary world of the story. In a related category of discourse, "text to life connections" students were asked to take information from the text and to relate it to their own world. For many elements within this category, specific characters or events were

simply transposed into the children's world (e.g., What problems would Stuart face in your house early in the morning?). However, a less frequent but potentially important emphasis within this category occurred when students were asked to construct generalizations from the story that could be applied to their own lives. Focusing on issues such as rules of conduct, advise vs. law, or what is important in life, these discussions addressed themes that extended beyond the boundaries of the book to the students' lives.

Two threads from the theme, discipline knowledge and the story world, were woven consistently throughout the discussion. These segments, focusing on discussion of literary elements and on intertextual connections, were present on regular occasions but were not as frequent as other segments.

References to literary elements, such as personification, understatement, the author's use of descriptive language, and comparisons between fantasy and fiction, were interspersed throughout the discussions. Seldom was a topic mentioned only once, instead, references to these elements occurred repeatedly across consecutive days. Important in this discourse was the emphasis on understanding a given technique or style of writing in order to better understand and to enjoy the secondary world of the story. Thus, by calling attention to the use of elements such as understatement (Transcripts Jan. 6, pp. 10, 3, 37, 52; Jan. 8, pp. 6, 6, 9; Jan. 10, p. 23), Mrs. H. helped her students appreciate the humor in the language of the text and increase their aesthetic experience of the literary work.

Intertextual references included connections to other literary works, newspapers, and TV shows. References were made to other works by E.B. White to draw similarities between characters and stories. Students were also encouraged to make connections between events in *Stuart Little* and other works shared in class or previously read. The benefits of making such connections differed with respect to how successful students are at moving beyond a recognition of surface similarities. The importance of the meaningfulness of connections is questioned by a student, Zerrick, in

the following excerpt. After reading about Stuart Little going down a drain pipe, Mrs. H. brought up an article in the morning newspaper about a baby who had fallen down a chimney. A student in the class, Joleen, is telling about what happened.

- Joleen: ... and the boy thought he'd play Santa Claus and jump down the chimney so he jumped down into the fireplace and uh and, her aunt saw. Uh, his mom calling 911. People started, started telling them come get her baby and she was saying, "Where do you live? Where do you live? Where do you live? You need to be calmer so we can come get him." And the mama said, "Come get my baby, come get my baby!"
- Mrs. H.: She was so excited she didn't know her address?
- Joleen: Unh uh. So then after he got out of the hospital and they went home she said did you have fun, and he said he said, "yeah!" "Do you want to do it again?" "No!" And she said you only had bruise right here and right here (gesturing) and that was all.
- Mrs. H.: What I want to know is how in the world did the child get on top of the house to get down the chimney in the first place?
- Joleen: I guess he climbed up a tree.
- Mrs. H.: A two year old?!
- Zerrick: Huh unh.
- Mrs. H.: That is terrible, its in the front page of the paper Zerrick. I know I read it this morning.
- Zerrick: But what's the point?
- Mrs. H.: Uh, well, this is something going down the drain kind of like the drain where Mrs. Little's ring was lost.
- Zerrick: Oh!

Zerrick's insistence of clarification of the point illustrates the key factor in whether or not intertextual connections actually enhanced the students' construction of meaning. Segments focusing on intertextual connections ranged from comments which simply listed related texts to a few in-depth conversations in which the meaningfulness of such connections was made explicit.

Discussion: Phase I. Taken as a whole, the pattern that emerged in Phase I indicated the guiding purpose was teacher determined and was intended, for the most part, to involve students in a personal understanding

of the literary work. Discourse in the theme, the text and the story world, provided a threshold of basic understanding of the text and its complexities, while conversation related to the reader and the story world enhanced the students' involvement in the literary work. Intertextual connections and references to literary elements were also used to increase students' understanding.

Such an emphasis in literary discourse can be described as aesthetic in that the ultimate focus is on enabling students to experience the literary work (Rosenblatt, 1985). Many researchers and theorists have stressed the importance of having students enter aesthetic transactions with literature (Cox and Many, 1992; Kelly and Farnan, 1991; Many, Gerla, Wiseman, and Ellis, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1985); however, at first glance many aspects of the approach to reading and discussion and the resulting pattern for Phase I discourse could seem at odds with earlier research.

In Phase I, Mrs. H. employed quite a traditional, teacher-dominated discussion approach. Research in classroom discourse has emphasized and often been critical of teacher dominance in the classroom (Dillon, 1984; Mehan, 1979; Marshall, 1989). Indeed, when the first author first began data collection, the traditional nature of the question-answer discussion, sometimes instigated by questions on worksheets, was alarming. Doubts were raised whether to continue the study because surely students could not be actively involved in constructing meaning under such circumstances. However, through the extensive examination of the transcripts and discussions with the students and teachers, it became clearer that the students were engaged in the texts, and were finding personal aesthetic experiences in the literature.

