BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT READER:
SELF-SELECTED TEXTS AND LITERACY EVENTS
IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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1991
To Hank -

the wind beneath my wings
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CHAPTER I
THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Learning to read is a process of change and choice. Through interaction with texts and selection of various literacy events, children construct concepts of how one reads.

As children actively participate, they develop a command of the reading process. Very young children "read" text by creating stories to go along with illustrations (Sulzby, 1985). They believe they are taking part in reading. As children begin to understand what "words" represent, they change their approach to reading texts. They stop the "pretend reading" and attempt only the words they know, or read only texts they have memorized. They have come to understand they must attend to the print (Sulzby, 1985). Eventually reading unknown words is attempted. During oral reading, words may be read one by one as the reader taps into various strategies. Self-corrections begin when the reader attends to whether what was said made sense (Goodman, 1973). Children gain confidence as they gradually understand how to make meaning of text. They become independent readers.
Whole language classrooms are organized to make learning meaningful and encourage the growth of independent readers. Goodman, et al. (1989) claim whole language teachers use "a range of authentic, natural and functional materials to build literacy" (p. xi). Children have opportunities throughout the day to self-select a variety of texts and explore written and spoken language. Experiences with print include shared reading of a "big book" or trade book, small group readings of familiar texts, listening to a taped story and self-selecting from a group of appropriate trade books. Children participate in the selection and have primary control over the materials they read. Through modeling and small group work, the teacher of a whole language classroom encourages children to make appropriate choices. When self-selecting, children may return to a favorite text, language experience story or poem. Research points to repeated readings of texts as a way for children to gain confidence about print. Meek (1988) states that "the move from 'more of the same' to 'I might try something different' is a clear step" (p.99) indicating growth in reading development. The choices children make concerning the texts they read and the events in which they participate, may provide access to how they are developing as independent readers.
Statement of Need

Children learning the concepts of how one reads are individuals in the process of making changes and choices. Taylor (1989) argues there is a need for descriptions of how individual children approach literacy tasks. There is no generic path to learning to read and write. She states:

Acknowledging the complexity of early reading and writing development means that we must try to understand literacy from the child's perspective, and that involves disciplined, systematic observation of children as they work at reading and writing (p.186-187).

There is a need to understand how children make choices that facilitate growth as an independent reader. Learning in a whole language classroom places demands on the reader to self-direct, self-select and participate in a variety of literacy events. What decisions do children make to meet the demands of reading and writing? Can their choices provide information about individual progress in the coordination of reading strategies? These are critical questions to be answered if teachers want to help children see themselves as, what Smith (1985) calls, "members of the literacy club". It is important to understand children's active role in becoming independent readers.

This study focused on evidence of the development of strategies related to independent readers as the children self-selected texts and literacy events in which to
participate. Specifically, assessments of both reading and writing and tracking of texts and events selected were used to provide information concerning changes in beginning readers. Research lends some understanding of indices of learning reading strategies. Morris (1980) claims that one "watershed" event for the individual reader is attaining the concept of "word". When this happens, Morris states, "the dividing line between nonreading and reading is crossed at a rush" (Henderson, 1981, p.88). Clay (1979) found that "voice pointing", or reading word by word, indicated that things were "coming together". Similarly, Bussis, et al. (1985) found the complete orchestration of knowledge about reading showed that the child was beginning to "get the act together" (p.114).

As the reader actively constructs the concepts of learning to read, the texts they select and the choices they make concerning events related to print may shift. Researchers such as White (1956), Clark (1976), Butler (1980) and Yaden (1988) have all found repeated readings (or "rereadings") are common for early readers. Teale and Sulzby (1987) suggest readers may show they are building confidence in learning to read through choices they make. For example, after a period of practice with familiar texts, the child "branches out" and tries a new text. If, as Meek (1988) suggests, choosing something
new, instead of "more of the same" indicates growth, attention must be given to beginning readers and the choices they make. Research has previously given insight into indications of when children are becoming independent readers. There is, however, a need to gain more detailed descriptions of how that process unfolds as children actively participate in the selection of texts and literacy events.

