



LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES: CHILDREN'S TEXTUAL PRACTICES BEFORE AND DURING A PLAY-BASED CLASSROOM INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the textual practices of kindergarten children as they co-created and participated in a movie theatre play context within their rural classroom. Data informing this paper were drawn from classroom videos of children (aged 3-5 years) as they engaged in activities associated with the movie theatre, field notes from action research meetings with the classroom teacher and early childhood educator, and the texts created by the children while participating in the initiative. In relation to our research questions, we coded and then identified patterns in the children's text-making activities and the texts they composed. Our analysis found that the children created texts in preparation for and while participating in the play initiative, revealing their emerging knowledge of the alphabetic principle and print genres. Through their creation of textual materials and during their enactment of roles within the play context, the children also demonstrated their understandings about the social functions of different texts. Insights from this analysis build on the literature regarding young children's early writing development through play and may encourage educators to co-create dramatic play initiatives with their students to extend literacy learning beyond the acquisition of literacy skills.

Over the last 30 years, much research and practice in early literacy has been situated within the emergent literacy paradigm, in which young children's informal experiences with print, such as those experienced during play, are understood as fostering the development of their early literacy skills (Teale, Whittingham, & Hoffman, 2018). In a review of early studies examining the play-literacy interface (e.g., Christie & Enz, 1992; Morrow, 1990; Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1997; Vukelich, 1994), Roskos and Christie (2001) concluded that play serves literacy when the play environment encourages literacy activity, skills, or strategies, and provides space for literacy instruction and learning. Similarly, Saracho and Spodek (2006) identified, from the literature, interactions between play and literacy that promote young children's literacy learning. For example, during play, children have been observed participating in reading and writing experiences



and using literacy in ways they have seen practiced by others at home, school, or in their communities.

The majority of these studies focused on identifying writing skills emerging from playful interactions embedded in teacher- or researcher-designed contexts. To expand on understandings of early literacy learning coming from research within the emergent literacy paradigm, Rowe (2010) suggests researchers develop careful descriptions of literacy practices in school settings. For this paper, we chose to examine textual practices, specifically how children write and interact with print, before and during a play-based classroom initiative created by educators *with* their students. Our aim is to contribute insights about young children's literacy learning by describing writing events within a kindergarten classroom in Northern Ontario, Canada, as the children, with assistance from their teachers, set up and operated a movie theatre centre. We suggest that this type of initiative affords young children literacy learning opportunities beyond the acquisition of early writing skills.

The following research questions framed the collection and analysis of the data: Within the classroom play initiative, what opportunities did the children have to write? How were writing events enacted and what were the outcomes? What do the children's created texts reveal about their literacy learning?

We begin by discussing the conceptual framework that shaped and guided our research, describing the larger project from which we drew our data, and outlining our methodology. We then present key insights gained from our analysis of the data and discuss their significance and implications for theory and practice.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

Our research on young children's early writing development is shaped by tenets within the sociocultural theory of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). Within this perspective, learning and development are understood as resulting from an individual's ongoing, active participation in social interactions within their local communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is through sustained participation in day-to-day activities that individuals acquire diverse sets of cultural knowledge and performance capacities and skills (Erickson, 2002).

Cultural tools in the form of material (e.g., paper and pencil) and symbolic (e.g., oral language) resources mediate children's writing activity (Wertsch, 1998), and children develop writing skills through their guided participation in ongoing cultural activities (Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Through their continued engagement in the act of writing, children foster their early understandings of and



hypotheses about the form and function of print (Harste, Burke, & Woodward, 1984; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

DEVELOPING AS WRITERS

Our work is further informed by assumptions from within the sociocultural perspective on literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Street, 1984), where literacy is understood as a set of social practices rooted within cultural and historical contexts and developed through sustained participation in literacy-related activities. Central to this perspective is the concept of the *literacy event* which Barton and Hamilton (2000) define as, “activities in which literacy plays a role. Usually there is a written text or texts, central to the activity and there may be talk around the text” (p. 8). These literacy events mediate social activity within sociocultural contexts (Purcell-Gates, Perry, & Briseño, 2011), with the mediating texts reflecting physical and cultural aspects of the community (Corbett & Donehower, 2017; Eppley & Corbett, 2012; Purcell-Gates, 2013). Through their continued participation in literacy events, young children develop a familiarity with a variety of texts and how they are used in the community (Barton & Hamilton, 2000), which serves to facilitate their learning of print skills in school (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004).