The students' engagement in the literary world began with daily recapping of what had happened previously, thus grounding the students in the environment of the story world (Langer, 1991). When Mrs. H. detected a discrepancy between the abilities of her students and the abilities of the reader the author had in mind when the text was written (Booth, 1961; Iser, 1980), she used paraphrasing and discussions of vocabulary to

bridge this gap. Finally as Mrs. H. encouraged students to consider the complexities in the story world, to make predictions, and to relate personally to the story, she accepted diversity while asking for clarification of personal perspectives. Just as Cochran-Smith's (1984) story reader guided the flow of conversation and yet encouraged active negotiation of story meaning, so did this teacher open avenues of consideration for her readers as she worked with them to negotiate meaning.

This interaction pattern can be conceived as a type of scaffolding, in which Mrs. H. the more proficient reader, provides a framework for meaning construction for the students. Cazden (1990) draws comparisons between the type of scaffolding used in classroom lessons and scaffolding used by adults when interacting with young children. Adults supply a framework for conversation and the child is encouraged to participate in discourse through prompts in which the adult supplies missing information. In classroom lessons the initiation-reply-evaluation sequence mimics this pattern. However, Cazden also stresses that classroom lessons are less responsive to the growing competence of the student. The structure often remains the same across grades and students seldom get a chance to take over the adult role of initiator. In general, this might indeed, be the case. While there were some student initiated exchanges, unarguably, the teacher question - student answer pattern dominated the discourse in Phase I. However, in contrast to the classroom lessons and adult/child interactions Cazden compared, in Phase I discourse - the adult did not always know the answers to the questions she was posing. For instance, in exchanges related to the reader and the story world, the horizons of possibilities was left open and the conversation was rich in terms of authentic teacher/student dialogue. The existence of such reader-based threads provided evidence that, while there was teacher-directed scaffolding, the presence of the individual reader in the reader/text transaction was not forgotten and students were involved in constructing their own personal meaning from the literary work.

A second major point to be underscored for Phase I was the role discussion in the categories: 1) self in the story world; 2) using life

experiences to understand the text; and 3) text to life connections played in facilitating students' engagement in *Stuart Little*. The increased participation and the kinesthetic and spontaneous responses evident during these exchanges (Field notes, Jan. 6, 13, 16) indicated these personal associations sparked interest and generated a high level of reader involvement. This finding is consistent with earlier research linking readers' ability to make personal connections and their engagement in a story (Beach, 1990; Tierney and Gee, 1990).

Phase II

Approach to the novel. Discourse for the Phase II occurred during the first week of the multidisciplinary unit on oceanography and focused on a condensed version of *Treasure Island*. Students helped in decorating the room with ocean scenes and the students and teachers were excited over the prospect of studying the same topic in all classes (Student interviews, Jan. 14).

The basic approach to the novel consisted of oral reading frequently interrupted by lengthy segments of discourse. Only ten copies of the novel made it necessary for students to share books while reading. Four to five students showed involvement across the week, volunteering to read and spontaneously reacting to the discussions, while others were consistently less attentive or disruptive (Field notes Jan. 21, 22, 23, 24, 27). The oral reading was generally followed by additional discussion guided by focused questions and by creative writing activities.

The pattern of meaning construction. The first thread of the Phase II pattern was the daily struggle to construct a basic understanding of the condensed version of the novel. Much conversation was a result of the inferencing required because the novel lacked explicit descriptions. Secondly, Mrs. H. and, after a while, the students were not content to construct the secondary world using only the information from the condensed text. Instead, they tried to reconstruct a story world similar to the one that Mrs. H. had experienced when she read the original version. As a result, the primary emphasis focused on building a threshold of understanding

through an emphasis on two categories: what the story was about and paraphrasing.

Discussion of what the story was about followed the reading of short sections of text. In these lengthy discussions of basic story events, participants reiterated who the characters were or what was going in the story. As shown in the following excerpt, these discussions often required the students to make inferences.

- T: ... Does that mean that he is a part of their group?
 Christie?
- Christie: Not really.
- T: Does that mean that he is a spy?
- S: No.
- T: No. What does it mean?
- S: He's scared of the pirates.
- T: It means he's scared of the pirates but he's coming and
 taking care of them.
- S: Yeah, if he don't come he'll get hurt.
- T: How?
- Jeremy: They'll kill him.
- T: I'm not sure I understand your logic. Can you explain it
 Jeremy?
- Jeremy: He's fixing them so that the pirates don't get any worse
 then they'd be madder at them than they already are. So
 they help, maybe the pirates will come to like them.
- T: Okay, so he's keeping their good graces by taking care of
 the medical.

In such a way thinking was probed so that the inferencing process could be modeled for the community of readers. The emphasis here was not as much on the imaginative powers of the reader, as on the textual cues that alerted the reader to make certain inferences and thus to come to an understanding of the meaning behind surface events.

