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ABSTRACT
                Concerned with the interaction between teacher
writing values and classroom writing instruction, this report
describes a naturalistic study of writing-related activities and
teacher attitudes in a combined second and third grade classroom and
a sixth grade classroom. It presents descriptions and analyses of
seven occasions for writing that illustrate how teacher planning,
prior experiences, conceptions of writing as a process, and beliefs
about student abilities were reflected in the teaching of writing.
The report also suggests the varied writing functions evident in
different writing occasions: writing to know oneself and others,
writing to occupy free time, writing to participate in the community,
and writing to demonstrate academic achievement. It identifies a
number of issues as important challenges to writing instruction,
including (1) developing a sense of audience, (2) using models, (3)
instilling a sense of purpose in writing occasions, (4) setting
expectations for writing performance, (5) evaluating students'
writing, and (6) recognizing the classroom context as an influence on
writing. The report closes with a discussion of the study's
implications for teaching, curriculum development, and future
research. Extensive appendixes include a list of articles and
workshops arising from the research, the videotape viewing session
format, and samples of field notes, interview notes, teacher journal
entries, and a videotape log. (MM)

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Research Series No. 104

UNDERSTANDING WRITING IN SCHOOL:
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF WRITING AND
ITS INSTRUCTION IN TWO CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

During 1979-81 a naturalistic study of schooling and the acqui-
sition of written literacy was conducted in two classrooms, a combined
second/third grade and a sixth grade. The four teachers involved in
the study (two focal teachers and their teammates) were active through-
out the project as research collaborators who helped to shape the
inquiry and to give direction to the data interpretation. This report
presents descriptions and analyses of seven occasions for writing that
illustrate how the teachers' planning, prior experiences, conceptions
of writing as a process, and beliefs about their students' abilities
were reflected in their teaching of writing. The occasions for writing
also illustrate the multiple functions that writing served in these
classrooms: writing to know oneself and others, writing to occupy
free time, writing to participate in community, and writing to
demonstrate academic achievement. Issues identified as important
contributors to the challenge of teaching writing in school include
audience, the use of models, the need for a sense of purpose in
writing occasions, the setting of expectations for writing performance,
evaluation of students' written work, and the classroom context as
an influence on writing. The report closes with a discussion of
implications of the study for teaching, curriculum, and further
research.

Acknowledgements

UNDERSTANDING WRITING IN SCHOOL:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF WRITING AND

ITS INSTRUCTION IN TWO CLASSROOMS

Christopher M. Clark and Susan Florio[1]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Written literacy is an acknowledged and valued outcome of schooling in our society, yet it has been lamented that writing is the most neglected expressive mode in both research and teaching. The social and cognitive complexities of writing make it a difficult activity to study. But writing instruction continues to be a thorny responsibility of teachers, and the economic and social futures of children rest in part on their mastery of some set of writing skills. For these reasons, it is fitting that teachers and researchers with diverse skills and interests invest energy and creativity in the study of writing in schools.

The Safety Posters: An Occasion for Writing

Before presenting the details of the study, the following story of an occasion for writing is offered. The story is offered to give the reader a feeling for the kinds of data and analytic approaches used in this study, and also to show the following:

1. that writing arises in classrooms that are open to its possibilities;

2. that it helps to know about teacher plans, intentions, and beliefs to make sense of the writing that is observed in classrooms; and

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3. that occasions for writing in classrooms are negotiated and multi-faceted.

The following paragraph is an excerpt from notes taken during an interview of Ms. Donovan,[2] the teacher of a combined second/third grade, on Monday, September 17, 1979, the eighth school day of the year:

> In our interview, Ms. Donovan described how she used an unexpected traffic safety assembly as an opportunity to do a writing exercise. The assembly included a film on bicycle and pedestrian safety and a talk on the same subject. After Ms. Donovan and her students returned to Room 12, she asked them to recall some of the safety rules that they had just heard about. Ms. Donovan said that she was very surprised at the terrific difficulty that the children had in remembering the safety rules. At first, they could remember only the general topic of the assembly. With some coaching and reminding, several of the rules were recalled. Then Mr. Donovan asked the students each to choose one safety rule and draw a picture illustrating the rule. These poster-size pictures, with the safety rules as captions, will be posted in the hallways as a service and a reminder to the other students in the school. (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

The Safety Posters Activity is an early and telling example of occasions for writing in this primary grade classroom. It began with the unexpected: a school-wide assembly that Ms. Donovan learned of only upon arrival at school Monday morning. What began as an unexpected interruption of the school day grew into an elaborate series of learning experiences that extended over several days, and, to some degree, involved children and adults throughout the entire school. What happened and how did it come about? To answer this

----

[2]The names of the teachers, children, schools, and school district used in this report are pseudonyms.

question, it is useful to "unpack" the above paragraph from the

interview notes of September 17:

> In our interview, Ms. Donovan described how she
> used an unexpected traffic safety assembly as an
> opportunity to do a writing exercise.

Commentary: This assembly was a school-wide event presented in the

gym by two uniformed young women employed by the local police depart-

ment. The young women were known by some of the children as their

summer jobs had involved monitoring bicycle safety. The assembly

is a clear example of formal contact between the larger community

and the school population. Bicycle and pedestrian safety are topics

that are very relevant to elementary school children, and responsi-

bility for the safety of school children is shared by school per-

sonnel, parents, public safety officers, and the community at large.

Safety is a fundamental issue, and, in this case, a safety assembly

took priority over classroom and academic issues. The fact that the

assembly was unexpected, yet easily incorporated into the morning

was, in part, a function of the flexibility of the early weeks of

school, when the daily and weekly schedules are not yet fully de-

veloped into relatively fixed routines. Ms. Donovan learned about

the safety assembly before the children arrived and included it as

the first entry on the daily schedule written on the chalkboard

(Field Notes, 9/17/79):

> On the board, Ms. Donovan has written the "plans
> for today." The safety assembly is included and
> starred as a special occasion. The plans are as
> follows:

Assembly*	Language Arts	Science (2)
10:05--10:30	12:15--12:50	Soc. St. (3)
Gym	Lunch	2:45--3:00
10:30--11:00	12:55--1:15	Clean up
Reading	Centers	3:00--3:10
11:00--11:15	1:15--1:55	Diaries
Recess	Math	
11:15--11:30	1:55--2:10	
USR	Recess	

The assembly included a film on bicycle and pedestrian safety and a talk on the same subject.

Commentary: The 9/17/79 field notes describe the assembly as

lows: "the young women talked about and showed several film ;

about safety in walking or bicycling to school." The field w(

who attended the assembly also remembered that this was the f:

school-wide assembly of the year, that some students were lou

disorderly and were brought back to order by the school princ

and that the safety presentation was not smooth and spellbind

One of the filmstrips actually burned up as it was being proj

In short, this assembly had as much to do with learning how t

have at an assembly as it did with safety rules.

It was during the assembly that Ms. Donovan had the idea

using this experience as the basis for a writing activity lat

the morning. While the data do not reveal what triggered the

earlier interviews and observations suggest that Ms. Donovan

predisposed to make the most of the unexpected. She valued v

and believed that school writing activities must have a clea1

if they are to be successful. On the second day of school, 1

Donovan and her students did another writing activity that began

with the common experience of a film. She describes this acti-

vity in her journal entry of September 9:

> I was pleased with Friday's writing lesson. Motiva-
> tion was movie on word families, then students wrote
> and illustrated sentences utilizing a word family
> (e.g., Jim Rice slid on ice and landed in lice.)
> This type of open-ended lesson seems to be the most
> effective. Children with differing abilities can
> be as simplistic or sophisticated [as they want to]
> depending upon their creativity. Instruction is to
> the group, but the results are individualized with-
> out isolation from the total group. (Teacher Journal,
> 9/9/79)

As will become apparent as the Safety Posters Activity unfolds,

the structure of this occasion for writing includes an initial shared

experience (the safety assembly), a clear purpose and audience, and

the kind of open-ended opportunity for children to produce something

that reflects their ability, creativity, and sophistication. The

most advanced students are not held back, and the least advanced

students can still achieve a measure of success. In short, the

safety assembly probably triggered the plan for the Safety Posters

Activity because the assembly fit Ms. Donovan's pattern or set of

criteria for a good writing activity. It seems that this "sponta-

neous planning" that Ms. Donovan engaged in is more frequently seen

in curriculum areas like language arts, where there are few published

series or kits, than in subjects like math, reading, and science,

which are largely structured by published materials.

> After Ms. Donovan and her students returned to
> Room 12, she asked them to recall the safety rules
> that they had just heard about. Ms. Donovan said
> that she was very surprised at the terrific diffi-
> culty that the children had in remembering the
> safety rules.

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Commentary: Again, the field notes give a clearer picture of what

actually happened on that Monday morning. Ms. Donovan's students

stayed in the gym after the safety assembly for physical education

(10:05 -10:30 a.m.). When the children returned to Room 12, they

worked on reading worksheets, went to recess, then did 15

minutes of silent reading. It was not until 11:35 a.m. (language

arts time) that the children were asked to recall the safety rules

taught in the assembly. Given so many interpolated activities,

that the assembly itself was full of interruptions and distractions,

and that the children did not know in advance that they would be

expected to remember the specific wording of the safety rules, it

is not surprising that they had difficulty. The safety assembly

was an experience removed in time and space from the classroom. The

children had no props or memory aids to stimulate their recall.

> At first, they could remember only the general
> topic of the assembly. With some coaching and
> reminding, several of the rules were recalled.

Commentary: In attempting to bring her plan into action, Ms. Donovan

had to take on the roles of "class memory" and "memory coach." She

had assumed that the safety assembly experience would be sufficiently

recent and vivid to serve as the common experience basis for the

language arts activity. When Ms. Donovan discovered (to her surprise)

that the children did not remember the specific safety rules, she

changed her plan on the spot. The teacher's task now became to re-

create the common experience in a form, place, and time such that all

the students had it available to them for use in the next part of the

activity. The field notes (9/17/79, p. 3) show how this was done:

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As part of language arts, Ms. Donovan asks students to "re-run" this morning's safety program and recall what they learned. On a piece of large white paper up front, Ms. Donovan prints what they recall. The format is that an individual raises her/his hand. Ms. Donovan writes down what (s)he says. Another student is asked to read it back.

Ms. Donovan writes down what students say in multi-color magic markers:

1. Don't run on the street without looking.
2. Don't take shortcuts you don't know.
3. Don't cross the street when the light is red.
4. When you ride your bike, keep your hands on the handlebars.*

*This formulation arrived at after several revisions. Ms. Donovan has said, "Take your time and re-state it, how you want to say it." In coming up with this one, students chime in with alternatives; Ms. Donovan asks them to let her restate it.

(This activity resembles others that have been observed so far. It is the generation of general information posters by the whole group with Ms. Donovan acting as scribe.)

In coming up with sentences, Ms. Donovan says, "Sometimes does it take a couple of times to get out what you want to say? That's OK." The person who offers the original idea has the final say as to how it is written down. (Field Notes, 9/17/79, p. 3)

This process continues until 10 safety rules are recorded. Notice that Ms. Donovan goes to some length to see that every student has a chance to be actively involved in the rule generation part of this process. Oral editing, friendly amendments, and reading aloud are all used to produce a document that every child has had a hand in and understands. Mechanics such as spelling and penmanship are taken care of by the teacher acting as scribe. The use of a rough draft is foreshadowed by Ms. Donovan's statement that "Sometimes does it take a couple of minutes to get out what you want to say? That's

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OK." In short, this part of the Safety Posters Activity constitutes a <u>collective</u> and largely <u>oral</u> preparation for writing that makes visible how the solitary, silent author could prepare to write (and is an activity in which even kids who have "forgotten how to write" can compose).

> *Then Ms. Donovan asked the students to each choose one safety rule and draw a picture illustrating the rule. These poster-size pictures, with the safety rules as captions, will be posted in the hallways as a service and a reminder to the other students in the school.*

<u>Commentary</u>: This was the point at which the full plan was first communicated to the children, that is, the part of the plan that had to do with transforming what the students knew into graphic form. The students were given a choice, within a clear and limited set of alternatives, and this element of student choice seems to have been an important part of Ms. Donovan's beliefs about effective learning activities, particularly in writing. The combination of drawing and writing is also a striking aspect of this task, as illustrated in Figure 1. Other researchers have commented on the close and mutually supportive relationship between drawing and writing, especially in the early grades (e.g., Graves, 1978; Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977; Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1978; Clay, 1975). The field notes give a vivid and more complete portrayal of the writing/drawing phase of the Safety Posters Activity:

> Next Ms. Donovan asks students to think of ways to help remind the rest of the school of these rules. The students suggest the following:
>> "take them around"
>> "put them up on the hallway*
>> "tell them not to do it"

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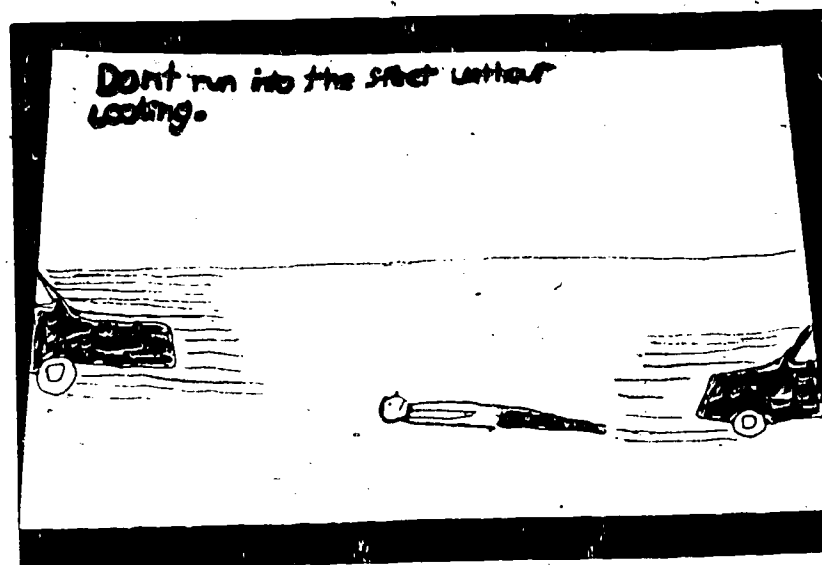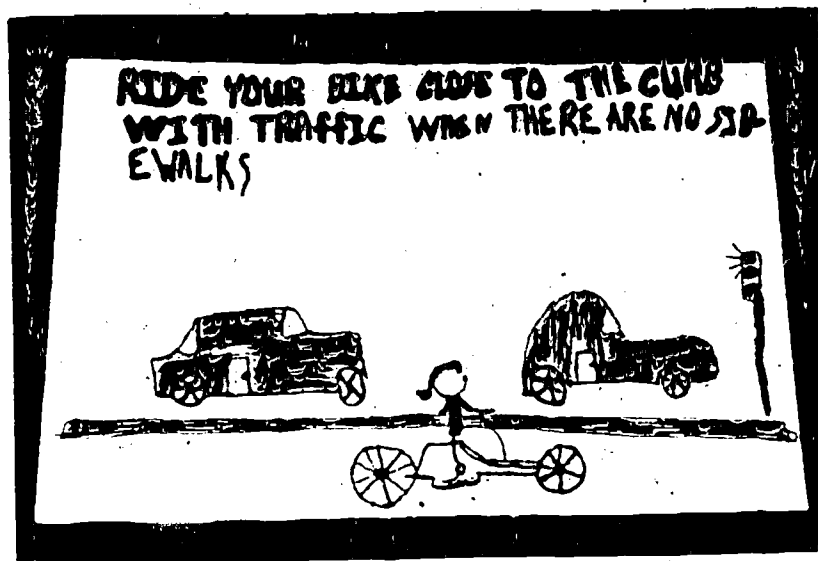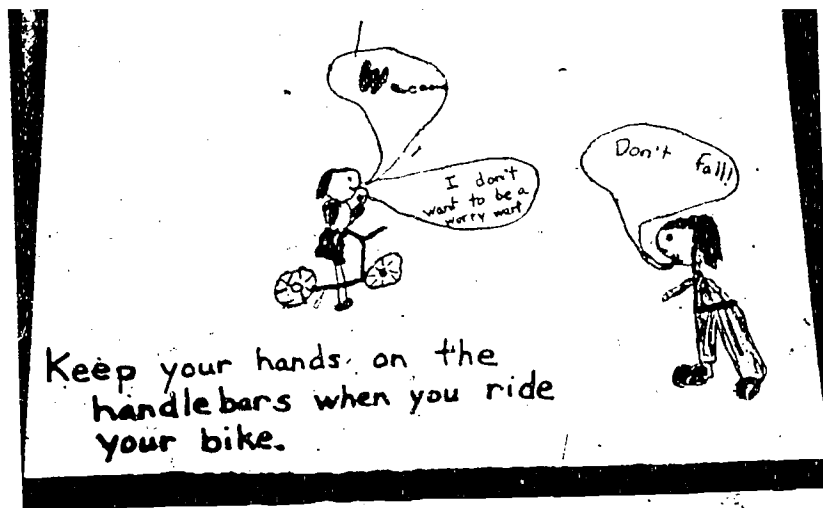
Figure 1. Sample safety posters.

*This is response to Ms. Donovan's question:
"How could each one of you help remind them of
one rule?

(It is interesting to note that, in response to
the charge, the students do not generate any means.
that are specifically writing-related. They <u>do</u>,
however, offer symbolic alternatives that are
largely visual.)

After the students make their suggestions, Ms.
Donovan says, "I had an idea, too. Each (person)
could make a·poster with one rule and put is in
the hallway."

The students say, "Yeah!"
Ms. Donovan: "Do a picture and write the rule
    on the bottom."

Before getting started, an additional rule is
generated:

 11. Don't ride a bike too big for you.

At <u>11:50</u>, as students go to their seats to start,
Ms. Donovan says, "At the end I'll write the rule
for you or you can write it yourself in marker.
The picture has to be done in crayon."

The students sit quietly at first. Overheard is
the following exchange:

Student: "What are you going to do?"
·Student: "I don't know; I'm still thinking."

Some students prefer to write the rule first; others
make pictures first. Several students found the
task difficult for several reasons, e.g., they did
not want to do a rule that they found out a lot of
other students were doing; they couldn't draw what
they needed to illustrate the rule (such as a bi-
cycle). The upshot of these difficulties was that
by the end of the available time, some students
were completely finished while others were just
getting started. (Field Notes, 9/17/79, pp. 4-5)

Notice that both the <u>purpose</u> of the posters and the <u>audience</u> for the

posters are specified before crayon touches paper. The students were

guided by their teacher to participate in "coming up with the idea"

of drawing safety posters. All of the necessary elements were now

in place: the list of rules on "experience paper," crayons, poster

paper, an opportunity for choice and originality, a sense of shared

ownership of the project, and the dual motivation of having one's

work displayed in the hallway (a place of honor) and of doing good

(perhaps even saving a life) by reminding other schoolmates of the

safety rules. Ms. Donovan took a further step to minimize threat

by offering to write the rule herself on the bottom of the posters

of those students who wanted or needed that help.

The time allowed for drawing and safety rule writing was

about 45 minutes (11:30 - 12:15). As the field notes indicate,

there were wide individual differences in task completion. This is

an issue that Ms. Donovan returns to again and again during the

course of the year. For example, the issue was first raised in the

September 17 interview:

> In discussing planning and diagnostic testing, Ms.
> Donovan raised a perennial problem for teachers:
> how to deal with the relatively large differences in
> the speed at which children work when they are working
> independently. "What should I do with the kids who
> finish fast? When I give them fun and extension ac-
> tivities to do I feel that the children who finish
> more slowly are being gypped. I like closure--every-
> one must finish. I don't want the slower kids to
> get farther and farther behind."
>
> (It is interesting to note that this problem of indi-
> vidual differences in working speed has shown up so
> early in the year. We should take care to note the
> ways in which Ms. Donovan deals with this issue as
> she tries to resolve an apparent conflict between
> her personal philosophy and value on equal opportu-
> nity and the practical realities of a mixed ability
> class. She seems to recognize that faster is not
> always better. This might be especially true in
> writing.) (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

Epilogue: The Safety Posters Activity continued to develop, as

though it had a life of its own. By Wednesday, September 19 (two

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days after the safety assembly) all of the posters were finished.

That day, in a conversation at lunch with the kindergarten teacher,

Ms. Donovan had the idea that her students should make small group

presentations of their posters to the kindergarten children as a

prelude to displaying the posters in the school hallways. Arrange-

ments were made to do this on Thursday, September 20. During the

morning and afternoon that day, groups of three or four of Ms.

Donovan's students were sent to the kindergarten room to show their

posters and teach the younger children the safety rules. The field

notes for September 20 and 21 show how this process developed:

> (9/20/79, p. 1): At 9:20, students gather in the
> center. Ms. Donovan says, "The kindergarteners are
> just learning to get along together." This comment
> is prelude to her sending several students to kin-
> dergarten to hang posters and tell about them.
> (Yesterday at lunch, Ms. Donovan negotiated the
> time and purpose of the safety poster sharing with
> Mr. Brown, the kindergarten teacher.)

> (9/20/79, p. 1): Dani returns from the kindergar-
> ten and says that she was scared to read her poster
> to the children. She says that, "the kids didn't
> even listen," but that she read it and showed them
> her drawing anyway.

> (9/20/79, p. 3): [At about 11:00] Before the stu-
> dents left for pictures, they began to talk about
> their experiences of sharing the safety posters
> with the kindergarten earlier this morning. Some
> said they found it "embarrassing" and "scary."
> Some students said they thought it might have helped
> to practice beforehand. They agree that students
> who will go this afternoon should practice first.
> Ms. Donovan tells the other students to help them
> practice by asking questions "that you think the
> first graders would ask." As a few students stand
> up to do it, their peers applaud their efforts.

> (9/20/79, p. 4): At 12:55 the students reconvene
> in the center. Ms. Donovan, who has had a chance
> to talk to Mr. Brown (the kindergarten teacher) at
> lunch, says, "Mr. Brown said that you guys did a
> good job this morning, even if you were nervous."

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Then five students leave with their posters to
talk to Mr. Brown's afternoon class, saying they
are nervous. (Lea has a stomach ache.)

(9/21/79, p. 3): At 12:55, after lunch, the stu-
dents gather in the center. Afternoon roll is
taken and one of the students reads the "afternoon
plans." Three students leave for the kindergarten
with their safety posters. Ms. Donovan asks them,
"Do you know what yours says?" She has them read
back what's written on the posters before leaving.

(9/21/79, p. 3): At 1:05, students return from
kindergarten.

Ms. Donovan: "How'd it go?"
Student: "Terrific."
Student: "Not very many questions, though."

Oral presentation of the safety posters to the kindergarten

children added a number of things to the Safety Posters Activity.

The second and third grade authors' sense of audience was undoubt-

edly heightened. They saw very clearly that it was useful to re-

examine, edit, and rehearse what they had written if an audience is

expected to understand their messages. They learned that writing,

and drawing can be used to focus oral communication (in this case,

teaching), and that a graphic product can serve the author as a

reminder and illustration of his or her teaching. Ms. Donovan's

students also learned from one another's experience and served as

a constructively critical audience for the dress rehearsals. And

finally, this phase of the project served as a meaningful connec-

tion between two groups of children within the school, showing on

a small scale how writing can contribute to the building of a social

system when members are separated in space and time.

This has been a lengthy description and analysis of the

Safety Posters Activity, one of dozens of occasions for writing

that took place in the two classrooms under study during a full

school year. The analysis of and commentary on the Safety Posters

Activity have raised a number of issues about how, why, and under

what circumstances written literacy is acquired in schools, and

what roles the teacher and students play in this process. Like

many other occasions for writing noted in the earliest weeks of

school, the Safety Posters Activity began with a shared experience,

not originally planned by Ms. Donovan. Also, like many other early

writing occasions, this one had importance in both the school and

non-school lives of the students. It was an expressive enterprise

that moved the students beyond the boundaries of Room 12. Ms.

Donovan seized the opportunity to turn an unexpected event into an

occasion for writing. Her engagement of students in a series of

related expressive activities, both written and oral, involved her

in a special sort of pedagogical role. Ms. Donovan extended her

planning and teaching beyond the bounds of prepared instructional

materials and district mandates for the language arts. She created

writing curriculum with her students as the class jointly produced

a situation that would both support the practice of writing and be

supported by that writing. Ms. Donovan and her students partici-

pated in an extended communicative enterprise that involved the

practice of written literacy as they prepared and shared documents

they called "The Safety Posters." Before returning to these and

other issues illuminated by occasions for writing in schools, the

rationale, purposes, research questions, and methods of the inquiry

will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING WRITING AND ITS INSTRUCTION

IN THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Frustration with past efforts marks the current state of research on writing in fields as diverse as psychology, anthropology, and educational research. In psychology, for example, difficulties have been encountered in attempting to test the relation between writing and mental abilities in societies lacking formal schooling. This has prompted a call for research on the acquisition of written literacy to focus not o 'e incremental development of a set of generalizable mental c ..cies, but on literacy as a repertoire of context-related expressive behaviors to a large extent imparted and acquired by means of cultural membership (e.g., Scribner & Cole, 1978).

'Similarly, in anthropology, years of modest interest in writing as merely an index of cultural development and as a symbol system divorced from daily expressive activity in a culture has given way to a call for an "ethnography of writing"--a study of writing and its meanings as part of the "total communicative economy of the society under study" (Basso, 1977, p. 432). This research focus is particularly appropriate as anthropology is increasingly applied to questions of educational equity and cultural difference in our own society.

Finally, in educational research, contemporary studies of classroom organization and teacher decision-making highlight the classroom

as a special place that both constitutes a small community in its

own right and is linked in important ways to the larger socio-

cultural milieu. The classroom community is special because it is

one in which one individual is empowered to think and plan self-

consciously for the structuring of many interactional activities

that take place wit'in it. This structuring is thought to be im-

portant in light of the community's valuing of growth and beneficial

change over time for each individual member. Such insights derived

from naturalistic study of classroom life have fueled interest in

the investigation of writing in school not as the "outcome" of

teaching behavior per se, but as an integral activity in the esta--

blishment and maintenance of the classroom as a learning community

and as one measure of that community's power as a socializing force

(Florio, 1979; Clark & Yinger, Note 1).

Thus the interests of psychologists, anthropologists, and edu-

cators have converged on questions of writing in use--on its expres-

sive functions, on the ways in which literacy is acquired in the

course of social life, and on the range of cognitive skills that

ought to be considered when documenting or planning for instruction

in writing. Questions about the acquisition of skilled performance

and its relation to social context lend themselves particularly well

to investigation by naturalistic means. One of the best ways to

learn about writing is to watch people navigating their daily lives,

noting occasions in which writing is the chosen mode of expression,

listening to the language people have about writing, considering the

nature of the writings they produce, and observing the ways in which

writing works for people as functional communication. This strategy
seems useful not only to the ethnographer hoping to locate writing
meaningfully in her/his portrayal of a society or to the psycholo-
gist observing the repertoire of skilled performances in a group of
literate but unschooled people, but also to practitioners interested
in the current state of the art in the teaching of writing and
seeking ways to support and nurture the process of becoming literate.

Literacy and Community

When researchers investigate the acquisition of written liter-
acy by children both in and out of school, they are asking funda-
mental questions about the individual psychological development of
those children and about their membership in a community. Although
children acquire many skills as a part of development, writing is
one skilled performance that epitomizes the profound connections
between personal development and the development of the community.
The learning of systems of signs and symbols in speaking, reading
and writing is a stunning example of the interconnection between
the growth of the individual and that of the society. In this spirit,
Vygotsky (1978) cites writing as a

> particular system of symbols and signs whose
> mastery heralds a critical turning point in
> the entire cultural development of the child.
> (p. 106)

Not only does writing, like speaking, provide entrée into com-
munity for the individual, but community is, in fact, able to exist to
the extent that people can share their thoughts and feelings by means
of communicative symbols. In this regard, Joseph Schwab (1975) asserts

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in the essay <u>Learning Community</u> that

> our beginning personness, as children, consists
> first of a world of perceived and felt signifi-
> cances that we have made from things seen. It is
> when another--adult or child--signals recognition
> that we have such a world, seeks to know it, and
> tries to give us a glimpse of this private world,
> that one-to-one community begins. This is done
> in one and only one way--through speech, by talk.
> (pp. 31-32)

Speech and writing are both instances of the use of cultural tools--
they are systems created and passed on in societies in order for the
members of those societies to live and work meaningfully together
(Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 7).

The problem with studying the acquisition of any such communi-
cative system in a society is that, for the most part, the process
happens gradually, informally, and without much explicit instruction.
This phenomenon has been documented in speech where, according to
Cook-Gumperz (1975), "the appearance of competence in daily life is
given more by the activities that are not singled out for attention
by the actors" (p. 138) than by those activities that are singled out.
The process of acquisition of literacy even in school where such
acquisition is an explicit and valued aim is equally opaque.
Although educators can develop curricula and organize classroom acti-
vities around the practice of reading or writing, they are, finally,
not able to render a full account of the process of becoming a
reader or becoming a writer simply by listing requisite skills
to be acquired (cf. Wittgenstein, 1953/1968, I, pp. 155-18?). Evi-
dence of this problem is the great difficulty with which ec.
make decisions about how to assess student performance in such areas

as expressive writing or the appreciation of literature (Elmore, Note 2).

In the pilot research in the classroom that preceeded the study reported here, we observed that the acquisition of written literacy in one second-grade classroom resembled the acquisition of speech in some important ways. It is well-known that as children acquire a first language they are welcomed into the family as communicators even before their first words are uttered. Early on, children find that moves and sounds are expressive in that they elicit action from other people. Children in effect practice the use of language not as preparation for social life, but as social life itself. In that process, grammatical skills are seldom taught directly to children by the adults who are expert in their use. Rather, by means of the practice that comes from use, children gradually approximate the matured forms of speech in stages that appear to be developmental (see, for example, Cazden, 1972; Brown, 1973). Similarly, in the classroom previously studied, children did not receive much direct instruction in the process of writing unless or until there was a breach in the normal order of things. Considerable practice of writing and gradual approximation of the matured forms was observed, but only occasional remediation (Florio, 1979). If all went well, the process of becoming a writer, although a remarkable one in the life of the child, went unremarked in the classroom. We observed the developing writer coming, in Garfinkel's (1975) words, "to know a world in common with others and in common with others to be taken for granted" (p. 139).

In attempting to account for these classroom observations, the researcher can assume with Goody, Cole, and Scribner (1977) that the occasion for mastery of written symbols, like the occasion for mastery of speech, arises in the course of social life and is supported by the community in which it occurs. People begin to write because within their communities they need to be able to perform the operations that literacy makes possible. They need to engage in commerce or to keep records, they need to remind themselves of the thoughts they have had (Brooks, Note 3). Again, in pilot work it was found that children in one second grade classroom in which a small community was created in microcosm during the course of the school year wrote in the greatest volume and complexity when working on the correspondence and record keeping required to maintain their classroom town. All other writing of worksheets, test papers, compositions, and the like was considered to be merely work "for school" (Florio, 1979; Florio & Frank, in press).

Like so many other forms of tacit cultural knowledge, writing, its uses, and the process of its acquisition are difficult for participants fully to describe or reflect upon. Rather, considerable insight into the writing process can be gained, in Basso's (1977) words, by "investigating the activity of writing as a dynamic component in the conduct and organization of social relations" (p. 431). The insight that mastery of communicative systems arises in the midst of social life is not a new one. In language arts, the point of view has been argued, for example, by Moffett (1968). We see evidence of this point of view in the writings of Dewey (1956),

Friere (Note 4), and Bettelheim (1967) as well. The implications of
this insight for research and practice are straightforward. In
coming to understand individual development, it is necessary to
consider that development in the context of community. Educators
need to know more about such development, not because it would fail
to arise without direct instruction and schooling, but because, in
schools, they have a potential opportunity to enhance the process.
Furthermore, in schools many children from diverse communities come
to be taught and evaluated by us. Educators are responsible to ap-
proach the individual stylistic preferences in communication arising
from the differences in community membership with understanding and
respect (Philips, 1972; Shultz, Florio, & Erickson, in press).

Teacher Thought and Action

In addition to the assumption that the acquisition of written
literacy in schools serves multiple social and communicative func-
tions, the present inquiry was also informed by a model of the
teacher as a rational agent who takes an influential and proactive
role in planning, initiating, maintaining, and integrating classroom
interaction in general and occasions for writing in particular. This
view of the teacher derives from the cognitive information processing
approach to research on teaching (Shulman & Elstein, 1975; Clark,
Note 5). From this perspective, the teacher is seen as bringing his
or her thoughts into action through the information processing se-
quence depicted in Figure 2.

The left-most section of Figure 2 represents the professional
memory of a teacher, which includes a teacher's implicit theories

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

STUDENT ABILITIES   TIME
MATERIALS   DISTRICT PRIORITIES
RESOURCES   COMMUNITY EXPECTATION‹

EXPECTATIONS
AND
COMMITMENTS

PROFESSIONAL
MEMORY

PLANNING

PRINCIPLES
OF
PRACTICE

PLANS

IMPLICIT
THEORIES

SUBJECT MATTER
LEARNERS
TEACHER
CONTEXT

REFLECTION
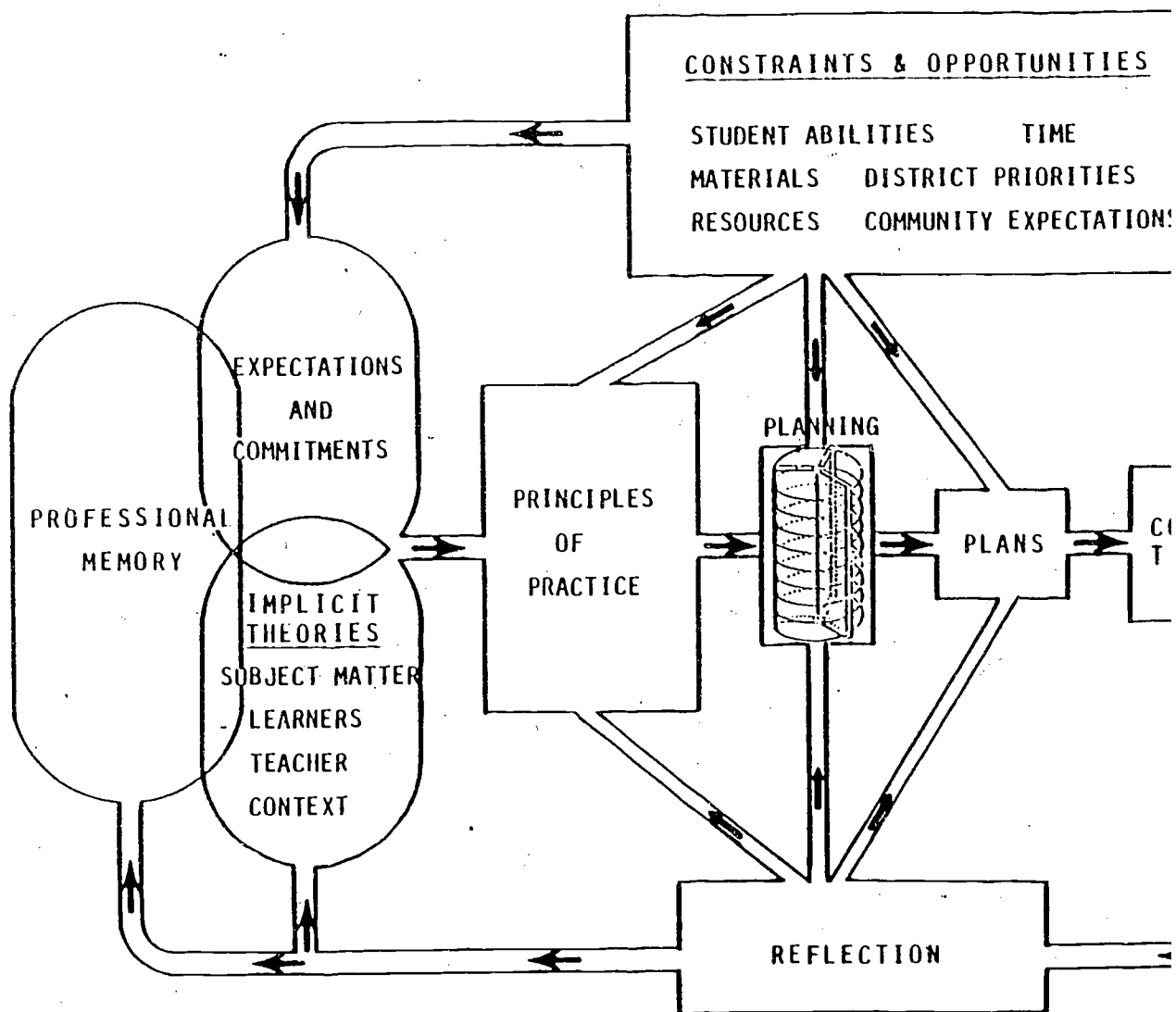
Figure 2.   A model of teacher thought and action.

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about the commonplaces of education (subject matter, learner,

teacher, and context) and his or her expectations and commitments

concerning the particular class and task of interest. In this

model, the teacher's implicit theories about each of the common-

places of education interact with his or her hopes, expectations,

and commitments for writing instruction at a particular time to

produce and rationalize a set of principles of practice. These

principles of practice may be explicit or implicit. Taken together,

they constitute a teacher's set of criteria for effective writing

instruction. That is, if a teacher can be faithful to the set of

principles of practice, he or she has every reason to believe that

the teaching of writing will succeed. Particular successes and

failures are explained largely in terms of maintenance of or vio-

lation of these principles of practice. It has been argued else-

where (Clark & Yinger, Note 6) that the essence of what is profes-

sional about teaching is the translation of principles of practice

into action.