Research Questions

This study was designed to observe children self-selecting texts and literacy events as they gained independence in the reading process. Observing children meet the demands of learning to read and write provided information about how they were progressing as readers. Noting the decisions they made and interacting with them about how they engaged in reading and writing, provided access to choices they made. At the same time, information was gathered about how they changed as readers. The following questions guided the collection of data for this research:

(1) As children self-direct reading and writing, how do they meet the demands of the task? When and how do they seek help?

(2) In what type of reading and writing activities do children choose to engage?
   - What books do they choose?
   - Are there reoccurring texts that can be noted (both in revisited titles and/or formats of print)?
   - How do choice of activities or
characteristics of text compare across time? Can connections be detected between choices made and development of reading ability?

(3) Do the children indicate a particular text or event that enabled them to feel in command of their reading skills?

These three sets of questions provided focus for both collection and analysis of data. The focus was to observe the children self-selecting texts and literacy events in relation to their growing reading strategies. Writing events were included due to the nature of whole language activities that combined reading and writing. The nature of this study allowed the examination of emerging issues related to the research questions to be considered as data collection continued.

**Definition of Terms**

Many specific terms reoccur throughout this report. To provide the reader a clear understanding of the particular meaning given these terms, the following definitions are provided:

(1) **Whole language classroom**: the teacher was guided by the philosophy that children learn to read and write through real experiences. Reading books of natural language and authentic stories (rather than texts based on a readability factor), writing for a purpose and having opportunities to self-select texts and
events in which to participate are all part of the active learning that took place in this whole language classroom. The children had responsibilities for their own learning.

(2) **Self-selection**: the children were in control of the texts they selected to read (from a large range of printed material in the classroom) or the events in which they chose to participate (such as writing or reading with another child).

(3) **Shared reading**: the children gathered together on the carpeted area to hear a story. The teacher placed the text so all the children could follow along. Generally **big books** were used. These were enlarged texts (with pages approximately 14" by 20") for large group viewing. The teacher used modeling of how one reads to present the story. The storyline was highly illustrated and used language familiar to children. On some occasions, shared reading was done with a traditional sized text. This occurred when the teacher selected a quality children's literature story (**trade book**) to read aloud. Any text presented during shared reading was available to the children for self-selection.
(3) **Literacy 2000**: a collection of individual stories (published by Rigby) used for small group and individual instruction. The texts are written in a variety of genre, using supportive illustrations, repetition and natural language to facilitate predictability when the child reads. The texts gradually increase in difficulty, thus allowing individualization of story selection.


(5) **Literacy events**: any activity that involved the reading and writing of print. This included choosing reading over writing (or reversed), listening to taped stories, handling of books for the purpose of studying illustrations and reading alone or with a buddy (another child).

(6) **Free choice time**: the time during the school day when the children are responsible for selecting an activity. This may occur between 8:45 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., during indoor recess and when all morning work is complete. The children may self-select any text to read or work on a story in their writing workshop.
folder (a manila folder that contains stories of self-selected topics the children were writing about. There was specific time set aside each day for work in the folders, but the children could work on a story during any free time). There were also work centers available for free choice. These were changed once a month by the teacher. The activities ranged from practicing handwriting to observing and recording scientific information. The important feature of free choice time was the control the children maintained over selection of activities.

(7) B.E.A.R.: Being Excited About Reading - a time each day when the children self-selected from all available texts in the classroom. No records were kept of what was read. The children had the option of not reading a text all the way through and replacing it with a new selection. The children had the additional choice of reading alone or with a buddy (another child).

(8) Risk-taking: the children were observed attempting something new on their own or moving away from the familiar. For instance, they attempted to use cues from illustrations to aid
their reading when sounding had been the previous strategy. Wells (1986) states:

Risk-taking is necessary in any enterprise that aims to move beyond the status quo, and this is particularly true of learning in school, where errors as well as successes can be productive. (p.115)

In attempting something new, the children were willing to make errors and took charge of their own learning.