The use of paraphrasing between the reading of short segments of text also played a major role in building a threshold of understanding. Phase II paraphrasing went beyond simple clarification of what was in the text; instead, on numerous occasions Mrs. H. explicitly related information from the original version that could help students understand the story (Field notes, Jan. 21; Transcripts: Jan. 21: pp. 8, 10, 11; Jan. 22: pp. 6, 7;

Jan. 24: p. 36). The focus of the paraphrasing segments was overwhelming on understanding basic events, rather than on clarifying character's emotions or on modeling how a reader might respond to events. Mrs. H.'s additional information often generated increased student interest.

A second thread, which also seemed to have been affected by the condensed version, was the focus on having students make judgments or evaluations. Within this category, only a few segments judged the appropriateness of character behavior or events. Instead, most of the segments focused on evaluating the merit of the novel as a literary work as a whole (Transcripts: Jan. 22: p. 6; Jan. 24: pp. 3, 9; Jan. 27: p. 28) with one point of consideration the comparison of the condensed version vs. the original (Jan. 24: pp. 7, 9). Thus this evaluative discourse indicated the students had stepped out of the story world and were objectively analyzing the novel as a creation.

Discourse drawing on the reader to construct the story world was related to only one major thread, student predictions. The prediction discourse segments occurred primarily during the reading of the text, with readers asked to predict solutions to specific problems or to hypothesize the results of specific actions. Thus constrained predictions were not as open ended as when predictions are made before reading based on chapter titles, or when alternative solutions are posed in contrast to ones suggested in the text, or when story sequels are written. Still, the focus in the prediction exchanges was on the reader's ability to imagine possibilities rather than textual authority. For example:

- T: And here he is floating out in the water between the island, hopefully between the island and the ship. He's not anchored anywhere. Christy.
- Christie: He could uh (inaudible) on the boat.
- T: How?
- S: Like this.
- S: A shark!
- T: Are you trying to be reasonable or are you just making things up? Just making things up. Jeremy?
- Jeremy: He could drift away.
- T: He could drift away. John?
- John: Um, I have two things.

- T: Two things.
John: One, Long John Silver could get them and hold them as hostage.
T: How could they get them there on their own island?
John: Well got on the boat and ...
T: Well they don't have a boat. They don't have access to it.
S: Well they can swim out to the boat from the shore.
T: (Laughing) It's a long way.
S: And also uh, he'd be out where the base is and they might think it is another crew.
T: You just never know, well he can't if its been dismantled. Hasn't it?
S: Well I mean something else could.
T: Oh and what else could it be?
S: I don't know ... something.
T: (laughing) It is hard to predict isn't it?

Overall, the prediction exchanges for Phase II contrasted sharply with discourse falling into other categories in that exchanges were longer and involved greater numbers of students participating. Also, student turns were frequently more lengthy than the teacher's turns. Mrs. H. generally responded by reacting to students' suggestions, by paraphrasing when students spoke so the rest of the class could hear the remark, and by inviting clarification or suggestions. Thus prediction discourse gave students opportunities to take imaginative forays into the story world and the result was increased enthusiasm and involvement.

The final thread emerging on a regular basis for Phase II consisted of discourse focusing on literary elements. In the initial mention of a specific literary element, conversation often did not involve an in-depth examination of the literary device. For example, during the first references to point of view, discussion did not move beyond the definition of there term or the recognition of the type of point of view in the work or in previous works (Transcripts Jan. 12, pp. 7, 21, 28, 36-37; Jan. 13, p. 15). When considered in isolation such segments seemed to do little to further the students' personal construction of the story world. However, these references to point of view were followed by a subsequent discussion (Transcript Jan. 17, pp. 24-25) where students considered how the story would have been different had it been told from the parrot's point of view.

The following excerpt begins halfway through the segment, as the teacher works to develop students' understanding that not only would a different character (the parrot) be telling the story but that the parrot would have quite a different perspective of what was happening:

- S: He probably would have said: "The pirates are coming, look out.":
- T: "The pirates are coming?" Well, he belongs to those pirates. Do you think he would have said that? ... How would he have told the story?
- Jolene: I ... He would have...
- T: Jolene?
- Jolene: He would have said like ... he ... I think he would have said like Jim Hawkins would have been the bad guy and the pirates were the good guy.
- T: Okay. So he would have turned it around from a different point of view and he would have been telling what was he thought about that was good that they did.

Different students then continued, attempting to tell the story in the parrot's words. Finally one student brought up the story of the three little pigs told from the wolf's point of view (making the wolf seem not to be bad) and analogizes that from the parrot's point of view the pirates would not have been "bad" at all.

Rarely were references made to literary elements merely to reinforce students' understanding of the terms. The majority of the time such references were made in order to immediately enhance the students' construction of or appreciation for the literary world (e.g., alerting the students to elements of foreshadowing; Transcripts Jan. 12, pp. 23-24; Jan. 13, p. 3) or to build a groundwork for later discussion of the technique's impact on the story.