Teacher planning, the next step in Figure 2, is the process

of combining constraints and opportunities with principles of prac-

tice to produce a plan for action. The plan consists of particular

writing activities that have been created, adopted or modified to

be consistent with a teacher's principles of practice and, at the

same time, practical within the limits of constraints and opportuni-

ties as the teacher sees them.

Next the teacher communicates the plan to his or her students

and they jointly enact the plan. This is the most visible part of

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teaching--what one can see during a visit to a classroom in full
operation. All that has gone before, and that follows, constitute
the "hidden world of teaching" (Clark & Yinger, Note 6). Almost
inevitably, there is a difference between a plan and the enactment
of that plan. Classrooms are characterized by interruption and un-
predictability. Spontaneity is often valued by teachers and students
alike. And because writing activities are joint productions of
teacher and students, a teacher's plan often serves mainly to get
the process started, with full enactment a divergent process. Tea-
cher interactive decision making guides this process of adapting
instruction to fit the unpredictable constraints and inspirations
of the moment.

As a writing activity is enacted, and afterward as well, the
teacher and the students gain experience of several sorts and the
teacher has an opportunity to evaluate and reflect upon these ex-
periences. This set of processes is represented in the Reflection
box in Figure 2. Reflection can lead to confirmation, explanation,
explication, or change in any or all of the earlier-mentioned parts
of the model. Thus, we have come full circle in this preliminary
model of teacher thought and action in writing instruction.

Summary

There are important theoretical reasons why we have chosen
to analyze both the functions that writing can be observed to
perform in the classroom and teachers' implicit theories
about writing in the same study. Previous research in both the
ethnographic/sociolinguistic tradition and in the tradition of

cognitive psychology have been incomplete and have left us with questions requiring the merging of perspectives. First, by documenting classroom interaction without attention to the intentionality of teacher (and students), little insight into the rationales for the observed social structuring can be gained. Classrooms are not like any other community. They exist for purposeful change in their members. They are organized by teachers whose responsibility it is to articulate the plans for activity and to structure the environments in which that activity occurs. However, to consider only the planning that underlies social life in the classroom is to miss both the spontaneity of the plans enacted and to encounter serious problems of interpreting the self-reports of teachers about their plans.

In an effort to increase understanding on the one hand of how teacher beliefs and values about writing (implicit or explicit) manifest themselves in the classroom and simultaneously to make better sense of those beliefs and values, research perspectives are combined in this study. The combination of a cognitive psychological approach to research on teaching with an ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to the study of classroom life is a particularly powerful and appropriate way to achieve the stated research aims. Cognitive psychological research can explore the thoughts, intentions, and decisions of the teacher as s/he conceives, initiates, and maintains writing activities. Ethnographic and sociolinguistic description of the classroom as an environment for learning to write can illuminate the social organization of expressive activities.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

During 1979-80, a naturalistic study of schooling and the

acquisition of written literacy was undertaken by the authors.   The

study had the following four purposes:

1. to document how two teachers and their respective
    students produce occasions for writing by means
    of interaction,

2. to describe the process of teacher planning for
    writing instruction as it relates to shaping
    these occasions for writing and overseeing the
    general evolution of the classroom as a community,

3. to develop a typology of the diverse occasions
    for writing extant in each classroom as they are
    construed by teachers and students, and

4. to examine these occasions as contexts for writing
    that may make differing cognitive and social demands
    on the students as writers and to document these
    differences.

Research Questions

The research was pursued in two schools in a mid-Michigan sub-

urban community. Researchers recorded, described, and analyzed

classroom activities and teacher planning as they relate to writing

in one second/third grade classroom and one sixth grade classroom.

The first 10 months of the study therefore consisted of extensive

participant observation, interviewing, teacher journal keeping,

sampling of student writing, and videotaping of occasions for writing

in these classrooms. Data reduction and analysis were ongoing parts

of this phase. The final nine months of the project were devoted to

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continuation of data analysis, writing of reports, and dissemination
of findings to researchers and practitioners.

Figure 3 is a schematic overview of the process of inquiry in
our study of writing and its instruction. The research was initiated
with the following guiding questions about the nature of writing in-
struction and the process of becoming a writer within the formal
setting of the school:

1. What is the nature of the process of acquisition of
    written literacy as it is realized in school?

2. How does the acquisition process work in classrooms?

3. What are the implications of this information for
    curriculum, instruction, and teacher education?

The initial questions were deliberately broad since pilot work sug-
gested that it might be quite misleading a priori to decide where in
school one might find writing taking place, which teaching behaviors
might count as "writing instruction" in the classroom, or what kinds
of graphic symbolizing on the part of children might function com-
municatively. Therefore, in framing initial questions and research
design, the researchers heeded Malinowski's (1922/1961) warning to
ethnographers that one who

> sets out to study only religion or only technology,
> or only social organization [or only writing in-
> struction] cuts out an artificial field for inquiry,
> and he will be seriously handicapped in his work.
> (p. 11)

Thus, to understand the acquisition of written literacy in school,
the particulars of classroom life and the thoughts and plans of
teachers were broadly sampled at the outset. The aim was gradually
to discover which among these pieces of data would best tell the
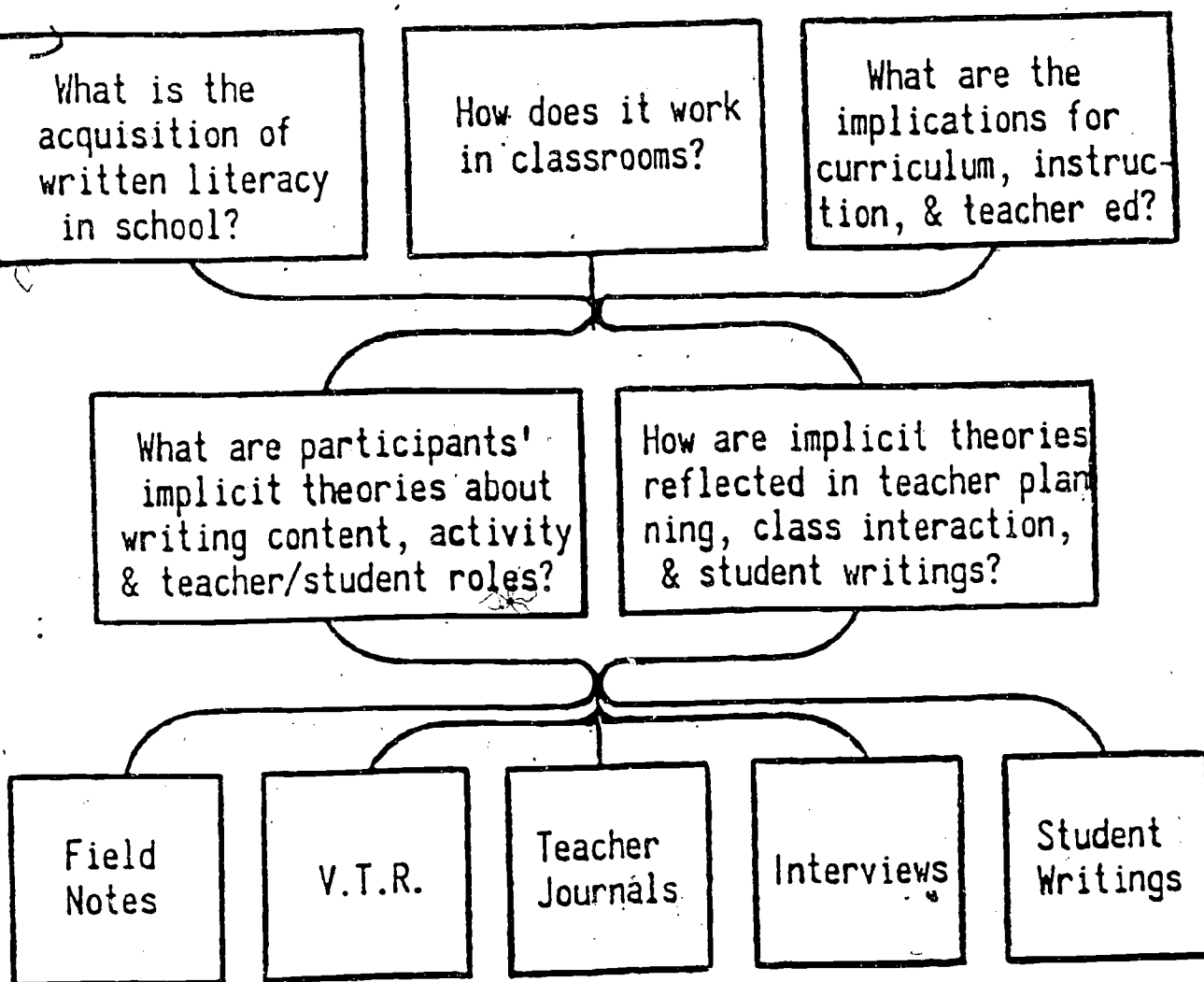
Figure 3. Written Literacy Project research questions and data sources.

story of writing and its instruction in the terms of the teachers
and children studied and in ways that would add to the body of
knowledge about the process of writing and its instruction.

Obviously questions of such a broad nature are not directly
answerable by means of naturalistic observation. Upon entering the
field, the researcher is confronted not with answers, but with a
flood of particular behaviors. Some behaviors are observed and not
commented or reflected upon directly by teachers and children as
they enact everyday life in school. Other behaviors are the descrip-
tions and explanations that participants offer for classroom activity
that can be elicited directly from them by means of interview or can
be heard in their talk to one another about school life. The data
collected in this study came from six sources and correspond to
these two classes of behavior. They included the following:

1. field notes of classroom participant observation;

2. periodic videotapes of classroom activity,

3. viewing sessions in which focal teachers discussed
    and analyzed videotapes made in their classrooms,

4. interviews with both teachers and students about
    the writing done in their classrooms,

5. weekly journals kept by focal teachers recording
    their thoughts about the process of writing
    in their classrooms, and

6. naturalistically collected samples of student writing.

Pilot work in both the planning and enactment of writing in-
struction in classrooms and review of literature on written communi-
cation provided a set of potential middle range questions that were
asked as the data began to accumulate. These questions concerned

participants' implicit theories about writing--its content, the activities that motivate it, the roles played by teachers and students in its production. In addition, these questions concerned the ways in which such implicit theories might be reflected in teacher planning, classroom interaction, and student writing. The questions at this level were continuously evolving ones that were structured by and helped to structure subsequent data collection.

The theoretical orientations with which we began our study helped to determine our methods of data collection, reduction, and analysis. In general, our methods were descriptive. Using techniques such as participant observation, journal-keeping, interview, and collection of documents, we hoped to develop theoretically grounded descriptions of writing and its instruction in two classrooms. More will be said about our methods in the next section of this chapter.

Theoretical Assumptions and Working Hypotheses

A description of writing in two classrooms is the heart of this report. That description is intended to illuminate both occasions for writing in the classroom and the teacher beliefs and plans that help to shape them. It is important to recall that the description offered here has been derived by observing everyday life in two classrooms and by asking teachers to share, in the course of their regular efforts, their beliefs and plans about writing and its use.

Because no observation is unbiased, it is important to mention at the outset several kinds of information that contributed to the sense made of what was seen, read, and heard in the classrooms.

Information about theoretical presuppositions, methodological de-
cisions, and the frames for interpretation that were applied to the
data should help the reader to locate the descriptions and analyses
offered here in an intellectual context and should stimulate dis-
cussion and criticism of the findings.

Perhaps the key assumption of this research on written literacy
is that writing is a form of social action, one way in which the
members of a community transact across time and distance to accom-
plish social life and work. That assumption has implications for
how one studies writing. For example, on the basis of that assump-
tion, this study emphasized the process and use of writing in class-
rooms rather than the written products artifactual to that process
in isolation. Important to the study of writing in use is the
analyst's ability to document the social conditions out of which
writing arises and the grounds on whic i participants select writing
as the appropriate expressive alternative on any given occasion.
To gain this kind of insight into social action and its meaning in
the research reported here, additional assumptions and attendant
methodological decisions were made. It was assumed, for example,
that it would be crucial to understand the subjective point of view
of the classroom participants. The hypotheses subsequently generated
and tested, and the means of testing them, pertained to the nature
of this point of view and its relation to the classroom events ob-
served.

The study was further limited in significant ways in that it
highlighted the teacher as purveyor and planner of the learning

environment in which writing takes place. Clearly one could have
elected to focus instead on the students as writers or on the func-
tions of writing in other social contexts in children's lives.
Selecting the teacher as the focus for study was deliberate and
rooted in a concern that the research illuminate writing instruction
as one of the important pedagogical responsibilities of teachers in
our culture. It reflects a bias as well that the classroom is a
significant place in the child's universe where writing is learned
and used.

In order to understand the point of view of the teacher and
its relation to writing as social action in the classroom, it is
necessary to consider both what is observable in classroom behavior
and what is inferrable about the mental life of the teacher. In
Schutz' (1976) words,

> to understand human action we must not take the
> position of an outside observer who "sees" only
> the physical manifestation of these acts; rather
> we must develop categories for understanding what
> the actor--from his point of view--"means" in his
> actions (p. 139).

There are many ways to move beyond mere observation of pheno-
mena to an understanding of their meanings to participants. Some-
times people can give words to the meanings they hold; sometimes
they reveal their meaning systems in patterns of action. The design
of this study contains the eclecticism and methodological pragmatism
of fieldwork research in order to obtain and validate information
about the meanings held by the teachers with respect to writing, its
functions, and its pedagogy (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Thus the
researchers asked the teachers participating in the study to share

in both writing and conversation "what they thought" about writing
in their classrooms. In addition, by means of participant obser-
vation, the researchers lived some part of the teachers' lives with
them. This primary experience of their world informed the resear-
chers' questioning of them and aided in the interpretation of the
self-reports of the teachers. Finally, the teachers were engaged
directly in the deliberative process at monthly meetings where they
joined the researchers in thinking from data by generating hypotheses
and relating variables in meaningful ways in order to explain class-
room observations. In short, the teachers joined the researchers
in generating theory about practice.

The decision to undertake the study reported here was the re-
sult of pilot work by the principal investigators on writing instruc-
tion and review of research on writing extant in the fields of
anthropology, psychology, and sociolinguistics. Thus the researchers
did not enter the field without a conceptual orientation. Just as
the initial questions of the study reflect that orientation (see
Figure 3, p. 28), so early working hypotheses developed in initial
stages of data collection reflect the study's theoretical orientation.
They are set out here because they served not only to constrain
what the researchers noticed out of the myriad of observable class-
room behaviors, but also because they provided initial frames for
interpretation of what was observed.

The researchers began data collection with the following limited
working hypotheses:

      1.   There is an important relation between the acquisition
            of written literacy and me ership in a community,

2. The classroom constitutes a community for learning in its own right and it is part of the wider community.

3. Many occasions for writing arise in a community. In the classroom, these occasions arise both as teachers and students develop a classroom community and as they transact with the wider community.

4. Across social occasions, writing serves a variety of expressive functions. Thus the cognitive and social demands of writing tasks may differ from occasion to occasion.

5. The teacher is chiefly responsible for conceiving, initiating, and maintaining writing occasions within the classroom community; but the enactment of those occasions and the writing produced therein are consequences of the interaction between teachers and students.

Despite these conceptual organizers, the complex nature of the research problem and the methods used to address it enabled the generation of many new hypotheses, not a priori, but in terms of and as a consequence of the life observed unfolding in the classrooms, interviews, and journals. Therefore, additional working hypotheses were generated that were grounded in observation and tested in short and long range ways against subsequent observation. As a result, the researchers tested and refined or rejected some initial hunches about writing instruction and learned many other things not dreamed of in the original research proposal. This report therefore reflects the influence of both the theoretical constructs antecedent to the research that constrain its focus and locate it in an intellectual tradition and the researchers' efforts to make disciplined sense of their own observations and the insights of their teacher informants.

Data Collection

Four methods were used to collect data about writing and its

instruction in the two classrooms of interest:

1. participant observation, in which researchers spent
    extended periods of time in the classroom taking
    field notes and attempting to understand the class-
    room as a community for learning and the functions
    of writing within it;

2. elicitations of teacher thinking about writing in
    the classroom of four types:

    a. weekly journals in which the teachers recorded
        their plans for and reflections upon teaching
        in general and writing instruction in parti-
        cular,

    b. weekly interviews in which each teacher dis-
        cussed her journal entries with a researcher,

    c. monthly meetings in which the teachers and \
        the research staff discussed patterns emerging
        in the data and other research-related issues,

    d. viewing sessions in which teachers viewed video-
        tapes made occasionally in their rooms and dis-
        cussed their content;

3. audiovisual recordings of naturally occurring classroom
    life, in which researchers attempted periodically to
    capture for later analysis and for discussion with
    the teachers those classroom interactions that appeared
    to be related to writing and its use; and

4. writing samples produced by both students and teachers
    in naturally occurring classroom activity that were
    used to illuminate and supplement analysis of class-
    room writing activities and teacher plans.

Data were collected throughout the entire 1979-80 school year.

For purposes of both collection and preliminary analysis, the year

was divided into four periods: September, October-December, January-

March, and April-June. Previous classroom research indicated that

this demarcation might be consistent with teachers' views of the

functionally different parts of the school year (Clark & Yinger, Note 6; Shultz & Florio, 1979).

The intention of the study was to document writing and its instruction in two schools and classrooms--one a second/third-grade elementary school classroom and one a sixth grade middle school classroom. In each classroom there was a two-person team of teachers. One member of each team was the focal teacher informant for that class. For the bulk of observation and interview, therefore, these two teachers worked closely with the researchers. The other teammates in each room, however, quickly became interested and involved in the study and attended the monthly meetings and other project-related functions.

An initial interview with each focal teacher took place shortly before the beginning of the school year. This interview provided background information and helped the researchers to negotiate entry into the schools and classrooms and to establish rapport with each teacher.

The first month of the school year was a particularly important time in the study. The researchers anticipated that much of the interactional work needed to establish the classroom community would go on during that time (Shultz & Florio, 1979). For this reason, participant observation took place five days per week during the first month of school. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, these early ethnographic observations of the classrooms and schools were useful in characterizing the social contexts of the occasions for writing observed throughout the year.

For the remainder of the school year, participant observers
·spent from one to three whole days in each classroom every week.
Because of the discovery-oriented nature of this study, it was
decided not to limit observation to times of the day explicitly set
aside for reading or language arts or to limit fieldworkers' presence
in the classroom to particular days, weeks, or terms. Again, as
will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the nature of classroom
writing and its instruction mandated the extensive presence of
fieldworkers in the classroom and required flexibility about the
kinds and amounts of researcher participation.

Elicitation of teacher thinking was another important aspect
of data collection. The two participating teachers kept weekly
journals in which they each described their thoughts and plans about
the week in general and about school writing in particular. This
journal-keeping technique had been used successfully previously in
studies of teacher planning undertaken by cognitive psychologists
(Clark & Yinger, Note 1). Field notes from participant observation
and teacher journals augmented one another in the production of a
rich description of classroom writing. Additionally, analysis of
each provided useful interpretive frameworks to apply to the other
and, as will be discussed shortly, inferences drawn about writing
from analysis of one source of data could be cross-checked with data
from other sources (Gorden, 1975).

Expansion and clarification of the journal entries was made
possible by the addition of weekly interviews of the focal teachers.
Once each week a researcher visited the school and talked with the

focal teacher about the contents of her journal. These interviews not only provided the researchers with yet another source of information, but also provided encouragement and support to the teachers for their journal keeping efforts and alerted the researchers to forthcoming classroom activities that might be appropriate for special notice.

Two kinds of data were collected periodically to amplify the documentation of writing and its instruction. Teachers normally collected many of the student writings produced in a variety of activities in their rooms. These pieces of student work would later be shared with parents to document student progress in language arts and other skill areas. Researchers copied many of these teacher-collected student writings and, because they frequently were accompanied by field notes describing the circumstances in which they were produced, the writings could be examined both in their own right with reference to the circumstances of their production and used to supplement analysis and description arising in the observational notes, journals, and interviews.

Originally the researchers intended further to supplement fieldwork and journal keeping with one day of videotaping in each of the four segments of the year. These tapes would be analyzed by both the researchers and the teachers in periodic viewing sessions. Deviating from the original plan, videotaping was undertaken for only three days in each classroom and one viewing session was held with each teacher. As will become clearer as the analysis of data unfolds, periodic videotaping of isolated classroom writing activities was a

decision made a priori. Once the research was underway, it became
evident that the meaningful unit of analysis for writing instruc-
tion and planning might not be the isolated lesson but rather a
series of socially and thematically-linked writing activities
separated from one another in time and space. This realization
made periodically collected videotape data and their analysis less
prominent parts of the study than originally anticipated. This
methodological insight should be taken into account when other
studies of the enactment of writing are contemplated. There appears
to be a relationship between the research questions and the specific
level(s) of analysis that they imply and the data collection strage-
gies used to greatest advantage by the researchers.

While it was unanticipated that videotaped lessons would be a
less than efficient and optimum source of data, the methodological
pragmatism of fieldwork and its responsiveness to research questions
arising inductively in the field led serendipitously to one form of
data that illuminated the study considerably. Originally, weekly
meetings were to be held among the researchers and focal teachers
to talk about the progress of the study. However, consultants con-
vinced the researchers that to require such meetings was to place
undue demands on the time and energies of the teachers. As an
alternative, monthly dinner meetings were held throughout the year
of fieldwork. These meetings provided for the sociability that is
important to continued negotiation of entry and to establishment
and maintenance of rapport between the researcher and the informant

that are so important in fieldwork. Held in a congenial location in the workplace of neither the teachers nor the researchers, the dinners provided a context in which open discourse was more likely to transpire. These meetings were audiotaped and transcribed. The researchers also document them in field notes. They were the catalyst for some major ... ghts in the study and citations from the transcripts and notes from those meetings appear throughout the report in testament of this fact.

Several appendices appear at the end of this report. They contain representative samples of field notes, interview notes, journals, videotape catalogues, viewing session transcripts, dinner meeting transcripts, and student work. They are intended merely to provide a sense of the kinds of qualitative data with which the analysts have dealt in completing the study. All of the data are catalogued and available at Michigan State University for further inspection by interested scholars and practitioners.

Data Reduction and Analysis

The processes of reduction and analysis of the descriptive data would have been unwieldy, if not impossible, if the researchers had waited until the completion of data collection to begin them. Working with data that are collected naturalistically over time can present problems and provide advantages. To get the most from our data set, it was necessary to plan for the gradual reduction and analysis of information gathered while still in the field.

The data collected had the following features bearing on reduc-
tion and analysis:

1. Some of the data were collected in relatively un-
    structured ways in that an attempt was made to limit
    the imposition of a priori analytic categories on
    what was seen, heard, and read, e.g,, field notes,
    continuous videotapes of naturally occurring class-
    room activity, writing samples, open-ended journal
    keeping.

2. Some of the data were collected by more structured
    means, e.g., scheduled interviews with teachers.

For the most part, categories for analysis were arrived at inductively,

as participants sifted the naturalistic data for patterns of meaningful

activity in writing and writing instruction. In addition, insights

from previous research, literature on both the writing and teaching

processes, and the experience of participating teachers provided

pontential "conceptual levers" that the researchers used to make

sense of the data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 117).

The study's interdisciplinary research staff worked together

in the development of a series of descriptions of the acquisition

of written literacy in the two classrooms studied. The collaborative

working relationship was important for two reasons. First, because

of ongoing contact among participating teachers and the interdisci-

plinary team, it was possible collaboratively to engage in a cyclic

process involving the formation of working hypotheses about what was

happening in planning and instruction, the testing of those hypotheses

in subsequent data collected, and the refinement of the working hypo-

theses. Such a design made it possible for the project staff to test

and refine descriptive models of the process of writing instruction

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in the two classrooms that were grounded in the observed phenomena.

In short, the goal was to render descriptions that were able, in

Ge-r s (1969) words,

> on an accur. ion of data, [to] predict an
> or stace people will behave in special
> under onditions. (p. 152)

The ability to build such a predictive model is one of the strongest

tests of the adequacy of a descriptive case study (Erickson, Note 7).

The second advantage of such a research design for the processes

of data reduction and analysis was that it fostered the process of

triangulation. The researchers recognized that the social and cogni-

tive phenomena of interest in the study were very complex, and ac-

knowledged, in Gorden's (1975) terms, that

> often the nature of the problem under investiga-
> tion demands a multimethod approach because the
> various methods give totally different kinds of
> information that can supplement each other, be-
> cause we do not know how to interpret some of the
> information unless we can couple it with other
> information, or because we need a cross-check to
> verify the validity of our observations. (p. 40)

By examining written, oral, and observational data with varying

degrees of structure and from the perspectives of various investi-

gators, it was possible to accomplish such triangulation. The

researchers intended that the study reflect as validly as possible

the perspectives of the participating teachers. By means of multiple

methods and opportunities for the researchers and teachers to cross-

check their inferences about the data both as they were collected

and retrospectively, the researchers hoped to maximize coverage and

understanding of writing and its instruction in the two classrooms

of interest.

. The processes described here yielded the following three-step

procedure for reporting the research:

1. Define a descriptive unit of analysis that makes
    sense to all of the participants in the research.
    (This unit was termed an "occasion for writing.")

2. Identify a manageably small number of such occa-
    sions for writing that are of theoretical impor-
    tance and of significance to the classroom parti-
    cipants.

3. Describe the genesis, unfolding, and fate of these
    occasions for writing both individually and in re-
    lation to one another using multiple data sources
    to enrich the descriptions and to cross-check in-
    ferences about their meaning.

The case studies of occasions for writing that follow in this report

illustrate the diversity of the data collected and one way that data

can be interwoven in the presentation of a descriptive analysis.

CHAPTER 4

LOCATING WRITTEN LITERACY IN TWO CLASSROOMS

The central problem of this study was to describe and analyze
the events that supported students in their acquisition of written
literacy in two classrooms. This chapter first describes the settings
in which teaching and learning took place. Next, we define the unit
of description and analysis that was discovered jointly by the teachers
and researchers in this project: the "occasion for writing." This is
followed by descriptions of six occasions for writing that (together
with the Safety Posters occasion described in Chapter 1) constitute
a carefully selected and representative sample of the ways in which
written literacy was supported·in the two classrooms.

Schools and Community

This report focuses on a second/third-grade class located in
Room 12 of the Conley School and a sixth-grade class in Lincoln
Middle School. Both schools are in the East Eden School District.
This school district serves approximately 4,600 students. The city
of East Eden is the home of a large land-grant university and abuts
the capitol of a midwestern state. Its population contains a mix
of families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The parents
of some of the students are employed in state government or the pro-
fessions: others are working class. The East Eden School District
over the past few years has been revising its K-12 writing curriculum,
and therefore teachers have been reminded of the high priority placed
on writing and its instruction.

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Room 12 is the only room of its kind in the Conley Elemen-
tary School. Its special nature has important implications for the
uses of writing that can be observed there. In order to locate
written literacy meaningfully in its social context, it is useful
briefly to consider Room 12 as an environment for learning.

Occupying an entire wing of the school building, Room 12
houses four teachers and four cross-age homerooms--two at the second/
third-grade level and two at the fourth/fifth. The room has movable
walls, a large common area, and four classroom alcoves that can be
isolated from one another or merged (see Figure 4). Mixed age
interaction, independent and small group learning in centers and a
team approach to planning and teaching have been associated with
Room 12 since its creation in 1976.

The school of which Room 12 is a part is known in the com-
munity as a lively and active place, particularly effective in in-
structing children from a range of ethnic and economic backgrounds.
Conley School receives Title I aid, and although many children
attending the school come from the middle class households of employees
and students of the nearby state university, many others are poor.
Some children live in a large, government-subsidized apartment complex
or in winterized summer cottages near the school. Many families are
employed in local agriculture or the automotive industry, and unem-
ployment has been increasing recently. A large number of Conley
children from all economic levels live in single-parent households.

A controversial place since the wing was built, Room 12
receives mixed reviews from teachers and parents. Some teachers

TEACHER DESK

STUDENT DESK

MOVIE SCREEN AND BULLETIN BOARD

EXIT

CLOSET

SINK/COUNTER

PARTITION

FILES

TABLE

CLOCK

LARGE CHAIR

TABLE

BOOKCASE

TABLE

CHALKBOARD

READING TABLE

SCREEN

STUDENT DESKS

BATHTUB

WINDOW

TABLE

TABLE

MATH FILE

"SOCIAL STUDIES CENTER"

TABLE

TO OTHER GROUPS IN ROOM 12

MOVABLE WALL
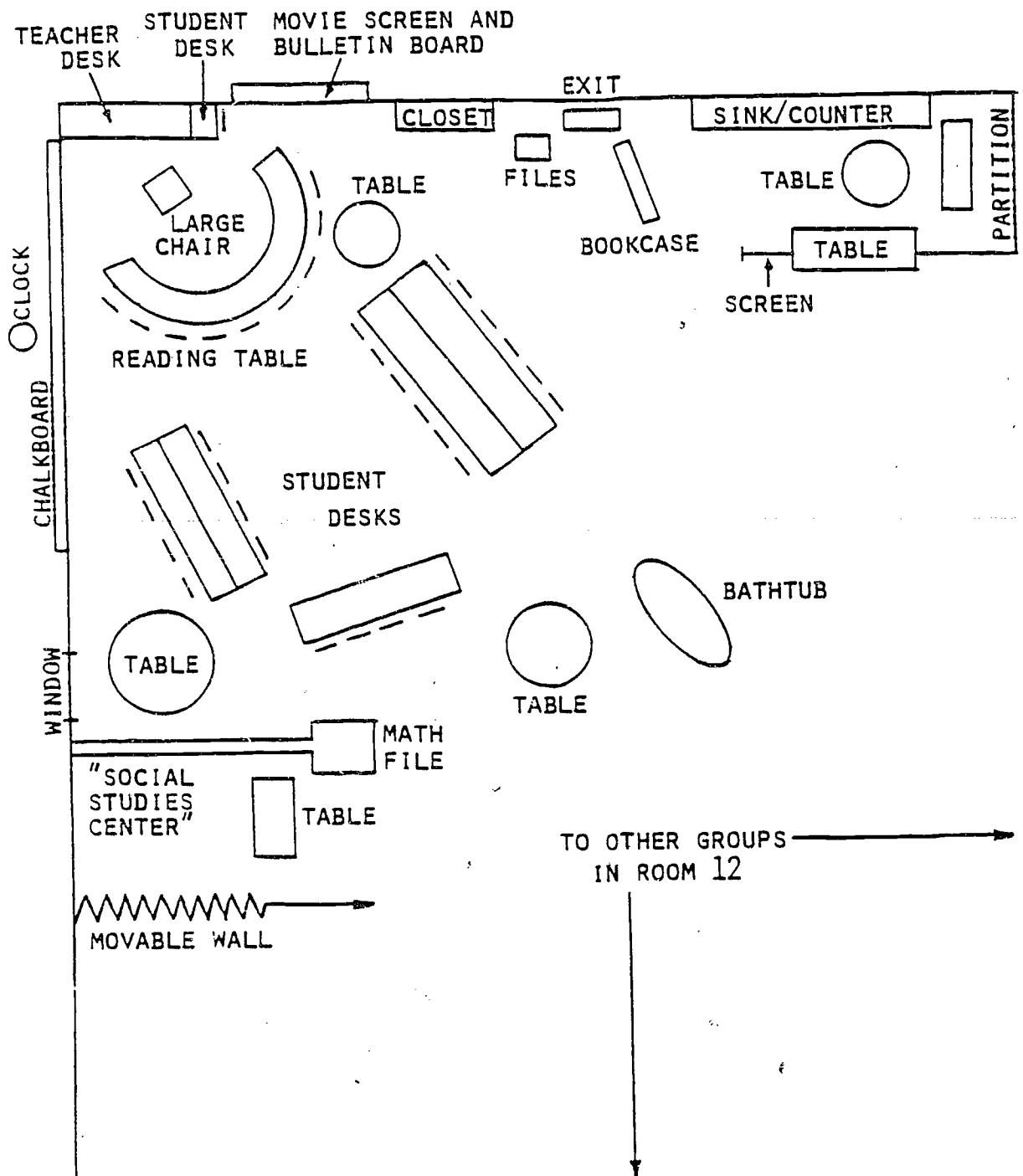
Figure 4. Floor plan of Ms. Donovan's corner of room 12. (Field Notes, 9/5/79)

consider it a challenge and a professional opportunity to work there, while others shun the room's potential disorder and lack of privacy in which to teach and plan. Similarly, some parents prefer less open environments for their children. However, it is not uncommon for parents from all backgrounds to inquire of the principal how their child can be assigned to Room 12. In fact, the Room 12 teachers assert that many parents think that only the most able children are assigned there, and that assignment to Room 12 is a status symbol of sorts.

Although Room 12 has changed over the years, the vestiges of the open education movement that inspired it are still apparent in its spatial arrangement and in the teachers' approaches to instruction. During the year, students have the opportunity to make choices about the timing and format of their academic and social activities. In addition, children work in a variety of interactional arrangements including teacher-led large groups, small student groups, mixed-age tutorials, and learning centers.

Lincoln Middle School is one of two middle schools in the district. It encompasses grades six through eight. Lincoln School has approximately 500 students. Although most of the students who attend Lincoln Middle School are from a middle class background and were born in the United States, a few of the students are from foreign countries.

Lincoln Middle School is organized for team teaching. There are three sixth-grade teams, each having two teachers, usually one male and one female. Four academic subjects are taught in teams: English, social studies, science, and math.

The school day is divided into blocks of time for team subjects and time for special area classes, which are physical education, music, art, and foreign languages. The blocks of team time can be arranged in any fashion that the team teachers prefer, since there is not a specified amount of time for a class and no class bells.

The children at Lincoln School are not grouped or tracked; each team is a heterogenous group. The only grouping policy is to balance the number of males and females as evenly as possible.

Mrs. Anderson, the sixth grade teacher in our study, has a reputation in the school district as a teacher who likes to teach writing. Mrs. Anderson has taught elementary school for 19 years, the past 10 years as a sixth-grade teacher in the East Eden school system.

Mrs. Anderson's teammate is Mr. Hathaway. He has taught for nine years, all at Lincoln Middle School. Mrs. Anderson teaches English and social studies; Mr. Hathaway teaches science and math.

There are 60 students in Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway's team, 30 in each homeroom. When Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway want to have both of their classes together, which they call "large group," a folding door located between the classrooms is pushed back, creating one large room. Large group is used for showing films, holding class meetings, discussing social events and working on team projects. Figure 5 shows the floor plan of the sixth-grade classroom.

In Mrs. Anderson's classroom, students' tables are close together because of the crowded conditions. The tables are moved into various configurations depending on the teaching situation. Mrs. Anderson
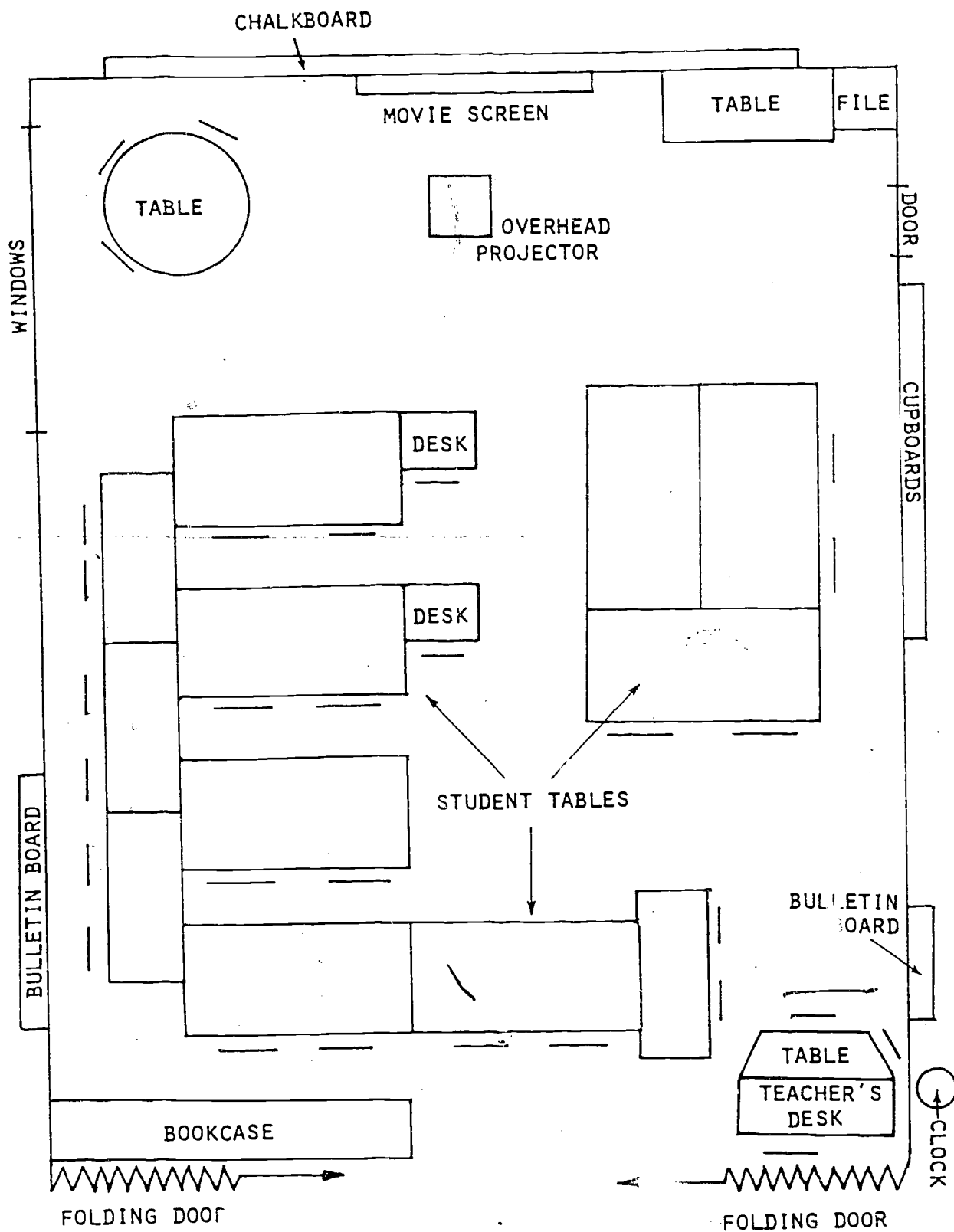
Figure 5. Floor plan of Mrs. Anderson's sixth-grade classroom.

often mentioned the crowded conditions of the room and felt it affected

the students. One wall of the classroom is windows; a chalkboard

covers the front wall. An overhead projector is located in front

of the chalkboard. Mrs. Anderson uses this projector, rather than

the chalkboard, because of her allergy to chalk dust. Mrs. Anderson

has her desk at the back of the room and does not use this area as a

teaching station.