Understanding the use and definition of the above terms will aid the reader of this study. Use of terms not central to the study are defined within the context of their use in this report.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The site for this study was a whole language first grade classroom. The setting was specifically chosen to allow the maximum opportunity for observing children self-selecting texts and literacy events in which to participate as they grew in reading skill. The instructional approach observed was not compared to other programs (e.g., basal readers). While generalizability ultimately remains with the reader, classrooms where self-selection of texts and activities is encouraged may find the results of this study most useful.

The largest portion of data collected was dependent on observations and conversations with the children. Due
to the nature of the activities observed, complete notes were occasionally recorded later the same day. Immediate recording of notes was possible whenever I judged it would not be a distraction to the children. When possible, direct quotes were recorded immediately to preserve accuracy. Conversations were not tape recorded to eliminate the possibility of interfering with the natural flow of events. Data was collected two to five days per week for 24 weeks. I strove to record as much detail as possible to be informative for later data analysis. Through triangulation with the teacher and, in some instances the children, cross-checking my findings was a constant concern.

**Significance of the Study**

As more teachers move toward a whole language philosophy, information is needed concerning children actively participating in their literacy learning. This study provided detailed descriptions of children self-selecting texts and events in which to participate. What they chose and how they made decisions regarding what and how to read, provides information about beginning readers. If classrooms are to foster independence in reading, then understanding what can be done to facilitate the reader's self-selection is of particular importance.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to discern patterns and render meanings from the self-selections first grade children made concerning their literacy learning. This chapter presented the need to understand how children make choices that facilitate growth as an independent reader. This study was designed to observe children self-selecting texts and literacy events as they developed reading strategies conducive to independence in the reading process. The research questions provided focus for the collection and analysis of data. The questions were framed by the need to expand current theory and research concerning children's self-selection during literacy learning.

A survey of literature that provided a theoretical base for this research is presented next in Chapter II. Chapter III is a detailed description of the design of the study. The context of the whole language classroom and the teacher's philosophy to empower children to make decisions is described in Chapter IV. Chapter V presents ten children who became the focus of the study. Their self-selections are reported and analyzed. A cross-case analysis was conducted, yielding five major themes. The results of that analysis are presented in Chapter VI. Chapter VII summarizes the findings and provides conclusions and recommendations that may be drawn from the study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To frame the research questions of this study, three areas of literature were surveyed. These areas were identified as the important components of children becoming independent readers in a whole language classroom. The following theory and research were reviewed:

(1) literacy learning in a whole language classroom,
(2) the individual task of learning to read, and
(3) self-selecting texts (particularly rereading familiar texts).

Literacy Learning in a Whole Language Classroom

It is important to understand the everyday occurrences in a whole language classroom in regard to this study. It was an atmosphere where children were given many opportunities to make decisions about what and how they read. The literacy learning that occurs in whole language classrooms is rooted in a philosophy, not a "packaged" approach. Teachers of whole language classrooms share a theoretical base. Weaver (1990) summarized the beliefs held by the teachers as:
...understanding that language and literacy are best developed when language (oral and written) is not fragmented, but kept whole; when listening and speaking and reading and writing are not isolated for study...[and!]...when students are encouraged and allowed to develop language and literacy as they engage in authentic language/literacy events. (p.30)

The whole language approach has evolved from many viewpoints of how one learns. John Dewey was a proponent of centering learning on the learner. He believed education should begin with what the learner already knows. Moss (1990) claimed:

Although all whole language classrooms will be comprehension-centered and learner-centered, each will have a unique identity shaped by the special needs and interests of the children and teacher who create it. (p.9)

Jean Piaget's exploration of children constructing their own knowledge informed educators of the power of the active role children play in their own learning. As teachers and children shape the literacy events taking place in a whole language classroom, the children are actively involved in the direction their learning takes.