In this paper, we understand the children’s participation in writing events associated with the classroom play-based initiative as fostering their emergent writing development and mediating their understanding of texts and their use within the community.

RELATED RESEARCH

EDUCATOR-FACILITATED WRITING DURING PLAY

Dramatic play centres, shaped by classroom teachers or early childhood researchers, have long been used as settings in which to study young children’s literacy learning. In general, adults select the context for the centre, such as a hospital or clinic (Cook, 2000), grocery store (Korat, Bahar, & Snapir, 2002), house (Neuman & Roskos, 1992), or office (Korat et al., 2002; Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1993) and then stock it with literacy related and other materials. For example, in their seminal study, Neuman and Roskos (1992) placed a variety of literacy objects, including message pads, calendars, an appointment book, forms, paper, and pens, in an office-themed centre to examine the effects of including literacy objects in a daycare play setting. More recently, rather than placing literacy related materials in a play centre, Ihmeideh (2015) explained to a group of Jordanian kindergarten teachers how to integrate writing into activities within the centres, such as, by providing opportunities for children to write prescriptions to patients, letters to friends, or signs to advertise the names of flowers. Taken together, this research demonstrates that structured dramatic play centres can provide a context in which young children write.



CHILDREN'S SPONTANEOUS WRITING DURING PLAY

Research has also demonstrated how children create purposeful texts during play within dramatic play centres. Korat et al. (2002) observed how, in response to the teacher's inquiry as to how customers know when a supermarket is open, one student asked another student to create an Open/Closed sign for the grocery store centre in their kindergarten classroom. Similarly, Worthington & van Oers (2017) observed in the nursery school, how a young student recreated a recent experience he had shared with his father in a city car park. The student created a pass (marks drawn on a sticker) to allow another student to gain entry into their car park and a sign (smaller sticker with scribble marks) to indicate the bell for drivers without passes to ring to gain entry.

DETERMINING LITERACY LEARNING

Past intervention research investigating the effects of literacy enhanced play settings on young children's literacy learning focused on documenting the gains in literacy skills (i.e., letter recognition) and/or knowledge (i.e., concepts of print, knowledge of the functions and uses of written language) of students in adult mediated-play groups as compared to students in the no mediation or control groups (e.g., Christie & Enz, 1992; Neuman & Roskos, 1993). While Christie and Enz found no significant difference between the groups for concepts of print or alphabet knowledge, Neuman and Roskos found the children in the literacy-enriched groups (with or without adult mediation) performed better on functional print tasks (e.g., naming items and identifying their function) as compared to the control group.

More recently, using a 19-item scale designed to measure early writing development through structured observation, Ihmeideh (2015) found that, when situated writing activities (e.g., writing grocery lists, prescriptions, and recipes) were included in dramatic play centres, the children used their emerging writing skills (e.g., producing letter-like forms) and demonstrated early writing behaviours (e.g. writing for functional purposes). Rather than focusing solely on emergent writing skills (e.g., writing forms), Worthington and van Oers (2017) noted multimodal and semiotic features of texts including the size of the marks, how the child arranged marks within a frame, and their choice of surface (e.g., sand, paper, plastic), when young children included literacy events in their pretend play (e.g., creating and using a parking pass, taking food orders in a café).

THE NORTHERN ORAL LANGUAGE AND WRITING THROUGH PLAY (NOW PLAY) PROJECT

NOW Play is a partnership project between university researchers and participating educators and stakeholders serving northern rural and Indigenous communities across four Canadian provinces. The aim is to develop teaching capacities in northern rural communities in support of young



children's oral language and writing development through play-based practices. As active participants in the project, classroom teachers develop classroom play initiatives and then video record the students' interactions as they engage in activities within these initiatives. This unique form of activity differs from conventional dramatic play in that, rather than focusing exclusively on the symbolic nature of play, it espouses the spirit of guided play (Portier, Friedrich, & Peterson, 2019). By this, we mean, after providing resources (e.g., props, writing supplies) and space within the classroom (e.g., centre area, whole class), educators primarily observe and respond according to how the students collaborate to shape and extend activities. Within the project, over the course of each initiative, researchers meet with the educators on site to reflect on their students' language, literacy, and social learning as revealed through classroom interactions recorded by the educators using iPods and artifacts their students created to support activities within the initiatives.