The Occasion for Writing

In descriptive classroom research one of the most challenging

parts of the data reduction process is to discover a unit of descrip-

tion and analysis that is useful in organizing the voluminous amount

of information usually generated in such studies. In addition to its

power as an organizer and condenser of data, the unit must be meaning-

ful to the participants in the inquiry (teachers, students, and

researchers), and must be robust enough to capture the complexity

of the phenomena under study without oversimplification. In this

study the unit of description and analysis that meets these criteria

is the "occasion for writing." It is typified by the following features:

1. Occasions for writing have a duration long enough to
    link multiple activities.

2. Activities constituting an occasion for writing arise
    in the context of or are planned with reference to
    classroom and community life.

3. Activities are linked thematically over time within
    an occasion.

4. Activities constituting an occasion are   sive in
    nature and may involve multiple modes on the c inuum
    of oral-written expression (e.g., writing, draw g,
    speaking before an audience, reading, etc.).

Occasions for writing frequently invove skill integration both among the language arts of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and across subject areas. In addition they often integrate school and non-school life experiences of the student writers.

Occasions for writing require a range of kinds of teacher planning including the ad hoc seizing of opportunities to write in the course of everyday school life; proactive planning to develop ways to support and maintain expressive activities; post hoc reflection upon classroom life and writing to identify potential occasions for writing and ways to enrich them as opportunities to use multiple expressive forms and perform many communicative functions; and creation of curriculum for and with students in an instructional area marked by the absence of prepared materials, district mandates, or ready-made evaluation instruments.

As the study proceeded the teachers and researchers achieved consensus on which classroom events had made significant contributions to the acquisition of written literacy in the two classrooms. But the identification of the occasion for writing as the meaningful unit of analysis in this study did not take place until after the data collection year ended. It was not until the research team could look back on the complete corpus of descriptive data and reflect on the commonalities of the "high points" of the school year that the profile of an occasion for writing was constructed.

After the occasion for writing was defined conceptually, one occasion (the Safety Posters) was written up as a test of the construct. After considerable feedback and editing by the research

téam, the Safety Posters description was elevated to the status of

a model, and guidelines for describing other occasions for writing

were drawn up (Figure 6). These guidelines were followed by the

authors of this report in writing descriptions of the occasions for

reported here.

The final section of this chapter consists of descriptions and

analyses of six occasions for writing:

Second/Third Grade	Sixth Grade
Diary Time	Life Books
Pen Pals	The Magazine Project
	Planning a Dinner Party
	Researching the World

In addition, the reader is reminded of the Safety Posters occasion

for writing from the second/third-grade data described at the begin-

ning of Chapter 1. The seven occasions for writing offered here

were not the only occasions that took place in the two classrooms

during the year of study. But they do constitute an important part

of the writing curriculum in each classroom and depict a represen-

tatively wide range of complexity, problems, partial failures, and

partial successes in the fostering of written literacy in schools.

The presentation of these particular occasions reflects the judgments

of the participating teachers and researchers about which classroom

events most significantly influenced students' school experiences

with writing. These occasions were also selected to depict the

evolution of writing activity across the entire school year.

Page Limit: 15-20 pages

Minimum Contents:

Dates and Time of Year

Duration

Participants

List of Parts or Phases of the Occasion
     Thematic Link Among Parts

Teacher Role(s) in Shaping the Occasion
     Genesis
     Implementation and Modification
     Fate and Closure

Student Role(s) in Shaping the Occasion

Relation of the Occasion to Other Parts of Participants' Lives

Purpose(s) of the Occasion

Function(s) of the Occasion

Audience

Examples of Written Products

Relationship Between Teacher Thinking and Classroom Interaction

Figure 6.   Guidelines for descriptions of occasions for writing.

Diary Time

Years ago psychologist Gordon Allport attempted to use the diary as a way to understand the inner lives of his subjects. He found that, although it was a powerful written form, the diary was not a simple one. Allport (1942) noted, for example, that despite the apparent privacy and revelatory potential of this written form, the "picture of the theoretical perfection of the diary . . . is often not realized in practice" (pp. 95-96). The realities of the writing situation place limits on the diarist. This is in large part because diary writing, like all writing, is both a social and a personal activity.

If one imagines the ideal diarist working at will and in blessed isolation, issues of social context appear not to be a problem. Yet we know that few diarists work in this fashion. Many diarists intend that their writing will someday be read by an audience other than themselves[3] or use their diaries to record and reflect upon their social relations.[4] When diaries are attempted within institutional

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[3]An example is the diary of the late Bostonian, Arthur Crew Inman. Compiled between the years 1919 and 1963, Inman's diary presents his view on life and politics and contains more than ten million words. The diary is currently being edited for publication by Harvard professor of literature, Daniel Aaron. It is reported that in this enterprise Aaron has been helped by the fact that

> the diary itself contains detailed instructions to
> the future editor, dictating how the manuscript was
> to be treated, from questions of style to punctuation.
> Inman's strictest editorial fiat was that nothing
> shocking be removed on account of squeamishness
> (Colt, Harvard Magazine, May-June, 1981, p. 50).

[4]Diary writing can be used to deal constructively with personal problems. Among the diary writing techniques recommended in this

settings such as the classroom, their "theoretical perfection" is clouded still further by the realities of school life. Most obviously, diaries written in school are not written in privacy. They are often initiated, not by the diarist, but by the teacher. And since most writing done in school has an audience, the issue of audience in classroom diaries is, at best, uncertain.

This description examines the social complexities of diary writing in one second/third-grade classroom. It does so in the form of a life history of diary time as an occasion for writing. As such, the report does not offer a recipe for how to keep classroom diaries. Instead it portrays the opportunities for and limits upon diary writing in the clas_room. This portrayal is intended to stimulate the reader's critical thinking about two issues—the diary's potential within the school writing curriculum and, perhaps more importantly, the classroom as an environment for the teaching and learning of writing.

Genesis

Our first regular interview with Ms. Donovan, the second/third grade teacher in Room 12, took place on September 5, the day before the school year began. She told us that this year she planned to have her students write in diaries for the last 10 or 15

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regard are some potentially social ones including the writing of dialogues and "unsent letters" (Rainer, 1978). In addition, such techniques have been adapted for classroom use. In the "dialogue journal," the student makes regular diary entries that are responded to in writing by the teacher. In the course of these written dialogues, thoughts and feelings are explored interactively, and there is opportunity for development of written language skills (Staton, Note 8; Shuy, Note 9).

minutes of each school day, and that she planned to use that time herself to write in the journal that she was keeping as part of the research project. She said she expected to write in a "stream of consciousness" fashion. Field notes written on the same day indicate that as Ms. Donovan drafted a model daily schedule she allotted the final 10 minutes of the day to diary time. Ms. Donovan commented to the fieldworker that having her students write in diaries was something she had wanted to do for a long time and that her participation in the research project would "give added impetus" to it (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

Getting Started

On the first day of school, Diary Time was expanded to the final full hour of the day, to allow time for Ms. Donovan to orient the students (i.e., communicate her plan for Diary Time), and for the students to make and decorate cardboard covers for their diaries as well as to write their first diary entries. Following afternoon recess, at about 2:15 p.m., Ms. Donovan had the children sit on the carpet in a filled circle (a configuration used for class meetings and for receiving instruction and directions from the teacher). The field notes (9/6/79) pick up the story:

> Looking up at the chalkboard where the schedule had been written, one child said, "It's almost time for diary." Another child said, "What's that?" Ms. Donovan said, "That's what we have to discuss. Some kids don't know what it is yet."
>
> Proceeding, Ms. Donovan asked, "Does anyone know what a diary is?"
>
> Linda: "Things that you write down that you think of."
> Kathy: ". . .private"
> Sarah: ". . .that you think are important"

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After taking some comments from the floor, Ms. Donovan noted that "no two diaries are the same." Anthony chimed in at this point: "I already have a diary with a key and lock." There was a discussion about why one might lock a diary. The issue of privacy was highlighted, and Ms. Donovan said, "I don't want to read them unless you want to share them with me or the class." She offered to lock them in a filing cabinet drawer.

Dani asked, "How do you correct them?"

Ms. Donovan said that they were not to be corrected and that she, too, would have one.

Considerable time was spent constructing the diaries, and the procedure had the following parts:

1. The diary covers were to be decorated with crayon or magic marker.
   Children who finished decorating ahead of time were not to begin writing in the diaries but were to take a worksheet and complete it. The worksheets were mazes and the children were told they could color them. They were told the mazes would be "corrected."
2. Children were to decorate their diaries with picture(s) of favorite things. Then the diaries were filled with five sheets of lined paper.
3. The third-grade paper was distinguished from the second-grade paper (they are essentially the same except that third grade paper has narrower spaces between the lines). Ms. Donovan asked the fieldworker to help distribute paper, and she found the distinction by grade disconcerting. It was noted by the children, but not accompanied with an explanation, and each time the fieldworker/helper gave someone paper she had to ask her/him their grade—somewhat of a non sequitur to some of the children.
4. When the children asked what would happen when they finished using the five pages, they were told that they could "make a new one."

5. Ms. Donovan gave an example of the cover illustration for the diary. She drew a Christmas tree. Three children (Mary, Stefan, and Kris) drew Christmas trees, too. Other covers included the following: bicycles, a star that evolved into the emblem of the Dallas cowboys, a house, a cat, a swing set, a tree.

Once the covers were underway, Ms. Donovan passed out the "third grade paper" and asked the researcher/helper to pass out the "second-grade paper." Then

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the children began to write in their diaries, as
Ms. Donovan circulated stapling the booklets to-
gether.   There were several procedural directives
as the writing began.

1. With regard to <u>privacy</u>, Ms. Donovan said that you
    shouldn't ask other people what they are writing;
2. regarding <u>help with spelling words</u>, Ms. Donovan
    said that she would also be writing in her diary
    and not looking up and around the room.   There-
    fore, students should come up to her table if
    they needed help.   Ms. Donovan said that the
    researcher/helper would be available to help as
    well.   The researcher decided to write in her
    field note journal during diary-writing time.
    Much like during Uninterrupted Silent Reading
    (USR), Ms. Donovan and the fieldworker both
    modeled the process and, perhaps, enabled it by
    this strategy.
3. Ms. Donovan said that she would share part of
    what she was writing in her diary--i.e., that
    she has a good class and has had a good day.
    The rest, she said, "is for me."   She also
    pointed out that diary time "was sort of like
    USR, but was UW (Uninterrupted Writing), so that
    you can think and write down your thoughts by
    yourself."   She added that "if you can't think
    of anything, write the word 'write' until you
    can think of an idea."

During UW, some children came to the fieldworker
with scraps of paper and asked her to spell words
for them.   The first was Stan.   He had a full sheet
of third-grade paper and said that he would keep the
words she spelled for him in a list so that he could
remember them.   He said that he did this last year
with his second-grade teacher.   Some of the children
came with questions about what to write--e.g., Do
you write about "just school," or can you write
about "before school?"   7

During the diary writing time, there was not much
talk among the students.   For the first time, the
fieldworker saw some children put up tall books
and workbooks around their papers as barriers.
There appeared to be much concern for privacy and
the students did not hasten to show their entries
to Ms. Donovan or her.   Writing went on this way
from 2:50 until 3:00.

At 3:01, Ms. Donovan asked the children to stop.
She asked, "How many people had a hard time thinking
of things to write about?"   She suggested that any-
one who didn't should give them some ideas.   (She

was apparently aware of Chet, the boy who had the
most trouble thinking of something to write.   He had
come to the fieldworker for help in decorating his
cover.   When she suggested that he might want to
write something inside, he said he did not know what
to write.   Attempting to get him started, she dis-
covered that he is new in town, has yet to make many
friends, and therefore felt he did not have much to
recount.   Ms. Donovan addressed much of the post-
writing discussion to Chet, looking at him a lot.)
Ms. Donovan asked the class, "How did you think of
things to write?" She called on two boys who seemed
to have no trouble making entries--

> Joseph: "I thought."
> Anthony: "I don't know."

Ms. Donovan said, "it isn't easy to talk about.   I
had a hard time also." But she suggested topics
such as:

> --what you liked about today
> --what you didn't like about today
> --how I felt

"How do you feel right now--at the end of the day?"
The students said that they were "tired," that they
"wanted to stay some more." Saying that they could
write about these feelings and that she didn't want
to "cut them off," Ms. Donovan promised that there
would be more time tomorrow. She let those that
wanted to continue writing do so for a few minutes
but began to collect the diaries and put them in her
file cabinet.

Diary writing was followed by a very brief clean
up and dismissal. (Field Notes, 9/6/79)

Discussion

Diary Time was clearly a planned occasion for writing that

originated with the teacher. By allocating a regular daily slot

for diary writing even before she met her students and by discussing

her intentions with the researchers, Ms. Donovan made a commitment

to establish this activity as a routine. On September 5, we had no

detailed evidence of her plan or mental picture of what Diary Time

would be like, or of what purposes she thought it might serve for

her students. But Ms. Donovan's scheduling of Diary Time as the very last activity of the day and her expressed desire to write in her own journal at that time suggest a picture of a quiet period of private reflection on and writing about the major events of the day, during which each child would be in his or her own little world for a while. As we shall see, the realities of the classroom transformed this idyllic picture in many unforeseen ways. As we reflect on the first Diary Time, a number of interesting features of this occasion bear mention. We address them under the headings of planning, implementation, audience, and function.

Planning. As mentioned above, Diary Time was clearly a teacher-originated and teacher-planned activity (as distinguished from student-initiated activities, mandated curricular activities, or unexpected, serendipitous events). Ms. Donovan told us of her intention to have the students write daily diary entries on the day before school began. She allocated a full hour of the important first day of school to Diary Time, and built in a 10-minute time slot at the end of each daily schedule for diary writing. Her comments on the day before school began, and her actions during the first Diary Time indicate that she had wanted to have students keep diaries for some years, that she had never done so before, that her participation in a study of written literacy (including her own keeping of a journal) provided added impetus to institute Diary Time, and that she was convinced that Diary Time would be a valuable activity for her students. In short, it was important to Ms. Donovan that Diary Time succeed.

Much of Ms. Donovan's planning for Diary Time must be inferred
from indirect evidence. Like other experienced elementary teachers
whose planning has been studied (Clark & Yinger, Note 1), she did not
write out an elaborate, step-by-step plan book entry for Diary Time.
The only visible record of planning for the first Diary Time is the
written schedule for that day. Yet her comments recorded in the
September 5 interview and field notes, her relatively elaborate
communication of the Diary Time plan to the students, and the fact
that materials for making the diary covers were ready when needed
all indicate that Ms. Donovan had an elaborate plan worked out in
her mind---she was not simply "playing it by ear." Although her
planning was a necessary preparation for Diary Time, it was invisi-
ble to outside observers.

Implementation. It is usually the case in the unpredictable
world of the elementary school classroom that activities are not
implemented exactly as planned. This discrepancy between plan and
action is especially likely to be visible in the early days and
weeks of school, when teacher and students are first getting to
know one another, and also in the case of activities that a teacher
is implementing for the first time. The first Diary Time met both
of these conditions, and Ms. Donovan adjusted her plan to accomodate
the unpredictable. In the orienting discussion of what diaries are,
she built on student contributions of ideas about the purposes and
contents of diary entries. The discussion of the privacy issue was
triggered by a student reporting that he owned a diary with a lock
and key. Ms. Donovan incorporated the fieldworker as an aide in this

activity, who handed out paper and helped the children spell words.
Implementation of Ms. Donovan's advance plan depended very much on
her interactive decision making and flexibility in building on
student contributions. The plan was tailored to fit the moment
rather than the moment forced to fit the structure of the plan.

Another feature of plan implementation worth mentioning is Ms.
Donovan's use of modeling. She modeled both the decoration of a
diary cover and the diary writing process itself. Further, she
shared one part of her own diary entry with the class, but told
them that the remainder of the entry was private ("just for me"),
showing that each writer was to be the judge of what to share and
what to keep secret. Ms. Donovan's use of modeling shows up in
various ways in other occasions for writing throughout the year.
The first Diary Time is the earliest example of a pattern of modeling
in which the emphasis is on making explicit how the teacher is
thinking about and doing the writing task herself rather than telling
the students what the "right way" to do the task is. Implicit in
this approach to modeling a task are the teacher's concern that
students learn and attend to the processes (of thought and action)
as well as to the products (a diary cover or entry), sufficient
respect for the importance and meaningfulness of the task that the
teacher herself will enter into it as a full participant, and an
openness to accept decisions by individual students to approach the
task in a way that is different from that modeled by the teacher
(as long as they do participate).

Another element of Diary Time implementation worth comment is
that the activity combined construction, art work, oral discussion,

and writing. Every student was able to make and decorate a personalized diary cover, and to participate as a listener or speaker in the discussion of what diaries are and how they can be useful. Even those children who did not write anything in their diaries had a concrete, visible product to show for the first day of school. Furthermore, the cover decorations were to be "pictures of favorite things"--a way for students to reflect on, declare, and make public (to the teacher and to classmates) some personal information. A measure of success for all students was built into the activity, and the link between drawing and writing was manifested on the first day of school.

Finally, it is clear that implementation of the first Diary Time was also the beginning of Ms. Donovan's planning for the second and subsequent Diary Times. She paid attention to the unanticipated problems in implementation that cropped up, and immediately began thinking of ways to solve these problems. After the children were dismissed at the end of the first day of school, Ms. Donovan wrote a journal entry of her own that was both a reflection on Diary Time activity and a plan for improving the process on the following day. In her reflection and planning, Ms. Donovan identified two problems encountered in the first Diary Time (children interrupting her to ask how to spell words that they want to write, and some children who couldn't think of anything to write) and came up with the idea to help solve the second of these problems:

> Discussed writing a diary; emphasized idea of personal thoughts and importance of privacy. Most caught on quickly...some kept their own diaries at home.

> I had planned to keep my journal while the class
> works in theirs, but for the first few weeks it
> will be difficult to accomplish with their inter-
> ruptions for spelling and ideas.
>
> Tomorrow I'll read short selections from logs and
> journals kept by such people as Anne Frank and
> Washington Irving and have the children figure
> out how they have become useful for us and pos-
> sibly give them some ideas. I'll have some share
> their entries from yesterday if they wish, then
> pull a small group to work out some strategies to
> help them think of what to write. (Journal, 9/6/79)

So we see that, especially in a continuing activity like Diary

Time, the teacher played the roles of observant and reflective critic

of her own teaching, problem solver and formative evaluator of class-

room processes, as well as leader, instructor, and facilitator of

those activities.

Audience. Who was the audience for the student diary entries?

At one level the teacher intended that the young diarist himself or

herself would be the primary audience. The discussion of privacy

reflected in the field notes quoted above, and the seriousness w'

which teacher   dents guarded their own privacy lend support to

the hypothesis of "self as audience." But, at the same time, there

is evidence to suggest that both teacher and students saw teacher

and peers as a potential audience for diary entries. The facts that

Diary Time was a teacher-imposed task, that the teacher knew and

taught about "the rules" of diary keeping, that the teacher read

aloud a part of her own first journal entry, and that the teacher

collected and stored the diaries in her filing cabinet all supported

the idea of "teacher as audience." Student concerns about accur

spelling, ques'   out how the teacher "will correct them" (Field

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Notes, 9/6/79), and teacher assistance for those who could not think

of what to write constitute additional evidence of teacher as audi-

ence. Peers were introduced as a potential audience by Ms. Donovan's

comment that "I don't want to read them [the diaries] unless you want

to share them with me or the class" (Field Notes, 9/6/79).

According to the fieldworker, the children appeared to be a bit

confused by the mixed message of privacy, on the one hand, and teacher/

peers as audience on the other (Field Notes, 9/6/79). The diary

writing activity could be seen as an invitation to engage in two

incompatible tasks: (1) private, freewheeling writing intended for

the author's eyes only, in which description and reflection were of

paramount importance, and "errors" of form, spelling, or grammar were

of no consequence, and (2) "correct" writing about one's daily experi-

ences and feelings, that fit the conventions of diary entries as a

literary form and the conventions of neatness, spelling, punctuation,

coherence, and length of school writing tasks that please the

teacher.[3] Taking the perspective of a seven- or eight-year-old

child on the first day of school, one can imagine a number of ways

that he or she might respond to this dilemma:

1. Treat diary time as "just another school writing
   task," and write what you think will please the
   teacher. Get help from an adult with spelling
   words and with further clarification of "the rules";

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[3]It is interesting to speculate about how this internal tension
in the diary writing occasion relates to Doyle's (Note 10) research on
classroom task structure in which he points out that even children
relatively new to school are caught up on the "performance for grade"
exchange. Indeed, it is reasonable to claim that all school writing
occasions initiated by the teacher include the teacher as one impor-
tant audience.

2.   Treat Diary Time as a reflective writing task
     which the usual "rules" of school wiring are
     mercifully suspended; maintain privacy;

3.   Write nothing. Let the teacher remove all of
     the ambiguity from this new kind of writing
     task by "helping you think of what [and how]
     to write."

These three alternatives characterize the observed range of

student responses to the first Diary Time. The central point of

this interpretation is that ambiguity about the audience of a student

writing activity can affect both the interpretation of the

task and the students' performance of the writing in diverse ways.

Function. Initially, the primary function of Diary Time inten-

ded by Ms. Donovan was to provide her students with an opportunity

to reflect on the events of the day and to become aware of their own

feelings and thoughts about school life. As mentioned above, the

evidence for this intended function includes Ms. Donovan's scheduling

of Diary Time as the last activity of the school day and her expressed

desire to write reflectively in her own journal while the children

wrote in their diaries.

Ms. Donovan saw her own journal writing in connection with the

research project and the students' daily diary writing as potentially

serving similar ends. In an early journal entry she speculates about

this parallel:

> Sharing this journal and my thoughts during the
> week with another [the researcher] on a scheduled
> basis is helping me to reflect in a less nebulous
> manner on planning and assessment of lessons. By
> articulating my conceptions and beliefs, it has
> become easier for me to present ideas in a more
> logical manner with fewer inconsistencies. I

wonder if the children will develop greater oral
ease through writing and reflecting on their ideas?
(9/11/79)

Diary Time also served as an opportunity for every

student to succeed at constructing and decorating a diary--a visible

product of the first day of school. Furthermore, the decorations on

the diary covers constituted information about each student's "favorite

things" that was useful to the teacher, the individual young artist,

and his or her peers. In this way, the first Diary Time contributed

to the process of building a social system in the classroom--getting

the year off to a good start by getting to know one another.

The investment of a full hour of the first day of school to

Diary Time also served to communicate to the students that writing

was to be an important part of life in this classroom, and that Ms.

Donovan would do whatever was necessary to insure that everyone

would write. Providing the correct spelling of words and her plan

to work with small groups who "could not think of anything to write"

of Ms. Donovan's determination to have every student

participate, even at the expense of journal writing time for herself.

Beyond communicating teacher expectations about writing in

Room 12, the first Diary Time also served as a diagnostic or writing

assessment opportunity for Ms. Donovan. She learned, somewhat to

her surprise, which students had the most difficulty writing. She

learned that all of her students were concerned about correct spelling

rds, even though the teacher-intended audience for the diary was

oneself alone. She also learned that the concept of a diary and the

personal and historical functions that a diary can serve were not

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well understood by her students, and she formed a plan to fill this gap of knowledge ...d motivation. And finally, Ms, Donovan began to learn about the a.   ..   of teach en   it .ld take to introduce, implement, and maintain a complex and long-term oc .sio... for writing with this particular group of students.

Finally, Diary Time served a managerial function: to calm down students at the end of the school day and to end on a reflective, academically justifiable, note. The comparison of diary writing to. Uninterrupted Silent Reading (USR) that Ms. Donovan made when intro- ducing the first Diary Time is telling (Field Notes, 9/6/79). Ms. Donovan had used USR following recess and lunch to calm children down and to focus them on an individual academic task as they re- turned to the classroom, one by one or two by two. Diary Time (or Uninterrupted Writing) served a closure and transition function between school and home, just as. USR was intended (in part) to ease the transition between active, social, out-of-classroom activity and calmer, often individual, in-class academic activity.

The Complexity of Diary Writing in School

Diary Time was an occasion for writing that did not live up to all of Ms. Donovan's hopes and expectations, yet it was one from which the students, the teacher, and the researchers derived sub- stantial benefit. In the year that we observed Ms. Donovan's class, Diary Time was undertaken for the first time. We have learned from research on teacher planning and from the reports of experienced teachers that teaching something for the first time can amount to a pilot test (Clark & Elmore, Note 11). The pilot test of Diary Time

in Ms. Donovan's room, while only partially successful, yielded

many insights about writing, instruction, and the classroom learning

environment. In a sense, the life history of Diary Time is offered

as an opportunity for the reader to experience that pilot test vicar-

...... and   out its implications for his or her own teaching.

For all of the instructional success of Diary Time, the seeds

of its ultimate difficulties were present from the outset. Despite

teacher planning and support, Diary Time, like many classroom acti-

vities, took on a life of its own as the year progressed. By year's

end, about six children were still keeping diaries in school, but

they were doing so as independent activity during their free time.

The field notes show that, not far into October, the regular ten-

minute slot intended for Diary Time was at first shifted to various

parts of the day. By January it had been removed entirely from the

daily calendar.

What were the difficulties in sustaining a daily Diary Time?

Ms. Donovan had some ideas on the subject when she was interviewed

almost a full year later:

> Originally I had hoped to write in a diary at the
> same time the children did, but it didn't work out
> too well. Because even though there was the idea
> of the diaries being private and no one had to read
> them except them and that they were just for their
> own use, they still wanted to spell the words cor-
> rectly and have it so it had some form to it. And
> they would have to come up and ask me to spell a lot
> of the words. I couldn't write in my diary very much.
> And then...we tried to set a special time aside every
> day and that just got to be almost impossible because
> of the way the schedule of the day goes...So from
> wanting to write everyday it went to three times a
> week and then it sort of just died out after a while
> because it was one of those activities that was real
> difficult to fit in. Another problem with it was that

> the children had a real difficult time reflecting back
> on what they had done...Even if you gave them topics
> to write about. They wanted to write about what hap-
> pened in their lives but they didn't think their lives
> were very interesting...Most of the kids at the end
> of the year weren't writing in diaries. (Interview
> 9/8/80; Italics inserted by the authors)

It is notable that in making sense of the decline and fall of

Diary Time Ms. Donovan cites factors that are related both to the

private mental lives of her students and to the situational context

of Diary Time. Her inferences that the children had difficulty re-

flecting and did not think their lives were very interesting derive

from the student behaviors she observed. Diary Time was plagued

with both the concern on children's part that their spelling would

be correct and the common lament by the children that they did not

know what to write. This state of affairs seems paradoxical when

we think of the diary as a private and personal written form. Yet

when we locate diary writing in the classroom context, it becomes

apparent that the children's concerns make sense given the expec-

tations about writing in general in school and the status of Diary

Time as a part of the day's scheduled activities. Living with this

paradox, student writers became stalled--and so did Ms. Donovan.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Diary Time lost its priority

in a daily schedule filled with a myriad of other instructional

activities. A re-examination of some of the contextual features

of Diary Time can help us to understand its problems.

From the outset, Diary Time contained a number of conflicting

messages regarding issues of privacy, correctness, and audience.

Different students approached the task of diary keeping in different

ways that ultimately related to whether the diary functioned for
them as private written reflection or as public sharing of thoughts
in written form. Some of Ms. Donovan's efforts to communicate her
plan for Diary Time and to support its undertaking contributed to
the ambiguous nature of classroom diary writing. Ms. Donovan hints
at these problems in the interview quoted above.

The Use of a Model

As noted in the description of Diary Time, Ms. Donovan attempted
to provide models for the children in several ways. First, she made
a model diary with decorated cover for the children. Second, she
hoped to write in her own journal during Diary Time, thus modeling
the process. And, third, she brought sample diary entries from pub-
lished diaries to the class to share when children seemed to have
difficulty getting started. Modeling provided both a prop and a
standard, and in so doing, both enabled and limited the students'
diary writing. We can see this when we observe that a number of
children copied Ms. Donovan's diary cover for their own. In addition,
the sharing of published diary entries, while illustrative in their
content and form, conveyed that diaries are not necessarily private
and that there might be standards for what constitutes an appropriate
diary entry despite Ms. Donovan's assertion that no one need read
them. Finally, because of contextual constraints to be discussed
below, Ms. Donovan was not afforded the privacy needed to write in
her own journal during Diary Time. Thus an important part of the
modeling process was unavailable to her and the students.

Audience and the Concern for Correctness

Much writing done in the course of a day in Room 12 was done
as academic performance. As such, that writing had Ms. Donovan as
its primary audience and was evaluated by her. There are contextual
features marking writing as academic performance in Room 12. They
include the instigation of the writing by the teacher, the scheduling
of the writing as part of the day's work, the collection of the
writing, and the production of the writing on special paper different
for the second graders than for the third graders. Diary Time was
to be a writing time that was private and personal. It was intended
to stimulate student writing unconstrained by worries about correct-
ness or audience. It was to be an opportunity to practice thinking
on paper. Yet a second look at Diary Time shows us that it had many
of the situational trappings of writing as academic performance.
First, Diary Time was given regularly-scheduled status and was ini-
tiated by the teacher. Second, diaries were collected and kept in
the teacher's locked file cabinet. While this move was intended to
ensure privacy, it is worth noting that only tests and workbooks
and other official written materials were kept in that cabinet, and
additionally that the children did not have access to their diaries
without Ms. Donovan's unlocking the cabinet. Diaries were, as re-
ported in the field notes, written on official school paper that
varied by grade. Although not required, spelling correctness was
reinforced by the adults in the room by the very fact that they were
willing to interrupt their own writing to help students achieve cor-
rectness of surface features of their writing.

A sample from the first five diary entries of Jane, one of the third-grade students, provides evidence that many features of Diary Time may have resembled formal academic writing rather than private written reflection (see Figure 7). Jane was a prolific writer who eventually offered to share her diary with the fieldworker. At first, Jane wrote at some length about things that had happened to her outside school and classroom. She experimented with audience by initially personifying the diary and addressing it directly ("Dear Diary"). Her second entry had no such direct address, but her third again resembles the "letter to diary" format by containing a closing ("I better go! By!"). It is interesting to note, however, that by the fourth day of school, while keeping the closing, Jane begins her entry as the students are requested to begin all their written work in Ms. Donovan's room--with her name just opposite the date.

Another notable change in Jane's diary entries occurs on the fourth day of school. Many children had been having difficulty deciding what to write during the first few days of school. In general, Ms. Donovan's suggestions limited the scope of the writing to what was happening in school, as was reported in the field notes .(What you liked about today; what you didn't like about today; how you felt). While this strategy was intended for children not writing as fluently as Jane (and, presumably offered to ease the burden of recall), it is worthy of conjecture that Jane had begun to learn by day four that school-related topics were the most appropriate for classroom diaries. Her entries change in their subject matter and

September 6, 1979

ear Diary,
cupil of weeks ago when
was upnorth, when I was
riping logs my stepfather
and a swarm of bees. I
o scard! Are friends head
beari a black one!! It
hard to strip logs, I
nt like to Upnorth we
go blue berrys, and onse
saw a little muskrate
o! Hes cute!

September 7, 1979
Today and last night
brock my finger well
least that is what I
ink. My mom thinks I
around it, I have a
cast on it right now
everybody keep asking
me what happend to my
finger. And there driving
me crazy!! My finger
looks dumb!

pg. 2

September 10, 1979
This weekend I went
upnorth. And a little boy
named David he is six
years old. He has thee
kittens one of them are
greg and two of them are
white. One is a cat. She
is whit too. And all
weekend I played with
David. He is six and I
am 8½. Pretty soon
we have to go to Recess.
I better go!
By!

pg. 3

Jane   Sep. 11, 1979
Today, I went to the
library for my first
time in my new school
I like my new school!!
I have to go now!
By!

Jane   September 12, 1979
My friend Jenny
Keenaga well she was in
the paper. Jenny brought
her mouses to school and
We threw them up and
down. And we had fun
today. I have to go
By!

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Figure 7. Jane's diary.

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length after the first three days and become decidedly more school-related.

In a paradoxical way, the more support provided by Ms. Donovan in the form of models, protected time for diary writing, ensured safekeeping of the diaries, and help with spelling, the farther from the original intent of diary writing the class moved. Faced with ambiguity about purpose, audience, and format, the students increased their pursuit of help from the teacher, the teacher continued to support the task, and a cycle began that moved most children far from diary writing by the end of the first month of school.

Diary Time illuminates complexity of two sorts. It portrays the complexity of the writing process, where privacy and audience stand in a figure/ground relationship that shifts depending on the writer's intentions and the conventions of a particular genre. In addition, Diary Time illuminates the complexity of the classroom as an environment for writing. In Diary Time we see that there are social norms embedded in classroom life that govern the functions of writing there. Those norms give meaning both to the material environment (lined paper, filing cabinets, daily schedules) and the social relations that constitute everyday school life. It was difficult for the teacher and students to re-cast their usual ways of behaving and making sense of writing in school in the service of the innovation of Diary Time.

All of the complexities mentioned above contributed to the difficulties experienced in the attempt to stimulate writing in Ms. Donovan's room by means of Diary Time. We can learn a great deal

by reflecting upon those difficulties. Most obviously, we can learn that social context is profoundly involved in the writing process as students seek to discover the purpose, audience, and consequences of their writing. Many facets of the classroom environment contribute to the sense that students will make of the writing task and to their subsequent writing. Implements, materials, time, and space are all powerful parts of the school writing activity. In addition, the teacher may be variously defined as initiator, helper, critic, or audience for school writing. The way that her/his role is defined has implications for the student's social identity as well. Redefinitions of the roles of teacher and student in the writing process-- no matter how subtle or bold--require attention and negotiation. In the end, because of such interactive complexity, not every negotiation will look precisely like the one the teacher envisioned in planning, and not every one will capture the imagination and energy of every student. But all attempts at improvement of writing instruction will bear fruit if, when examined in retrospect, they can be seen to inform the continuing processes of setting realistic goals, planning meaningful activities, and structuring the learning environment to enhance the acquisition of written literacy.

Pen Pals

Introduction

One of writing's great powers can also be the source of great difficulty for students. By means of writing it is possible to communciate our thoughts to an absent audience over time and distance. Yet it is precisely the absence of our audience (and the uncertainty or lack of a reply) that often makes writing far more difficult than conversation. Much has been said and written about letter-writing as a curricular device providing students the opportunity to practice communicating with an absent audience and to have the exhilarating experience of a reply. Letter-writing is unlike many other classroom writing activities in that, by definition, it moves student writing outside the classroom walls, it admits of an audience other than the teacher, and it serves purposes other than academic performance. In these ways, it can be said that letter-writing more closely resembles transactional writing in the world outside school than do many other school writing tasks.

This description of Pen Pals, an occasion for writing in Ms. Donovan's class, examines a five-month correspondence between the second- and third-grade students in Room 12 and their second-grade counterparts in a school across town. This account of the genesis unfolding, and fate of Pen Pals attempts to shed light on the social contexts in which the many facets of the correspondence occurred. It also considers the roles played by the children and their teachers in bringing letter-writing to life.

How It Began

Mrs. Leslie is a "writing helping teacher" in the East Eden school district. The term "helping teacher" designates a newly created professional role in the district. Interested teachers apply for the privilege of spending a school year working as resource persons in the basic skill areas of reading and writing. "Helping teachers" not only aid the continuing education of their colleagues in the district, but their own expertise in these areas is enhanced as well.

As a writing helping teacher, Mrs. Leslie worked with many elementary teachers in the district. Her role afforded her the opportunity and incentive to identify teachers who might otherwise not have been in contact and to initiate the opportunity for their students to become pen pals. Once the initial arrangements were made, the two teachers and their students could carry on the activity without further help from Mrs. Leslie.