Another key theory for whole language comes from research showing how children learn language. The children's active involvement is important. According to Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores (1987):

The key theoretical premise for whole language is that, the world over, babies acquire a language through actually using it, not through practicing its separate parts until some later date when the parts are assembled and the totality is finally used. The major assumption is that the model of acquisition through real use is the best model for thinking about and helping with the learning of
reading and writing and learning in general. (p.145)

The "real use" Altwerger, et al. suggested was with language-rich books instead of vocabulary controlled basal readers. The idea of using trade books (or "literature"), however, is not new.

As early as 1959, educators were calling for the use of literature in classrooms to teach a love of reading. Veatch (1959) discussed many advantages to learning to read from self-selected books. Children were allowed to progress at their own pace, thus allowing accomplished readers to move ahead, while permitting those needing time and individual help an acceptable format for interaction with the teacher. Veatch believed that reading from trade books encouraged children to learn skills as they were ready for them.

Chambers continued the plea for the use of children's books for instruction in 1971. His contention was reading books, beyond the basal, gave children additional practice in skills rehearsed on workbook pages. Books were the places children "put together" all they had learned.

The powerful connections of what children read and their developing language was a growing theory in the early 1970's. Stauffer and Van Allen (Vacca et al., 1987), strong proponents of Language Experience Approach, believed the young reader's point of view should be:
What I think about, I can talk about; what I can say, I can write or someone can write for me; what I can write, I can read; and I can read what other people write for me to read. (Vacca et al., 1987, p.43).

This interactive approach used recording of stories, building word banks and directed reading-thinking lessons that used and supported the child's oral language. The stories were written after a class trip or activity, or to explore ideas and feelings of the group. Written on large sheets of paper, the stories were used for group or individual readings, discussions and for building word banks. Each child participated in the construction of the story, and rereading the stories was common practice. Similar activities are often used in whole language classrooms.

Studies such as those conducted by Cohen (1968) and Cullinan et al. (1974) provided information about the use literature with young readers. Significant increases in reading achievement were realized by the groups using literature in their reading program. Eldredge and Butterfield's (1986) study looked at the improved reading ability of children using literature as well as the children's perspectives about reading. They concluded that the children's achievement in reading and their attitudes were positively effected by the use literature to teach reading.
The whole language view of teaching reading was greatly influenced by work done in New Zealand. Based on research of family bedtime stories, Holdaway (1979) developed the procedures for "shared reading". The teacher displays a "big book" (approximately 20" by 40" pages), and reads the story to the children. The children are invited to reread with the teacher. The book is usually revisited several days in row, allowing the children to become familiar with the text. The books are available for the children to self-select to read on their own. Other books may be read by the teacher, using the same procedure. Literature selected for shared readings is evaluated for its use of natural language, supported by the illustrations. These features in the text encourage children to reread the texts on their own.

By 1986, Bill Honig, California State Superintendent of Schools, was convinced of the need to use literature as a means of instruction. According to Cullinan (1989), Honig:

...launched a statewide reading initiative to encourage teachers to get actively involved in using literature with children, especially in the teaching of reading. (p. 27).

Other states followed suit and Cullinan found 23 states using literature as a base for instruction. These programs placed a demand for children to have access to a large number of books. The books were not only used for reading instruction, but also for science, social
studies, health and math. The focus was on learning to read by reading to learn. The child is a participant in the selection of books to read.

The major components for literacy learning in a whole language classroom are:

- big books for shared reading;
- a large number of trade books for self-selection;
- opportunities to work cooperatively during reading and writing activities;
- a focus on reading as a "whole", rather than discrete skills; and
- language is the center to learning.