The discourse surrounding *Treasure Island* took place during a multidisciplinary unit focusing on oceanography. Surprising, references to the other subject areas or to the overall oceanography theme did not play a role in the pattern of discussion; in fact, only one reference explicitly linked the story to the overall oceanography theme. The subject matter references that did occur called attention to the social studies concepts

of latitude and longitude. The teacher commented that she probably would have made these connections whether or not the work was taught in the context of the multidisciplinary unit because she "taught social studies previously and [she tends] to work off the kids." (Interview, March 6).

In terms of the degree to which students made connections to other literature they were reading, the discussion of *Treasure Island* seemed unaffected by the fact that it occurred during the multidisciplinary unit. Although intertextual connections were an infrequent focus of attention, Mrs. H. noted that as the students became exposed to additional works containing similar settings, more associations were possible (*Treasure Island* was discussed the first week of the unit). This perception was corroborated by other six-grade language arts teachers (Interviews, March 6). Students were more likely to remark that they had made connections across books studied in language arts during the oceanography unit than they were to note connections between language arts and other subject areas (Students interviews, March 5).

Discussion: Phase II. The pattern that emerged for Phase II indicated the guiding purpose was to construct, at the least, an ongoing understanding of the basic events occurring in the story world. Thus students were primarily involved in what Langer (1991) has described as stepping into and moving through an envisionment of the story. To achieve this envisionment was difficult at times with tension felt between what the original version had to offer in contrast with the condensed version. This also resulted in some discussion that was not focused on the events occurring within the secondary world at all; instead, from time to time Mrs. H. and the students stood apart from their envisionment and critiqued the text itself. For the participants, stepping back and objectifying the literary experience (Langer, 1991) emerged regularly as students and teacher encountered frustration with their ability to create the desired experience.

Discourse in Phase II indicated that students actively worked to envision *Treasure Island*. Considering their enthusiasm for making

predictions it seems that they took interest in the events that were occurring or that they imagined could occur in the world of their creation. However, discourse focusing on personal associations played only a minor role in the discussions and lacked enthusiasm. Thus, while students were constructing the world of the novel, this was not accompanied by putting themselves in the story experience, evoking similar life experiences, or taking away information from the text and applying it to their own lives.

In examining the lack of enthusiasm in discourse related to personal associations, an interesting observation appears. Two additional topics that played minor roles in Phase II discourse were the categories: 1) character motives and emotions and 2) intratextual connections (in which character growth over time can become apparent). Beach (1990) has noted that across a series of texts, readers' initial connections between works and their own experiences are most often to feelings, settings, violations of behavior norms or conventions, and characters. Of these, three obviously deal directly with characters, their emotions, and their behaviors, topics that were not consistently the focus of the discussion of *Treasure Island*. Consequently, attention to characters may contribute to the degree to which readers can relate to literary works.

Phase III

Approach to the novel. Discussion of the third novel occurred at the end of the semester when the preservice teachers taught their three-week interdisciplinary unit focusing on environmental issues related to the students' selves and their world. After a brief introduction to novels, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* and *The Talking Earth*, the students were allowed to choose a group to join based on which of two novels they wished to read. *Dinky Hocker*, a complex novel, focuses on conflicts between a compulsively overweight teenager and a self-righteous mother who is so immersed in her volunteer work with teenage drug addicts that she grossly ignores her daughter. The novel was linked to the environmental theme through 1) references to the body as an environment and 2) recognition of compulsive eating and drug abuse as pollutants. The second novel describes the struggle of a modern Native American girl to recognize the value of

her tribal traditions considering the pollution threatening their environment. Often both novel groups joined for whole class discussions and activities.

Ten students choose to read the novel *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*. The six girls who chose this group cited an interest in the communication problems between the mother and daughter as the basis for their decision, while three of the four boys were drawn to the topic of drugs. Nine of the students were friends sitting in close proximity. One student was assigned to the group by the classroom teacher to separate him from members in other book group (Field notes, April 13).

Approaches to the book varied greatly from day to day. Many times students were asked to read silently or with partners and then the reading was discussed. On other days the book was read orally by the pre-service teacher and by volunteers with little discussion until the end of the chapters. Occasionally students went outside on the schoolyard or in an adjacent, empty room to read. Four girls were consistently active participants in the reading and discussions but the remaining students were often inattentive or refrained from actively participating in discussions (Field notes: April 14, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29). Half way through the unit, students were allowed to read at their own paces and three of the young people chose to read independently and subsequently completed the book by the beginning of the third week. The remaining students were often reluctant to read and consequently were usually brought together in a small group and the book was read orally.