For Ms. Donovan's class, Mrs. Leslie identified the second grade of Mr. D (short for "Donizetti," a name the children found difficult to pronounce). Mr. D's class was in the Stone Elementary School. While the Stone and Conley schools were both located on the east side of town and were only about two miles apart, the neighborhoods they served were separated by a four-lane state highway (see Figure 8). Because it was not possible for the children to cross the highway alone, Mrs. Leslie assumed that they were not likely to have already had social contacts with one another. Thus, as they became pen pals, letters would carry the burden of introduction and evolving relationships

between them. It was also assumed that, should friendships develop between pen pals, the proximity of the two neighborhoods would make it possible for children to visit one another with the cooperation of their teachers or parents. This arrangement also provided the opportunity for pen pals to encounter one another at church, when neighborhood scout dens met in monthly pack meetings, and in community intermural sports. Later the children would also know one another as students in the same middle school. Before beginning the project, however, only two pen pals knew each other.
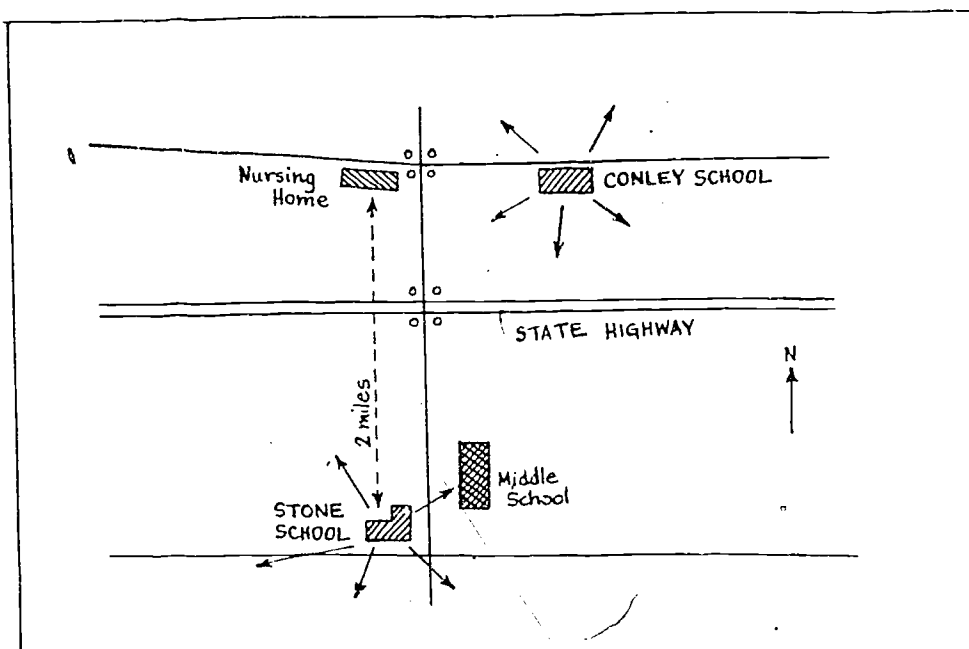
Figure 8. Location of the pen pal schools
and their neighborhoods.

Ms. Donovan and Mr. D assigned pen pals randomly within sex groups. After as many students as possible were paired with same sex pen pals, the remaining few were assigned pen pals of the other sex. Mr. D's students were all second graders, while Ms. Donovan

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had both second and third graders, but the difference in grade was

not commented upon by Ms. Donovan's students when they learned of

their pen pals. A more serious difference was the fact that Mr. D's

class had fewer boys than did Ms. Donovan's. Ms. Donovan reports

the following in her journal:

> We have established pen pals with a second grade
> class in Stone School. Most of the children were
> really thrilled with the idea; a few were quite
> upset. Unfortunately, there were not enough boy's
> names for all the boys, and you know how deadly
> girls' germs can be...especially when you mix boys'
> germs with them. It was difficult to convince them
> to write. However, most of them are resigned now to
> the unfairness of life. (Journal, 2/14/80)

This early concern about the sex of their pen pals suggests that

from the outset Ms. Donovan's students may have approached the Pen

Pals activity as a form of social transaction with Mr. D's students.

As we shall see, the problem of sex of the pen pal was resolved by

some of the students once the writing was underway.

The students received the names of their pen pals early in

February. They corresponded until the end of the school year. The

first letters were sent by Mr. D's class. Most of them were descrip-

tions of their authors and were three or four sentences in length.

All were printed and included dates, the return address, and the full

names of their authors. Figure 9 illustrates with two of the letters.

‘ All of the letters from Mr. D's class arrived by U.S. Mail in

a packet addressed to Ms. Donovan. She distributed the letters, and

her students wrote replies. In an interview in the last week of

February, Ms. Donovan described the process:

Stone School
E. Eden, Mich
Feb. 8, 1980

Dear Lea,
What is your name?
I have freckles.
We are going to be pen pals.
Write to me soon.
Sincerely Sally N.

Stone School
East Eden, Mich
Feb. 8, 1980

Dear Marie,
My name is Harriet. I live on
Burcham Dr. I am in second
grade I like gymnastics.
Your friend,
Harriet B.

Figure 9. The first pen pal letters.

> Ms. Donovan reported that the Pen Pals project is
> now in its second round. She showed the inter-
> viewer letters that her students had written
> including drawings and school photos of some of
> the authors. She said that the girls are much
> more enthused about this project than the boys--
> Derek is still very put out because he has a <u>girl</u>
> for a pen pal. Ms. Donovan sees the pen pals' letter
> writing as a good exercise that gives kids lots of
> practice in basics like punctuation and capitali-
> zation. She said that her children are already
> good at "sentence sense." (Interview Notes, 2/29/80)

In responding to the letters from Mr. D's class, Ms. Donovan's

students described themselves in word and picture. However, they

found it difficult to expand their letters beyond such descriptions

because, while Mr. D's students had described themselves, they had

not written anything in their letters explicitly requiring a reply.

To help get the transaction started, therefore, Ms. Donovan required

that each student include at least one personal question in the letter

to her/his pen pal. Most often the question took the form of either

a request such as "Will you send me a picture of yourself?" or a

question such as "What is your favorite TV show?"

The Pen Pals Meet

While Ms. Donovan and Mr. D had mentioned in passing that some-

day their students might get together, it was not until Mr. D's

class was invited to sing at Colonial House, the nursing home across

the street from Conley School (see Figure 8), that the idea became

a reality. Mr. D offered to bring his class first to Room 12

where they could present the musical program to their pen pals.

Thus, early in March, after having exchanged two letters, the Room

12 pen pals began to prepare for the visit of Mr. D's class.

This preparation was the occasion for quite a bit more planning and writing on the part of Ms. Donovan and her students. She comments in her journal:

> Our next big planning feat is the visit of our pen pals on Monday. We've sketched out a tentative plan—— I. Introdution, II. Welcome speech, III. Time at different centers at which they'll entertain their pals, and IV. Treats. I initiated the discussion by informing the kids when they were coming and saying it wasn't possible to have lunch for a half day, and what could we do while they were here? They came up with quite a list of ideas but realized we couldn't accomplish all those things with everyone, so someone suggested the idea of centers so each one could choose what they wanted to do with their pal. Tomorrow will be the nitty gritty of detail work. We will have to make the treats, decide where the centers will go and how people will decide where to go and what to do. Interesting..." (Journal, 3/5/80)

On the day that Ms. Donovan and the class planned for the pen pal visit, she wrote on the large white butcher paper she calls "experience paper," recording student suggestions for the activities that could be shared with pen pals at the centers around the room. As activities were suggested and discussed, they were narrowed to "quiet games" that could be played indoors in a crowded room and activities "that only two people can do——you and your pen pal" (Field Notes, 3/8/80). Such planning virtually ensured that each child would have some activity time alone with his or her pen pal. Among the activities suggested were drawing, painting, handwriting, games (chess, checkers, Scrabble, and Battleship), and a tour of Conley School. Time was also set aside for serving a snack that would be prepared in advance by Ms. Donovan's class. After Rice Krispie treats were chosen, Ms. Donovan wrote the recipe on the butcher

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paper and helped the students to double the recipe so that two classes could be served.

The students also decided that there should be a welcoming speech to greet their pen pals. Mark volunteered to write and deliver it. Meanwhile, Thomas volunteered to write a speech introducing Mark's welcome. Thomas' speech quickly evolved into a spoof. Once written, it was read to Ms. Donovan and the rest of the class to their great enjoyment. Although Thomas' spoof was never delivered to the pen pals, Mark did read his welcoming speech. Both the speech and the spoof are reproduced in Figure 10.

Two days later, the Rice Krispie treats prepared and the centers organized, Mr. D and his class arrived at 12:45. There was an air of excitement as the students made their way to Ms. Donovan's corner of Room 12. The visiting pen pals wore prefabricated shamrock name tags on which Mr. D had written their first names. In contrast, Ms. Donovan's students wore handmade name tags. They had spent a great deal of time during the previous week preparing them, getting very involved drawing on the tags pictures of things that might express a bit about who they were. As a result, many of the students wore tags with flowers, sharks, football helmets, and the like on them. All names were printed or written in cursive by the students (Field Notes, 3/10/80). Here the field notes pick up the story of the visit:

> As each pair of children met and greeted one another, they immediately left the center rug area and went to the round blue table at the back of the room. Then Ms. Donovan's students offered their pen pals animal crackers or the Rice Krispie treats they had made. (This use of food seemed like a terrific ice breaker. It gave the students something

Welcom to [crossed out: With] Conley School.
We are glad to have you Here
After writing to you two or three times
We are glad to see you in
person. We have planed Some special
activities for you. and we hope you
enjoy your Visit. and now
we are going to introduse
are sleves,

---

interdusing.
Mark part.
interdusing THomas peters
That will say a Spech. TO
Welcom you to our class
room. and rember ohly
Smoking in the lobby
[crossed out: going to be smoking]
and US. guys will give
you a trip around the school.
and Drinks are over By the
blue table. and you are
More then Welcom to play
games and do art things.
and all that stuff now lets
here the spech.

Figure 10. The welcome speech and the spoof.

to do with their mouths and hands while adjusting
to a new social situation. The room resembled a
cocktail party for a while.)

By 1:10, some students began gravitating toward two
centers that had been set up for the occas . --the
art center and the game center. At this ti..., the
principal of Conley School got up to leave. She
had been observing the proceedings with apparent
pleasure. Also at this time, the school reading
aide helped to organize the first of several small
group tours of the building. Ms. Donovan and her
students knew in advance both who would be in the
group of four and who would lead the tour.

Around the room the students interacted with their
pen pals--some in small groups, most in dyads. The
field worker wandered, not wanting to be too ob-
trusive and taking her cue from the teachers, who
remained peripheral and did not interfere with what
was unfolding. Snatches of conversation could be
picked up from around the room, such as the following:

> "You don't look the way I thought you would
> look."
>
> "What grade are you in?"
>
> "We never get Smelly Stickers" (to one of Ms.
> Donovan's students showing off the stickers
> on his notebook).
>
> "They aren't Smelly Stickers, they're Scratch
> 'n' Sniffs. We get them for cursive writing."'

At 1:20, Ms. Donovan moved to the center of her cor-
ner of Room Twelve and began clapping rhythmically.
"In our room that means its time to be quiet, and you
have to match the pattern. Let's see if the people
in Mr. D's room can match this." She clapped a sim-
ple pattern, and they followed. Then Ms. Donovan
asked both classes to line up for the music program
to be presented by Mr. D's class. After that, she
said, they could return to what they were doing.
The group was joined in the large common area of
Room Twelve by the other Room Twelve students and
for most of the remainder of their time together,
Mr. D's class performed the songs they had prepared
to present at the nursing home, and Ms. Donovan's
and the other Room Twelve students listened and
joined in singing the songs. (Field Notes, 3/10/80)

Because many of the nursing home residents were sick with the

flu, that part of Mr. D's class trip had been cancelled. To the

chagrin of Ms. Donovan, the music teacher who had accompanied Mr. D's

class took that state of affairs as an opportunity to extend her

musical presentation. With diasppointment in her voice, Ms. Donovan

later confided that the music had taken twice as long as she had

expected. The result was that opportunities for pen pal interaction

in the activity centers had been truncated. After much preparation

and planning, it was not clear when Mr. D's class departed on their

bus at 1:55 how the meeting had gone (Field Notes, 3/10/80). A few

days later, Ms. Donovan's assessment was more positive, but it is

notable that she did not have particular long range plans for the

Pen Pal activity beyond a visit to Stone School:

> Ms. Donovan: The Pen Pals visit went well, because
> our Room Twelve kids planned what they wanted
> to do. The visiting teacher from the other
> school thought our kids were wonderful. Most
> kids got along with their pen pals or ignored
> them (except Lisa, because she's so bossy).
> Some exchanged telephone numbers, but I'm not
> sure whether any will continue writing--maybe
> just those who really like each other will con-
> tinue. The visit was enjoyable--it really didn't
> seem like there were fifty kids in the room.
> We talked about a reciprocal visit to Stone
> School in April and lamented the fact that we,
> can't walk there because of the dangerous inter-
> section en route.
>
> Interviewer: Is the pen pals activity finished now
> for you?
>
> Ms. Donovan: No, I'm still going to continue to have
> them write. It's real important to learn how
> to get to know someone else through letter cor-
> respondence. We'll continue at least until we
> visit Stone School.
>
> Interviewer: Then will it be over?
>
> Ms. Donovan: Who knows? I can't say when it will
> be over for some kids. (Interview Notes, 3/11/80)

While the writing helper may have planted the seed and Ms.

Donovan and Mr. D were the purveyors of an environment supportive

of the pen pals, Ms. Donovan's comments above highlight the fact

that to a great extent the fate of the pen pal relationships would

be in the hands of the students. Yet the pen pal visit to Conley

School was an event replete with opportunities for enrichment of

the correspondence. As we shall see, the children exploited that

event in their subsequent correspondence.

The pen pal visit had all of the trappings of a major school/

community event. In addition to the large number of students

gathered in one place, five staff members, one of whom was the

principal of Conley School, were involved in its undertaking. Many

school resources were made available for the occasion--the reading

aid was free to help, the school was opened to groups of touring

pen pals, a school bus was provided for Mr. D's class, and time was

made in the regular school day not only for this event, but for

the planning and preparation that preceeded it. Such a commitment

of resources, combined with the participation of important adults,

highlighted both the event and the pen pal relationships as very

special.

The pen pal visit resembled other special occasions and cele-

brations that occur both at home and at school in the lives of the

East Eden children. There was sharing of food and music specially

prepared for the occasion. The Conley chidren marked the event with

a formal welcoming speech as well as with tours and games. The

children from Stone School performed music for their hosts and also

provided an opportunity for both groups of children to sing together

by their addition of several familiar rounds to the performance.

The sharing of food, the playing of games, and the singing were
occasions both for the meeting of individual pairs of pen pals and
for the coming together of the classes as a large group. The pen
pal visit was sufficiently important to warrant its sharing in the
monthly letter to families written by Ms. Donovan:

> On Monday the class had a special treat--
> they were able to meet their pen pals from Mr.
> Donizetti's second grade class. We have been
> writing back and forth for about a month and this
> was the first time we got to meet each other.
> Each child chose the activity s/he wanted to do
> with her/his pal. The afternoon ended with the
> children from Stone presenting their music pro-
> gram they had practiced for the residents of
> Colonial House. I know your child could tell
> you which part s/he liked best. (Letter to
> Families, 3/12/80).

The pen pal visit potentially served important social functions
that enabled the writing relationships to grow. It marked the exis-
tence of those relationships as special and important, it gave the
authors an opportunity to meet and to share a common experience with
their audience, it gave many students new things about which to write,
and it set up the promise of a subsequent reunion at Stone School. An
examination of the letters that followed the visit helps to show the
importance of coming to know one's audience in such a special way.

Getting to Know Your Audience

Less than two weeks after the pen pals visit, Ms. Donovan re-
ported the following in an interview:

> Writing is going well. The kids received pen pal
> letters and wrote back right away. The kids are
> moving beyond basic informational questions like
> "What is your telephone number?" and "Do you have
> any pets?" to other topics. All the students are

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>   getting the idea about the letter heading and
>   other format features of a friendly letter.
>   (Interview, 3/31/80)

All of the pen pals were writing now, and social relations were

being worked out. The changes in relationship between pen pals that

were stimulated by their visit had implications for the nature and

complexity of the letters they wrote. Derek, for example, who had

balked at the writing when assigned to a girl pen pal, resolved his

problem during the visit. He met the pen pal of his best friend and

decided to share him (see Figure 11). To enable this, Jane, another

member of Ms. Donovan's class and a prolific writer, agreed to have

two pen pals. And so she began to write to the girl who had formerly

been assigned to Derek.

Further evidence of the students' concern for the fledgling

writing relationships--that each person have one and that they grow--

were manifest in two letters that followed the pen pal visit. In one

letter, a student from Mr. D's class who arrived at Conley School to

find that her pen pal was absent writes to affirm their relationship

and expresses hope that they will meet in the future (see Figure 11).

In the second, a student new to Ms. Donovan's class who arrived after

the visit writes an open letter to Mr. D's class soliciting a pen pal

(see Figure 11).

Letter writing proliferated after the pen pals' visit. The

corpus of letters exchanged in April and May was large. It included

at least two letters from each student. The letters differed from

the earliest ones in a number of ways. Most obviously, the letters

became longer. In addition, students generally began to delete the

Conley Schol
E. Eden, Mich
4/29/80

Dear Niel
Here's some
football cards for you
and thanks for the 2.2
What's your favorite
Baseball player Myrs
are Willie Stargell,
Dave Parker, Jason
Thompson, Rod Carew
Derek is your Pen Pal
too so don't forget to
send two things if
you send anything.

Sinearly,
Jimmy, Derek

Stone School
march 25, 1980

Dear Marie,
I have missed you and
when I went to see you
you were sick and
I can't wait to see you

from Harriet B

Conley School
East Eden
Mi
April 29/1980

Dear Mr. D's class,
I am a new kid in school,
and I need a penpal. Please write
back.
thank you.   Sincerely,
                                Richard

Figure 11. Working out social relationships in letters.

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formality of last names when signing the letters after the meeting.
There were notable changes in the materials used to construct the
letters. While earlier letters were written on lined school paper—
wide lines for the second graders, narrower for the third—students
were now using their own looseleaf notebook paper or unlined paper
on which they wrote and drew pictures. In the earliest letters
there had been some exchange of photographs. This continued for
many students (although one student wrote after the visit, "You
didn't have to give me your picher because I know what you look
like."). After the pen pal visit there was the additional exchange
of gifts. Some students now closed their letters with "Love" or
"Your friend."

Examination of the letters exchanged in April and May reveals
the following general purposes served:

1. exchanging gifts,
2. commenting on the visit,
3. describing school life,
4. exchanging home addresses and telephone numbers,
5. describing life outside school,
6. flattering and joking, and
7. sharing problems and feelings.

Figure 12 illustrates the first six of these purposes with examples
from the corpus. Each letter deals with one or more of the purposes
Some relate directly to the visit; others rely on it implicitly.
Some of the purposes served by the letters are more complicated
than others, but, in general, each purpose requires the writer to
venture beyond the "simple declaratives about him/herself" and "one
question to the recipient" that typified the earliest letters.

Exchange of Gifts:

Dear Jeremv,
   I like to watch Bugs Bunny. What do you like
to watch? I like other shows besides Bugs Bunny.
Can you please send me another scratch a' sniff?
                     Your penpal,
                          Mark

Comments on the Visit:

Dear Jane,
   I did give you my address. I'll give you my
phone number to. next time you can come to are
school. we have a teacher his name is Mr. D. I
bet you met him whats your teachers name.

                     My Address
                       1731
                       Blueberry hill
                     Phone number
                       446-0986
                             Love,
                             Ilze

Describing School Life:

Dear Liz,
My phone number is, 453-1068 and my address is,
Wagon Wheel court 6101 MI. Our soical studies
class is going to have a Japan play. Mrs. Roberts
said that I am going to be the lead because I
going to have a real comand. And in science
today I'm going to have a plant and a cricket.

                     Love,
                       Jane

Describing Life Outside School:

Dear Chad,
I have a dential aopintment tommorw. I'm going to ask
if I can go to the beach next weekend. I hope I see
you again.   your friend, David

Dear Rachel,
I went to my friend's house for the weekend. My
friend has a lot of marbles. boulders, Jumbos. He
gave me sixty-three. Then we started to share. How
many marbles do you have?   From,
                                   Anish

Dear Lee Ann
I think your the best penpal in the world to. I had
a good Easter did you? I hope you had a good time
with your brother and sister-in-law. I am going to
move to Idaho. And I will be with my mom the whole
summer.   your pen pal
                     Shelly

Exchanging Home Addresses and Phone Numbers:

Dear Lynn,
   I will give you my address and we can write letters
back and forth,even if we are at home we can write.
2409 Round Hill Road, E.E. 48823 Will you give me
your address?   Love, Jean Wilson

Jokes and Flattery:

Dear Machelle,
You are werd because you tell funny jokes. But I do
like you. I will tell you my phone number. It is 452-
7896. I like you a lot.   from, Sarah

Dear Lynn,
I want roller skating yesterday. Dont write back
anymore know just kiding. as you know
                     Love Lynn Smith

Figure 12. The letters to pen pals serve multiple purposes.

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To achieve some of these purposes requires only one letter.
Others require one letter and a reply. Still others are worked out
in several rounds of letters where the children appear to chain
topics. In some of the letters children share information about
themselves that would ordinarily not be shared in face-to-face com-
munication. In many we can see the effort to establish shared ex-
perience and understandings.

Researchers have begun to document the ways in which a written
dialogue with another can occasion the acquisition and practice of
functions of written discourse such as persuasion, complaint, joking,
and flattery. These forms are important to social life but may be
neglected in the acquisition of more formal types of school writing.
Letters are a way to expand and extend the written expressive reper-
toire because, as transactions, they call forth in their authors a
variety of social functions of writing (Florio & Frank, in press;
Staton, Note 8; Shuy, Note 9; Greene, Note 12). This has been the case
for the pen pals.

The flexing of literary muscles in the pen pal letters followed
a somewhat stiff beginning that was warmed by the visit to Conley
School. Eventually, for some of the students, the correspondence
ventured into the area of problems and feelings. Perhaps not sur-
prisingly it is in this domain that the only extension of topics
over more than two letters was observed. It is also in these letters
that pen pals worked to find things in common. In the first example
in Figure 13 the boys exchanged comments on something that was a
great problem for Reggie--fighting on the playground and the punish-
ment of having to stand against the wall. Related to that issue was

Dear Jim
    Do you care if I call Jim Jimmy? All we have is mud!
I hate school! It's boring. Once I had to stand against
the wall.
                        HAVE A HAPPY EASTER .
                            REGGIE

Deat Regge, I like school because I do not haf to stand
against the wall. On Friday I played basketball And I
got to come out to your school with my mom. When my mom
saw me playing basketball she was paroud of me.
                        your pen pal
                            Jimmy

Dear Jimmy,
    I'm in Cub Scouts, aind I nouw your mom we got a new
boy in our class, I got to stand against the wall for a
week.

I'm giving you 3 baseball cards & 3 football cards & 3
hockey cards Look in the back-----------------------→
                        Your penpal
                            Reggie

Dear Kathy,
    I don't want to move at all, but I have to. I will
miss you.
                "I WILL MISS YOU"!
                                    Danielle

Dear Danielle
    It is too bad that you are moving to New Jersey but
I hope you will like It a lot and I will miss you a lot
and I hope you will miss me a lot to but I know it will
be fun in New Jersey and I bet I would have fun to. I
love you a lot.
                so long
                        Love,
                            Kathy S.

Figure 13. Sharing problems and feelings in the letters.

the subject of basketball--a popular game in both playgrounds.

Neatly, Jim raised both that topic and the fact of his mother's

pride in his playing. Jim's mother was one of the other teachers

in Reggie's classroom. Thus, when Reggie replied, the pen pals had

now commiserated about Reggie's problem, raised the common interest

of basketball, and acknowledged that Reggie knew Jim's mother and

saw her every day.

In the second example, Danielle wrote about her feelings related

to moving. Briefly and emphatically she stated the situation and

her feelings about both the move and her pen pal. She used capital

letters and an exaggerated exclamation point for emphasis. Kathy

replied directly. She linked all of her assertions in one long sen-

tence that gives the sense of a rush of feelings. In her letter she

not only asserted her affection for her friend and assured her that

New Jersey would be a nice place to live, but she took her friend's

role, saying that she, too, would like New Jersey. Like her pen

pal, she modified her exclamation point--this time with two hearts.

Across the unique pen pal relationships we can see the gradual

coming to know another in large part by means of writing. In the

Pen Pal project students gradually built upon their encounters with

their audience. At first the pen pal visit was the primary, literal

encounter on which they built. But, in time, previous letters became

encounters as well. They were resources upon which the students

could draw in framing their next letters.

Looking back in June, Ms. Donovan elaborated on this idea when

she reported that as students came to know their pen pals, they not

only wrote more, but they wrote more easily as well.   The letters

became an integral part of a real and growing association.

> They really learned to write letters.   I
> think that's in large part due to having pen
> pals.   It's really made it clear to them why
> you do that kind of thing.   And so now when
> they get their pen pal letters, they can just
> whip out a letter in about fifteen minutes
> instead of five days, and know what they want
> to say.   So, more than anything, having con-
> crete experiences to go along with their writing
> that inspire it and give them an outlet for it
> makes a big difference.   Without that back
> there, there's no reason to do it.   (Interview,
> 6/4/80)

The Life Book

An unfamiliar school, twice as big as any they had gone to before, new teachers and a schedule that changes from one day to the next, all contribute to the excitement and nervousness of the sixth graders' first days in middle school. At the beginning of the school year the teachers work at acclimating the students to the new surroundings, helping them to become acquainted with new classmates and teaching them the expectations and norms of behavior for the middle school. The first assignments are short and each has a function of placement or socialization. It is a period of preparation--of adjustment--rather than academic instruction.

Writing had been a part of the activities from the beginning of the school year. Because Mrs. Anderson believed that writing is important she planned activities in which it was necessary for children to write in order for them to participate. An example of this is the get-acquainted games of the first days of school, in which children wrote about their own characteristics and exchanged information with the others in the team. As the period of orientation drew to a close, the real business of schooling got underway. And for our teacher, Mrs. Anderson, that was the signal to begin the first major writing assignment of sixth grade--The Life Book.

Planning

An important aspect of Mrs. Anderson's year-long plan for writing was sequencing tasks so that each activity teaches or reviews a skill needed for the next. For the Life Book, the skill

she was concerned with was writing complete sentences. The planning

for the Life Book began with activities for sentence writing.

During an interview early in the school year, Mrs. Anderson

talked about how she planned writing activities in sequence:

> Today she will have the students work on a "sen-
> tence hunt." The idea is to help students under-
> stand "what a sentence is." Tuesday they will begin
> work on the Life Book. She wants them to use com-
> plete sentences when writing in the Life Book and
> will remind them later in the week about the lesson
> they are doing today. "Remember when we talked
> about sentences?" (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

For the sentence writing activity, the teacher first talked

about the concept of a sentence. Then, she encouraged students to

give examples of sentences, writing them on an overhead projector

slide. She explained how to add variety and length to kernel sen-

tences. The homework assignment was to expand three kernel sentences

into complex ones.

In planning for writing activities, Mrs. Anderson thought

about what skills the children would need to be successful at doing

the assignment. She spoke about it being "unfair" to expect children

to do something they hadn't been prepared for.

In a journal entry, Mrs. Anderson wrote about the Life Books:

> This afternoon kids had class time to work on the
> week's longer writing project. I chose to have the
> kids make "This is My Life" booklets because I
> think it will not threaten the students who are low
> in spelling and writing skills, and it will be a
> meaningful activity for those with more ability.
> Also, the kids usually have fun making them and
> after all the testing and listening to me they've
> had to put up with, I decided they needed a break.
> (Journal, 9/18/79)

Mrs. Anderson's concern with the differing ability levels of

her students is apparent in her planning. She did not plan alternate

writing for those with less developed writing skills, but presented the task in a way that, while helping those who needed it, wouldn't get in the way of those who didn't.

Throughout the year, Mrs. Anderson tried to plan activities that would be enjoyable for her students. She judged the success of an assignment by how much the kids liked it. Thus, she planned the first of the weekly writing tasks to be one that the children would enjoy.

Implementation

Mrs. Anderson described the Life Book activity in the following way:

> The activity involves each student finding pictures
> which represent events in his life—and possibly his
> dreams for the future. The pictures are glued on
> paper and captions (I stressed using complete sen-
> tences again—actually that is the "why" for yester-
> day's homework assignment) are written. Then the
> pages are enclosed in a construction paper cover.
> The completed books will be put out on a table for
> all to read and—let's hope—enjoy! (Journal, 9/19/79)

The teacher introduced the plan to the students by showing them a copy of a Life Book that she herself had made.

> She passed out magazines, specified that the assign-
> ment must be neat, well organized, and written in
> complete sentences that make sense. She asked them
> to look in the magazines for pictures that show
> something about their lives. She showed students a
> booklet she had done about her life. There are
> about two or three pictures per page and next to
> each of the pictures is written at least one sen-
> tence. Mrs. Anderson read these sentences to the
> class, which tell about, e.g., her graduation from
> college, marriage, church, sons, hobbies, travel,
> vacations, teacher in grade six. She showed stu-
> dents another one that Mrs. Lambert had done.
> (Field Notes, 9/14/79)

This modeling of an assignment goes far beyond simply showing the students how the teacher wants it done. Mrs. Anderson used this opportunity to tell the students about herself--to share her life with them. She wanted to create an environment of trust and acceptance in which children feel comfortable and willing to share their writing. This example of sharing and community building was as important as the model of a finished product that the the actual Life Book itself provided.

A third reason for modeling an assignment is explained in the interview notes:

> Mrs. Anderson began talking about the Life Book
> when she finished the journal. She had made her
> own about three years ago and uses that as an ex-
> ample. She likes to always do the assignment her-
> self first, partly to use it as an example, but
> also to see if there are any problems in the actual
> doing of the task that she didn't foresee. (Interview
> Notes, 9/17/79)

Working on the Life Books was a time for students to get to know each other better. Mrs. Anderson allowed talking as long as the students were working.

> An activity like the one above (she had been ex-
> plaining the Life Book) gets really noisy, but
> that doesn't bother me at all as long as the kids
> are working. When they start messing around I
> begin to get angry. (Journal, 9/18/79)

This opportunity for talking with each other and with the teacher helped the team organization become a social unit. Students identify strongly with their team number, which for these students was "61." There was a competition among the teams as to which was the "best."

Excerpts from the field notes describe the class activity when students were working on the Life Books:

Mrs. Anderson says that next week she will have
paper for covers and materials for pasting.
Student: "What about scissors?"
Mrs. Anderson: "There are scissors on the win-
    dowsill."
Mrs. Anderson continues to pass out magazines...
    -"I'm trying to give a little variety."

Mrs. Anderson explains that students can get star-
ted on a communications arts assignment [the Life
Book] due next week Thursday and that they would
have some class time to work on it. She shows the
class her own sample and that of Mrs. Lambert and
explains what they are to do. She tells students
that when she looked for a particular picture she
couldn't find what she wanted; so instead she found
pictures which might be appropriate, then selected
from them. She reads from her booklet, and asks
that students' assignments be "neat, well spaced,
and use complete sentences." (Field Notes, 9/14/79)

Mrs. Anderson: "Who needs a picture of a pretty
    blonde sister and her mother?:...gives it to
    Marie (who is blonde)...Mrs. Anderson helps
    different students.
Mrs. Anderson: "Who has a grey haired mother or
    grandmother?"...

Mrs. Anderson continues to help students find pic-
tures that they can use in their project.
Mrs. Anderson: "...show things that you want to
    do or like to do?..."
Christa shows a picture of tall buildings near
    water: "It's New York, but I'm going to
    put 'Baltimore.'"
Mrs. Anderson: "Anybody want this?" (flashes
    picture at students)

Gary asks me to draw a pond. (We look at some
    pictures which I thought might help him;
    make a couple of very rough sketches to give
    him ideas of how to proceed)...

Mrs. Anderson: "Will everyone get into a seat?"
Student: "Is time up already?"
Mrs. Anderson asks students to start cleaning up
because in five minutes it will be time to switch
classes.

Carl has collected several pictures. He asks me
about paper. I guessed that Mrs. Anderson might
soon be giving students some.

Mrs. Anderson asks students for return of scissors,
pens, and glue.
Mrs. Anderson: "Will those of you who are ready to
    go please be quiet?"

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Mrs. Anderson explains that some people got into
shenanigans...corrects Micki..."would it help you
to have until Friday?" (for completing the Life
Book); says students will work on it Thursday;
gives ideas for where else to look for pictures.

Mrs. Anderson: "...if people can't get along to-
    gether...will need a seating chart..." Mrs.
    Anderson expresses displeasure when students
    say "but he did it to me." Mrs. Anderson says
    that she will usually get to that person, too.
    Mrs. Anderson says that she has seen some baby-
    like behavior, tripping, poking, etc...that her
    patience is wearing thin...time to switch...that
    she is giving students time to get used to their
    new school environment but that students will be
    held accountable for their behavior.

Mrs. Anderson dismisses Class B.

Mrs. Anderson leaves for library to get more maga-
zines, said her present collection was wearing thin.
Class A enters.

Mrs. Anderson: "We've a couple of things to do to-
    day. We don't have much time."

Mrs. Anderson explains [to Class A] what is needed
for life booklet and writes the names of items to
be included on an overhead projector slide: cover,
pictures, captions.

Mrs. Anderson explains that pictures can be drawn
if students wish, also that photos may be used;
that captions should be in sentence form.

Mrs. Anderson: "Do your best in the amount of time
    you have...at least four pages not counting
    the cover...students should plan that they
    will be put out and shared with others...sug-
    gests a rough draft of captions on separate
    paper; that students condense what they want
    to say; plan a margin...can use lined paper
    if they wish...scissors, paper and glue are
    available...break at 2:00. (Field Notes,
    9/18/79)

When Mrs. Anderson introduced this activity, she first explained

the assignment to each class. But everyone did not begin at the same

time. The uneven beginning of this occasion for writing is an exam-

ple of how Mrs. Anderson adjusted task demands for the different

student ability levels represented in the class.

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Mrs. Anderson explained the Life Book assignment on a Friday, telling the students it was due the following Thursday. By the next Thursday she had decided that they needed more time and changed the due day to Friday. Because of unexpected interruptions and because this early in the year she did not know exactly how well the students would work when in a group setting, she was willing to change the due date to assure that all students would finish.

Mrs. Anderson worked with the students, which helped them to become better acquainted with her. Also, by being a member of the group, she kept control of the activity. She was able to chide one student, praise another, ask questions, and find materials in the space of a few minutes. She knew how they were progressing and reminded them, when necessary, about using complete sentences (Field Notes, 9/18/79).

The duration of the activity was one week--from Friday, September 14, to Friday, September 21. The writing seemed to take place entirely at school. Students may have brought magazines from home, but Mrs. Anderson took the responsibility of supplying a selection of them for students to search for appropriate photographs.

Evaluation

The Life Book assignment was the first occasion of the school year that Mrs. Anderson formally evaluated.

> The Life Books were turned in on Friday--after
> spending most of Thursday's class time on them.
> Generally, they were neatly done and I really
> enjoyed reading them. I wrote a personal note
> to each student and stapled it to the last page.
> If the student had made one type of error fre-
> quently, I mentioned it in the note. I hope this

> type of feedback to the student is more meaningful
> than a grade (ABC) or a mark (√+,√,√-). I'm anxious
> to see if any of the kids have any comments when they
> are returned to them tomorrow. (Journal, 9/23/79)

The evaluation was based on the information given to students when

the assignment was introduced. Mrs. Anderson had asked them to

write in complete sentences, have the pictures well spaced, and to

be neat (Field Notes, 9/14/79, p. 9). She talked about the Life

Books the following week.

> In thinking back over last week's assignment, Mrs.
> Anderson said she was very happy with the Life Books.
> The students did "a good job." Mrs. Anderson wrote
> her evaluation on a separate sheet of paper and
> clipped it in their book. She looked for complete
> sentences, good penmanship, and to see if they did
> the assignment right--that is, did they get the pur-
> pose. Students were very enthusiastic about the
> books and spent a lot of time looking at each others'.
> (Interview Notes, 9/25/79)

In the Life Book, as well as in assignments later in the year,

Mrs. Anderson allowed for individual differences, not in the require-

ments of the assignment, but in the evaluation. In an interview on

September 17, she said she would accept phrases rather than sentences

from the "slower kids." Evaluation was not based on one standard for

the whole class, but rather on a comparison between what the teacher

thought each student was capable of doing and what he or she actually

did. Mrs. Anderson's often-repeated reminder to the students was,

"remember to do your best."

Audience

From the beginning of her plan for this occasion for writing,

Mrs. Anderson wanted the students to share their Life Books with

each other. After she had shown them her own Life Book and that of

another teacher, she kept these examples available so that students could read them. In her September 18 journal entry she wrote that the completed books would be put on a table for all to read and enjoy.

The teacher was an audience, also, because the students knew that their work would be evaluated. When evaluation occurs, the evaluator is always an important audience. Eleven- and twelve-year-olds have been in school long enough to be very conscious of pleasing the teacher. By working closely with the students, Mrs. Anderson helped them to know what her expectations were so that she, as an audience, was not an unknown.