There is an emphasis on children using what they "bring" to school to participate in reading. Cornett and Blankenship (1990) summarized the philosophy of whole language teachers:

They believe that the language learning potential is there in each child, just waiting to be released. With well-placed questions and unaltering encouragement, powerful stories and a little grace, teachers chisel an environment to uplift and elevate the life and language of each child. (p.26)

The individual task of learning to read

Donaldson (1978) argued:

...there is a fundamental human urge to be effective, competent, and independent, to understand the world and to act with skill. (p.118)

As children learn to read, they attempt to sort out and utilize a number of strategies to gain meaning from text. Each child approaches the task in an individualized way, yet there are common events that occur as the process unfolds.
Views about how a beginning reader needs to obtain meaning from print have changed during the past decade. This is largely due to the research that has portrayed learning to read as employing many strategies. This differs from the idea that children learn a group of subskills, or parts, to understand text. The strategies are ways to combine and select necessary skills. The exact combination of strategies can be influenced by prior knowledge, the text, purpose and context of the reading.

Downing (1979) outlined three phases of acquisition of reading strategies - cognitive, mastering and automaticity. The cognitive phase occurs when the child realizes the demands of the task. Clay (1979) called the period "emergent literacy". Children realize the need to pay attention to what the letters form. As children have learned speech through making sense of the conversations around them, they learn about reading by trying to make sense of surrounding print (Smith, 1985). Their early attempts to create words in writing suggest their understanding that particular letters combine to represent a word. Their expectations about print carry over to texts read to them. The crucial step in this phase is the development of "concept of word" (Morris, 1980) or "reading the white spaces" (Clay, 1979).

Henderson (1981) suggested that attempts to begin to
match a printed word to a spoken word continues to drive word awareness. Clay (1985) outlined what the child may attend to when attempting to read a word. Three cues can be used - semantic, visual, and structural. In these beginning stages, the reader may rely on one cue more than another (Morrow, 1989). Eventually, this early phase of imbalanced use of strategies, progresses to the reader's use of all necessary cues.

Downing's second phase, mastering, involves practicing the strategies in a more coordinated manner. Goodman (1984) stated:

Learning to read is at least partly gaining control over these systems and their interactions in the context of literacy events. (p.102)

Automaticity, the third phase described by Downing, shows that "something had clicked in place" (Clay, 1979). Consistency in reading is evident and use of strategies is balanced by the demands of the text. How each child comes to this point, is marked by their individuality.

Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel and Klausner (1985) conducted a six year collaborative project that centered on individual readers. Their collection of information on each child was conducted over time to show growth and detect patterns. The authors observed "ordinary behavior" to gain a "better understanding of how children learn to read". (p.x) They concluded that "learning how to read bears the stamp of a person's individuality".
Their research provided strong evidence for individual approaches in the process of learning to read. The patterns that emerged fell into two clusters. Cluster A children were observed as being imaginative and divergent. They worked in a mobile and fluid manner, their attention was broad and integrative and they used parallel sequencing of thought. Cluster B learners were considered realistic and convergent. Their work manner tended to be contained and methodical and their attention was narrowed and analytic. They preferred linear sequencing of thought. While the children clustered into two groups, Bussis et al. claimed individual orchestration of reading strategies marked each child's growth.

Teale (1986) agreed with the theory that children learn to read in similar ways, marked by their individuality. He stated:

Learning to read and write is a developmental process for young children. However, even though their learning about different aspects of literacy can be described in terms of generalized stages, children pass through these stages in a variety of ways and at different ages. (p. 20)

Teale traces the research on early literacy completed by Ferreiro, Ferreiro and Teberosky, Mason and Sulzby to demonstrate the differences in children's approaches to literacy learning in the preschool years. He believed teachers must "view reading and writing as a process that progresses at the child's individual rate" (p.23).
Recognizing that there are many ways readers come to literacy opens the possibilities for discovering new directions in understanding how children learn to read. Clay (1991) challenged:

If different programmes stress different aspects of the reading process at different times, teachers need to give more sensitive attention to the sequential accumulation of reading processes by individual children. We need to recognize and work with different paths to the same outcome. (p.23)