Throughout the unit, collaborative groups worked on related activities some of which extended across more than one day. These activities seemed to generate a high level of student interest and participation (Field notes: April 13, 16, 21). Besides activities related to the novels, students created a magazine related to the overall environmental theme. Picture books, rap music, poetry, and videos were also shared to reinforce the environmental theme. This resulted in the novel being read intermittently across the three-week period rather than on a daily basis. During the last

week the final chapters of the novels were abandoned to allow students to complete the magazine before the end of the preservice teachers' field-based experience (Preservice teachers' interviews, April 29).

The *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* small group discussions and the whole group discussions related to both novels revealed an interesting pattern of meaning construction for Phase III. The major threads comprising that pattern are described below.

The pattern of meaning construction. The first obvious thread to emerge both was the manner in which students were asked to make connections between the literature and the overall interdisciplinary theme. This focus, persistently addressed by the preservice teachers, was integrated across categories focusing on the following areas: what the story was about (which included basic character descriptions), evaluations and judgments of characters and events, the literary elements of integral and back-drop setting, text to life connections, and intertextual connections.

Environmental references occurred almost entirely at the beginning and end of class when the two small novel groups joined for discussion and activities. On the rare occasion when an environmental reference was brought up in the small group as the participants were reading *Dinky Hocker*, the connection and resulting conversations seemed forced, for example:

- PT: Was she eating allot again?
 S: (inaudible)
 PT: What kind of pollution was taking place there then?
 S: She's not supposed to be eating out.
 PT: Oh, she not supposed to, okay.

As illustrated, attempts to connect to the environmental theme during reading seemed at times irrelevant to the construction of the secondary world. To answer the preservice teacher's question regarding the type of pollution taking place, a reader would have to step back from the events of the story to make connections to the environmental theme. Within the context of the events of the story, the type of pollution that was occurring

did not matter. Indeed the responding student ignored the question, focusing instead on judging the character's behavior within the framework of the story as it was unfolding.

In contrast, in whole class sessions students developed a basic understanding of concepts involving the environmental unit itself. In such discussions, preservice teachers attempted to have students understand what the story was saying in relation to environmental issues (Transcripts: April 14, pp. 1, 3, 4, 17, 19; April 15, pp. 17, 18, 19, 20; April 16, pp. 1, 11, 13, 14-16; April 21, p. 9). Through these discussions students expanded their notion of an environment to encompass the body as an environment and their understanding of the types of pollution to include drug abuse and compulsive eating. For example:

- PT: What did you write Zerrick [with respect to how the novels were similar in terms of dealing with environmental issues]?
- Zerrick: They both didn't care. They both are not into their environment.
- PT: They didn't really, didn't really get into it. What does that mean? Fred? (pause)
- PT: How did she not really get into her environment?
- S: Oh ...
- S: She kept on eating.
- PT: Right, she kept on eating and not caring about it.
- PT: - and not caring about her (pause)?
- S: Weight.
- PT: That's right. It's possible she gained a lot of weight because she was, I mean she had no concern for her environment, her personal environment, where as Billy Wind, how did she feel about her environment?
- S: Uh, she, I had it in my mind.
- S: She, she didn't care about the uhm, environment cause she, she said that she didn't believe that -uh-
- S: Oh, yeah
- PT: She didn't believe what?
- S: That, uh
- PT: She didn't believe in her environment.
- S: Yeah
- PT: So, so neither one really had faith in their environment really.
- S: On, uh, *Dinky Hocker*, *Dinky Hocker* had bad self esteem.

- PT: Right. That's very good. [That] had a lot to do with why she polluted her body -
 PT: - the way she did.
 PT: So she ate. She really didn't feel good about herself and she had low self esteem and she didn't care about it ...

In this exchange, and in other segments similarly focused, the pre-service teachers encouraged students to work at an abstract level rather than at a surface level. Also, although preservice-teacher turns were predominant and more lengthy than student turns, these segments did contain evidence of authentic student reaction to the unit topic something that was rare in other segments in Phase III.

Preservice teachers' references to the environment were their attempts to use the content of the novel to aid in the student's understanding of the interdisciplinary unit (Preservice teachers' cadre meeting April 14; Interdisciplinary unit plans; Preservice teachers' debriefing: August 11). They also were more likely to probe students for elaboration in these exchanges, in an attempt to uncover additional information connecting the novel with the environmental theme. Consequently, these exchanges often consisted of greater turn taking than other segments.

A second major thread of emphasis for Phase III could be described as a consistent but not quite a successful attempt to build a threshold of understanding for the novel. These exchanges focused on "what the story was about." This discourse emphasis was commonly introduced because of a preservice teacher question and consisted predominantly of long teacher turns. The majority occurred after reading extended sections of text (no such segments occurred at the introduction of each day's activity) and focused on what was occurring at a particular point in the story.