Function

When Mrs. Anderson first spoke of the Life Book in an interview, she said that it was the first big writing assignment of the year and that it would help the students to get acquainted with others in the class (Interview Notes, 9/17/79). So one of the major intended functions of the Life Book was building the social system of the classroom. The Life Book assignment fulfilled this function through the structure and dynamics of the associated classroom activity. Students were allowed and encouraged to visit with each other in a friendly casual setting, with Mrs. Anderson modeling that behavior.

A second function of the Life Book was to begin to establish a pattern of weekly writing assignments. Mrs. Anderson planned to initiate a major writing activity each week throughout the year. She wanted the students to have regular opportunities to write and tried to find or develop activities that they would enjoy. These assignments were given in a sequence so that each assignment would help

the students attain skills they would need for the next. The sen-
tence writing helped prepare the students for the Life Book. The
Life Book helped students to understand the pattern or routine for
the weekly writings to follow.

Mrs. Anderson suggested to the students that they first write
the captions for the pictures on a sheet of paper and then copy the
caption into the book. This was not a requirement and she did not
check to see who did or did not do this. Later in the year, she
required rough drafts and students had to turn them in.

The date on which the project was due was important. She
changed the date to allow more time so that all the students could
finish the work. Handing assignments in on time was stressed for
this project and throughout the year.

The Life Books served as a transition activity between the
early non-graded assignments and the more academically-oriented
activities that were to follow.

The Magazine of Your Choice:

A Sixth-Grade Writing Project

> Yesterday afternoon I talked with the classes about
> the magazines I am going to ask them to "publish." This
> week's writing assignment is to begin the rough drafts
> of a story which they will eventually incorporate into
> their individual magazines. For this reason, they had
> to decide what types of magazines they wanted to make--
> general interest, sport, beauty, comic, etc.--so they
> would write a story which would be appropriate to include
> in their particular magazine. (Journal, 11/7/79)

This quote is excerpted from the planning journal kept by Mrs.

Anderson, the sixth-grade teacher in our study. In this entry, Mrs.

Anderson alluded to the introduction of an occasion for writing

called the Magazine Project. Although she had not used this project

for two or three years, Mrs. Anderson had assigned the magazine pro-

ject in previous years. She recalled that "students enjoyed making

the magazine, it was kind of fun for them" (Interview, 11/30/79).

Mrs. Anderson liked this project because students of all abilities

were able to participate and the students were pleased with their

products.

Mrs. Anderson's introduction of the Magazine Project focused on

the short story that the students had two weeks to complete. But

the Magazine Project encompassed much more than a short story.

Each student's magazine was to include:

> Table of Contents
> Short Story
> Interview
> Feature Article

In addition, Mrs. Anderson encouraged students to add their own

creative touches, including comics and ads or even recipes. The

magazines were to be completed before the winter vacation. This due date allowed the students approximately six weeks to complete their magazines.

Although the list of the contents of the magazine provided makes the magazine look like a simple project, this list is deceiving. A first impression of the project is that it appeared to be an exercise with the goal of encouraging expression and of producing magazines. A closer look revealed that the project was much more than a new way to use skills that students had already mastered. In fact, when the project was introduced, the students had only a few of the skills they needed to produce the magazine. Instead of the magazine acting as a goal, Mrs. Anderson used the magazine as a means. It was a vehicle that provided the motivation or the reason for students to learn how to write an interview, to punctuate, and organize a table of contents, which are just a few of the required skills needed to complete the magazine. The real goals were to learn new writing skills and to integrate these to produce a product that was meaningful to each student--a personal magazine.

Mrs. Anderson's extensive plans for the magazine project included lessons and sublessons directly and indirectly related to the magazine. The major lessons on how to write an interview, a short story, and a feature article were directly related to the magazine project. Other sublessons on punctuation, quotations, and other skills, although necessary for proper completion of the magazine, were not directly related to the components of the magazine. In one sense the very first skill lesson at the beginning of the year on capitalization

was related to the magazine project. Mrs. Anderson planned the
shorter sublessons on skills so that they were related to the maga-
zine project. For instance, the lesson on quotation marks empha-
sized the need for this skill to aid students in writing their
interviews for the magazine. While teaching new skills needed for
the magazine, Mrs. Anderson would recall, with the class, skills
they had learned earlier in the year (Videotape 550, 11/6/79). The
students were also prepared for the magazine project through an
earlier project called the Life Book. Although the Life Book Pro-
ject required fewer skills and less time than the magazine, it was
also an individual project which foreshadowed many of the rules and
requireme-- seen the magazine.

Mrs. Anderson planned lessons on different types of writing for
the magazine. Students in her class had not been formally instruc-
ted in the forms of writing, such as short stories, interviews, or
feature articles, which were required for the magazine. Since these
forms of writing were a part of the magazine, students had a reason
to learn these new types of writing, i.e., a reason other than "the
teacher said we had to learn it."

Mrs. Anderson's enthusiasm for organizing the Magazine Project
grew out of previous experience with the project and from her im-
pression that the students liked it very much and that it was a pro-
ject that could be shared with other members of the class. The
magazine was attractive to the teacher because many shorter lessons
could be integrated into the instruction for the required article
included in the magazine. In this sense, the magazine project was

a stepping stone for later larger projects just as previous lessons
such as the Life Book were preparation for the magazine.

The Process of Instruction

We have described some pieces of the magazine, but how did it
all fit together to become a completed project? As stated earlier,
the writing project was introduced to students in early November.
The project was completed the week before Christmas break. Mrs.
Anderson introduced the magazine to the students in the manner
that she used to introduce most writing assignments: whole class
instruction with the teacher at the front of the room using an over-
head projector to display examples and important points. The format
for explaining the magazine began with Mrs. Anderson giving an over-
view of the entire project. She showed the students examples of a
completed magazine she had created and ones created by students from
earlier years. The entire class brainstormed topics for the magazine
while the teacher listed the numerous themes on the overhead projec-
tor slide. After a number of topics were listed, Mrs. Anderson en-
couraged the students to ask questions. She then clarified due dates
and other requirements of the project (Videotape I, 513, 11/6/79).

Skill Lessons

Once questions were answered and Mrs. Anderson felt satisfied
that the students understood the long range plans for the magazine,
she began to introduce a skill lesson on quotation marks. This
skill lesson taught students a skill necessary for the completion
of the magazine assignment. Specifically, proper use of quotation

marks would be needed in writing dialogue in interviews for the magazines (Videotape II, 599, 11/6/79).

The method Mrs. Anderson used for teaching the skill lesson was similar to that used in the introduction of the magazine: teacher-centered instruction with Mrs. Anderson at the front of the room using the overhead projector to explain the lesson. During the skill lesson, Mrs. Anderson first talked about the skill and then she and the students completed examples shown on the overhead projector. Mrs. Anderson also walked around the room checking students as they used the new skill to write sentences (Videotape I, 635, 11/6/79) and she referred the students to a page in a reference book for further help with the new skill (Interview, 12/4/79).

The day after the skill lesson on the use of quotation marks in a sentence, Mrs. Anderson introduced the use of quotations in conversations. When the lesson was completed, the students were asked to apply the skill they had just learned. They were given five minutes to write a conversation using quotations. After five minutes the class divided into groups of two or three students in which they read each others' papers. As students finished correcting their papers, the teacher collected the assignment. In her comments on this exercise, Mrs. Anderson wrote,

> I purposely gave them a time limit as I find that some
> kids actually do perform better if they know the working
> time will be very short. (Journal, 11/7/79)

Required Theme Writing for the Magazine

The writing assignments, which eventually became parts of the magazine (feature article, interview, and short story), were intro-

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duced in much the same manner as the punctuation lessons. Mrs.
Anderson usually presented the writing assignment from the front
of the classroom using the overhead projector to illustrate and
list components of the assignment (Videotape I, 11/6/79). Modeling
is a teaching method used by Mrs. Anderson in skill lessons and in
the writing assignments intended for inclusion in the magazine
(Videotape II, 11/7/79). In all of her lessons, Mrs. Anderson
showed students examples and often modeled the processes being
discussed. For instance, she used the overhead projector to cor-
rect sentences and list parts of an outline (Videotapes I & II,
11/6/79).

The assignments for the magazine project, which consisted of
three major themes in final form, may seem like a lot of writing,
but students in Mrs. Anderson's class usually do a lot of writing.
In addition to shorter assignments, students ordinarily write a
theme each week. This theme is written in rough draft form and
is corrected by Mrs. Anderson and returned. The students then
made corrections and recopied their themes in final form. Students
were given some class time to write their weekly themes. In addi-
tion to class time, most of the students spent some time out of
school completing their themes (Journal, 11/6/79).

In planning the magazine project, Mrs. Anderson capitalized
on this routine of weekly theme writing by replacing the weekly
theme with the assigned writing for the magazine. Similar to the
weekly themes, students wrote a rough draft of the assignment they
were working on.

Once the magazine assignments were begun, Mrs. Anderson
decided to arrange her teaching to allow students more class time
for writing. She discussed the new scheduling with her students.
In her journal and in an interview, Mrs. Anderson reflected on
her reasons for allowing more class time for writing. She decided
to extend writing periods to an hour in length because she found
that she could not help all students in the 45 minutes she had pre-
viously allotted for writing (Interview, 12/4/79). Mrs. Anderson
thought that if students had sufficient time for writing in class,
especially the final copy, that they might write the rough draft
on Monday and then come to the writing session with questions and
she could help them more with the processes of proofreading and
editing. She did not want them to simply give her their papers to
proofread for them; she wanted students to become aware of what
improvements could be made in their writing as she worked with them.
She hoped that working with students as they were writing would
teach them skills in a more natural way--as the problems came up
(Interview, 12/4/79).

Mrs. Anderson also wrote in her journal about her reasons for
allowing students more time to write in class.

> It is my goal that all students will become more aware
> of ways in which to improve their original writing.
> (Journal, 11/29/79)

By allowing students to write in class, Mrs. Anderson hoped that
the students would take a more active role in and responsibility for
their own editing. Mrs. Anderson preferred this arrangement to
the current one in which students handed in their papers and she

edited them and then returned the papers to the students for correc-

tions.

> Mrs. Anderson does not want her students to simply give
> her the papers to proofread for them. She would like the
> students to become more aware of the process and what im-
> provements could be made. As she works with students she
> hopes to teach them skills in a more natural way--as the
> problems come up. (Interview, 12/4/79)

Fate and Closure

As the due date for the magazine project approached, Mrs.

Anderson reviewed the contents of the magazine and more class time

was devoted to completion of the project (Journal, 12/12/79). Mrs.

Anderson was pleased with the eagerness students showed in trying

to complete their magazines on time (Journal, 12/14/79). Because

the magazine was the most complex writing project of the year to

date, Mrs. Anderson was careful to remind students of all the

parts they should include and she discussed her wish that the

students' magazines be "representative of their best efforts at

this time" (Journal, 12/18/79).

When the students finished their magazines, they shared them

with other students. Mrs. Anderson discussed, with the class, the

four categories she intended to use in evaluating the magazines.

The four categories were:

1. The student compiled an excellent magazine of
   original writings.

2. The student compiled a satisfactory magazine of
   original writings.

3. The student compiled a magazine of original
   writings which were below standard.

4. The student did not complete a magazine of ori-
   ginal writings. (Journal, 12/21/79)

Mrs. Anderson further discussed with the class the criteria that she would use to assign each magazine to one of these categories. The students were asked to evaluate their own work using the four categories listed above. Mrs. Anderson intended to compare her evaluation with each of the students' evaluations.

Mrs. Anderson read and evaluated the magazines over the winter holiday and returned them to the students when school began in January. At the beginning of winter term, table space was provided for students to leave their magazines to share with others. The students showed "a lot of interest in looking at the magazines which were on display." Interestingly, Mrs. Anderson observed, "several good students who did poor work (for them) took their magazines home rather than leave them out for others to look at" (Journal, 1/9/80).

Mrs. Anderson expressed pleasant surprise at the agreement between the teacher and student evaluations: "it was amazing how often we agreed with each other!" (Journal, 1/9/80). The student evaluation also served to lessen the teacher's own dislike of evaluating student work and helped to avoid negative student reactions: "if they had not gone through the evaluation process themselves I think many of them would have been mad at me for what they would have considered a low grade" (Journal, 1/9/80).

An interesting result of the teacher's evaluation of the students' magazines was an assessment of how the class was developing over the year. Mrs. Anderson appeared to use this project as a gauge to stop and check the year's progress. After completing the evalua-

tion she reported, "It (the evaluation process) took a great deal
of time, but it was also rewarding in that I became more aware of
the growth many students had made since September when they made
the Life Books" (Journal, 1/9/80).

Students and the Magazine Project

Since students could choose their own topic for the magazine,
the project was an opportunity for them to express interests or
hobbies they had outside of school. The teacher's encouragement
to be creative with the magazines also allowed students freedom to
include as many articles, comics, or advertisements as they wished.
School projects often do not allow students the latitude of creative
expression provided in the magazine project. Mrs. Anderson noted
that students who chose a topic they had a personal interest in
enjoyed the magazine project more than those who chose a general
topic magazine (Journal, 12/11/79).

The magazine project had several potential audiences. The
primary audience for the magazine was the theoretical "subscribers"
to the magazine. For instance, a sports car magazine would be writ-
ten for an audience of sports car enthusiasts. Due to the constraints
of the classroom, the teacher, not the project audience for the maga-
zine, was the one who evaluated the writing, therefore the teacher
was an important audience for the students' consideration. Since
students knew their projects could be shared with other students in
the classroom, the other students in the class were also a potential
audience. Finally, the author of each individual magazine was also
a potential audience, especially since the teacher required the
students to evaluate their own magazines.

As discussed earlier, Mrs. Anderson believed that giving the students a chance to evaluate their own projects gave them a better sense of how they did on the project and prevented the "hard feelings" that often accompany an evaluation. In fact, student reaction to the magazine project was generally positive. Most students completed their magazines by the due date and one student "was so excited that he started another one which he said he would finish during the vacation" (Journal, 12/21/79).

Transforming Teacher Thoughts and Beliefs into Action

In this part of our description of the magazine project, we focus on the teacher's beliefs and how they are evidenced in her plans and teaching. Examination of videotapes, journals, and interviews revealed seven beliefs or principles of practice that Mrs. Anderson discussed and translated into action in the magazine project:

1. Writing is an important area of instruction.
2. Writing instruction must be well-planned.
3. Modeling is an effective means of communicating writing instruction.
4. Students need to feel successful in writing.
5. Students must be prepared for what is to come; they need skills before plunging into an activity.
6. Writing activities must be interesting and challenging.
7. Evaluation is an important aspect of writing instruction.

Mrs. Anderson is convinced that writing is an important area of instruction. She finds that "writing helps kids to focus their thinking; they often have ideas that are not well thought out" (Interview, 12/11/79). But this does not mean that writing must be difficult and discouraging. When discussing writing at the be-

ginning of the school year, Mrs. Anderson said, "kids get discouraged if they are not successful right away" (Journal, 9/7/79). For this reason Mrs. Anderson's plans for writing activities at the beginning of the school year focus on assignments that the students will enjoy and ones that they can feel successful doing (Journal, 9/7/79). For example, at the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Anderson found her students' writing abilities were below her expectations. Based on this information, Mrs. Anderson changed her writing instruction plans to include easier assignments which were short and would allow students to feel successful (Journal, 9/7/79).

Mrs. Anderson believes effective writing instruction must be well planned (Interview, 10/9/79). Part of her planning included the teacher actually doing the writing activity before she assigns it to the class (Journal, 9/6/79). In the instance of the Magazine Project, Mrs. Anderson herself completed all the magazine requirements and assembled her own magazine. This activity helped the teacher to understand what she had assigned and also was used by the teacher as a model for the students.

Mrs. Anderson has found modeling to be an effective means of communicating writing instruction (Interview, 10/16/79). While introducing the Magazine Project, Mrs. Anderson showed the students magazines completed by sixth graders in previous years. She also showed the students the magazine she had completed and used other ways of modeling throughout the magazine project (Videotape I, 11/6/79). In addition, students were encouraged and given time to examine other published magazines to use as models (Journal, 1/9/80).

Another aspect of the importance of modeling was explained in an interview in which Mrs. Anderson described how some students need to know what the teacher wants and have difficulty if they do not have a model (Interview, 6/15/80). "Surprisingly, most students do not copy the teacher's model," but Mrs. Anderson found that a model helps to communicate the teacher's expectations and it "helps students to feel more secure when they can see the right idea" (Journal, 9/6/79).

The practice of modeling to help students feel secure is consistent with Mrs. Anderson's concern that students need to feel successful in writing, especially during the first part of the year (Journal, 9/6/79; Interview on videotape, 2/11/80). One way that Mrs. Anderson translated this belief into practice is by planning assignments that students are technically prepared to do. "Students must be prepared for what is to come, they need skills before plunging into an activity" (Journal, 10/31/70). Mrs. Anderson accomplished this goal of preparing students by developing a curriculum with assignments that built on each other. As the year progressed, writing became more complex (Interview, 10/16/79). For instance, the Magazine Project was foreshadowed by the Life Book project, an assignment in which students were required to assemble pictures illustrating their lives and to write a story about their lives. This assignment helped prepare them for the similar (but more elaborate) format and requirements of the Magazine Project.

The Magazine Project, as described earlier, consisted of several writing assignments (interview, short story, feature article) and skill lessons that enabled students to write the assignments. The

interview is a good example of Mrs. Anderson's method of building

complexity. The interview assignment was part of the magazine,

and skill lessons on using quotations were part of the interview.

In other words, the skill lesson (i.e., quotation marks) enabled

the students to complete the writing assignment (i.e., the inter-

view), which, in turn, enabled the students to complete their

magazines. This gradual building of complexity was carefully

monitored by Mrs. Anderson. The goal in this methods of teaching

writing was to prepare students for what was to come. By monitoring

student progress at each stage, Mrs. Anderson was more confident

that students would have the knowledge necessary to complete their

assignments and to be successful.

According to Mrs. Anderson, "writing should be interesting and

challenging" (Interview on videotape, 2/11/80). Although Mrs.

Anderson was committed to building students' confidence through

successful writing experiences, she also realized students must be

challenged by an assignment. How can these seemingly opposite values

be reconciled in practice? One method is to allow students many

choices. For instance, Mrs. Anderson allowed students to make any

type of magazine they wanted. There were certain required assignments

such as the short story, but even here students were allowed wide

latitude in topics. Another method Mrs. Anderson used to make writing

more interesting and challenging was to let students know the fate

of their writing. "Kids take writing more seriously if they are

going to share it" (Journal, 1/9/79). The fate of the Magazine

Project was that the magazines would be shared and displayed at the

individual student's discretion. Those students who wanted to could.

leave their magazines on a classroom table set up to provide a place
for students to look at the magazines their classmates had construc-
ted (Journal, 1/9/80).

Evaluation is another topic frequently discussed by Mrs. Anderson,
both with her students and in her journal entries and interviews.
Evaluation is a sensitive area of discussion for Mrs. Anderson and
she is careful in her approach. Because she feels students take pride
in their work, Mrs. Anderson only marked on a student's rough,draft
paper. Usually her comments were appended to the final draft. In
theory many teachers realize how traumatic evaluations can be and how
discouraged a student may become if his or her work is severely
criticized. The potential for poor communication and big disappoint-
ments in evaluation is especially high for writing activities, in
which evaluation criteria are typically rather subjective. One part
of the problem is that teachers must evaluate for several different
purposes, including diagnostic purposes. The need for timely return
of students' papers is another part of the evaluation problem. Mrs.
Anderson firmly believes that all student writing should be read, and
that it should be evaluated and returned to the students as soon as
possible (Journal, 9/18/79).

The Magazine Project demanded much teacher time. Mrs. Anderson
planned the project due date to enable her to take the magazines home
over the winter vacation. In this way she had more time and was
less pressured to complete her evaluations of the students' work in
a few days.

Lots of writing for students usually means lots of work for the
teacher, both in shepherding projects along and in final evaluation

and feedback. Students in Mrs. Anderson's class wrote a great deal;
they wrote at least one theme per week plus other assignments. Many
teachers would like to have their students write more but feel over-
whelmed at the prospect of evaluating all those themes. Mrs. Anderson
feels it is important to the students to know that someone has read
their papers. One way that Mrs. Anderson was able to increase the
amount of student writing that is reviewed was to recruit two parent
volunteers to help with the task. Mrs. Anderson still reviewed the
student papers and personally evaluated each student's writing on
a rotating basis. This allowed students to write more yet it pro-
tected the teacher from becoming overwhelmed.

Summary

Reviewing the manner in which the Magazine Project was planned,
evaluated, and taught, it is apparent that Mrs. Anderson combined
lessons and integrated skills that she felt students needed to learn
with activities that they found interesting and challenging. In
turn, this occasion for writing served as preparation for future more
complex lessons and projects. The Magazine Project was the first
major writing occasion of the school year, and its served as the cap-
stone experience of the fall term. The project was complex enough
to be both challenging and satisfying to each student, and yet the
individual components of the magazine were each of manageable size
and thoroughly supported by skill lessons and in-class composition
time, teacher feedback, and encouragement. The Magazine Project is
a good example of how Mrs. Anderson maintained a delicate balance
between teacher-provided structure for a complex set of writing

activities and an opportunity for students to develop feelings of
ownership, choice, and control over their own creative work. Finally,
the Magazine Project illustrates Mrs. Anderson's dual roles of curri-
culum builder as well as instructor of writing. The extra demands
of creating, maintaining, and evaluating the Magazine Project were
investments that paid off for Mrs. Anderson and her students in terms
of added meaningfulness, coherence, and integration of skills and
forms of written expression.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner:

Sixth Graders Plan a Dinner Party

Some teachers devise occasions for their students to express aspects of their lives through creative writing and speech. The following narrative describes how Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway created such an occasion by having the combined classes of their Lincoln Middle School sixth graders plan a dinner party, during a time designated as the team weekly class meeting. The Party Planning occasion continued for five consecutive Wednesdays, beginning in the middle of January and ending in February, a time of year when the students were reorienting themselves to each other and to the school environment after returning from the holiday vacation.

The dinner Party Planning occasion involved six steps: (1) individual students making party guest invitation lists of 10 real or imaginary people, (2) students meeting in groups of four to collectively decide on 10 people to invite, (3) the student groups drawing the seating arrangements for their invited guests, (4) the student groups planning a complete party menu, (5) the groups planning entertainment for their party guests, and (6) group presentations of their party plans to the class.

Genesis

Before reconstructing these stages from the field notes, it is helpful to know Mrs. Anderson's thoughts on the origin of the activity. Let's turn first to an entry in her journal:

> On Wednesday, Mr. Hathaway and I started the "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" project during the team meeting. It seems to me that I got the original

> basic idea from one of Simon's values clarifi-
> cation books--but it has been several years ago
> so now I've forgotten. When P.L. and I used the
> idea we added two ideas--the seating chart and
> the menu--then two years ago Mr. Hathaway and I
> added the planning of the entertainment idea.
> (Journal, 1/18/80)

Mrs. Anderson generally traces the origin of this activity to

Sidney Simon's values clarification works. Importantly, she revised

it over time through her team teaching experiences, making additions

to round out the process of planning a complete dinner party.

With her reference to Simon we might infer that Mrs. Anderson

favors those occasions that help students identify and share with

others the concerns relevant to their daily lives. Some support

for this inference comes from the following entry in her journal.

> I consider this primarily a social studies activity
> and my primary interests are in observing the inter-
> actions of students and helping those who have dif-
> ficulty functioning in a group activity. (Journal,
> 1/18/80)

Specifically, Mrs. Anderson wants her students to develop their

social interaction skills through this group participation activity.

The content of this interaction we will see later does indeed stem

from the students' personal values as they plan their dinner party.

Mrs. Anderson considered this activity to be part of the social

studies curriculum. In an interview in which she sorted student

writing assignments by purpose, she identified this occasion as

"strictly social studies" (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). She grouped

this assignment with other activities such as "writing social survey

questions," and "writing reactions to a film on slavery."

With this teacher intent in mind, let us reconstruct the stages

of this occasion in detail from the field notes.

Implementation

Day 1. We begin the party planning project with Mrs. Anderson's

presentation of the assignment to the combined classes. Mrs. Anderson

encouraged the students to think imaginatively about 10 people they

thought were important to invite to their dinner party. She told

them not to be concerned about money or other limitations. Mrs.

Anderson encouraged them to think beyond their immediate environment

and to develop guest lists that did not include family and friends.

> 2:12 Mrs. Anderson explains today's project. She
> tells students that they will have about ten
> minutes to do the first thing. They are to
> number their papers from 1 to 10. They are
> to use their imaginations in working on this
> assignment. She tells them that they are to
> list names of persons, living or dead, fic-
> tional or nonfictional, whom they would most
> like to invite to a dinner party. She adds
> that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.
>
> 2:15 Mrs. Anderson tells them that there are limits.
> They may not write down anyone from their fami-
> lies or from the team. They are not to worry
> too much about the spelling of their guests'
> names. If all they know is the first names of
> their guests then that is all they have to write,
> such as Heidi from the book Heidi. She tells
> them that they have enough money to entertain
> lavishly. (Field Notes, 1/16/80, p. 4)

The first stage of this assignment is consistent with Mrs.

Anderson's belief that writing assignments should be non-threatening

experiences and ones that students enjoy (Interview Notes, 9/10/79).

Mrs. Anderson has cleverly created such an opportunity in this occa-

sion. Surely it must have been motivating and fun for the students

to freely explore their imaginations in identifying their party

guests. From the observer's viewpoint this occasion provides an

opportunity to gain some insight into the students' culture.

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Two examples of the individual students' party lists are shown

in Figure 14. Generally they invited sport stars, movie celebrities,

and book characters. Some students invited deceased relatives such

as grandparents.

After about 15 minutes, Mr. Hathaway described the second

part of the activity, which required the students to work in groups

of four to compile their lists and collectively agree on 10 names.

Mrs. Anderson assigned them to their groups from a list.

> 2:28 Mr. Hathaway announces the next thing the
> students will do. He tells them that they
> will be assigned to a group with three other
> students. They must tell the others in their
> group the ten names of their invited guests
> and offer one reason for having each person.
> Mr. Hathaway explains that each group of stu-
> dents will hear about 40 names. Their job is
> to agree on ten names for the group party lists.
> He explains the task again, then asks for ques-
> tions. Mrs. Anderson reads the names of persons
> who will work together in each group. Students
> move to their respective groups throughout the
> room to begin working on their lists. (Field
> Notes, 1/16/80)

This part of the activity fits with Mrs. Anderson's belief that

students need opportunities for developing social interaction skills

and for sharing in small groups (Interview, 9/10/79). As the stu-

dents shared their lists, the other students gained some insights

into their classmates' interests and tastes. Regarding social inter-

action skills, the students possibly gained some experience in group

dynamics. They faced justifying their guest lists, subjecting them

to the evaluations and the influences of the other group members.

Perhaps they learned some principles of negotiation and diplomacy.

It seems that all the groups learned that they needed a secretary and

a system for recording their collective decisions. The observer noted

1-16-80

Names of Dinner guests

1. John Havlicek
2. Johnny Unitas
3. Steve Martin
4. Earvin Johnson
5. Sylvester Stallone
6. Frank Howell
7. Paul Westphal
8. Kevin Smith
9. Buck Rodgers - Bill Gearard
10. Cherral Feigs

1 Steve Martin
2 Burt Renolds
3 Martin Luthur King
4 meg Chalmers
5 molly Chalmers   } A summer to die
6 Michael Jackson
7 Judy Blume
8 Henry Winkler
9 magic Johnson
10 Tie Babalonia

Figure 14.   Samples of individual students' invitation lists.

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that each group designated a recorder and that this person was responsible for recording group choices, for transferring these to a separate sheet, and for turning in all sheets (including the originals) to the teachers at the end of the period. Finally, the students may have realized that writing can serve an instrumental function, as a mode of communication that need not have a strictly teacher-oriented, academic purpose. Examples of the group invitation lists the students generated are shown in Figure 15.

Day 2. On the following Wednesday afternoon, the teachers asked the students to return to their respective groups. While they finished up their group lists Mrs. Anderson introduced the third part of the assignment. She told the students to devise some type of seating arrangement for the people in their dinner party (10 guests, four students). Mr. Hathaway elaborated on the assignment:

> 2:14 Mr. Hathaway tells the students they must draw
> a table and a seating chart and that they must
> discuss their reasoning for the seating arrange-
> ments. For example, he explains, in politics
> one wouldn't seat the representative from Russia
> next to the representative from Afghanistan.
> (Field Notes, 1/23/80)

The student groups fashioned a variety of seating charts. The observer noted some star-shaped, rectangular, and M-shaped seating arrangements. Examples of their finished work are included in a later section of this report.

As on the first day, the two teachers created a group problem-solving situation for their students. The teachers did not prescribe problem solving methods for the student groups, but did specify the goals they had to achieve. The students had to develop the methods through their own group discussions.

List 1

1. Barbara Striesand
2. Steve Martin
3. Cheryl Teigs
4. Erik Estrada
5. Judy Blume
6. Micheal Jackson
7. Jacklyn Smith
8. Gary Coleman
9. Meryl Streep
10. Jane Fonda

Barb. S. B. we all like her singing

Steve M. B. He's funny

Cheryl T. B. She's a pretty model

List 2

Erik E. B. He's a hunk

Judy B. she's a favorite auther

Micheal J B. He's a good singer

Jacklen smith because good actress

Gary Coleman Because he's funny

Merel S. B. she's a great actress

Jane fonda good actress

List 3

1. Steve Martin
2. George Burns Carl
3. Rosan Rosana Dana
4. Earl Campbell
5. Lynn Swann
6. Roger Moore
7. Richard Pryor
8. Cheryl Ladd
9. Gil Gerard
10. Sylvester Stallone

Figure 15. Samples of group invitation lists.

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The students may have gained some experience from this activity in managing social relations. In designing the seating arrangements they had to cognitively rehearse the relationships among their guests, to encourage their interaction and to circumvent possible relational problems. Essentially the students had to imagine themselves as guests to help them decide the appropriate seating arrangements.

The stages of this occasion for writing described thus far have an underlying continuity and progression. This observation coincides with Mrs. Anderson's belief that student writing occasions should be sequential, such that one assignment prepares students for the next occasion (Interview, 10/9/79). Her commitment to sequential assignments across writing occasions is consistent with her practice of sequential assignments within these occasions. In the present activity the students have sequentially pieced together their party plans. It follows that the students will have to plan the menu and entertainment during the next two stages of this activity.

Day 3. During the third class meeting period the student groups planned a menu and the entertainment for their dinner party, after receiving instructions from the teachers. The following field note segment describes the opening minutes of this activity.

> 2:14 Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway pass out materials
> to group representatives, calling out names. Stu-
> dents come to center and get them from the teachers.
> Noise level rises.
> Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
> Mr. Hathaway: "Everybody listen." (Room becomes
> quieter.)
> Mr. Hathaway tells students that they must copy
> their seating charts on the overhead pro-
> jector acetate.

Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."

Mr. Hathaway tells students to put their things
      away.

Mrs. Anderson tells students to put their pencils
      down.

Mr. Hathaway tells students that their next step
      is to draw up a menu to suit a once in a
      lifetime opportunity.

Students whisper.

Mrs. Anderson: "Shh." She tells students that
      they have quite a bit of paper now and can
      use the back of a piece they already have to
      write up their menu. Tells students to dis-
      cuss it, that there should be give and take
      there, too.

Mr. Hathaway calls out names of two or three boys
      whom he says are not listening.

Mrs. Anderson tells students to just list a menu,
      that they don't have to figure quantities.

2:17 Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."

Mr. Hathaway tells students that they are to plan
      a main course, dessert, beverage.

Mrs. Anderson tells students also, a vegetable.

Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."

Mr. Hathaway: "I can't hear Angelo because
      students are talking."

Mr. Hathaway (to Mrs. Anderson): "Shall we tell
      them about entertainment, then?"

Mrs. Anderson: "Might as well."

Mrs. Anderson: "Jenny, put your pencil down,
      please."

Mr. Hathaway (in answer to student query):
      "...extremely rude to ask them [the guests]
      to entertain."

Mr. Hathaway tells students that next week they
      will be asked to explain what they do at the
      dinner party, explain also the people chosen,
      seating chart, menus and the whys of choosing
      these.

2:22 Mr. Hathaway: "You've got the twenty minutes
      to work. Use your time wisely."

(Mrs. Anderson leaves rooms for supplies.)

(Mr. Hathaway stands near Mrs. Anderson's desk.)

                              (Field Notes, 1/30/80)

The observer noted that the children worked together smoothly

as they exchanged their ideas, often nodding in unison, physically

moving together, and sitting on their knees in their chairs. The

observer recorded that this part of the activity stimulated the group members' discussion. Mrs. Anderson also noted this discussion which she later reflected on in an interview. In comparing this activity with other writing assignments for the year, she categorized it with those activities that provided the most student-initiated (non-teacher-directed) discussion (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). Two examples of the students' party menus are shown in Figure 16. Seating arrangement diagrams and entertainment plans are shown in Figure 17 to provide a complete picture of the dinner party plans.

After the students finished this stage of the activity they transferred their plans onto acetate to display on the overhead projector for their group presentations, the final stage of this activity.

Days 4 and 5. On the last two days of this occasion the student groups presented their dinner party plans to their classmates. Each student discussed one or more parts of the plans according to their group assignment.

The observer noted that the students listened attentively and were generally appreciative of the presentations. They laughed at certain things, such as corn-on-the-cob for dessert, and always applauded at the end of each presentation. The students often asked questions of the presenters regarding the rationale for their party plans.

At the end of the fifth day, Mr. Hathaway told the class that the teachers enjoyed the presentations and that the students had

THE MENU

appitizer:
soup, Bean - vegatable - clam chowder - ca...r

Main Course:
Steak with bake potatoes - frepsh tries
spare ribs
Lobster with melted butter
spegetti with a shish ca bob

Bevrages:
champane
soft drinks
beer
wine

Dessert:
Pie, apple- cherry - pumpkin
Cake, choclate - vanilla
~~To~~ ~~~~
corn on the cob

oSamon on crackers
~~Bar~~
*Salad Bar
oCrab
*Lobster (melted Butter)
crab
oSteak and potatoes with gravy
*Imported champain
oMarble Cake
*mud pie -Steak a

~~Entertainment~~
~~Ann Mufey~~

*Entertanment
~~Ann Mufey~~

o ~~Earth Wind and Fire~~

*Ann Murey

· o Styx

Figure 16. Dinner party sample menus.

Steve Corl George Roger Earl

Paul Cheryl

Dana Ross

Jony Ric

Cheesecake
Champaj

ice cream(vanilla
Soup(spicy vegetable)
Sirlon steak

be TROTTERS

2. The Jackson 5,
3. ST.YX,
4. 0Q
5. SUGER Hill gang,
  STRIDERS

Food
Stand

Pool

Sugar hill
Gang ★

Village
People
Stage

Darrel D

Richard P

Pele

Elvin H

Wesly W

Neil A

James B

Steve M

Craig M

Cheryl T

Mehriar M

Farah F

Gary M

David H
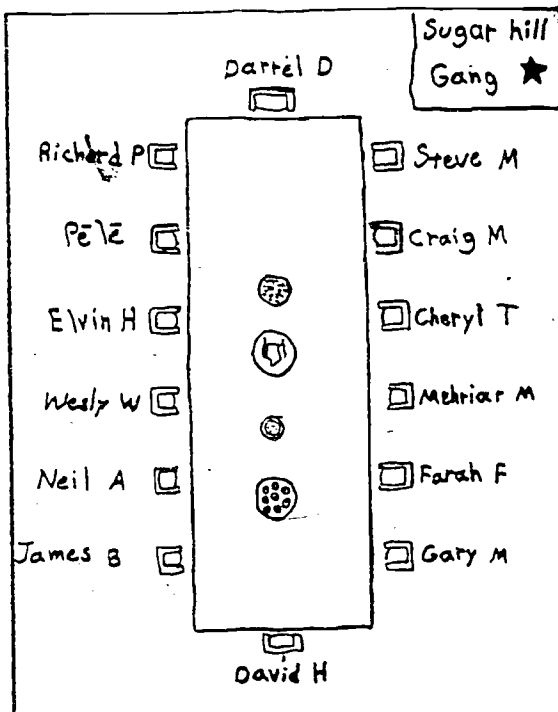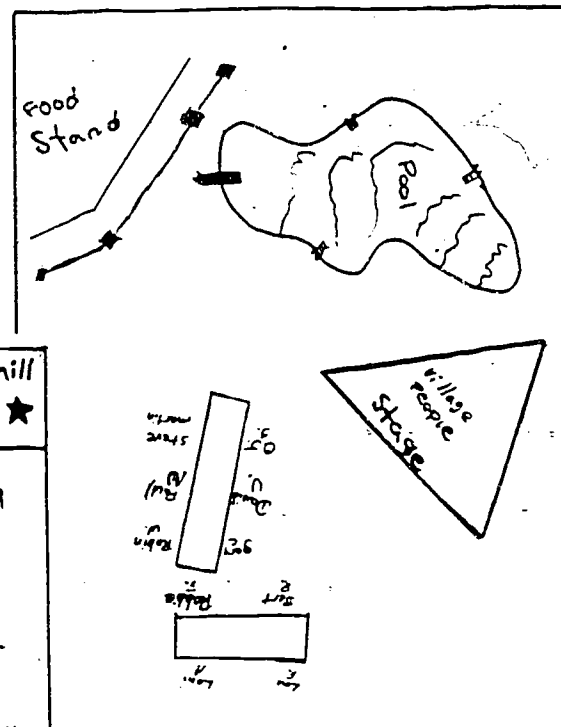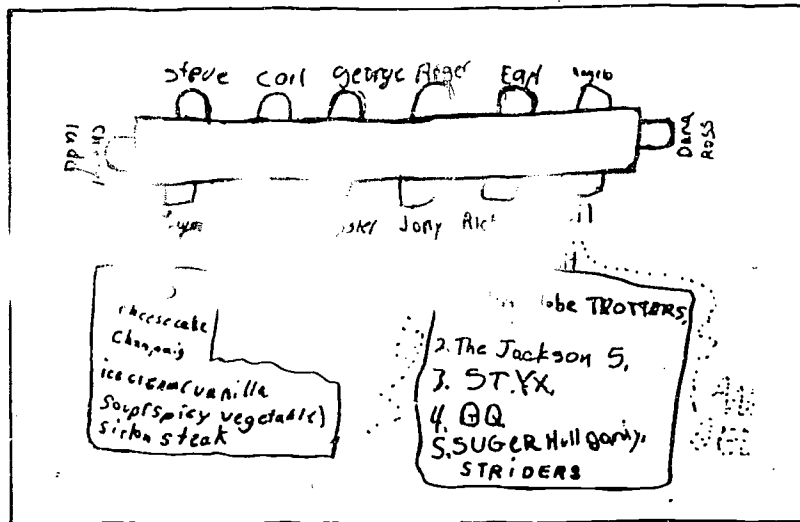
Figure 17. Dinner party
seating arrangements.

achieved the main objectives of the activity:

--to learn to work with a small group of people,

--to learn how to come to a decision,

--to be able to disagree with a group,

--to be able to compromise, and

--to be happy with the decision-making process.