Analyses of data drawn from each classroom initiative have furthered our understanding of the connection between play and literacy. Play and collaborative playful activities are exceptional contexts for providing young children with authentic opportunities for using oral language (Peterson, 2017), and for demonstrating writing skills (Friedrich, Wishart, & Peterson, 2018) and print literacy knowledge (Friedrich & Peterson, 2020). An analysis of 41 play-based classroom initiatives found evidence of literacy (e.g., sound-symbol relationships, spelling, vocabulary) and other curricular (e.g., math, science, social studies) learning within every activity (Portier et al., 2019). Finally, dramatic play is a meaning-making and narrative-building practice (Wajskop & Peterson, 2015) that encourages early writing behaviours (Peterson, 2015) and develops vocabulary (Peterson & Portier, 2016).

To sum up, our interpretation of the literature examining young children's writing during play is that adults (e.g., teachers, researchers) typically create the dramatic play centres in early childhood settings that provide children with opportunities to write in preparation for and while enacting context-specific roles. Results from intervention and observational research suggest that, through their participation in writing activities within play settings, young children develop their writing skills and increase their understanding of functional print items. Our purpose in writing this paper is to contribute further insights by describing writing events associated with a movie theatre-themed initiative *co-created* by two classroom educators and their students, and then analyzing the children's literacy learning through both an emergent literacy and social perspective lens. In the next section, we describe our research methodology.

METHODOLOGY

CONTEXT

In Ontario, kindergarten is an optional two-year full day program for children prior to entering grade one at 6 years of age. Data informing this paper were collected in an English-speaking



kindergarten class taught by a teacher and an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) in one of the NOW Play Project's Northern Ontario towns. The class consisted of children differing in age (3-, 4- and 5-years old), experience in formal schooling (one and two years), and culture (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). All of the children were orally proficient in English. The town (population 8,000) services smaller resource-based communities as well as remote hunting and fishing camps. During one of our action research meetings, the two educators mentioned that they had asked the children for input as to how they would like to shape the dramatic play centre. Together, they brainstormed possibilities, including local shops and restaurants, before settling on a movie theatre theme. Because of the town's small size and remote location, visiting the movie theatre was a popular past time for the children.

DATA SOURCES

Data sources include 27 classroom videos (totaling 74 minutes) that the educators took of the children engaged in activities associated with their movie theatre initiative, 28 samples of the children's writing created during related activities, and multiple pages of field notes from our action research meeting with the two educators and from one visit to the classroom to observe the Movie Theatre play centre.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first phase of analysis involved the identification and coding of literacy events that included writing (writing events). To identify such events, we watched each of the videos and coordinated these with our field notes and the children's writing samples. We created a spreadsheet into which we described each event and assigned codes to indicate when and where each event took place, who participated, the text genres produced, the social purpose of the texts, and the forms of graphic representation the children used to display the written content. We then verified our interpretation of the events with the ECE. The second analysis phase involved generating output tables of the coded data and identifying patterns in the children's enactment of writing events and in their written texts. In the following section, guided by our research questions, we present descriptions of writing events within the movie theatre initiative.

FINDINGS

In response to our question regarding occasions to write (Research Question #1), the movie theatre initiative presented the children with writing opportunities as they prepared the movie theatre play centre and while they engaged in play within the centre. We organized these opportunities into general categories. Here, we describe the enactment of writing events within each category and identify texts created during these events (Research Question #2). We also suggest possible literacy learning outcomes from these events (Research Question #3).

WRITING EVENTS IN PREPARATION FOR PLAY



BRAINSTORMING IDEAS. During writing events within this category, the children sat in small groups at tables to talk about and write lists of required items for their movie theatre centre. As they wrote, they shared their ideas (e.g., “the slushie cup”), sounded-out words (e.g., “tickets ... t-t-t-t-i-i-i ...”), asked each other about their writing (e.g., “Everyone's writing the same thing, right?”), announced what they wanted to write (e.g., “Popcorn popped!”), and exclaimed over their accomplishments (e.g., “I read a lot of stuff!”, “I write-ed some.”). The teachers often supported the children by encouraging them to try spelling on their own, helping out with letter-sounds when needed, and asking them to read their lists to their peers.

In creating these lists, many children demonstrated their own understanding about spelling (e.g., PoPCon, PopKorN, and qKRN [*popcorn*]; isTer [*ice tea*]; movyu [*movie*]; LicWESh [*licorice*]; SEET [*seat*]; HOHIIq [*wine*]; BOOsTRSEET [*booster seat*]; and, FoTSnaCs [*fruit snacks*]). They also demonstrated their understanding of how a list is structured. For example, one child placed ‘bullets’ down the left-hand side of her page and then went back to the top and wrote one item beside each bullet. Another child began printing on the left-hand side of the page and continued printing left-to-right, separating each item with a period. Another child added small ‘icons’ beside each written item, while another girl filled her page with letters, letter-like forms, and lines/shapes. Figure 1 shows a child who used conventional letters and phonetic spelling to write the names of items.