The choices children make influence the particular path their learning will take. Wells (1986) suggested the active participation of making choices is an important part of children constructing the knowledge they need. This, of course, involves children taking risks in a supportive environment. Smith (1978) suggested the conditions that provide support for children's attempts to learn to read are:

...access to meaningful and interesting reading material (ideally the child's own choice), assistance where needed (and only to the extent that it is required), a willingness to take the necessary risks...and freedom to make mistakes. (p.181)

The pivotal issue in any theory of how children learn to read is keeping the child as the focus. Studies such as Bussis et al. provide implications for teaching and further research. Understanding the active participation of individual children in the process of learning to read, can provide maps to the "different paths" children have taken to literacy.
Self-selecting Texts and Literacy Events

Smith (1973) has claimed:

...the motivation and the direction of learning to read can only come from the child, and he must look for the knowledge and skills that he needs only in the process of reading. (p.195)

Child-directed activities in whole language classrooms place a high demand on the individual to make decisions about what and how they read.

Selecting books for reading may not be new to many children entering school. Their first decisions about texts involved what they wanted to hear at home, preschool or kindergarten. The recountings of repeated readings, because children chose to hear them again, have been presented by many researchers (White, 1956; Clark, 1976; Butler, 1980; Yaden, 1988). The demands for "read it again" enabled the children to gain understandings of the meaning of print. Children may memorize the text to "read" themselves. Sulzby (1985) claimed they are developing their own "strategic, effortful, conceptually-driven behaviors" (p.470) that suggest beginning steps toward reading print.

As children enter school, they are expected to begin to self-direct their learning, particularly in whole language classrooms. Opportunities to choose books and activities occur each day. Gibson (1989) stated that the books children choose tend to:
...promote the growth of the vertical and horizontal aspects of the child's reading repertoire. The reading of materials in which youngsters function as "emergent" readers can be juxtaposed to the fluent reading of old favorites. (p.138)

The types of self-directed text selections children make as they become independent readers is a scarce research topic. A 1985 study by Anderson, Higgins and Wurster compared the free reading selections of older readers. Fourth and sixth grade children regularly picked similar types of books (tall tale, fantasy, adventure, etc.). The authors concluded children should be free to choose a book, "regardless of grade level" (p.329). Also, adults should resist "making judgements about the reading levels of books selected" as being too easy or too hard for the reader (p.329).

Mervar and Hiebert (1989) compared the text selections of children in literature-based and skills-oriented classrooms. Classroom observations were conducted for one week. The authors found the children in the literature-based classroom took longer to select texts than children in the skills-oriented classroom (11.60 minutes versus 2.60 minutes). The children in the literature-based classroom selected "high-quality tradebooks" (p.533). The authors concluded that, although there were limitations to their study,

...the results are provocative enough to encourage us to further examine issues related to children's literature selection and amount of reading. Answers to questions about literature-selection strategies and quantity and quality of children's reading are
important to document... (p.534)

It is difficult to locate empirical work about children's self-selection that involves rereading of texts. Beaver (1982) found repeated readings a desirable part of her reading instruction. Based on preschool children's love for hearing or repeating the same storybook over and over, Beaver added repeat readings to her primary classroom. She stated:

The need for repetition is apparent in many other areas as children develop and gain control over themselves and their environment. (p. 143)

In Voices of Readers: How We Come to Love Books, Carlsen and Sherrill (1988) shared the reading autobiographies of thousands of students in secondary education. The autobiographies, collected over thirty years, tell of the profound effect books had on developing readers. Carlsen and Sherrill stated:

...practically all the (preschool) accounts tell of favorite books that the writers wanted read to them over and over again. (p.7)

Repetition in hearing stories appeared to help the listener in the early processes of learning. The authors suggested that such recounts of early literacy can provide information about developing and encouraging growth in readers.

Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel and Klausner (1985) provided the most detailed work done in reading growth and text selection. They described "Carrie" who used
rereading of texts as a way to gain control over reading. 
For Carrie,

...rereading becomes the principal learning context...the context in which she expands and consolidates her abilities. (p.230)

The records of Carrie's text selections showed that she was constantly choosing new books from the classroom, yet revisiting familiar ones. The authors believed the rereadings "offered a supportive function of offering an opportunity to orchestrate her abilities" (p.231).