The lack of success at building a threshold of understanding was apparent from the beginning of the unit. Several times entries were made regarding the fact that the students did not seem to grasp what was going on (Field notes: April 14, 16, 27, 28, 29) and discussions with the preservice teachers and their written reflections in their teaching journals

corroborated this impression by the researchers. Examination of transcript segments led to several hypotheses about why, throughout Phase III discourse, there was little indication that the plot was being understood.

Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack is a complex work that requires that readers infer a great deal of information from events to understand the psychological conflicts occurring in the story. Although preservice teachers attempted to have students explain specific events, students often responded in a nonsensical manner. Students rarely gave elaboration on the textual information or modeled thought processes that led to a particular belief. Consequently, although references to what was going on in the story was a common focus, the resulting interactions seemed to do little to aid students' in understanding what was happening behind the scenes.

Secondly, often students in the small *Dinky Hocker* group and their preservice teachers were working at cross purposes (Transcripts: April 16, p. 19, 20, 21-22; April 27, pp. 4, 15, 16, 18; April 28, pp. 5, 6-7, 10). One ongoing word game between the male students was related to the title of the book. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, students continually responded to questions by irrelevantly bringing up that Dinky, the main character, took smack, even though this did not occur in the book.

- PT: What is it saying about Natalia?
 S: Taking smack. She started taking smack.
 PT: Natalia taking smack? We haven't read anything about Natalia ...
 S: No, not Natalia, but ... um Dinky shoots, takes smack.
 PT: We haven't seen Dinky shoot smack.
 S: No. There ain't no pictures. I know. Yeah, but she says ...
 PT: We don't have any conclusions ... (inaudible)
 S: Uh huh.
 T: Can (inaudible) judge everything by the cover of the book?
 S: No. Yeah, but (inaudible) said Dinky offered me smack.
 T: Oaky, quiet, ya'll quiet.
 S: I need smack.

Student's responses to literature in such interactions were driven not by a desire to respond to the preservice teacher probe nor by an authentic

response to the world of the text, instead, students' interactions seemed to be influenced by a need to be a part of a peer group community that was not actively involved in constructing meaning.

A third thread within the pattern of meaning construction for Phase III was an emphasis on characters. This strand consisted of discourse focusing on character motivates and emotions and on having students put themselves in a character's shoes. Discussion related to character emotions and motives made up the second largest category of emphasis in the theme, the text and the story world. Many segments within this category occurred on the last day of group discussion of the novel, in the third week of the unit. The preservice teachers had grown increasingly concerned over the students' lack of understanding and lack of interest in the novel (Preservice teacher-teaching journals), and after consulting with their cadre (Cadre meeting: April 28) had devised an activity in which each participant would be assigned a character in the story and would talk about what their character was feeling and how he or she was relating to the other characters. As illustrated below, some resulting exchanges seemed to enable more complex understandings of the intricacies of character relationships. The students are discussing the reaction of Natalia, an emotionally disturbed girl, to a gift of balloons given to her by a young boy and the resulting suspicions of Dinky's mother, Mrs. Parker, with whom Natalia is staying.

- PT: ... and no one really understood their little secret, the little conversations that they had. So, um, how did that make Natalia feel? Who's got Natalia? (refers to student assigned to Natalia's character) How did you feel about Mrs. Parker's suspicion?
- S: How did Natalia feel about what?
- PT: Fred?
- Fred: (inaudible)
- PT: You know what happened.
- S: Oh I know what happened.
- PT: What?
- S: She mixed ah, something up, salad with chili and gave it to Nader.
- PT: She started mixing things up, and she started mixing up the food. What do you think she was feeling when she did that?

- Fred: Sad. (mumbles) No.
PT: What?
S: She was thinking, uh ...
PT: Thinking about what?
S: In Renaissance [the mental facility she had been in].
PT: The times when she was in the hospital?
S: Yeah.

In such ways students recreated not only what the characters might have been feeling but also constructed a sense of what might have been going on in the character's heads. Such discourse uncovered the rationale and importance behind character actions and active processing of information was evident (Field notes, April 29). Segments with this focus were prevalent during the character activity occurring on the last day of discussion of the novel, and exchanges were often longer and involved multiple students. In contrast the character motivates and emotions segments which were interspersed in the intermittent discussions occurring during the reading consisted of short exchanges with superficial labels for what a character might have been feeling (e.g., "Um, she's feeling sad.").

A closely related activity had occurred during the second week of the unit when students put themselves in the characters' shoes by role playing scenes from the story. Working in small groups, students dramatized a scene from the story and then remained in character to respond to questions. Unlike discourse focusing on characters' motive and emotions, the discussion following the role playing did not emphasize the text as referent. Students were asked to act out scenes and to draw on their own feelings as they experienced the scene to describe the characters' feelings. Drama was motivational for the students and increased student participation (Preservice teacher — teaching journal, April 21).