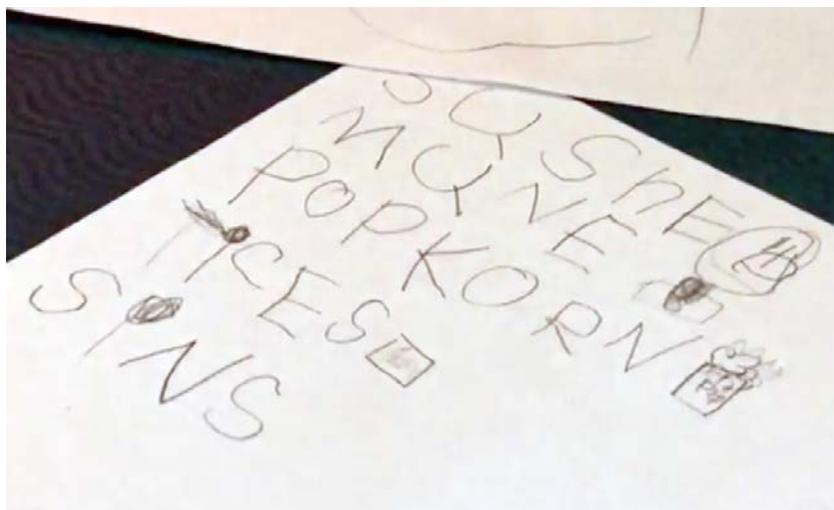


Figure 1. One child’s list of items includes words and icons.

Her spelling (e.g., SUHe [*slushies*], MUNE [*money*], POPKORN [*popcorn*], TicES [*tickets*] and SiNS [*signs*]), suggests that she was writing at the mid letter-name alphabetic stage (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). She created her list by placing single word items on each line and adding small pictures of a drink, dollar bill, box of popcorn, and a small square ticket next to the corresponding words.



CREATING ARTIFACTS. Within this category, in general, children worked independently to create artifacts to support their play in the centre. They created identifying texts (e.g., packaging and labels) to help them distinguish the content placed in various areas of the theatre, and information texts (e.g., posters and price lists) to communicate to potential customers as to what was available in the theatre. At times, the teachers provided assistance to the children with the writing of individual words, and in doing so, they modeled writing strategies consistent with early learning settings. For example, in the following interaction, Gillian (all names are pseudonyms) was “working” at the movie theatre counter. Part of her (self-assigned) job was to create a label on a card to identify the candy she was offering to sell to movie-goers. Before Gillian placed her label beside the little confection boxes on display at the counter, the teacher assisted her by modeling the strategy of isolating and ordering individual sounds in the word ‘candy’:

Gillian: (prints a ‘K’ to begin the word candy)
Teacher: Aaaaaa.
Gillian: ‘A’. (prints ‘N’) ‘A’?
Teacher: Your ‘A’ goes before the ‘N’.
Gillian: (prints ‘A’ between ‘K’ and ‘N’)
Teacher: Aaaaa - nnnnn - dd.
Gillian: ‘D’!
Teacher: After the ‘N’, ‘D’. You already wrote your ‘N’.
Gillian: Oh, ‘D’.
Teacher: Can-dy. Eeeeeee.
Gillian: (prints ‘E’)

A close inspection of this and other texts revealed the children’s use of phonetic spelling and their understanding of features specific to each genre of text. For example, on one candy package, a student wrote “GAiMBOL” [*gumballs*] as a means to label and identify the contents. Another student labeled a box with the phrase “TIKIT STIBS” [*ticket stubs*] and children used this to store the tickets they collected from customers before they entered the viewing area (Figure 2).



Figure 2. A box to collect movie tickets is labeled as “TIKIT STIBS” [*ticket stubs*].

The children also created movie posters to inform others about the films featured at the theatre, menus to inform customers as to what food they could purchase at the concession stand and for how much, and labels to identify the items stored on the shelves in the concession stand (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Concession stand items were labeled as “KUPS” [*cups*], “POPCORN”, “HOPDoe” [*hot dog*], and “KANDE” [*candy*].