Finally, the teachers said that they observed that the students behave differently sometimes in different situations (e.g., large and small groups), suggesting that cooperation is necessary, and that students sometimes must compromise to help solve a group problem (Field Notes, 2/13/80).

Fate and Closure

The students, as the audience, provided the fate and closure to this writing occasion. They acted as both producers and consumers. The teachers set up the situations and goals for this production and its consumption to take place. The students served as evaluators through their reactions to the group products. An entry in Mrs. Anderson's journal indicated that she did not plan to evaluate the student writings: she wrote that "most of it will never go beyond the rough draft stage." Instead, she was more concerned with evaluating the group problem solving processes--"helping those who have difficulty functioning in a group activity" (Journal, 1/18/80).

Conclusions

This social studies activity provided students with several learning experiences and the opportunity to creatively express

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themselves through writing and speech. Basically, the students

learned to group problem solve and perhaps discover some principles

of group process. In a more general sense they learned to identify

and share with others parts of their lives that they find important

and meaningful. Writing helped them express, record, and communi-

cate these ideas and feelings. Writing served as an important and

necessary means to the ends of group problem solving, planning,

sustaining a complex set of activities over several weeks, and of

communicating the results of these deliberations to the entire class.

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Researching the World:

A Sixth-Grade Writing Project

Individual student research about cities of the world completed during the third marking period of the school year was a complex writing occasion that grew out of earlier writing activities. Principal forerunners were the Life Book, completed in September, and the Magazine Project, completed in December.

Description of the Project

Students enacted this culminating writing occasion during the months of January, February, and March, both within and outside of approximately 38 class sessions. Participants in this project were primarily the teacher, Mrs. Anderson, approximately 60 students (in two classes), and the school head librarian.

Mrs. Anderson identified three basic phases of the writing occasion: first, a preparatory phase in which she introduced students to the basic skills needed for searching out information in a systematic manner and for writing the content of their papers, second, a content phase, in which Mrs. Anderson guided students through steps of drafting and formulating their written reports, and third, a presentation phase in which she assested students in creating visual aids and in preparing for oral presentations of their reports.

The preparatory phase. The preparatory phase of the Researching the World occasion consisted of nine class sessions over a period of

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approximately three weeks (January 22, 1980 through February 7, 1980).

Mrs. Anderson provided an overview of this phase in her journal:

> This week I have been getting materials together
> so they can start on their research papers soon.
> I plan to start with some orientations to the
> library, especially the card catalogue and the
> Reader's Guide--and the writing of a bibliography.
> (Journal, 1/15/80)

Mrs. Anderson did not assume that just because students have

had an orientation to the library at the beginning of the school

year that they acquired the necessary research skills for com-

pleting the project:

> Mrs. Anderson tells me after class that students
> already know something about the card catalogue
> and use of the library, but are missing some
> skills. Thus she taught this lesson so that she
> wouldn't have to answer many questions tomorrow
> when students use the library. (Field Notes,
> 1/22/80)

During the class sessions Mrs. Anderson explained the use of

the Dewey Decimal system and the card catalog. The librarian guided

students through the process of using the Reader's Guide, and Mrs.

Anderson described the manner of writing different types of biblio-

graphy entries. She expected students to learn to locate and record

information more independently as they spent several class sessions

exploring library resources. She collected, evaluated, returned and

reviewed (with students) information they had recorded on their three

worksheets in the process of using the card catalog and Dewey Decimal

system, but only surveyed students about the progress they were making

in recording information found in the Reader's Guide. Mrs. And

expected that only a few students would want or need to use current

resources, thus the relatively cursory treatment of the students'

Reader's Guide notes. Since she would require three different types

of bibliography entries in phase two, she did edit, evaluate, return,

and review the practice entries students had listed.

The content phase. In the second phase of Researching the World

students used many of the skills and procedures they had practiced

both in earlier writing projects (e.g., Life Book, Magazine, weekly

themes) and in the immediate preparatory skill development lessons.

The content phase consisted of 21 class sessions over the course

of about four weeks (February 8 through March 4). The students

selected and developed the actual content of their research papers as

Mrs. Anderson guided them through successive stages of choosing a

topic, developing an outline, discovering and abstracting data from

a variety of resources, writing a rough draft, and completing the

various requirements for their booklet formats.

Mrs. Anderson described how she initiated this phase:

> On Friday I announced the topic of the research
> paper would be a city someplace other than the U.S.
> Then we brainstormed quite a list--I put them on
> the overhead--just from names students knew or,
> finally, by looking at atlases. Each student
> listed three cities he/she would be willing to
> research--and starred any city they especially
> wanted to do, along with a sentence explaining
> why. I have managed to assign everyone one of
> their three choices and will give the students
> those assignments on Monday. (Journal, 2/8/80)

That same Friday, in the afternoon, she also recorded one class

of students' ideas for outline headings and subtopics on the overhead

projector. She then showed the second class of students what the

first class had contributed and invited them to add to the outline

of ideas. The following week, Mrs. Anderson assigned research topics

to students, and combined the ideas of both classes into one outline

that she duplicated and distributed to each student in both classes.

At least 10 sessions of the lessons in the content phase of

Researching the World were characterized by student activity in the

library. In most class periods Mrs. Anderson gave a brief (five-

minute) introduction in the classroom to available resources, then

sent students to the library to search for information on their

respective topics and record it under the general headings and sub-

headings of the outline. In one of the earlier sessions she called

students back to the classroom and offered suggestions to them for

improving their note-taking skills:

> 1:30 (Library) Students are located mostly in the
> central section of the library. The have outline
> copies with them and are using atlases, encyclopedias,
> the card catalog, geography books about one country...
>
> 1:55 (Classroom)...Mrs. Anderson tells students that
> now that she has observed them working, she has sug-
> gestions that would be helpful. She tells them not
> to approach an article with a closed mind, e.g.,
> with the sole purpose of finding the population first.
> She explains that they may not find the population
> for two weeks--if ever. She suggests that the stu-
> dents read a couple of paragraphs, then take notes
> on what they find. (Field Notes, 2/12/80)

But by the end of the week Mrs. Anderson wrote:

> I did manage--on Wednesday, and Friday--to squeeze
> in some time in the library to work on the research
> projects. Most of the students are finding a nice
> variety of materials with a minimal amount of
> assistance from me or the librarian. It appears
> that the outline has been helpful and is eliminating
> some of the copying I've seen other years. (Journal,
> 2/15/80)

About midway in the note-gathering process Mrs. Anderson ex-

plained her guidelines for writing components of the final report:

9:22 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she will
review what is on the sheet, explains how she will
evaluate. Mrs. Anderson shows on the overhead
projector: I. Cover--Title. She tells students
that they can have a design on their covers, asks
them: "Does the title have to be the name of the
city?" She gives examples of descriptions that
might fit a city and asks students if these would
be acceptable...Mrs. Anderson illustrates on the
overhead projector: scribbles 'Berlin' inside a
rectangle (to represent a book cover). She tells
students that they can go to the library and ask
for stencils--"at least it shows more effort," or
they can cut out letters from magazines. She sug-
gests that they think about designing a cover, maybe
a map...

9:30 On the overhead projector Mrs. Anderson writes:
II. Title page. She asks students what information
the title page has to have on it. Three different
students respond with "title," "author," and "date"
respectively. On the overhead projector next to
"Title page," Mrs. Anderson writes: title, author,
date. She shows students the cover and title page
of a library book, and illustrates ways of doing
cover and title pages.

9:34 Mrs. Anderson: "Take out your outline, the
one you've been taking notes on in the library."
...Noise level rises as students take out their
outlines.

9:35 Mrs. Anderson draws table of contents page
on the overhead projector and explains what she
has written. She uses a social studies book to
illustrate captions and sections.

9:40 Mrs. Anderson writes on the overhead pro-
jector: III. Table of contents--sections, page
number, bibliography page. Mrs. Anderson asks
students to look at the very last page of their
outlines. She cautions them that everyone won't
be able to fill out all of the outline sections...

9:44 Mrs. Anderson tells students that the body of
the report will be like a theme and writes on the
overhead projector: IV. Body of report.

9:45 Mrs. Anderson then adds more to the outline:
V. Bibliography. She turns off the overhead pro-
jector...

9:46 Mrs. Anderson passes out another paper to
students entitled "Evaluation for Special Written
Report"...She tells students that for every day the

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> research report is submitted late that she will
> penalize the student one point...
>
> 9:58 Mrs. Anderson explains the "extras" listed
> on the evaluation sheets--tells students that she
> will talk about this later because she doesn't
> want them to be late for gym class. Students leave
> quickly--all have left the room in about 30 seconds.
> (Field Notes, 2/19/80)

After a few more days of note-gathering Mrs. Anderson asked her

students to submit their outline notes, and when she returned them,

indicated to students that either they had sufficient information

and could begin their rough drafts, or that they needed to gather

additional notes or complete their bibliographic entries before

writing their drafts. She informed students that she would not

collect their rough drafts because she intended to monitor progress

as students wrote them. Mrs. Anderson explained a means of

relating outline section notes to drafting of paragraphs:

> 9:35 Mrs. Anderson comments that the people going
> to the library have gone...The rest of you are going
> to get started. "Shh" (she waits)..."I'll say this
> once." She explains that students may think of each
> section of the outline as a paragraph, or maybe com-
> bine two sections...and that after the first two
> sections they could do things in any order. (Field
> Notes, 2/26/80)

The following figure (Figure 18) is an excerpt from one student's

outline and rough draft written from the first two sections of her

outline notes.

In late February, Mrs. Anderson became ill and decided to take

a week at home to recuperate. To keep the momentum going on the

Researching the World project, she planned a detailed schedule

activities for completing the research project and explained

her students. She recorded an account of her planning in her

Name Jane L. Price
City London, England

<u>General Outline for Research on a City</u>

☑ I. General Information

A. Population Sixth largest city in the world
   1978-80 7,167,600

B. Language spoken English
   Welsh   Irish

C. What name means

D. Capitol of Great Brit. ect, ect, ect

☑ II. Geography

A. County/continent
   Great Brit./England)

B. Major waterways (rivers, oceans)
   English Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea Atlantic, mouth of the Thames

C. Climate rarely to hot, cooler air in north, often
   showery, rains heavy, fog

D. Terrain (mountains, deserts)
   Trees, mountains bh

E. Neighboring countries
   Whales, Sotland, Ireland, France

F.

Jane Price   1.

London
The City

London   London is one of the oldest cities
It traces in the world, and the Capitol of Great
its
history Britian and Northern Ireland. In
back   1979, it was populated by some
nearly 7,167,600 people. It is the sixth
2,000
-0   largest city in the world. Some of
years
        the languages spoken there are

        English, Welsh, and Irish. London

        bears the motto "God Direct Us".

        London is Located in England. The

        river Thames runs through the

        city. It's rarely to hot, often showry
                                    P1

Figure 18. Student outline and rough draft for research project.

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February 27 journal entry:

> I went to school on Tuesday because I felt that
> if I could get the students started on their
> rough drafts they could proceed with a substitute
> teacher in the room while I stayed home to recover.
> I told them I wouldn't be in for a few days and to
> follow the guidelines I left carefully because the
> finished report would still be due next Tuesday,
> March 4. The guidelines I left for the students
> went something like this:

Day	Class Time	What to Do
Tues. a.m.	30 min.	Work on rough draft
Tues. p.m.	45 min.	"
Wed. a.m.	45 min.	"
Wed. p.m.	45 min.	"
Thurs. p.m.	60 min.	Finish rough draft; make cover, title page, etc.
Fri. a.m.	60 min.	Write final draft
Mon.	45 min.	Complete
Tues.	30 min.	Turn in

When Mrs. Anderson returned to school the following Monday she

discovered that several students had also been absent during the

previous week. She then announced that they would have additional

time to complete their reports:

> 1:56 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she was
> not the only one absent last week--two students
> were out five days last week. She says that they
> have an extra five days without penalty to com-
> plete their reports. She explains that students
> who were absent one day have until Wednesday, and
> if absent two days they have until Thursday, and
> so on. (Field Notes, 3/30/80)

Mrs. Anderson also informed students that she had received a

request that they display their work during a Middle School teachers'

conference to be held at the school during the following week. She

suggested that they display their research reports (as well as the

Life Books and Magazines they had created during the previous

semester).

As students submitted their completed booklets Mrs. Anderson evaluated them using the evaluation criteria she had previously explained and reviewed with students. She then returned them so that students could prepare for their oral presentations.

The presentation phase. The presentation phase of Researching the World was both a means of sharing the content of the research papers with other students and a way of meeting Mrs. Anderson's requirement that each student give one oral report each quarter. This phase consisted of eight class sessions that took place from March 4 through March 12. During these sessions students prepared visual aids (e.g., maps) to use when they would present their research reports orally to their teacher and classmates. Mrs. Anderson demonstrated how not to read a report and how not to use a visual aid. Students evaluated her performances and Mrs. Anderson later evaluated student oral presentations of their written reports as well as the visual aids they prepared and used to illustrate their findings.

Teacher and Student Roles

Teacher role. Mrs. Anderson had customarily done a research project with her sixth-grade students at this time of year. This time she modified her planning and implementation of the occasion in several ways. She changed the topic area from the usual one of "myths" to one of "cities." She decided on this change in order to rekindle her own interest in the project and because sufficient resources for all (60) students could be made available—mainly from

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the school library:

> Mrs. Anderson tells students: "I had to choose
> a research topic broad enough so that there would
> be something for everyone on the topic in the li-
> brary...it is devastating to go to the library and
> find nothing on the topic. I have seen this happen."
> (Field Notes, 2/8/80)

Mrs. Anderson also experimented with an outline format for note

gathering, leaving space for note-taking, and with means for en-

couraging students to edit their rough drafts using wide-lined

paper:

> Over the weekend as I thought about putting the
> students' outline on a ditto, I had another idea
> that might make that outline more meaningful for
> them. I will have the secretary triple space the
> outline and then students can use that paper for
> the recording of their notes. Perhaps this will
> also cut down on copying of sentences word for
> word and encourage "notes." Another plus might
> be that it could help students organize their own
> papers into paragraphs or sections. I've never
> provided such a structured guide before so it will
> be interesting to see what happens. (Journal,
> 2/11/80)

> On the way to school this a.m. I was rethinking
> the outline the secretary was going to type when
> it hit me that an extra sheet stapled on with the
> label "Bibliography Info" might help the students
> remember to jot down that info as they finished
> using each source. In other years a common pro-
> blem has been the kids would lose--or never write
> down in the first place--info on the sources they
> used. And, so often they couldn't relocate the
> material to get the information. I also have de-
> cided to have them turn in their outlines, or at
> least present them in class, several times during
> the course of the project so I can keep tabs on
> their note taking. (Journal, 2/12/80)

Her intention was to shorten the data gathering and writing processes

to two weeks, but unforeseen circumstances such as limited availability

of the library facilities, changes in school scheduleing, and illness

(her own and that of students) served to extend the duration of the

activities or phases of the project, and changed the nature of phase

three. Originally Mrs. Anderson intended that oral reports be

given from notes in the manner of an earlier speech-giving occasion,

but due to the length of reports and time constraints, she encouraged

students to develop skill in oral reading of their reports.

Student role. Students had many choices within the framework

of the project as Mrs. Anderson outlined it for them. However, she

made no significant changes in her original plans because of unfore-

seen student problems. Perhaps this is because Mrs. Anderson had

already enacted similar plans with students in previous years and

had already taken most of the bugs out of it. Furthermore, this

project was done in mid-year, after much preparatory work in writing,

and thus the teacher was familiar with student writing abilities and

dispositions. Consequently, she could anticipate many of their needs

and patterns of response. By this time students were also familiar

with Mrs. Anderson's expectations.

Personal Meaning of the Project

Both students and teacher related aspects of the Researching

the World occasion to their lives outside the classroom. Students

chose topics according to current outside interests and/or according

to anticipated future events (e.g., one student chose Jerusalem

because his father had promised him a trip to Israel on the occasion

of his Bar Mitzvah; another student wrote about Teheran, an area of

current national interest because of the oil embargoes and hostage

crisis).

Both places of work and types of resources used to gather information brought students and teacher to familiar environs outside the classroom. Mrs. Anderson obtained research materials she selected to suit individual student needs from her home, from a neighboring elementary school, and from the social studies office of the middle school in which she was teaching. She also called upon the school librarian to assist her in preparatory phases of the project, and she made arrangements for students to use the school library on several occasions. The students not only used resources in their school library but explored possible opportunities to use local public libraries, and resources available at their homes (e.g., almanac, tourist guidebooks, assistance from parents).

Mrs. Anderson expected that the experience and skills gained by students as they learned the fundamentals of compiling a research paper would serve them well in completing research activities and projects required in future school years. Researching the World was both the culmination of the sixth-grade writing curriculum and the beginning of a form of academic writing that the students would encounter again and again in middle school, high school, and college.

CHAPTER 5

THE FUNCTIONS OF WRITING IN TWO CLASSROOMS

Introduction

The preceding case studies offer a taste of the ways in which

writing manifests itself in the everyday life of Ms. Donovan's ele-

mentary and Mrs. Anderson's middle school classrooms. Occasions

for writing are sufficiently complex units of both instruction and

communication that it is not surprising to find that they are the

means to realize broad social and academic functions. In this chapter

the functions of writing that were realized in the two classrooms will

be described.

The study was instituted with an interest in the social situa-

tions in which students' written products arise and in which their

beliefs and values about writing and its use are shaped. Toward

these ends, guiding questions raised in the processes of collecting

and analyzing data included the following: What opportunities for

writing do students find in school? How is writing used by students

to meet those opportunities? How do teachers and students differen-

tiate among the functions of writing and the forms appropriate to

them? What contextual forces are operant in this process?

Our approach to the study of writing in classrooms was strongly

influenced by sociolinguistics and ethnography. As such it views

writing holistically--not as a series of discrete skills to be

mastered, but as a cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978). Viewed in this light, writing is studied as it is used by members of a community. This focus on function stands in sharp contrast to other ways of studying language that have typically emphasized mastery of form (Shuy, 1981). To study the process of acquisition of written literacy in this way, the researcher does not measure written linguistic output, but, instead, in Basso's (1977) words,

> focuses upon writing as a form of communicative activity and takes as a major objective the analysis of the structure and function of this activity in a broad range of human societies. (p. 426)

In our own society, this sort of study is particularly appropriate in schools and classrooms where, despite intensive efforts in the area of reading instruction, writing has been generally neglected in both curriculum and instruction.

Scholars of language and culture have expressed concern about the adequacy of the classroom as an environment for learning to write. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1978), for example, have argued that schools in our culture too narrowly define both literacy's functions and the skills necessary to realize them. Shuy (Note 9), echoes this concern. He points out that while children have mastered a broad range of oral language functions by the time they enter school, most have not had much experience in writing. School, a public and institutional place, is typified by a formal language register and activities that are teacher-generated, monologic, and not functional in children's other social lives. Such a learning environment limits children's opportunities to acquire a rich range of language forms and functions.

For writing, which is generally not acquired to the degree that speech is in the home, the consequence is that children may never practice parts of the written communication repertoire that are self-generated, transactional, and useful in everyday life (Shuy, Note 9). If such is the case, children's competence in writing may never be fully realized, not despite their formal education, but as a consequence of it.

These are disturbing and powerful suggestions about the class-room as an environment for writing. They prompt closer examination of occasions for writing in our two classrooms asking, in Basso's (1977) words, "what position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is the range of its cultural meanings?" (p. 432). The remainder of this chapter addresses these questions by examining the functions served by writing in the two classrooms studied.

Overview of the Four Functions

As the case studies show, life in these two classrooms is varied. In each classroom there are both scheduled and impromptu opportunities to learn. There are group and individual activities, teacher-led and free times. Communication in the classrooms reflects this social and academic diversity, and although each classroom has its own unique flavor, writing in both classrooms arises out of particular intellectual and social needs and opportunities presented by the school in general and the classroom in particular.

Before offering a detailed discussion of the functions of writing in the two classrooms, some discussion of the process by which those

functions and their distinctive features were inferred is provided.

Since the research project was oriented to discovery, fieldworkers

did not limit their sights to activities explicitly involving writing

and its instruction. Instead, pains were taken to spend considerable

time in the two schools and classrooms observing and sharing in the

round of daily activities and gradually noting patterns in the use of

writing by the teachers and students. Similarly, when teachers and

students were asked questions about writing in both formal and in-

formal interviews, the questions came at first in terms of the larger

context of their classroom life. Finally, in the same spirit, student

writings and drawings were collected widely and in large quantity.

Gradually, the documents were classified, but with an eye toward

how they related to classroom activity and with the help of students

and teachers.

In both sites, it quickly became evident that writing and its

instruction were meaningfully organized not into discrete units such

as lessons, but into broader units of related activities that inte-

grated a range of skills and served broad social and academic func-

tions. To learn more about how these units, called occasions for

writing, fit into the social and academic fabric of the classrooms

under study, we framed and tested working hypotheses about the

types of functions the occasions for writing were performing in the

classroom. As we generated these hypotheses about how teachers and

students might be using writing, we tested them against subsequent

instances of classroom activity. In this enterprise we sought mean-

ingful contrasts in the use of writing, and those aspects of writing

activities that appeared to make a difference to participants were noted.

Four broad functions were thus identified, first in the second/third-grade classroom and later in the sixth. These functions appeared to be integrally related to classroom life and were the following:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time, and
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

These four functions are sufficiently broad to characterize the writing done in both classroom settings. However, because of contextual differences including student age, grade, school, and teacher, their realization differs in many interesting ways in the two classes studied. Table 1 shows the four functions of writing identified in the two classrooms and illustrates them with sample occasions for writing. The table is derived from field notes, teacher journals, interviews, and work samples collected during the 1979-80 academic year. It illustrates that writing is used to serve multiple purposes including, but not limited to, skill assessment and practice in the language arts. Writing also functions in setting the social climate of the classroom, in getting to know others, in reflecting upon one's experiences during the day, in recreation, and in the service of academic activities not explicitly related to language arts. Table 1 also shows that occasions for writing differ along particular dimensions of the writing act in these two classrooms. Some of these dimensions apply in most writing

Table 1

The Functions of Writing and their Distinctive Features

FUNCTION TYPE	(GRADE) SAMPLE ACTIVITY	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES						
		INITIATOR	COMPOSER	WRITER/ SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	FATE	EVALU- ATION
TYPE I: WRITING TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY	(2/3) classroom rules	teacher	teacher & students	teacher	class- mates	by teacher and students; jointly ren- dered rules are drafted on chalkboard; printed in colored marker on large white paper by teacher	posted; re- ferred to when broken	no
	(6) magazines	teacher	teacher & students	student	magazine subscri- bers	by teacher; she provides maga- zines of former students as models	read by teacher; may be displayed for reading by classmates; taken home	yes
TYPE II: WRITING TO KNOW ONESELF AND OTHERS	(2/3) diaries	teacher	student	student	self	by teacher; she models from literature and oversees making of the diaries; students write or print on lined paper in booklets they have made	kept in teacher's file cabinet or in student desks; occasion- ally shared with teacher, other students, or family	no
	(6) life books	teacher	teacher & students	student	class- mates	by teacher; her own work is used as a model	read by teacher, classmates, parents, other students	yes
TYPE III: WRITING TO OCCUPY FREE TIME	(2/3) stories, letters, and cards	student	student	student	other (parents, friends, family)	by student; printed or drawn on lined or con- struction paper	kept; may be given as gift to parent or friend	no
	(6) cartoons & stories	student	student	student	self or others (parents, friends, family)	by student; writ- ten or drawn on notebook paper, may be re-copied	kept; may be shared or not be shared; when shared, it is usually with a friend.	no
TYPE IV: WRITING TO DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC COMPETENCE	(2/3) science lab booklets	teacher	publisher	publisher and student	teacher	by publisher; printed in commercial booklet in which students also write	checked by teacher; filed for later use; pages sent home to parents by teacher	yes
	(6) research project	teacher	teacher & students	teacher & students	teacher & class- mates	by teacher; students draft their research project on dittoed outline & note sheets	read by teacher: presented orally to classmates; displayed at teacher con- ference	yes

activities and have been singled out for attention by other theorists
of writing. Others, however, appear to arise uniquely in the insti-
tutional setting of the school. The dimensions identified in this
study included the initiator of the occasion for writing, the com-
poser of the written product, the person(s) who actually write(s)
the document, the intended audience for the writing, the format of
the document (and the person(s) who plan that format), the ultimate
fate of the written product, and the presence or absence of evalua-
tion of the writing.

With Table 1 it is possible to take a closer look at the func-
tions of writing, first in the elementary classroom and then in the
middle school classroom. In so doing, comparisons and contrasts will
be drawn both among functions within each setting and between the
functions as realized in the two settings.

A Closer Look at the Four Functions
in the Elementary Classroom

Implicit in Table 1 is the insight that literacy resides not
entirely in the production of documents, but also in a complex of
social roles, expressive purposes, and resources for writing. Differ-
ent configurations of these features occur with different expressive
purposes and, as Figure 19 illustrates, different documents result.

Writing to participate in community. Writing as participation
in community is exemplified by the efforts of Ms. Donovan and her
students to set and enforce rules of social conduct in their corner
of Room Twelve. The composing of rules was undertaken collectively,
with children framing and negotiating rules orally in interaction

Student Letter
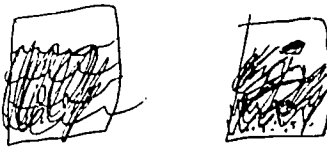
Lab Booklet Page

Behavior Contract

Diary Page

Figure 19. Documents reflecting the functions
of writing in room 12.

with one another and with guidance from the teacher. Ms. Donovan was the scribe in this activity. At first she worked at the chalk-board, revising the rules as the children discuss them. Then, over-night, she carefully printed the rules in colored marking pen on a large sheet of white butcher paper. She mounted them near the chalk-board. This procedure gave the teacher ultimate control of the format of the written rules that had been jointly composed. This way of writing classroom rules is consistent with the spirit of open educa-tion shared among the teachers of Room 12. The teachers encouraged students to devise classroom rules and to arrive at understandings of social relations inductively. However, in keeping with the need for order and coordination in a room containing so many children and a wide variety of social arrangements for teaching and learning, Ms. Donovan reported that the teachers reached consensus in advance on what the "discovered" classroom rules would be (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

setting enabled a particular kind of writing in which many of the pro. ns usually undertaken by the individual author are shared by all of the students in interactions with their teacher. The process of deliberation worked toward consensus before the rules were in place. The act of writing them down at the board, where they could be easily erased, negotiated, and modified, was akin to pro-ducing a working draft. The final step of recording on paper what has been agreed to conveyed one potent function of writing: to specify and render binding social compacts. Public display of the r   red the other students in Room 12 accountable to ob-serve them.

The collective creation of a written document has powerful

pedagogical implications. The teacher reported that this sort of

activity enabled the participation of all--even second graders who

may have forgotten how to write their alphabet letters over the

summer (Interview, 8/6/80). In addition, two key aspects of the

writing process--composition and revision--are undertaken by the

children in an oral rather than a written mode, thus moving them

gradually into writing. Finally, the collective effort at composi-

tion may, in fact, result in moving each individual cognitively

beyond the place s/he might have been if left to generate rule ideas

in isolation or if confronted with a teacher-made list.

In Ms. Donovan's corner of Room 12, the rules for class

conduct that were generated and written down were invoked as they

were broken. In fact, long into the year, written rules were peri-

odically referred to when Ms. Donovan sanctioned behavior. A formal

scoial and written mechanism existed wherein students could engage

in reflection both upon the rules that had been recorded and upon

the consequences of breaking them. It was the writing of a behavior

contract (See Figure 19). Like the rules themselves, the behavior

contract was a collaboration between teacher and student. Ms. Dono-

van printed the contract and constrained the topic of student writing,

but within those limits the student expressed her/his account of the

offense and framed in writing a way to prevent its reoccurence. Ms.

Donovan and the student then signed the contract. Again, by means of

a jointly composed and public document, an air of the official nature

of the activity was created. In addition, contracts were kept on

record and, upon the third offense, a parent signature was added

to the already-present _____ ier and tudent. This ty

of writing, in both rule-generation and enforcement, codified the

social norms of the group and helped the group to regulate social

behavior.

Writing to demonstrate academic competence. Another type of

writing that is both public and collaborative but in quite different

ways occurred when students wrote as part of academic performance.

Here the purpose was not explication of social relations in the

classroom, but the performance of academic tasks. A page from a

SCIIS science lab booklet is shown in Figure 19 to exemplify the

documents produced when this function was undertaken. Like rule-

setting, this is a teacher-initiated, activity and it is the only

type of writing that received formal evaluation from the teacher

(see star on the lab booklet page). This time writers worked in

privacy, but th _____ 'orated on the documents produced.

Academic writing is the only type of writing that was typically both

composed and formatted by an outside third party--the publisher.

This fact, so commonplace in classrooms in our culture, was at first

taken for granted by the researchers. However, when students were

asked to sort and talk about their written work, they consistently

grouped worksheets and workbook pages together because they were

produced "b, _____ interview Notes, 6/6/80).

Some writing as academic performance was intended for practice

and assessment of writing skills themselves, but much of it was

writing in the service of other academic ends. Writing could serve

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in these cases as an aid to memory, as description resulting in

in   's about phenom na (as in the experiment report), and as

explanation to the teacher-audien. .i. ... tudent ha   n

a concept. Both the rule-setting and behavior contract activities

and the academic performance activities called upon students to en-

gage in a variety of discourse functions including explanation and

description. However, they were not activities that were generated

or ultimately controlled by the students--the topic was constrained,

the format of the writing was limited, and the function of the writing

was predetermined by others. These two functions of writing were

observed throughout the year and are those most typically associated

with formal school writing.

     Writing was not limited to rule-setting and academic performance.

Two major functions of writing were undertaken in Room 12 in which

students had considerably more control over the features of the acti-

vity and that were closer to students' everyday experience outside

school. These function types, writing to know oneself and others and

writing to occupy free time, are the least formal types of classroom

writing. They are not shared publicly nor are they evaluated. Al-

though in the case of writing to know oneself and others the writing

activity was typically initiated and formatted by the teacher, the

students generated and wrote the text, and their efforts were ac-

knowledged by the teacher while not being formally evaluated. In

writing to occupy free time, the teacher enabled the process by

providing room for it in the school day, but, as can be seen in

Table 1, the students controlled all other facets of the activity.

Writing to know oneself and others. As is evident in the case
studies of Diary Time, Pen Pals, and the Safety Posters, students
wrote to get to know themselves and others better. In an ever-
widening circle that began with knowing their classmates in Room
12 and grew to knowing the com...   h they lived, stu-
dents produced a variety of documents. They wro. in aries (se
Figure 19) that recorded their experiences and feelings and were
private unless voluntarily shared, they wrote around the holidays
(everything from Thanksgiving menus and recipes for a class dinner
to New Year's resolutions), and they wrote class books recounting
field trips.

Writing to know oneself and others better was an interesting
function of written literacy in Room 12 in large part because
it is at the cusp of purely private and personal writing (e.g.,,
writing to occupy free time) and the more formal and public school-
oriented writings previously discussed. It is perhaps the only
function of writing in the elementary classroom that fully realized
the concept of an occasion for writing. This type of writing relied
on the teacher often to seize the moment--perceiving an experience
that had happened spontaneously and captured the students' imagina-
tions, and turning it into an occasion for writing. It relied on
her as well to free the children to design and control as much of
the writing process as necessary to reach fruition. Sometimes this
strategy leads to success, sometimes to disappointment.

An example of such an occasion for writing that had all of these
elements was the diary-writing that is documented in Table 1 and

described as a case study. Diary-writing was Ms. Donovan's idea,
and she would have liked to institutionalize it as a quiet, reflec-
tive writing time in the school day of each child in her class.
However, her plans were never fully realized. Detailed study of
this occasion revealed that it was the very marginality of the writing
function that made the activity both attractive and difficult to in-
stitutionalize. Diaries were supposed to be private. Students were
to be free of concern about issues of form and audience; they were to
write their own thoughts, and Ms. Donovan would write hers. But
Table 1 shows us that Diary Time had some distinctive features that
greatly resembled other, more formal types of school writing.

Diary Time was scheduled into the school day by the teacher—it
was initiated by her. Diaries were kept locked in the teacher's file
cabinet to ensure that they would be private, but only official
schoolwork was kept in this manner. Diaries were written inside
student-made booklets, but the diaries were to be written on official
lined paper. While diaries were to be private, they could be shared—
and that implied that an audience beyond oneself was at least of some
concern. In short, diaries were both a school writing activity and
a personal one as they were realized in Room 12. This caused
confusion on students' part about both audience and purpose—and that
confusion was manifest in student concern for correctness of form and
spelling in their diaries and in their lamenting the lack of topics
about which to write. Diary Time was not successful for most of the
students in that by mid-year it was deleted from the daily schedule
and continued by only six or seven students. By that time, however,
for those few students, it had been renegotiated to resemble the

next function in our discussion--writing to occupy free time.

Despite the difficulties of diary writing, many of the other

instances of writing to know oneself and others better were potent

occasions for writing in Room 12. Extended and interconnected

opportunities to write arose from activities in and around school

and community and on the occasion of cultural events such as

holidays. As the case studies of Pen Pals and the Safety Posters

illustrate, these occasions were often framed as opportunities to

learn about oneself, others, or one's community. This type of

writing function, so amenable to the integration of skills and links

to community that are benchmarks of occasions for writing, is a

highly promising place to begin to construct that part of the school

curriculum concerned with acquisition of both writing skills and

values about literacy and its power. These possibilities will be

explored further in the next chapter.

While writing to know oneself and others was a function that

was largely teacher-initiated, it depended on the everyday life

experiences of the students for its vitality. In the second/third

grade, it occupied the peculiar status among the functions identified

of being both an explicit and recognized school function and one in

which students had a large measure of control over facets of the

composing process. It appears, as well, to have been closely allied

with the use to which children put writing when left to their own

devices.

Writing to occupy free time. In a busy, crowded place like Room

12, students who isolated themselves with paper and pencil were

most likely to have a bit of quiet time and space. The teachers
modeled this by instituting both Diary Time and a time called USR
(Uninterrupted Silent Reading) as times when people were to be
privately engaged with words. Often children chose to use their
free time--which was variable but plentiful in this open-space
classroom--to read or write. When children wrote during this time,
they produced stories, letters, and cards that were colorful and
illustrated. With full control over this function, the students
chose a variety of materials on which to draw and write, they
planned their own formats, they identified an audience, and they
were instrumental in seeing that their documents reached their
intended fate. Given such student autonomy, great diversity in writing
and its use might be expected. Instead, it was surprising to see
that, in general, students used this opportunity to write in intimate,
transactional ways. Figure 19 illustrates this with a letter written
by one student early in the year to a researcher who had been parti-
cipating in the classroom. In the letter, which was written on
colored paper in magic marker and hand-delivered, the student both
compliments the researcher and makes a move toward a relationship
with her, suggesting that the researcher is a role model. The letter
is personal, spontaneous and self-revealing--and, unlike in the case
of diaries, the student wrote it without seeking help with spelling
or ideas for a topic.

In the lives of these second/third graders, the function of
writing to occupy free time was typically realized as "keeping in
touch" or "making contact" with others--often expressing in writing

what would be hard to express face-to-face. Given that half of the

children lived in single-parent households, it was common for children

to use their private time to make cards and write stories for their

absent parents. Additionally, children wrote to one another in the

classroom and exchanged letters of invitation to parties and playtimes

(see Greene, Note 12, and Florio & Frank, in press, for other examples

of this phenomenon).

The Functions of Writing in the Middle School Classroom

Everyday life in Mrs. Anderson's sixth grade-classroom was

organized quite differently from life in Room 12. Differences

in time available for writing, space within which to work, age of

students, nature of the curriculum, and teacher beliefs and experi-

ence had implications for the writing that was observed there.