Finally, a thread very important in the pattern of meaning making for Phase III was a result of the heavy emphasis placed on making intertextual connections. Such a focus surfaced naturally during whole class discussions as students from the two small novel groups were brought together. In addition, because literature was integrated into all subject areas in the environmental unit, references were also often made to picture

books, videos, or songs incorporated in science, social studies, or math classes. Intertextual segments focused primarily on three areas — characters, settings, and environmental aspects.

Contrasting characters occurred on the day when students were asked to compare the characters from the two novels using a Venn diagram. Few of the connections seem to go beyond a superficial level (character size, liking animals) although some connections were made with respect to the problems each was having concerning her environment. Making intertextual connections to understand characters occurred primarily within the context of this specific activity.

Similarly, comparison and contrast of settings were made about the two main novels and occurred in all but one instance within the context of a single lesson focusing on integral vs. backdrop settings. Preservice teachers chose this element because it was a requirement in the state curriculum guide and because it would allow for references to the unit theme (Unit plans). Discussions concentrated on having students understand the terms, with references to the two novels used to illustrate the differences between the terms. This knowledge did not seem to enhance the students' construction of the story world and the subject of setting was only referred to on one other occasion after the introductory activity.

In contrast, intertextual connections focusing on the environmental theme occurred across the unit (Transcripts: April 14, pp. 3, 17, 19; April 15, pp. 3, 10-11; April 16, pp. 14, 15, 15-16; April 28, pp. 1, 2). In the following excerpt, students drew on information that was read in a book in social studies class.

- PT1: Did ya'll have Mrs. H. yesterday? ... and what did you read in there?
 S: Greenel.
 S: Greynel.
 PT1: So, like there's a pollution going on in their story like it's going on there.
 S: Air pollution.
 S: The, uh, factories.

- PT: The air pollution going on in the factories, and it's sort of like what they were talking about in *The Talking Earth* whenever the father tells Billy Wind about the pollution that's happening in our world that we need to take care of and stuff. And, uh Derrick, I mean Sirquence.
- Sirquence: They were like, in the woods and he had, they started drilling before. They had drilled and what they had done was messing up the [environment].
- T: So you think that maybe Billy Wind's dad was worried about that happening again?
- S: Yeah (inaudible)
- S: Cause he said they might have to move.
- PT: Isn't that what happened in *Greynel*, people wanted to move because of their land?
- S: Yeah

Interestingly, intertextual connections to literary works were the only specific references made to content addressed in other subject areas during the unit. All of the intertextual connections were made to fictional literature that focused on some form of environmental abuse. Although subject area lessons were correlated during the interdisciplinary unit, students did not make any connections to expository texts nor did they discuss any of the information learned in science, social studies, or math.

Discussion: Phase III. In Phase III preservice teachers juggled two purposes; one, to have students recognize aspects of the novel that could relate to the theme of the interdisciplinary unit and two, to encourage students to become involved in the literary work. In correlation, the pattern of meaning making for Phase III seems to show students fluctuated in attentiveness during the reading of the novel and many constructed only fragmented glimpses of the world of the story.

Attention to characters, through empathetically role playing or by examining the text to understand character motives and emotions better, seemed to increase students' involvement in the story world. It was during exchanges with such focuses that students' psychic distance (Benton, 1992) to the secondary world seemed to move from a near detachment to greater personal involvement. However, with respect to Benton's concept of psychic process (the process of understanding the flow of time from

beginning of the secondary world to the end), students' inability to build an understanding of the conflicts underlying the plot meant that students had little concept of the relationship between events. Thus their involvement in the story world might best be described as an interest in snapshots of characters rather than in an unfolding story.

The dual purposes driving discourse segments in Phase III may have played a role in students' tendency to disengage from the story world. Discourse was driven not only by an interest in students' experiencing the world of the story, but also by an allegiance to making connections to an overall unit topic. Consequently, substantial amounts of discussion focused students' attention on analyzing the text as an object in order to relate the work to the environmental theme. Such discourse required that students assume an efferent stance toward the literary work (Zarrillo and Cox, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1985). Rosenblatt and others (Cox and Many, 1992; Many, et.al., 1995; Purves, 1991) have stressed that in any reading event attention will fluctuate between efferent and aesthetic focuses. Rosenblatt (1991) stresses, however, that the appropriate stance when encountering literature is aesthetic and that teachers must keep their overall purpose clear. While analysis of a text can be driven by an aesthetic purpose and can contribute to students' construction of the story, the efferent purpose driving the environmental references may have contributed to the fragmentation evident across the Phase III discussion.

In Retrospect

The preceding sections have described our interpretation of the patterns of discussions of three literary works occurring within different organizational contexts. Two of these situations involved the same teacher and similar overall approaches, although very different texts. The third context involved inexperienced preservice teachers, a variety of approaches to reading and discussion, and comparisons across multiple texts. We have not attempted to control any factors concerning readers, texts, or teachers across these situations but only to offer three scenes of the meaning-making processes within each situation. From these literature discussions within these three contexts (with their unique transactions of texts, teachers,

and students), individual readers will best decide what might inform their own situations.