To create movie posters, the children wrote the title, for example “PeDR RABiT” [*Peter Rabbit*] above their representations of images from the movie (Figure 4). In contrast, to create the menus,



the teachers provided the children with a pre-printed template showing the features specific to this genre of text (see Figure 5).



Figure 4. A poster for the “Peter Rabbit” movie.





Figure 5. A snack menu for movie-goers.

WRITING EVENTS DURING PLAY

We identified categories of events within the movie theatre centre in which the children's writing mediated their play and we named them after the specific areas where the children enacted roles, specifically the "box office", "concession stand", and "movie area".

BOX OFFICE. At the box office, the "ticket seller" wrote the title of the movie along with the date and time on the pre-printed ticket template (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Employees prepare tickets at the box office.

The students often helped each other write as part of the "selling tickets" event. For example, in the following interaction, Sara was enacting the role of ticket seller. She wore an apron and stood behind the box office window. Using a clipboard, movie list, pre-printed ticket template, and pencil, Sara prepared a movie ticket for Brandon, the customer:

Sara: (writes the data on the ticket)

Brandon: Lego Ninja Movie.

Sara: (to co-worker) Cindy, look at the day (points to the date she just wrote)

Brandon: L - E.

Sara: (begins to print name of movie) There's only one people on my line, teacher. There's lots of people on Cindy's line. (returns to writing the ticket and looks at the movie poster for spelling)



Brandon: M - O - V - I - E (points to the word ‘movie’ on the ticket list to help)

Here, Brandon modeled another early writing strategy by directing Sara’s attention to an example of the word she was trying to write and then dictating each letter individually as she wrote them on the ticket (Figure 6). Once printed, the tickets were handed to the movie-goers who brought them to the “usher” to gain entrance to the screen/seating area. The ticket served as a way to regulate the number of students who entered the seating area at any given time.

CONCESSION STAND. At the concession stand, directly beside the ticket counter, customers read from a menu and looked at the labeled confectionary before giving their orders to the “employees”. The employees wrote lists as they received the orders. To remember which items had been purchased, they brought these lists with them to gather the items together and give to the customers (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Employees work at the busy concession stand.

MOVIE AREA. At the movie area, the students enacted various roles that made use of the written artifacts. Here, when enacting the role of “usher”, children collected tickets from the movie-goers. Once inside the movie area, they escorted the movie-goers to their seats. The teachers had prepared movie previews on an iPad with projector so that the movie-goers could see their roles through to the end. After the film, they returned snack items to the concession stand and chose another classroom activity or switched roles with another student at the theatre. During these play events, instead of scaffolding the children’s writing, the teachers often joined the play by modeling different roles as needed. For example, one teacher sat at the entrance to the movie area in role as the “ticket collector” to check tickets and admit the movie-goers.

In this section, we described writing events before and during a movie theatre-themed play initiative. During events in preparation for the centre, we found the act of creating texts on their own or with the assistance of others afforded the children the opportunity to apply their emerging writing skills and demonstrate their understanding of features of print. Further, their role play



alongside their peers and teachers within the movie centre afforded them the opportunity to explore how these texts are used in the community. In the next section, we discuss these findings in relation to literature and theory.

DISCUSSION

To recap, our purpose in carrying out this research was to identify and describe textual practices associated with a movie theatre-themed, classroom-based play initiative co-created by kindergarten children and their teachers. Our review of research investigating writing during play (e.g., Christie & Enz, 1992; Cook, 2000; Korat et al., 2002; Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1993) as well as our analysis of action research initiatives within the NOW Play project (Portier et al., 2019) revealed that, in general, teachers or researchers select and shape the context for role play in early years' classrooms. In contrast, we described how two classroom educators asked their students for input about the theme for the dramatic play centre and then worked with the students to brainstorm and co-create materials and resources to support the role play in the centre. We agree with past research that dramatic play centres provide children with opportunities to write (e.g., Christie & Enz, 1992; Ihmeideh, 2015; Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1993), however, we suggest that, by including the children in the planning of their movie theatre initiative, the educators expanded these writing opportunities. Specifically, as co-creators of the initiative, the children generated lists of ideas and prepared artifacts for use in the dramatic play centre.