However, despite such contextual differences between the two class-

room sites, weekly meetings of fieldworkers in both sites and monthly

meetings with the focal teachers and their teammates led to the

discovery of important similarities between the sites as well. The

four functions of writing described in this report are useful ways

to categorize writing in both settings, and the occasion for writing

as a unit of writing instruction was operant in both classrooms.

A closer look at the functions of writing in the middle school

classroom reveals both the uniqueness of that setting and the ways in

which it is similar to the elementary setting. Returning to Table 1

to consider the functions of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom,

it is important to recall the overall structural difference in the

school day in the two classrooms studied. The writing described in

the elementary classroom was observed throughout the day. Ms. Donovan
was responsible for instruction in all school subjects except social
studies. Thus researchers had the opportunity to observe her and
her students engaged in writing for a wide variety of social and
academic purposes. In the sixth grade, however, students had several
different teachers for their school subjects. Focusing on Mrs.
Anderson's teaching limited both the time and school subjects that
could be observed. Mrs. Anderson was responsible for instruction in
her team in the areas of communication arts and social studies. She
was observed as she taught these subjects to two groups of sixth
graders--her own and those of Mr. Hathaway's homeroom. This difference
in organization of the classes had implications for the type and
range of occasions for writing that were observed in her room.

While in Ms. Donovan's room four communicative functions were
realized by means of writing, we have already seen that only one of
them--writing to know oneself and others--produced extended and
interrelated sets of activities we have called occasions for writing.
In achieving the other functions, writing was instrumental to such
activities as recreation, testing, record-keeping, and rule-setting.
In these instances writing was often undertaken in isolated lessons
or blocks of time and lacked continuity or integration with other
parts of students' lives.

Writing in the sixth-grade communication arts/social studies
block taught by Mrs. Anderson was obviously only a part of the writing
undertaken in the middle school day. Thus, our data represent some-
what less than fully the range of opportunities to write extant in

the sixth grade. Our documentation is limited to only a part of the school day and curriculum, but, as the preceding case studies have shown, within that part there was extensive interweaving of social and linguistic aims as writing was undertaken in the completion of such occasions for writing as Planning A Dinner Party, the Life Books, the Magazine Project, and Researching the World. It is to that subset of writing experiences and the ways in which they serve to achieve important social and academic functions in Mrs. Anderson's class that we now turn.

Table 1 illustrates the possibility of finding all four function types of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom. Like their elementary counterparts, students initiate writing as one way to occupy free time. Although they have far less free time during their scheduled communication arts class periods, students still write stories and cartoons for their own amusement or to share with friends. In addition, and with Mrs. Anderson's leadership, they write to participate in an ever-widening circle of communities from their own class and team to their school, town, and ultimately to the more abstract community where their audience may be separate from them in time, space, and experience. They also write to demonstrate academic competence.

The middle school occasions for writing described in Table 1 and in the case studies differ from those identified in the elementary classroom in that they occur in all three of the major function areas and in that they are related to one another both in content and in time. Perhaps because Mrs. Anderson's students are older and because her time with them is more limited and more focused than

is Ms. Donovan's, Mrs. Anderson endeavors to link occasions for writing to one another across the year, gradually building the complexity of the writing tasks undertaken by the students.

While linkages are seen in the elementary school, they are frequently of the sort that join student to experience outside of school or student to intended audience. In the middle school these sorts of linkages are less prevalent. Students are sometimes asked to write to an imagined audience; often the fate of a written product is not decided upon in advance of its completion. The teacher initiates most of the writing activities, and they may not necessarily arise from or relate directly to the everyday life experience of the students. The integration that occurred in the sixth-grade occasions was far more internal to the writing curriculum--it was integration of skills necessary to complete a given writing assignment across three functions--writing to know oneself and others, writing to participate in community, and writing to demonstrate academic competence.

Early in the year when the sixth graders were new both to middle school and to peers from other East Eden elementary schools, there was both a need and an opportunity to get to know one another. At that time Mrs. Anderson initiated the Life Books. This occasion for writing not only was appropriate in terms of the social situation unfolding, but it resembled writing in the early days of elementary school in that it brought students gradually back into writing. The Life Book required relatively little actual writing and was a highly interactive occasion for writing. Students shared their ideas and

work space and were provided a model in the form of a book prepared
by Mrs. Anderson to describe her own life. In addition, students
were encouraged to use pictures and drawings to enrich and extend
their written expression. And, much like the writing seen in the
elementary school, the audience for their writing was real and
immediate--the classmates whom they were coming to know.

The Magazine Project was an occasion for writing that built
upon the Life Books both in terms of the writing required to complete
it and in light of the growing sense of the class as a social unit.
Once the students had begun to know one another, they turned their
attention outward. While the actual audience for their writing
continued to include their classmates, Table 1 illustrates that
their intended audience in subsequent writing occasions was somewhat
different. Eventually the magazines that the students wrote would
be read by their friends, parents, and teacher. But when initiated,
they were intended to address an imaginary audience of subscribers.
The extension outward from writing that was purely instrumental to
social and academic life at home or at school to writing intended
for an absent and largely unknown audience was an extension of the
notion of writing as community participation that was not seen in
the elementary classroom. It more closely resembles some aspects
of adult literacy. Perhaps the closest that students in Room 12
came to such an enterprise was in writing to pen pals--and here we
saw that making one's audience real and concrete was integrally
related to the success of the project.

Thus it can be seen that the Magazine Project built upon the
Life Books not only in terms of the skills required to complete it

but in terms of the extension and expansion of the definition of audience to include a community beyond the walls of Lincoln School. In completing this writing enterprise, the students were again offered a model, but this time it was the model of magazines of former students. Using magazines of authors unknown to the students reinforced the notion that magazines can be addressed to an audience separated from the reader by time, distance, and experience.

As the case studies illustrate, the integration of skills and building of complexity in occasions for writing continued throughout the year and in the sixth-grade classroom. A culminating occasion for writing--the Research Project--occurred late in the year. It epitomized writing as academic performance and, as such, shed light on the nature of formal evaluation of writing in Mrs. Anderson's class.

While evaluation of writing was present in academic writing across the year in the elementary classroom in such subjects as reading and science, that evaluation was largely implicit. Grades explicitly for writing were never introduced in writing in the second/third-grade classroom. In addition, as was mentioned earlier, the writing which engaged students most directly in the composing process (writing to know oneself and others) was never formally evaluated by Ms. Donovan.

In the sixth grade, however, the picture was quite different. Indeed, all writing except the recreational kind was graded by Mrs. Anderson. The case studies point out that evaluation was an enterprise that Mrs. Anderson found both essential and thorny. In many cases her evaluation was in terms of largely unstated criteria. Her

inferences about student competence in discrete writing skills was cumulative and not framed precisely. However, in early spring students undertook the longest extended occasion for writing when they prepared their Research Project. In this occasion we observed for the first time the explication of evaluative criteria by Mrs. Anderson, the negotiation of those criteria with the students, and the holding of students accountable in terms of them. Much like the explicitly academic writing in Room 12 (which was the only writing to be directly evaluated by Ms. Donovan), student composing in this evaluated activity was constrained in ways different from the previous occasion for writing. .In writing to participate in community or to know oneself and others, students had the greatest autonomy to compose and format their written work. The composition and format of writing in the research project, in contrast, was largely in the hands of Mrs. Anderson--a striking parallel to the predominance of publisher-made materials shaping the writing to demonstrate academic competence in the second/third grade. In the next chapter these and other features of occasions for writing will be considered as they bear on curriculum, instruction, and future research in writing instruction.

CHAPTER 6

IN CONCLUSION: PICTURES OF A PROCESS

Introduction

This study was conceived and conducted in the spirit of dis-
covery. Its aim was to describe the writing undertaken in two
classrooms and the teaching attendant to it. The combination of
anthropological, psychological, and practical perspectives was found
to be a powerful and flexible way of working to craft these descrip-
tions. This work represents only one of many useful approaches to
research on writing and writing instruction. Correlational studies,
surveys, and experiments can also make contributions to knowledge
about the acquisition of written literacy. As the corpus of research
grows and is shared and reviewed, we shall come closer to the goal of
understanding writing in school.

In concluding this report, one caution is warranted. This
caution applies to all educational research that is broadly descrip-
tive, whether that research be ethnographic or correlational in
nature. The caution pertains to the tendency in educational research
to draw implications for teaching and policy uncritically from de-
scriptions of current practice. The potential strength of descriptive
research lies in its rendering of analytic portrayals of the complex
activities of teaching and learning and of the sense-making of parti-
cipants in those activities. But descriptions are not uncomplicated.
They are static attempts to represent processes that change in time.
They are, in addition, neither value-neutral renderings of "what is,"

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nor are they facile roadmaps for "what ought to be."

When we study schooling, we describe everyday life and practice within the context of a social institution governed by shared norms and values. Thus statements of fact about life in such settings as schools and classrooms are statements meaningful in terms of the norms and values held there. Our descriptions of teaching and learning in school settings thus presuppose the institution in which the behaviors arise and the rules that regulate those behaviors and make them meaningful. It is in virtue of this state of affairs that our "mere descriptions" are already somewhat evaluative even as we render them, and that they are turned so conveniently into prescriptions for practice (Searle, 1964).

Critics of mainstream educational research have pointed out that failure to recognize the normative nature of the descriptions we devise can lead to uncritical acceptance of the underlying rules presently governing practice, and hence to their unreflective perpetuation by the very act of studying them (Cherryholmes, Note 13). From description we may be tempted to offer heavy-handed recommendations for practice. But the principles of practice documented in one educational setting may be inappropriate to the local and particular perspective of participants in another (Hymes, Note 14). If handled unreflectively, our accumulating corpus of research on instruction is unlikely ever to lead to a normative theory of education--one that stands back from research findings and asks questions ultimately about what is worth knowing (Fenstermacher, 1978).

At a time when we are just beginning extensive research on the teaching and learning of writing, it is worth asking ourselves what

we mean by literacy. What are we willing to count as writing? What do we assume is the teacher's role in the process of acquisition of writing? What resources are available and for whom in enabling the process? Descriptive research cannot answer fundamental value questions for parents, teachers, or policy makers beyond reification of the status quo. Nor can it offer simple and direct prescriptions for practice. What it can offer are pictures of the complex processes at work in schooling and the acquisition of written literacy (Wittgenstein, 1953/1968). These pictures are, of course, limited because they are abstractions. As such they freeze ongoing action in order to describe it. In addition, to be sensible, they must be constructed like caricatures, delineating certain features and demonstrating overall patterns. Thus they must be drawn from one particular point of view and not another (Erickson, 1973). But, like pictures, they are of value despite their limitations. For the inexperienced, they share situations which may be heretofore unknown or difficult to observe at firsthand. For the experienced, they provide much food for thought; a chance to examine their own unique but related experiences.

In this study we have attempted to draw such pictures of processes. We have not focused on products. We have not, for example, regarded student writing as a product in isolation from the social and academic processes that engendered it. Nor have we regarded teaching behavior as a mere product or output. We have considered teacher actions in light of teacher thought and in the context of classroom life. We have looked at instruction as a process--the

dynamic and collaborative creation of teacher and students in a particular setting. Thus our study has reflected truly local norms governing writing and its instruction. But by examining our pictures of writing and its instruction in two classrooms, the reader may learn about a process heretofore obscure or may find the opportunity to think about her/his own situation. She or he may be surprised that her/his experience is quite different, nod knowingly at a familiar episode, agree or disagree with our interpretations, find our renderings satisfying or incomplete. In short, the reader may find these descriptions the occasion for reflection upon her/his own work. And, with the gradual accumulation of such local portrayals, by means of comparison and contrast, the generic may be illuminated in the particular.

In this spirit we offer in concluding this report reflections on issues in practice, curriculum, and research as they relate to writing. These reflections are prompted by what we learned in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

Implications for Practice

One way to characterize curriculum is, in Eggleston's (1977) words, as "a body of learning experiences responding to a societal view of knowledge that may not always be fully expressed or even fully accepted by teachers and students" (p. 20). It was not until this study was well underway that the researchers realized that to study the processes of teaching and learning writing in the classroom was, in fact, to study the writing curriculum. Thus, it was a long time before the teachers and researchers

in dialogue with one another discovered the curricula for writing embedded in everyday activities in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

Perhaps because writing instruction in East Eden, unlike instruction in other school subjects, lacks a "received" and highly standardized system of objectives and materials, it is easy to assume that it lacks a curriculum. But as Eggleston's characterization indicates, curriculum may exist without full consensus about or full expression of the structure and contents of knowledge, the appropriate ways to impart knowledge, the persons to whom it should be taught, the means to evaluate such efforts, or the values underlying its instruction.

In large part we have found that this state of affairs characterized the writing curriculum in the two classrooms studied. While the nature of the curriculum was different in the elementary and the middle school settings, it was, in both cases, largely unarticulated. Free of the materials and precise district mandates that both supported and limited instruction in other academic subjects, writing posed both a problem and an opportunity for the teachers and students whom we observed.

It is possible that relative freedom from outside management of curriculum makes writing the last bastion of independent decision-making among school subjects. Potentially it is still an area in which teachers can make fundamental choices about the knowledge to impart, the ways to impart it, the nature of assessment, and the reasons for learning. But it is also possible for such lack of

specification of the curriculum to be a source of problems. Teachers
may enact writing instruction unreflectively--filling up the time
with activities that merely recapitulate their own limited experi-
ences as former students of writing. Worse, such an unregulated
part of the course of study can suffer for lack of legitimacy. Thus
we sometimes see writing slighted in a busy school day or passing
unremarked upon as it is used throughout the day as a means to other
academic ends.

The absence of curricular materials in writing has engendered
a paradoxical situation with respect to writing instruction. On
one hand, research on the teaching of writing portrays teachers
engaging in some of their most creative and rich preactive and inter-
active planning precisely because they lack the curricular and mana-
gerial props and constraints that materials would provide (Clark & Elmore,
Note 11). However, much of that creative instruction is invisible--
to analysts, to students, and to teachers themselves. The invisi-
bility happens in at least two ways. First, teachers often engage
students in writing that is incidental to the completion of other
academic tasks and miss, in their efforts to complete those tasks,
opportunities to draw student attention to the important aspects of
the very writing processes they are using. The other source of the
invisibility of writing instruction lies in the nature of classrooms
as places in which to study and communicate with others. Writing is
ubiquitous in classrooms, although explicit writing instruction may
not be. Writing of papers and tests can become such a part of
everyday life in classrooms that it goes unremarked upon by its

users. Thus the powerful potential of writing in use in everyday school life goes unexploited such that it is neither addressed in teacher preparation nor accounted for in curricular descriptions; it is not even counted as writing and writing instruction by educators, children, or parents. Yet it is precisely this everyday use of language that is at the heart of the process of becoming a competent communicator.

This state of affairs makes writing a strategic site for curricular research. In addition, writing is a school subject that potentially calls forth considerable professionalism in teachers. In undertaking writing instruction they may find themselves having to reflect upon their own experience as writers, the lives of their diverse students and the role of writing in them, the opportunities for becoming literate in their classrooms, the problems of standards in writing, and our societal definitions of and values about literacy.

As we considered the implications of this study for the practice of teaching writing, we realized that the occasions for writing described in this report have spoken to the question "why is school writing difficult to teach?" It is our hope that by answering this question, at least in part, teachers and other practitioners will better understand and be better equipped to rise to the challenge of teaching writing. Teaching writing will never be easy. But we believe that understanding how and why fostering the acquisition of written literacy in schools is difficult will be useful to those who seek to help the process along.

Challenging issues. In the teaching of writing, we identified a number of issues that our teachers wrestled with explicitly or implicitly. These included the question of audience, the use of models, the need for a sense of purpose in writing occasions, the setting of expectations for writing performance in school, the issue of evaluation of students' written work, and the classroom context as an influence on writing. In sum, these issues and considerations constitute an answer to the question, "Why is writing difficult to teach in school?"

Audience. The description and analysis of the Diary Time occasion for writing demonstrated how important the issue of audience can be in school writing. Audience seemed to be a particularly important factor for the primary grade writers. Ambiguity about audience seemed to cause a variety of responses to Diary Time and made a noticeable contribution to the decline of that occasion for writing. The second and third graders seemed to profit most from real, live, and visible audiences (e.g., kindergarteners and pen pals), while the sixth graders were able to visualize and write for an imaginary audience (e.g., in the Magazine Project). One trend that describes the writing curriculum in the second/third grade as it developed during the year could be called the "widening circle of audience." There, Ms. Donovan started with Diary Time, moved to Safety Posters, which involved other children in the school, and on to Pen Pals, involving an absent but visualizable audience in another school building.

<u>Models</u>. A second issue that our teachers dealt with in each of the occasions for writing was the use of a model. Both teachers expressed mild discomfort with showing an example of a finished product when introducing a new occasion for writing. They were concerned about students imitating a model too slavishly. However, in most cases, our teachers chose to show examples of either their own work or that of students from earlier years who had done similar projects. The teachers seemed to believe that the young writers needed to be able to visualize their finished product in order to get started in the composition process. Indeed, showing an example of a finished product was an integral part of the teachers' communication of their plans. Communication of plans had as much to do with the form and content of the finished product as it did with specifying the process of production.

A second sense in which modeling was an issue had to do with the teachers modeling the process of writing themselves. Ms. Donovan began the school year by writing in her own journal during Diary Time. She continued to use her own writing throughout the year as examples of partial and finished products and also as a way of communicating to her students that the occasions for writing were worthwhile enough for even the teacher to take seriously. Similarly, Mrs. Anderson typically did each student writing assignment herself as part of her own planning and preparation. She later used these drafts and finished work as a means of communication about herself as a writer and as a person. In short, both teachers used the examples of themselves as writers to convey the idea that writing is a

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valuable, challenging, adult way to express oneself. We can also

speculate that writings that the teachers actually performed them-

selves were likely to be infused with meaning for students.

Purpose. Both of our teachers acknowledged the importance of

purpose felt and understood by students as a crucial part of a suc-

cessful occasion for writing. By purpose, our teachers meant that

the activity must have some reason for being done well beyond that

of pleasing the teacher. Preferably each writing activity should

have some connection with the students' lives in school or beyond.

But our two teachers approached the challenge of incorporating real

purpose in each occasion for writing in different ways. Ms. Donovan

typically developed occasions for writing out of events that already

had some meaning in her students' lives. The Safety Posters activity

is a good example of her use of the unexpected experience of a school

assembly to generate an elaborate occasion for writing. In contrast,

Mrs. Anderson tried to achieve purpose in the sixth-grade occasions

for writing by providing her students a range of choices of topic

and form, within an elaborately pre-planned set of activities. In

this way, the sixth graders were encouraged to express and explore

their own identities, tastes, and values while at the same time working

through an increasingly complex set of literary forms selected by the

teacher.

Communicating expectations. In both classrooms, it was clear

from the first day of school that every student would be expected

to write. Ms. Donovan set aside a full hour of the first day of

school for Diary Time. Mrs. Anderson, as a teacher of communication

arts, made it clear that writing would receive heavy emphasis during

the year. The district testing program in reading, math, and

spelling gave the teachers an opportunity to observe their students

performing the mechanics of writing. Individual students who had

difficulty thinking of what to write (e.g., in their diaries) received

help and encouragement from teacher and peers. In short, very early

in the school year it was clear to every student that full participa-

tion in these classrooms required and included a considerable amount

of writing. Although we cannot tell from the data in this study just

how important early communication of these expectations was, it was

certainly the case that these two teachers strongly believed in the

importance of setting high and early expectations for writing per-

formance.

Evaluation. Evaluation of student performance is a thorny issue

in every part of the curriculum. In additon to the discomfort that

many teachers feel with evaluation in general, writing presents some

special problems. Unlike mathematics and reading, there are no clear

"right answers" in writing. The adequacy and completeness of a stu-

dent's written work is a matter of the teacher's subjective judgment.

Furthermore, the risk of discouraging a student with a negative evalua-

tion seems high. Ms. Donovan dealt with the problem of evaluating

student writing by concentrating almost exclusively on completing

the assignment as criterion. The process of doing the writing assign-

ment was seen as an end in itself. Subjective evaluation of the

quality of the written product was not made, or at least not reflected

in any official grading or evaluation system.

In contrast, most of the sixth-grade occasions for writing were formally evaluated. Typically, Mrs. Anderson announced the criteria that she intended to use in evaluating the quality of written products either during her introduction of an activity or at some time before the projects were complete. In one case (the Magazine Project), she also asked the students to turn in an evaluation of their own work to compare with hers. She was pleased with the degree to which the student self-evaluations corresponded with her own judgments, and felt that the self-evaluations were useful in teaching the students about the difficulty of making fair and careful judgments about written work.

The evaluation issues tends to overshadow a related and challenging problem in the teaching of writing, namely, the problem of providing constructive criticism that will help the student author improve his or her work. In Ms. Donovan's class suggestions for improvement were usually given tutorially, while the work was in progress. Especially during the first months of the school year, most of the critical attention concerned surface features of neatness, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The concept of a rough draft was introduced during the winter term, but the young writers still seemed to distinguish between their first and final drafts largely on the basis of neatness and correctness. Given that the mechanics of producing a written paragraph or letter were somewhat laborious for seven- and eight-year-old children, the improvement of surface features seems to have been the most one could accomplish in Room 12. In contrast, Mrs. Anderson made extensive comments and

suggestions about the form, content, and mode of expression of her

students' work. These comments were made on the draft material that

the students turned in, and the sixth graders were expected to reflect

Mrs. Anderson's suggestions in their final drafts. We have not done

an analysis of teacher comments and criticisms of student written work,

but we have the distinct impression that the task of coming up with

truly constructive criticisms was among the most difficult aspects

of the teaching of writing for our two teachers.

Classroom context. Our experiences with school writing in this

study convinced us that fostering written literacy in schools is a

demanding enterprise. Even when writing was integrated with other

school subjects, writing activities demanded a great deal of energy

from the teacher to initiate, sustain, and complete. This was

especially true in the mixed ability elementary classroom in which

the teacher insisted that every student complete every writing

activity. In the sixth grade, reading and responding to each stu-

dent's first and final drafts also placed heavy time and energy

demands on the teacher. Finding time in a crowded daily schedule

for students to reflect on, think about, and revise what they have

written in relatively undistracted peace and quiet was difficult

in both settings. The typical public school classroom is not the

ideal setting in which to become a writer. We attribute much of

the success that Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson achieved in the

teaching of writing to their continual shaping of the physical and

social environments in their classrooms in ways that supported

student writing.

Much of this shaping of the classroom context for writing was

done by trial and error and common sense practical reasoning.

Psychological theories of composition deal only with the solitary

author. Yet, as we have seen in our analyses of occasions for

writing, there are large and important social components in the

processes of organizing and executing occasions for writing and in

the seetings in which the actual writing, revision, and evaluation

take place. Individual-oriented theories about the composition

process have value, but practitioners also need more adequate models

of school writing in social context.

Implications for Further Research

In this report we have described our view of school writing as

a complex social, psychological, and practical enterprise and have

illustrated the methods we have used to do research on school writing.

Our reflections on the data and experiences of this study of two

classrooms lead us to recommend three types of studies for future

research:

1. descriptive studies of school writing in settings
   different from those documented here;

2. more focused descriptive, correlational, or experi-
   mental studies of specific factors identified in
   this study as important elements in school writing;
   and

3. inquiry into ways of relating research on written
   literacy (its processes and findings) to the prac-
   tice of teaching.

The first suggestion for future research is a call for more

thick description of children's writing in context. Before the field

can put together the beginnings of a developmental picture of the

the acquisition of written literacy, we need to document the teaching
and learning of writing at grade levels other than second, third,
and sixth. Other potentially important setting differences include
bilingual classes, inner city schools, and special teacher training
and background (e.g., the Bay Area Writing Project or one of its
progeny). Furthermore, future descriptive research should attempt
to observe and describe those events and experiences outside the
school, at home and in the neighborhood and community, that provide
opportunities for children to learn, practice, and apply writing as
a means and as an end in itself.

Several of the factors identified in the present study as im-
portant in the teaching and learning of writing deserve more focused
attention. These include the role of audience, the use of process
and product models in writing assignments, the influence of teachers'
conceptions of the writing process on their planning and teaching,
form and timing of constructive criticism of students' written work,
motivation for writing, and the setting of expectations for writing
performance. We are reasonably convinced that these factors are
important to successful school writing. Understanding precisely
how and why they are important will have to await additional descrip-
tive, correlational, or experimental research.

Our final suggestion for future study concerns the process
of relating research to practice. By and large, the research on
teaching of the last 15 years has not had dramatic effects on the
practice of teaching. In part, this is because accumulating research
findings is a slow and deliberate business, while the demands of the

classroom do not wait patiently for researchers to come up with
precise answers to precise questions. Furthermore, much of research
on teaching addresses questions that are of little practical interest
to practitioners.

But even when research on teaching is timely and addresses
questons of real interest to practicing teachers, the problem of
putting research into practice is not solved. Because every class-
room situation is unique, a list of prescriptions for teaching will
miss the mark more often than not, or be couched in such general
terms as to constitute a set of mere slogans. Furthermore, teachers
are thinking professionals and not mere technicians. They deserve
and need to have a sense of ownership over what, why, and how they
teach. Both the processes of inquiry and the findings of research
on teaching must be subjected to careful deliberation by all inter-
ested parties in order to ground recommendations for the practice of
teaching in the wisdom and experience of practitioners.

In the context of applying research on the teaching of writing
we have proposed the creation of a Written Literacy Forum. The
purpose of this Forum is to build on our research on written liter-
acy in schools and on our experiences in meaningful collaboration
with practicing teachers to create a new and powerful way to bring
research into practice. Specifically, we will organize a Written
Literacy Forum comprised of researchers, practicing teachers, and
teacher educators (a working group of about 12 people). Forum
participants will develop and try out answers to the question, "What
does research on writing mean for teachers and teacher educators?"

-Forum members will have access to a rich corpus of descriptive data
on the teaching and learning of writing in schools. Consultants
with special expertise will be called on from time to time. Pairs
or small groups of Forum members will identify issues of particular
interest to them and pursue these issues, producing analytic papers,
syntheses of knowledge about some aspect of written literacy, and
materials useful in teacher training and development. Deliberation
within the Written Literacy Forum will be documented and carefully
described. In short, the Written Literacy Forum will be a serious
attempt to think from research on writing in order to interpret
and adapt the research in ways truly likely to make a difference in
schools. Documentation of the development of the Written Literacy
Forum may also produce a model for relating research to practice
that can be adapted for use by other researcher-practitioner teams.

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APPENDIX A

DISSEMINATION

Dissemination

During the period of this grant the research staff has engaged
in a number of dissemination activities. In addition to this techni-
cal report to NIE, the journal articles, book chapters, and other
papers listed below have been produced during the course of this
project. These reports focus on particular substantive and methodo-
logical issues surrounding the teaching and study of writing. Beyond
these formal papers and publications we have conducted a number of
colloquia at our own and other universities, in-service teacher
workshops in local school districts, and consultant visits with the
State of Michigan Department of Education and with researchers and
practitioners interested in research on teaching.

Written Literacy Study Reports and Publications

Clark, C.M., & Florio, S. Diary time. In J. Schwartz & B. Bushing
(Eds.), Integrating the language arts. Illinois: National
Council of Teachers of English, in press-a. (This paper was
presented at the Pre-Conference Session at the 32nd Annual
Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics
titled, Writing in the classroom: Qualitative Studies, Washing-
ton, DC, March 19, 1981.)

Clark, C.M., & Florio, S. Understanding writing in school: Issues
of theory and method. In P. Mosenthal & S. Walmsley (Eds.),
Methodological approaches to writing research. New York:
Longman Press, in press-b. (This paper was presented at the
State University of New York at Albany Conference in Writing
Research, Albany, NY, May 30, 1980).

Clark, C.M., & Florio, S. with Elmore, J.L., Martin, J., Maxwell,
R.J., & Metheny, W. Understanding writing in school: A descrip-
tive study of writing and its instruction in two classrooms.
Final Report of the Written Literacy Study (Grant No. 90840)
funded by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department
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Teaching, Michigan State University, 1981.

Florio, S., & Clark, C.M. Occasions for writing in the classroom:
    Toward a description of the functions of written literacy in
    school. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American
    Anthropological Association, Cincinnati, OH, December 2, 1979.

Florio, S., & Clark, C.M. The functions of writing in an elemen-
    tary classroom. To appear in Research in the Teaching of
    English. (A version of this paper was presented at the
    National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School,
    Portland, OR, April 10, 1981.)

Florio, S., & Clark, C.M. What is writing for?: Writing in the
    first weeks of school in a second/third grade classroom. In
    L. Cherry-Wilkinson (Ed.), Communicating in the classroom.
    New York: Academic Press, in press.

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    presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of
    Teachers of English/Language Arts, Portland, OR, April, 1981.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FIELDNOTES

Fieldnotes – Grade 6

FN: HMS   WK #19   day 50   Wednesday   1/23/80

Page 1

Timeline of events (column labels, left to right):

- S's pass out WS's. M checks attendance
- M collects game gives explan. of task
- M tells s's to leave materials in room, will return
- S's assemble in corner of libr. & at card catalogue
- M gives directions to s's
- M helps s's at card catalogue
- S requests help from peers
- S shares finding with others
- M helps S
- S rewarded by find
- M monitors s's
- M repremands s from other class
- M assists individ.

Times: 9:15 | 9:17 | 9:22 | 9:24 | 9:30 | 9:32 | 9:33 | 9:37 | 9:38 | 9:42 | 9:45 | 9:46 | 9:47

MN: Requested bank of objectives from M. Obtained student copy of objectives for 2nd quarter. Large bank of objectives from first quarter M will bring to me another time.

ON: 9:15 Three girls pass out worksheets:
Titles of WS's are 1. Calling all numbers
2.) Guiding readers
3. It's in the cards

M checks to see if s's are present, asks in general if any s's are absent.
M asks s's if they all have all three worksheets, reads off titles.

9:17 M collects battery powered game (calculator type) from Robbie. She asks him two or more times before he finally hands it to her.
M tells s's that she will give them a very quick explanation, tells them that for #1 (on WS) that s's will need to go to where tree branches are in library (M points in general direction--SE) to find where fictional books end and non fiction begins., tells s's they will have to find the different sections (M is standing in front center of room.)
M tells s's that they will have to write the call number, name of author and title of book they select. M tells s's that they all can't start there at once.

ON: 9:20 M tells s's that for #2 on WS, they can locate cards in card catalogue, all books listed are there, she has checked herself. M explains that s/s are to write on WS's and where they are to write.

ON: 9:22 M tells s's that on last sheet, they will do the same thing but for a different book, e.g., non fiction for subject card. Main information will be needed, such as name of author. . ., M tells s's to leave notebooks and stuff here. We'll return at the end of the hour.'

ON: 9:23 S's and M leave room.

MN: Room is rearranged, especially in front. Tables pushed back (same general arrangement) but lectern and table and o.p. are west of center front. (I think for the purpose of student presentation of oral reports.)

ON: 9:24 S's gather in SE corner of library, (about ten s's) where fiction ends and non-fiction begins. About four girls are at the card catalogue. Other s's are scattered.

ON: 9:25 M walks to SE corner, tells s's that they don't all have to be in one place.
9:26 Four g's at card catalogue.
9:27 Most s's in SW corner (12 or more) but spread out at various table.

MN: Gary asks me for help. I point to the call number categories above bookcases.

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S's work together	M tells s's to return to room	B's talk about basketball. M ask for attn.	S asks other s's to be quiet	M asks s's to put name on papers	M tells s's they may leave room	M reviews what s's did last week, explains new assignment	M & W confer	S asks? noise level higher	S begin work	W makes suggestion for place of work	Sm.gr. disc. 1 gr. makes drawing-share ideas	Noise level rises
9:50	9:51	9:53	9:54	9:55	9:56	2:10	2:14	2:15	2:17	2:20	2:26	

ON: 9:30 M tells s's to reshelve books after using them.
9:32 Eight s's at card catalog. M assists them.
9:33 Teri: "Now what do we hafta check? (to s's ar 400 section).
M tells s's in SE corner that all of them don't have to copy the same book.
9:34 M joins Teri's table.
9:35 Some s's very quietly writing (about 5). Scott jumps to touch top of bookcase. . . .struts, pencil over ear.
9:37 Craig shares his finding (book) with two girls.
9:38 Christie appraches M. M responds: 'You'll have to hunt---right on top of it' (laughs).

MN: 9:42 Teri approaces me excitedly. Says she found two new books to read: One about the KKK, and the other about Black Beauty (not the horse).

ON: 9:45 M continues to circulate among groups of s's. (S's appear to work individually on task).

ON: 9:46 Richard, are you finished?
Richard: "We're done"
M: (discovers that he is in W's class) "You should be with your group."

MN: I move to card catalogue area. Cannot seem to find a place where everyone can be observed at once--too many barriers (e.g., bookcases).

ON: 9:47 Fourteen s's in card catalogue area. M assists indivduals s's. S's have card drawers pulled out. Some are kneeling, standing, sitting.
9:50 Tom: (responds to?) "I coulda guessed" (keeps drawer open).
Three girls run together toward table near card catalogue, one with drawer in hand. (all appear to be excited).

ON: 9:51 M tells s's to put drawers back in proper order, return to room for a few minutes.
9:52 M: "Come on, . . .No tardy slips for special area."
9:53 (In classroom) three or more boys talk noisily about basketball. M enters says "all right, shh". . . asks s's to be seated.
9:54 Seven s's still standing.
S: "Be quiet!" (loudly).
Gary shares his WS with M, says "I only got this far." (Shows his WS to her about 3/4 completed).
9:55 M: (to s's) "I forgot to tell you to put your name on all three papers."
M asks s's if any of them have finished all three sheets. Two s's raise hands.
M tells s's that on Friday they will have a little bit of time to finish up. She tells them to keep their papers in their notebooks, not to lose them, says that those who have finished may look around the library.
9:56 M tells s's that they may go. S's leave room.

MN: At end of the morning, M comments to me on how much I have written. I get the impression that she is happy when I have much to write about.

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Timeline events (left to right):
- M helps indiv. gr.
- Marla's gr. decide on seating arr.
- An. gr. works on acetate
- Angelo enters from W's room looks for M, Kim consults W
- M reappears in room
- Group changes location for next step
- M advises sm. gr. of next step
- W calls for attention
- M calls for attn.
- S's return materials
- PA announcement by s's
- S's sleeve

Times: 2:27 2:30 2:31 2:36 2:39 2:40 2:41 2:44 2:45 2:48 2:49

MN: M tells me that the purpose of this activity is to have s's be able to work on
research paper, so that s's won't be afraid to look for ____ books. First time
that I can recall that M has explicitly referred to purpose of lesson. I wonder
if she picked up the idea that I would be specifically interested in "purpose" from
interviews with R.

MN: M reminds me that today s's will have classroom meeting. I had temporarily
forgotten about it but can change my plan for the day and return this
afternoon.

MN: Requested samples of worksheets s's complete at future date from J.
(possible Friday or Monday).

MN: M tells me that she will introduce the Reader's Guide. (Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. and
Wednesday at 2:10 p.m.).

DIAGRAM OF LIBRARY: S   X - my vantage points

BOOKS - NON FICTION

branches

BOOKS - FICTION

TABLE

BOOK CASE

TABLE

Table

BOOKCASE

Table

BOOK CASE

CARD CATALOGUE

TABLE

Files

Table

chairs

BOOKCASE

LIBR. TABLE

CARRELS

WINDOW

DOOR

STAIRS

ROOM

CORRIDOR

214

AV
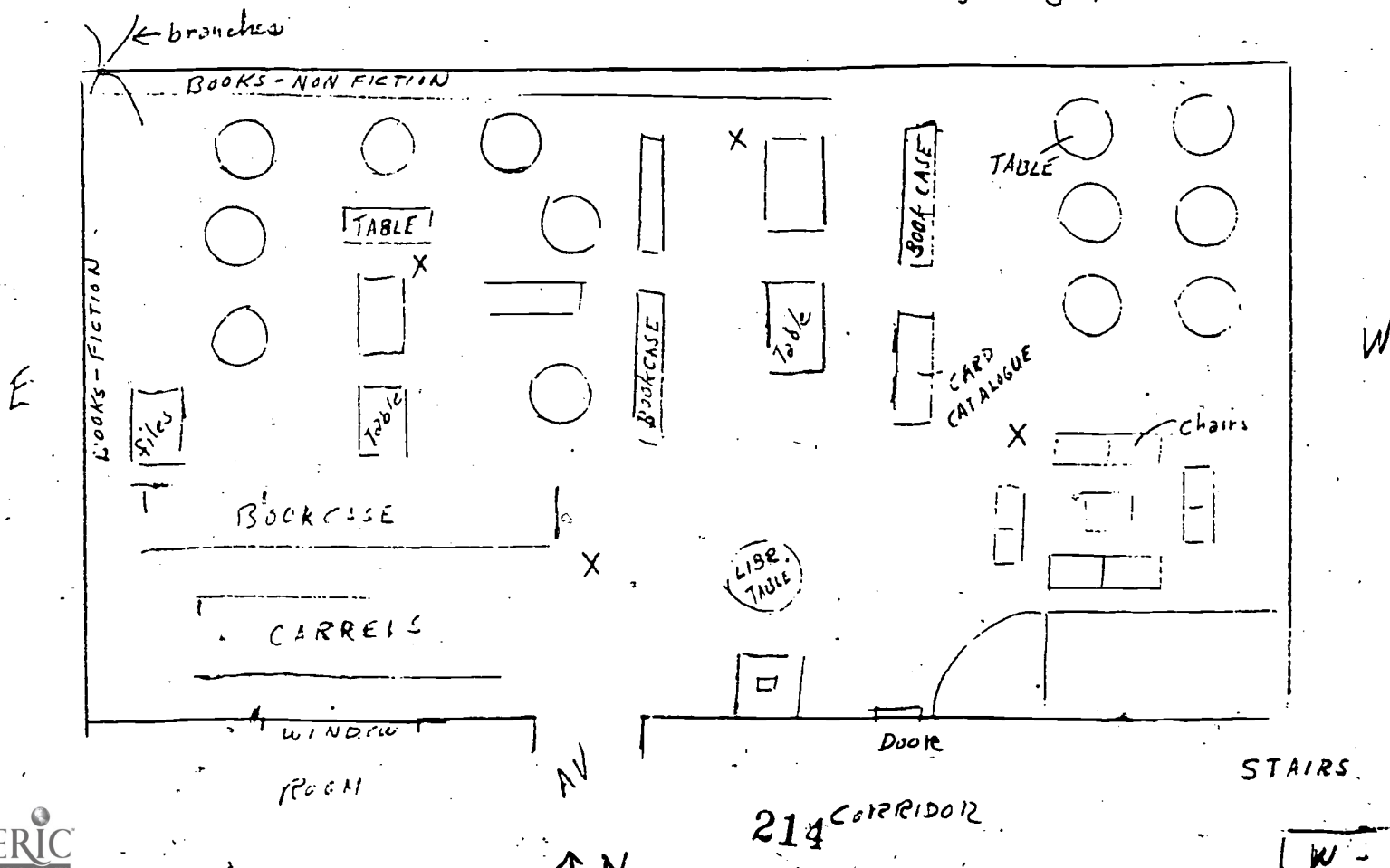
TN/   Today is Columbus Day. It is also the day after JD has been out sick.
ON: To open the day, the s's meet on the floor in the center. They talk
      briefly about what they did yesterday. Also, to begin the day, s's
      are treated to a holiday play performed by the 5th graders. There is
      an apparent impromptu decision on JD's part to turn the occasion into
      an opportunity to write--perhaps made when it is apparent that, due
      to the play, there will not be enough time to start reading groups before
      gym.