Through this study we developed a new appreciation for the importance of the purpose underlying a teacher's approach to literature. In some discussions, teacher-directed activities that might seem reflective of a new critical, text-oriented approach were used to enable personal constructions of literary works. Similarly, references to literary analysis have often been assumed to result in an efferent stance, and yet we saw examples of how references to the author's craft could be used to enhance and support aesthetic experiences with texts. Thus as researchers and teachers we build bridges of understanding and a new found respect for each others ideas and preferences and closed our own gap between theory and practice.

In addition, we raised new questions for ourselves regarding literature within interdisciplinary units. Integration across the curriculum has often been seen as crucial in helping students overcome the fragmentation that is pervasive in schooling. However, we saw that when the unit topic become the force of attention, the literary experience itself can become fragmented. Thus as teachers move to interdisciplinary perspectives, they may wish to monitor their own use of literature and the role literature is to play in the unit. Our own concern to ensure that learning in one subject was correlated to information from a different subject area during the interdisciplinary unit worked at cross purposes with our desire for students to engage in the literary work. In retrospect, we feel that activities and discussions related to a literary work must ultimately be responsive to the needs of the children as they work to construct the story world. Once such literary worlds have been envisioned and experienced, students can weave understandings of the larger thematic relationships between books and interdisciplinary units in more meaningful ways.

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Joyce E. Many is a faculty member in the Department of Middle/Secondary Education and Instructional Technology at Georgia State University, in Atlanta Georgia. Lisa Nicklow is a faculty member in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at University of Houston, in Clearlake Texas. Rebecca Hutchingson is a teacher at Jane Long Middle School, in Bryan Texas.



Children's Literature: What's on the Horizons

**Lauren Freedman
Western Michigan University**

Bailey, Linda. 1997. *What a Daring Detective Like Me Doing in the Doghouse*. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Company, \$4.50 pb. ISBN: 0-8075-8835-3. 185 pp.

This is another case in the Stevie Diamond Mystery series. In this book, Stevie Diamond and her partner, Jesse Kulniki set out to discover the identity of the prankster who has kidnapped the president's dog while he is visiting Vancouver from the United States. It is Jesse who realizes they must find the prankster as they have found the dog and it now looks like they are the kidnappers. Linda Bailey writes with wit and humor. Her characters are interesting and unusual and the interactions between and among them are immensely entertaining. The plot is well developed and keeps the reader guessing right along with Stevie and Jesse.

Smith, Mark. 1997. *Pay Attention, Slosh*. Illustrated by Gail Piazza. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Company. ISBN: 0-8075-6378-1. 54 pp.

Josh is eight years old and can't seem to concentrate or stay still for any length of time. He is troubled by this and often wonders what's wrong with him which leaves him feeling angry and frustrated. Consequently, he has problems at school with both the teacher and some of his peers who call him "Slosh," a nickname he hates. Finally, his parents decide to get some help. Working with a doctor, they use a combination of positive rewards and medicine to help Josh regulate his behavior. Josh's story is well told and would be a good resource for children with ADHD and children who have friends and classmates with ADHD.

Mastoon, Adam. 1997. *The Shared Heart: Portraits and Stories Celebrating Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young People*. NY: William Morrow & Company, \$25.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-14931-6. 87 pp.

A beautiful and moving combination of photography and narrative, this book gives voice to the experiences of 40 lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth ranging in age from 16 to 23. The narratives are told in both type-set print and the original handwriting of each of the young people. Taken together the portraits form a pluralistic representation of male and female as well as a variety of ethnic groups while maintaining the individual lived experiences of each person. This is a book which should be shared widely both in and out of classrooms as it will open minds and hearts to both the uniqueness of each of these young people and the similarities they share with all young people.

The Shared Heart also includes at the end a bibliography of resources which offer information and materials about and for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. The list is by no means exhaustive, rather it provides a starting point.

Stevens, Diane. 1997. *Liza's Star Wish*. NY: Greenwillow Books, \$15.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-15310-0. 183 pp.

In this sequel to *Liza's Blue Moon*, Liza's best friend Chloe has moved to Houston from San Antonio and Liza goes to Rockport to spend the summer with her Grandmother, Mama Lacy who is loud and bossy. Liza leaves behind her boyfriend, Forrest with whom she communicates via E-mail, but it's not the same. She makes friends with a girl named Paz who invites her to go to Mexico. Then, Chloe comes to visit and accuses Liza of not being the same. Liza has to deal with a lot during this summer in terms of her relationships not only with Chloe, Forrest and Paz, but also with her mom, dad and of course, Mama Lacy. Liza narrates the story and does so with humor and perceptiveness. She is a character that will bring the reader into her world and not only share her struggles but also her strength and wisdom as well.

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