Past research (e.g., Korat et al., 2002; Ihmeideh, 2015) described kindergarten children's interactions with literacy-related materials and resources while enacting roles within dramatic play centres. We, too, observed the children interact with materials while enacting roles in their movie theatre play, for example, when they purchased tickets and consulted concession stand menus. In previous studies (e.g., Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1993), the teachers and/or researchers stocked classroom centres with materials and resources for the children to use in their play interactions. However, in our study, we observed the children creating the bulk of the materials and resources that they wanted to use in their play centre. And, while the teachers supported some of the children's ideas by supplying templates (e.g., for the tickets and the menus), they left room for the children to relate these items to the play context through print, as the children completed these texts by filling in the relevant information (e.g., printing a movie title on the ticket and listing the concession items on the menu).

We agree with past research (e.g., Cook, 2000; Ihmeidah; 2015; Neuman & Roskos, 1993), which found that literacy-related play in dramatic play centres fosters the development of children's emergent writing skills. Creating texts on their own before and during a play initiative afforded children multiple opportunities to apply their developing writing skills and discover features unique to different genres of texts. For example, our close inspection of the children's texts revealed a range of spelling stages in their writing of words (Bear et al., 2008), from emergent (e.g., HOHIq



[*wine*]), through mid- to late-letter name alphabetic (e.g., TicES [*ticket*]), to within word pattern (e.g., SLOShees [*slushies*]). Furthermore, receiving assistance from an adult or peer when writing afforded the children the opportunity to observe and then apply early writing strategies, such as isolating individual sounds in words or copying print. Finally, with these texts, the children demonstrated their understandings of different text types (Friedrich & Peterson, 2020). For example, they wrote lists as columns of words, created packaging with labels identifying the contents, and designed theatre posters with printed titles and pictorial images from movies.

However, our analysis of the children's literacy learning goes beyond simply identifying children's early writing skills and features of texts. By thinking about the children's activity from a social practice perspective, we understand writing events before and during the play initiative as mediating the children's activity within multiple sociocultural contexts (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). Specifically, as participants within an early learning play setting, they constructed texts consisting of single words or simple phrases (e.g., labels on snack packages and titles on posters and tickets) either independently or with the assistance of a peer or teacher. As co-creators of the movie theatre centre, they created purposeful texts during the planning and set up phases of the initiative (e.g., generating lists, and creating posters, price lists, and tickets). As characters in the movie theatre narratives, they used texts while enacting their roles (e.g., filling out tickets, consulting menus, and reading shelf labels).

Thus, we suggest that the activities within the co-created classroom play initiative afforded the children opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of how literacy is used within multiple domains of activity. First, the children demonstrated an understanding of literacy behaviours specific to early literacy classrooms (Yoon, 2014). They did so when writing or copying words, as they segmented individual sounds to establish letter-sound correspondences, and when creating texts, as they differentiated between different types of texts by including features specific to each genre. Second, the children demonstrated an understanding of how adults use texts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) to plan for and establish dramatic play centres in the classroom, as they generated lists and created numerous textual artifacts to support the play context while assisting with the planning and setting up of the initiative. Finally, the children demonstrated an understanding of how texts are used in their community (Purcell-Gates, 2013), as, through their enacted roles, they wrote on tickets to regulate entry into the theatre and jotted down customer orders to remind them of what they needed to gather at the concession stand.

Through the act of co-creating the movie theatre initiative and then participating in dramatic play within the movie theatre centre, the children demonstrated an understanding of literacy that went beyond the simple application of their developing writing skills and understanding of the functions of print. Instead, the children actively demonstrated what Barton and Hamilton (2000) describe as, "the general cultural ways of using written language which people draw upon in their lives." (p. 7) In other words, the movie theatre initiative afforded the children the opportunity to, within their



kindergarten classroom, take up literacy practices from various communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

CONCLUSION

We acknowledge that our analysis was limited by the video recordings the educators took within the classroom. This means of data collection allowed us, as outside researchers, to see a wider range of classroom interactions than we would have seen if we had taken the videos during our site visit. However, the educators may or may not have captured the complete range of activity that took place as part of their initiative. Future research might include the video-recording of all activity related to similar initiatives and/or including data gathered through participant observation in the classroom.

Furthermore, our insights came from our analysis of the text-making activity of a group of English-speaking, predominantly non-Indigenous, children enrolled in an elementary school in a small rural town. It is possible that the textual practices of other groups of children may provide different insights into how young children develop as writers.

However, we see this study as contributing to the awareness of how local understandings of writing are constructed in kindergarten classrooms (Rowe, 2010). Moreover, we hope this study will inspire teachers to work collaboratively with their students to incorporate authentic social and community contexts within classroom play initiatives as a way to further support their students' overall literacy development.

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