ON: At the board, the following schedule is written:

                     Today is Oct. 12, 1979

            9:20--10:05   12:15--12:50
            play   Lunch
            reading
                                           12:55--1:55
            10:05--10:30   Speaker
            Gym   Language Arts

            10:30--11:00   2:00--2:15
            Reading   Recess

            11:00--11:15   2:20--3:05
            Recess   Superstars
                                           Diaries
            11:15--11:30
            USR   3:05--3:15
                                           Clean up
            11:30--12:10
            Math

ON: After the play, the group remains on the floor in the center and has a
      discussion about exploration of The New World. The discussion occurs
      from 9:30--9:45.

ON: At 9:45, JD says, "So what can we write about this man (Christopher
      Columbus)? Anything we've learned?" Each time an s offers something,
      JD says, "Can you put that in a sentence?"

ON: JD copies down on large white paper in front of the s's the sentences they
      offer--

            "I leaned about the different kinds of islands   written in red
             that Christopher Columbus went to." (JD asks the
             s that has offered this sentence if he can read it back. He does.)

             JD: "And Mike, what did you learn?"
             Mi: "Noting--"
             JD: "You just learned the same things that you already know?"
             Mi: "Yes."

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JD calls on other s's. Finally one offers something learned.
(in purple) "He died before he got to Asia."
JD: "Cha, did you learn anything new?"
Cha: "We learned it last year."
Another s offers: (in blue) "He was first to America."

ON: S's sent back to seats to work in their folders after Columbus discussion.
ON: At <u>10:52</u>, JD says, "Let's get into a circle, please." (They put folders
away and join circle in center.)
JD: "We're gonna go on a trip. . . pretend we're going on Christopher
Columbus' ship. And we're gonna take different things on a trip."
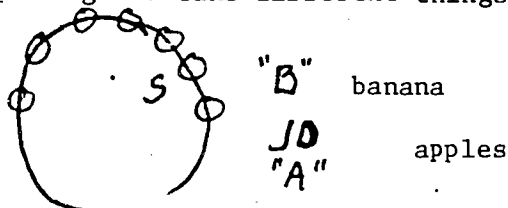
JD. "I'm gonna take apples.
S: "I'm gonna take apples and a banana.etc."

("Apples, banana, cans of food, ducks, elephant, fawn, glue, hippopotamus,
ice cubes, junk, kangaroo, lion, monkey" are named. At that point, JD
says, "It sounds like we are on Noah's Arc almost. . . instead of on
Columbus' ship." Then an s adds, "nuts." At that point the group stops
for gym and JD says they'll finish when they return.

TN: Some of the cognitively demanding aspects of this task involve the
following simultaneously memory, knowledge of the vocabulary, control
of initial vowels and consonants/spelling, turn-taking, knowledge of
classes of objects.

ON: During gym, JD talks to me about the work in gifted education of Rensuli.
She talks about her own education stopping short of calling herself
gifted. "I only know that I was very bored in school; stuck off in a
corner with a book to read." In the midst of this conversation, JD says
that she thinks that one boy, ER, did not want to play the game because he
was afraid he wouldn' be able to do it (I don't know whether JD would
consider him to be "gifted" by Rensuli's or her own definition.)

ON: After gym, the game continues. Tom, the boy who offered "duck" is
now gone from the group, and I observe taht the first s misses "duck."
TN: Could association of words and students also be operating in this
game?

ON: Words that are added include "octopus, pig, queen, rhinoserous, snake,
tomatoes," The last sutdent in the circle has the letter S since
there are fewer than 26 students. But she says "zebra." JD: "You
don't have Z; you have S." After her turn, they go around again
with JD having a turn. They stop at T.

ON: At <u>10:35</u>, the s's are in their seats. The "passer" has given out 2nd
and 3rd grade paper. The s's are to copy the Columbus sentences. There
is a high level of ambient noise. JD says, "Sssh" often. She is
at the horseshoe table correcting some worksheets with one s. She

has some of the perenial "disrupters" (Chri, Ti) at the table with her.

ON: I am distracted by the principal and several 4/5 girls and boys who are
having a heated discussion at a table in the center of room 12: They
are discussing an altercation about which all are apparently angry.
GM raises her voice periodically—as do the s's.

ON: The s's in JD's room talk and move a lot. They appear restless. JD
continues to say, "Ssh." There is a great deal of gum chewing
today. Also, I observe that all s's are wearing pants, and most are
wearing jeans. This has not been typical so far this year. There is
a lot of leaning across desks and bickering ("Move over. I can't see!")

TN: I wonder whence the air of informality and restlessness. Is it because

          --it is Friday? (and gum day)
          --it is the day after JD has been absent and, according to JD, the
             substitute "couldn't handle" the room 12 arrangement? (JD says
             she "still can't figure out what she did.")
          --there have been several consecutive days of bad weather?
          --reading was interrupted by gym?
          --there was a disruption of the regular reading format today
             because of the play? (No reading groups today.)

ON: During this time, Der and Ant (who are identified by JD as "gifted") are
doing science work at Ant's desk. They do not have reading with the
other 2/3 students. Early this morning JD had shown me the paper
rocket they had made for a play they are planning to write and produce.
(TN: Integration of science, writing and other language arts?)

ON: By 10:50, many s's are walking around the room. JD says, "I hear a lot
of rudeness. Where do you belong now?" But at 10:55, Li asks me (apparently
not knowing the answer to JD's question), "Susan, what do we do after
we're done doing that on there?" (copying sentences). I also do not know.
Some of the things s's are doing at this time include

          --talking
          --quarreling (several instances of tattling on each other)
          --Fern is drawing a picture of her grandfather, but few other
            s's have elected to draw or write on their own.

ON: At 10:59, JD says, "I'd like you to close your folders and come and
sit in the center. "The s's are asked to put their finished papers "in
the bucket." Others are to leave their work on their desks. JD says
that s's whose work is not finished may not go out for recess. JD
must repeat several times, "I'd like you in a circle." She says, "I
don't like how you people make a circle, " and calls many individual
names.
        JD: "When I ask you to sit down, Carl, what should you do?" etc.
        JD: "Monday, what are we going to have to practice?"
        S: "Listening to directions."
        S: "Being quiet."

ON: At 11:01, there is a break for recess. During recess and USR, I peruse literature that JD obtained yesterday at gifted workshop (reason for her absence). She raises the topic again. Talks about it with enthusiasm.

ON: At 11:35, there is a transition to math. S's are in the center. JD has a stack of workbooks. She says, "Will you raise your hand and tell me what you did yesterday?" There is some dispute and confusions among the s's about what was done. JD says that she will go over p.8 with the s's "together," and then "you can go back to the other pages." She calls the s's by name and gives them workbooks. They find seats.

ON: During this process, there is high ambient noise. There are disputes about who is in whose seats. S's say
        "I'm tellin?"
        "That's my chair!"
JD still can be heard calling a lot of individual names both to reprimand and to praise s's behavior.
        "Leila remembered to open to p. 8."
        "Karen. . ." (falling intonation)
        "I'm still waiting for Mark's table. They're very rude.

ON: The assignment on p. 8 involves "number sentences." Given the following "incomplete number sentence," the problem is to decide "what sign goes in the box to make the number sentence true."

    52 + 71   83 + 71

      52   What sign   83
    +71   +71
    123   154

JD: "Can you think of a way to tell without putting the answer down?"

TN: This task makes many assumptions about symbolization as well as about computation and mathematical reasoning.

ON: As the group begins to work on the problem, JD says, "We're going to have to stop again. There's an awful lot of rudeness going on. . . talking to yourselves. You're _very_ impolite."

ON: S's offer strategies for completing the sentence. In addition to the one of adding the numbers and comparing the sums, Jeff . . .That "both 71's are the same. Look at 83 and 52 and decide which one is bigger."
JD: "Either way is alright to do." She does not do the entire p.8 with the class (although she said earlier that she would), but does two sentences. The assignment is written on the board--

        S.B [student book]
          8 [page]
        4, 5, 6, 7, [problems]
        Then 9 [page]

ON: After JD makes the assignment, she says "If anyone needs scrap paper (presumably for calculations), I'll put some up on the chair." This is the first time I have observed the use of scrap paper (and the writing functions attendant to it) officially designated by JD.

TN: This is an instance of writing that is done 'privately' and to 'work something out.' But both the process and its documentation are not saved or shown to the teacher. They are discarded. Only the outcome, represented symbolically, is saved, shown, and evaluated (presumably the teacher makes inferences about the process based on the nature of the outcome, however.) Some of the scrap paper that is officially designated as such is the backs of old dittoed worksheets. I have also seen s's write on the backs of such worksheets—before writing in the "answers" on the front because they claimed that they didn't want to "cross out" on the worksheets.

ON: At. 12:10, there is clean up before lunch. JD says, "This morning what trouble did we have in math time?" S's: "Too noisy." JD: "On Monday, I'm going to give you seats that I want you to stay in. You're being too silly."

ON: At lunch, JD and I talk about the troubles that seem to have been occasioned by there being a substitute teacher yesterday. JD muses, "I wonder if she's different with the kids than I am. I'm unusual." She elaborates, pointing out that she tends to be positive, she doesn't "single out" students for reprimands, and she doesn't raise her voice. Then she adds, "Its just like you said about community. If someone comes in and changes the rules, what do you do?"

ON: After lunch there is a guest speaker from the fire department. He visits each classroom and gives a short presentation.

MN: It is interesting to note that, in the schedule, JD has combined the speaker with language arts time and deleted science. One could imagine the opposite also making sense in terms of curriculum. One possible explanation is simply that language arts normally occurs in the middle of the day and it is simpler to delete science than to drop language arts and move science. But another way to think about this decision is in terms of what JD construes as the range of activities appropriately engaged in during the time called "Language Arts."

ON: At 12:55, after lunch, JD calls s's to the center. Roll is taken and the "afternoon plans" are read. JD explains about the fact that it is Fire Prevention Mont. When JD mentions this occasion, s's suggest that the other "special" days or events coming up include Colombus Day (today) and Halloween. They also say that "it is getting colder" (maybe associating a string of important holidays with fall/winter;

ON: When JD's class is joined by another class not from room 12 (who enter with a substitute teacher) and Dz's class. JD using clapping cadence that I have heretofore heard only the principal use (at the school-wide Safety Assembly) to gain the attention of the group. She explains to the newcomers to room 12 (who come from a self-contained classroom and who

presumably were not so informed by their substitute teacher)."You have
to be very quiet because there are people on the other side of the room."

TN/ A period of waiting for the fireman ensues. He is apparently delayed.
ON: There is some 'stalling' during which time s's fidget and noise increases.
In what is apparently a sort of "vamping til ready," Dz then leads the
group in some songs. First is a rendition of "My Bonnie Lies Over The
Ocean" done as a "Columbus Day song in which the words have been changed
to tell about Columbus' voyage. Then they sing a song called "Peanut
Butter and Jelly" which is very rhythmic and dramatic and which the s's
appear to enjoy.

ON: At 1:15, the fireman enters accompanied by the principal. He sets up his
slide show which is called, "Sparky's Friends Learn Not to Burn". The
s's watch the show and then are dismissed to their respective rooms
after a brief discussion.

ON: At 1:45, JD gathers her s's in a circle on the floor. They talk about
problems from yesterday. Then at 1:52, Li interjects, "Are we gonna do
language arts?" JD: We don't have time to do it today." But she adds
that there is something the s's can do over the weekend to get ready for
the next language arts time. They are to find leaves of all sizes and bring
them to school--"as many as you can." Then, at 1:55, JD quizzes s's from a
checklist about fire prevention left by the fireman.

ON: Next room 12 has "Superstars." There are not many given by the 2/3's--
two per homeroom. There is much reference to behavior problems of the
past week as the reason.

ON: At 2:45, having returned from the center of room 12 and "Superstars," JD
puts a chair in the center. The s's take seats on the floor around it.
JD says it is time for "Show and Tell," although on the board the time
has been scheduled for "Superstars" and diaries.

ON: Ani tells that, "I'm going to Detroit tomorrow. Any questions?" There
are none. Then Manal (it is not her day) asks JD if she may show the
class her book. JD says, "You can show it, but you can't read it."
Manal declines.

ON: Then the group returns to the book Ka has been reading orally. They are
near the end of it. S's are free to sit and listen or to return to their
seats.

ON: At 2:52, after Ka has finished the book, JD asks, "who wants to share their
diary with the class?" Dani identifies herself, and JD says, "She just
wants to share part of it before its time to write in your diaries."
As Dani reads, about 2/3 of class are quiet and looking at her, appearing
to listen intently.

At the end, JD says, "Were some of the things she wrote about real? Can
you write about make believe things in your diaries?" S's: "Yes."

ON: JD asks s's to sit and take out their diaries. She says she'll "come around"
if they raise their hands. The only s's I observe not doing this activity

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are Der, Ant, and Er. They are working on props for their science play.
The room is relatively quiet. Li asks me to spell a word, but in a
definite whisper. Some s's are making new diaries. Several girls are
working on a chain letter that has been circulating among JD and Dz's
students. Mana has made an autograph book and asks me to sign it.

Dismissal

Summary of Notes from Dinner Meeting
General Observation(s)

Chris Clark initiated the conversation this evening with a question about "getting started" in the school year in general, and in the instruction of writing in particular. The teachers engaged in a lively conversation of more than an hour, and the researchers did not interject comments or questions very often. It is worthy of note that, left free to determine the course of the conversation, the teachers did not limit themselves to the issue of "getting started," nor did they address solely the 'direct instruction' of writing (language arts, communication arts activities), but talked about writing as it manifests itself in a range of classroom activities. I think in light of these two bits of evidence it is important to ask ourselves just how salient the idea of 'getting started' is to the teachers-it may be more interesting to the analysts than to the participants. Also, I think we have begun to accumulate strong evidence (in the interviews, in the field notes, and now in the dinner conversation) that these teachers do not think of writing and its instruction as solely the province of language arts class, but think of it both as a skill that is taught directly at some time(s) in the school day and as one that is used and can be taught about within a variety of academic contexts.

Three Major Themes

What follows is highly inferential and is basically an attempt to summarize and synthesize a conversation that covered a lot of ground. However, upon examination of my notes, I think it is possible to talk about the conversation in terms of three interrelated themes. The first, "getting started," was generated by us, and the teachers had no option but to deal with it. As I said above, I am not at all convinced that it is an issue that is salient to all of them. This bears testing by means of careful review of already collected field notes, interview responses, and journal entries. However, what is very interesting is the way in which the teachers chose to respond to the issue of 'getting started,' and the subsequent, related areas that they explored. I think these areas were ones not thought of in advance by the researchers, but they were ones upon which the entire informant group seized with alacrity despite the differences in grade level taught, educational philosophy, and personal style. For convenience, I have called these two themes "the landscape of the writing task" and "the question of a standard." These terms, like "getting started," are creations of the analyst that need to be supported as valid representations of the teachers' thinking by evidence from our data set.

"Getting Started"

The four teachers rose to the task of discussing "getting started" quickly and spoke with ease about it. This is, I think, a strong piece of evidence that the category is one that they have and have a language for. They did not, however, stay with the question for more than the first ten minutes of the conversation. And so I wonder whether it is one that sufficiently pre-occupies them to be considered functionally relevant in developing a grounded description of their thinking about writing instruction. Putting that analytic question aside, however, my notes suggested that there was quick consensus that writing is different from other subject areas covered in school, and that these differences have implications for both the ways in which one starts writing in the school year and for the role writing plays in the starting of school. The follow four points were made by individuals and appeared to be ratified by the group in this regard:

(1) Writing is one school activity that <u>can</u> be started early in
the school year because (in our educational system) it is one
of the few areas in which one does not have to pre-test and
match children to materials by ability level. (It strikes me
as I write this that this may be one very positive thing about
what some have lamented as our inability properly to 'assess'
writing competence and our lack of systematic writing materials
and curricula. One might imagine what would happen to writing
if, like reading, it because more heavily structured and evaluated.
And, in like manner, one might imagine the look of reading instruc-
tion in school if it did not have to wait upon testing, the
computerized test results arriving in the mail, and the grouping
of students by 'ability.');

(2) There is 'no right or wrong;' writing is something you can always
say something good about to the student. Related to this comment
was the consenus that writing is not particularly competitive
whereas other subjects in which there are clear right and wrong
answers and measures of progress tend to foster competition among
students;

(3) Because writing can be combined with other kinds of symbolization
to express an idea, it can be used to "ease them into" school again
and so is a useful early vehicle for academic activity;

(4) Writing is a good way to mark or make note of shared, whole-class
activity. (Although not stated explicitly here by the teachers,
this comment suggests that writing early in the year may support
the establishment of classroom community in ways that other academic
activities do not.) Worthy of note here is the fact that teacher(s)
mentioned not only the writing by each member of a class about a
shared experience, but the enthusiasm students have for reading each
other's work.

"The Landscape of the Writing Task"

Unlike the question of "getting started," in which a fair degree of consensus
seemed to obtain between middle and elementary school teachers, when the conversation
evolved to a consideration of aspects of the writing task that are foregrounded for
teacher attention and to the actual appearance of the writing task, differences began
to arise. The primary teachers talked most about the problems of and strategies for
motivating and supporting the writing task. Furthermore, the writing tasks they
described were short in duration (one day, one part of one day) and did not involve
editing and revising either independently or in response to teacher comments. In
contrast, the middle school teachers seemed to address more the shaping of a piece
of writing by means of a longer term assignment (one week) and revision based on
self correction and teacher comments.
One common concern of the teachers was the difficulty of inferring mastery of
factual content from answers written by students. Although the problem manifests
itself differently at the elementary and middle school levels, all expressed a kind
of frustration with programs like SCIIS and DMP that rely on student writing as a
major way to demonstrate academic competence. The upper grade teachers found that
the problem centers around students' diffuculties with the techniques of writing
while the lower grade teachers said that it was difficult for students to separate
'fact' from 'fantasy,' and therefore they had difficulty reporting the facts in
their lab booklets and workbooks. (Wayne addressed this problem when he talked

about writing descriptively about what one sees under a microscope--about the
problem of criteria for adequate description being different when you were
attempting to represent acurately rather than expressively what you had seen--
this can also be a problem in writing up descriptive research!)

"The Question of a Standard"

This question was raised by Daisy. A lively discussion ensued in which
the issues of modeling, criteria for adequacy of student written products, and
the implicit expectations of the Common Writings Curriculum were raised. In
large part, the question concerned the relative advantages and disadvantages of
giving students a model of the written product you expect in advance of their
actually beginning to write. There seemed to be a general tension between the
desire, on one hand, not to constrain students' 'creativity' (a position that
Wayne suggested was much more prevalent a few years ago--perhaps when at least
half of the group was trained) and a sense of responsibility for and valuing of
sharing the socially held conventions about writing. There was general agreement,
however, that the goal was linking these two areas of commitment in the experience
of the student writer. Daisy, as the newcomer in the system, raised the question
of lack of explicit criteria for adequacy within the Common Writings Curriculum in
terms of the teachers' responsibilities to their students. She appeared to raise
it, not as a rhetorical question, but as one to which she expected the veteran
teachers to have an answer or at least considerable insight. However, the other
teachers did not have an answer to the question, leading me to think that the
general perception of the group is that this area is vague in the curriculum.
However, the teachers did express some of their values and beliefs about what some
criteria for adequate writing might be. These beliefs fell along one continuum that
might be labeled, using Jo Ann's terms, as follows:

Skill	Creativity

Where a person fell along this continuum appeared to be related, at least in part,
to the age group taught. I think that the teachers in the upper grades talked in
most detail about specific skills, strategies for teaching them, and their importance
in shaping the landscape of the writing task. On the other hand, the teachers of
the lower grades emphasized the immediacy of the writing experience, the need for
vivid personal experience to initiate and sustain writing. This kind of concern
appeared to leave little place for revision of writing. (It may be that, for beginners,
so much of the writing act is new--from formation of the letters to symbolization of
thoughts and feelings--that short, vivid, straightforward writing tasks make the most
pedagogical sense. Later, when a good bit of the writing act is routinized, it may
make more sense to stretch the act out over several days and several re-writings and
to turn one's attention to the fine points of sentence construction and to the atten-
dant nuances of expression.) Finally, where one might fall along the above continuum
could be related to some of the following values that the teachers mentioned holding:

--mastery of technical skills (journalism)

--genre knowledge (what is a poem)

--ability to respond to dictates of specific tasks (descriptive
                                                    writing)

--ability to reflect upon and articulate for others feelings and
    procedural knowledge (writing directions, writing questions, writing
    about feelings)

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APPENDIX G

SAMPLE INTERVIEW NOTES

October 3: Interview with Marilyn *(Grade 6)*

Marilyn and I began our session with a discussion of our teaching career goals. Marilyn is looking into to possibility of dropping her name from the union membership. (E. L. is a closed shop so it's a decision based on a principle, not on money.) Marilyn is planning on retiring in 2 years. She is not tired of teaching but would like to have time for some other things too. She said she is tired of taking papers home every night to grade. She smiled and said she was really enjoying this (meaning the project).

I think Marilyn finds that our work and interest adds to her enjoyment of teaching. Talking over what she does and thinks with adults adds an interesting dimension.

I asked Marilyn if she had followed her plans for writing or if she had changed them as she actually presented and taught them. She answered that she had. She had the students construct graphs this week. Something she always does. But before she had asked them to write a synopsis at the bottom of the drawing of the material presented in the graph. As she was standing at the overhead she said to herself "Gee, thats' dumb!", and on the spot changed the writing requirement to having the students compose and write four questions that they think other students could answer after reading their graph. She is planning on putting the graphs up around the room and giving the students an opportunity to see if they can answer the questions on each others' graphs. Marilyn went on to say that she doesn't always think of these things as writing activities. In fact, had thought Sister June wouldn't be interested because she wasn't doing writing.

Even when she had the students write their tall tales she said she did not think of that so much of a writing assignment as it was a sharing and getting to know you experience. Marilyn thought the students had a lot of fun with the tall tale assignment. She told them that they didn't have to share if they didn't want to.

This was the assignment where they wrote why they hadn't done their homework-trying to convince a teacher the reasons were legitimate.

The writing assignment for this week, or theme as Marilyn calls it, is to write about something old from the family-something they treasure. She used to have them think of an antique but with so many students coming from split homes and/or living in apartments they may not have antiques, but the object has to be at least as old as they are. One student, a girl, handed one in today about a crib, but Marilyn handed it back to her as it did not have enough detail. She asks students: "Who was the original owner? Have you always had it? Or did you get it in a garage sale? Is it functional or just pretty to look at? Was it once functional but not now? One girl wrote about a spinning wheel. How would you feel if it were lost? Or stolen?" They are working on this assignment all week. It is due Thursday; they always are. One girl wrote about some needlepoint that her grandparent had brought over from Hungry.

I asked Marilyn what kind of things she would be looking for when evaluating) this assignment: Sentence structure, run on's and variety in sentences. Spelling; how they use their rough drafts. It has to be stapled to the final copy.

Here Marilyn referred to something she heard at a workshop that she attended last year. The difference between revision and proofreading. She tells students to proofread but wants them to revise also. I suggested she might use the term editing also.

October 3:   Interview with Marilyn

page 2   (R. Maxwell)

Neatness counts of course.   I asked if she would grade them.   Marilyn will write
comments on them and then keep them in the students' folders.   She keeps the writing
assignments in the folder to look at them when she does report cards.

Although Marilyn said she keeps all writing assignments in the folder, it is just
the themes.

She also did a skill lesson this week on capitalization from <u>Building Better English</u>.
It was on capitalizing proper nouns and they discussed the difference between common
and proper nouns.   Because street was used as an example in the book, Marilyn asked
students what words could you use besides street (lane, avenue, circle, etc.) so
students would know to capitalize these words too.   Marilyn said most have had this
in elementary school, but they need to know so a review is good.

NOTES ON NOVEMBER 2, 1979 INTERVIEW WITH J.D. *(Grade 2/3)*

The first part of the interview concerned J.D.'s response to my questions in her journal about what changes J.D. has noticed in her students' writing since the beginning of the school year. She said that the most noticible changes took place among the "low" kids. She mentioned that G. had said at the beginning of the year that he could not write or dictate stories. Now, he seeks out J.D. to have her write down his stories. Another boy, E., is asking for fewer words to be spelled by J.D. when he writes his story. With the low kids, the reading aide, N.B., is being very helpful by having three low boys dictate experience stories several times a week.

Changes in the writing of the other students in the class since the beginning of the year are that they write longer and more elaborate stories. For example, one page was not enough for some students who wrote "pumpkin stories" last week. One of the posted stories on the bulletin board required a "double pumpkin." J.D. also judged that the children were more fluent in their story writing, compared to the beginning of the year. J.D. also pointed out that the second graders' handwriting samples were getting spontaneously more elaborate, with the use of more adverbs and adjectives than at the beginning of the year.

Now that J.D. has gotten her students to a reasonable degree of competence in story writing with positive attitudes about their competence, she wants to begin a new stage in the writing process: proof reading.

T.N.: It seems that J.D.'s implicit model of the writing process may be unfolding here. First, get the kids to do (and therefore believe that they can do) a lot of short, highly motivated, art-related writing activities. Then, as stories get longer and more elaborate, and kids become more fluent (benchmarks? vital signs?), shift the emphasis from creation of stories to reflecting on what has been produced, attentions to detail, even self-criticism and self-improvement. These changes represent a whole new psychological orientation for the students.

J.D. also talked about the importance of audience in the students' writing, mainly as a source of motiviation. A related source of motiviation is having the kids produce a concrete visible product (e.g., a class book, posters, etc.). She said that "if there is no audience or other real reason for writing, it just doesn't work." To illustrate the importance of producing concrete products and having an audience, J.D. told two stories. In the first, a student (Man.) had been absent for a day or two during which the class wrote short stories and put together a class book. Upon her return the absent student asked the teacher if she could write a short story on her own time to be added to the class book. The concrete product was there, and the student wanted to be a part of it. Second story had to do with the importance of audience. When J.D. announced that the class was to make Halloween safety posters, the children grumbled and booed, and indicated that they were not enthused about this project. But when J.D. said that they were to share these posters with first graders and kindergarten children, the students reversed themselves and were instantly enthusiastic about the project.

J.D. mentioned that her students had produced a play, Billy Goats Gruff, and that it had gone very well. She said that the children had worked on the play for a period of two weeks, which is a long time to sustain attention for children of this age. She pointed out that when a lesson or activity must be extended over more than one class period or day that she must do a lot of reteaching, i.e., she can't just pick up where we left off. J.D. attributes this to the relatively short attention spans of children of this age, and anticipates that this will be one of the challanges of teaching them proof reading.

November 2, 1979 Interview with J.D.

page 2

In other writing activities J.D. reported that her third grade students are still quite enthused about learning cursive writing. She also said that she hasn't been able to get them writing in their diaries much lately, bacause of schedule problems, but some of the children continue to write in their diaries anyway. The problem with scheduling has to do with science and social studies periods. sometimes running overtime, therefore not allowing sufficient time at the end of the day for diary writing and clean-up. J.D. said that she's thinking of changing diary time to the middle of the day, because things are too rushed at the end. She still thinks that it is worth scheduling a regular diary writing time.

J.D. talked a bit about her own writing. She said that the more writing that she does, the easier it becomes for her. She gave an example of writing a letter home to parents describing a field trip for all of the room 12 students. She said that she hates to do this kind of writing because it is very difficult to get it just right, but that she volunteered to do it so that she will get better at writing of this kind. She now has a file of examples of letters home to parents that have worked in the past, and she draws upon these. In talking about the field trip, J.D. noted how nice it is to have several adults to share the work of room 12. For the field trip, one teacher did all the calling and arranging, J.D. wrote the letters home to parents, and other teachers took other parts in the organization. She said that it really helps to spread the work around. In addition to the four regular classroom teachers, J.D. mentioned the reading helping teacher, the reading aide, plus having plenty of physical space to move around in as being special benefits of working in this setting.

I asked J.D. about her use of the Common Writings Curriculum. She said that she looks at it every couple of weeks, but that most of the requirements for second and third graders are things that already happen without special planning in her classroom (e.g. copying from the board, writing different types of sentences, etc.). In addition, J.D pointed out that some activities that are not in the curriculum are things that her students need practice in (e.g., learning how to answer questions in science work-books). She said that sometimes, if she runs low on ideas, she looks at the common writings curriculum to see what it might have to offer.

T.N.: It seems that the common writings curriculum is perceived as a relatively unstructured and minimal collection of activities. In a classroom like this one, in which a relatively large amount of writing takes place, the common writings curriculum activities are things that take place naturally, without special reference to that curriculum. J.D.'s task seems to be to express what she is already teaching in terms of the common writings curriculum rather than to organize her teaching according to that curriculum.

One last set of comments from J.D. was that "this year is so easy. I don't have to deal with all the problem children that I had last year. Some children still have problems, but I can still appeal to their sense of reason. Last year I had a very difficult child who brought out the worst in everyone."

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TEACHER JOURNAL ENTRIES

Teacher Journal - Grade 6

Wed., Oct. 31 - Most of the students did a nice job of writing several ¶'s to describe a place last week. This week they are writing a description of a person and the ones I have seen [seem] equally as good.

On Monday I read the students a description I had written (actually I guess I read two) and, again, that seemed helpful to many of them. In my selections I illustrated how they might have their characters involved in doing something and then describe the character's actions & expressions while involved in the activity. I sincerely believe that it is a disservice to our students not to present the student with a model. As a math teacher tells students "how" something is done by using a problem (model), English teachers should use the same technique. I think this gives many of the kids a better "sense of direction" and their confidence in their results in better writing.

On Tuesday during soc. stu. I re-introduced question writing. (Many students had had difficulty several weeks ago when asked to write questions regarding graphs they had constructed.) After reading several pages in the text, I asked them to write two questions *based on the reading* that others should be able to answer. We talked about "factual" questions vs. "thought" questions — and also "open book" questions. Students took turns reading questions & called on others to answer — then we discussed both the questions + their answers.

Since today was Halloween, I provided time for those who wanted to to read their "place descriptions" aloud. (Since many of them were spooky, it seemed appropriate.) The response was positive. I also read some without revealing names for the hesitant ones.

This am. there was also a work period where I could help students with this week's written work. I wish I could find a way to do this

more often.

Goal No 3 — The themes that I've read which describe a person are very interesting — and quite clear. The problem I'm having now is that about 1/3 of the students do not get their writing assignments in on time — it's not always the same people only 3 or 4 of them are chronically late.

Because report cards need to be filled out next week I will not have the students turn in a theme instead, I'm going to be doing some skill lessons on writing conversation correctly so that the next week they can write a story in which they describe a place + character + have the characters speak. They will be asked to think carefully about the story as it will be incorporated into a (magazine) they will be writing later.

Teacher Journal - Grade 2/3

j. l. ____

4/23/80

Language Arts this week had to be replanned due to National Secretaries Week — we made cards for Marilyn, some children wrote poems, and others made a banner. They had a variety of ideas and could choose which activity they wanted to complete. Some chose two. Everyone loves the secretary — they instinctively know what will happen without her — CHAOS.

Planning for Science has become a management problem. There is no way to distribute daphnias (water fleas) to 28 children quickly and orderly — they are simply too excited watching the little creatures. We have to work on self-control — waiting to hear all the directions and not letting the excitement of the situation take over.

4/27/80

Marilyn enjoyed all her surprises. It does help to have an audience. One of the girls made a typewriter-shaped card — 3-D. it was quite the hit and at least 3 people copied it.

Plans are being reshaped this week by a Social Studies unit Daisy is doing on Japan. So far it's been quite interesting — we

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE VIDEOTAPE LOG

Counter #	Participant(s)	Activity
271	T&CLASS	Discussion of magazines T moving around in front of room – showing magazines SS beginning to react to magazine T showing She is talking about body builder
312	T&S	One boy asks to see the picture – T shows it to him
314	T	T shows magazine she did in contrast to last class she actually shows pages of the magazine Much less SS reaction
327	T&CLASS	Girl has hand up –T does not acknowledge Begins showing another old S's magazine
336	S	Girl put hand down – T has glanced at her but not acknowledged
344	T&CLASS	T finishes showing magazines still in front but close to class; T "Okay, first of all what you need to do, pauses, says disruptive boy's name then goes on. Certainly hasn't been much class participation so far and it appears t is pre- venting what does occur.
345	T&CLASS	SS quiet and watching T who is showing beautiful women's magazine explaining it is mainly for girls, not boys, SS react
348	T&S	As T is talking B makes excessive noise, T says his name and continues
349	T&S	T, "Just think what kind of magazine you want to write" Teri shoots up her hand, T: Now just think, I'm not answering questions yet. T talking to this girl but looking at class and has moved further to left center front of room G put hand down
355	T&CLASS	T continues talking without leaving this time to think she has talked about and asks, "What are special topics magazines might have?" Several SS raise their hands, G who has not been acknowledged does not T calls on others
360	T&CLASS	Boy responds "sports", Others moaning, and making noise B directly in front of T slams hand, ouching, etc. he and desk mate watching camera. T says what would be another topic,

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Counter #   Participant(s)   Activity

514   T&CLASS   T: Okay, you all need paper and a pencil
                             SS get up to get paper, etc., lot of movement

520   T&S   T talking to one SS

527   T&SS   B (#362) up to talk to T then he leaves the room,
                             other SS including G attempt to leave but T stops,
                             sends back. T goes into hall closes door

540   T&S   Returns to overhead and hold up object for boy to
                             come to retreive

545   S   G comes in walks to table, T notices, No comment

550   T&CLASS   T next to overhead, Begins lesson
                             T "All right - how many of you remember how to write
                             conversation in elementary school."

557   T&S   B's comes up while T talking - she stops gives him a pencil

560   T&S   G walks up interrupts T - then leaves room

562   T&CLASS   T still trying to talk about quotations
                             T next to overhead

564   T&CLASS   T instructing on quotation using overhead and walking
                             forward closer to class

567   T&CLASS   Asking SS for alternative ways to write, says T moves
                             to class away from overhead, moves back

592   T&CLASS   T tells SS was giving to dictate questions but S last
                             hour suggested she show them on overhead so she is going
                             to do that

597   T&CLASS   SS's are to look at sentence, copy it, put in all puncuation
                             marks
                             T walking into middle of class 1st time than back to front
                             and to far left

603   T&S   Talks to individual S

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APPENDIX F

VIEWING SESSION FORMAT

INTRODUCTION TO VIEWING - SESSION

April 17, 1980

Preview

We would like you to look at this part of the tape which shows when you first started talking about the magazine. We are interested in the tape because it seems to contain a lot of information. We think the magazine is interesting because so many kinds of writing activities led into it and followed from it. It is one of the longer assignments of the year, and the students seemed to enjoy it.

First we'd like you to--

1. Watch the tape with Jan straight through without stopping;

2. Share any first impressions or general comments at the end;

3. Then Rhoda and S. June will join us, and we will watch the tape together.

Viewing Session

4. This time as you watch the tape--

   a. Comment on what you see in the tape;

   b. Focus your comments on the whole group;

   c. We are especially interested in what you are doing and saying in your teaching and what the class members are doing and saying as you begin the magazine.

We'd like you to comment right along with the tape as you watch it. Don't worry about interrupting the tape. Activity goes by quickly on videotape, so if there are times when you want to comment in detail, just stop the tape or ask us to stop it so we can talk.

At the end of the viewing session, ask Marilyn if there is anything she wants to add and/or if there is anything she wants to say about the viewing session.

Schedule the next viewing session.