Similarly, "Crystal" chose to reread familiar, patterned books. Bussis et al. found a pattern to Crystal's choices - easy and familiar, followed by new, very difficult texts. They believed the easy, patterned books were chosen by Crystal to teach herself to read.

Yaden (1988) maintained the research of rereading in classrooms has been examined only recently. His study of a kindergartner suggested that rereading of stories by teachers help children in literacy and literary development. Huck (1990) agreed:

We are just beginning to recognize the value of rereading stories to children. (p.6)

The value of rereading was evident in a study done by Strong (1988). The at-risk children in her study selected familiar texts to reread on their own. Rereading to the children "benefited their independent reading of the story". (p.310) She concluded that reading familiar books gave children confidence in their
growing literacy skills.

There are many authors who discuss the value of rereadings theoretically. Children reread books to gain control of skills, just as in most new acts (babbling, walking, scribbling). Repetition helps the child gain confidence over her/his new skill. Smith (1985) believed this springboards from hearing text reread:

Young children who read the same book twenty times, even though they know the words by heart, are not avoiding more 'challenging' material in order to avoid learning; they are still learning. It may not be until they know every word in a book in advance that they can get on with some of the more complex aspects of reading, such as testing hypotheses about meaning and learning to use as little visual information as possible.

Meek (1988) suggested that children reread texts after they've discovered what's happened in the story. Then, "they pay attention to the words" (p.36). Gibson (1989) simply stated:

...just as young children love listening to their favorite stories read again and again, so young readers enjoy reading and rereading books of special interest to them. (p.138)

Cornett and Blankenship (1990) suggested the rereadings done during shared reading, in whole language classrooms, encourage children to reread on their own. The children understand it is an acceptable activity. Strong (1988) agreed that rereading books to children places value on the activity within the "literacy community". (p.274) By making shared books that the teacher rereads available, Lamme (1987) suggested
"children can learn to read by rereading familiar books, just as children do at home". (p.43)

Research completed in the area of children's self-selected rereadings is in dire need of expansion. Some studies had children reread to improve fluency (Samuels, 1979), but the books were not of the child's choosing. Martinez and Teale (1988) found when young children were given choices about books to look at, they generally chose familiar texts with predictable structure. Although the kindergartners they observed browsed through unfamiliar texts proportionately to familiar, there was a significant difference in interaction with familiar texts. They concluded that one implication may be that teachers should present more repeated readings to help support emergent literacy. Clay (1991) also supported rereading done by the teacher, followed by rereading done by the child. In this way, children can practice their new strategies on familiar ground. She suggested:

When children are allowed to re-read familiar material they are being allowed to learn to be readers, to read in ways which draw on all their language resources and knowledge of the world, to put this very complex recall and sequencing behaviour into a fluent rendering of the text. (p.184)

The questions remain - if allowed to self-select, will beginning readers choose to reread familiar texts and when do they branch out to the unfamiliar? This study attempted to address those questions.
Summary

Three issues central to this study were reviewed:
- literacy learning in a whole language classroom,
- the individual task of learning to read, and
- self-selecting texts.

Understanding the events in a whole language classroom provides the setting for this study. This environment allowed children to use self-selected texts in a variety of ways. Focusing on the individuality of children and the choices they made, signalled growth as independent readers. The following chapter presents the methodology for conducting this study.
CHAPTER III
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the texts and literacy events first grade children self-select. The research questions outlined in Chapter I suggested the need to obtain information concerning each child's growth in reading and writing, while observing the choices they made. The combination of observations, conversations and assessments provided a variety of information about each child. "The significant question to be asked is what [and how] a person has learned, not if a person has learned" (Bussis, et al., 1985, p.15). A variety of methods were employed to provide a multi-faceted picture of the learner.

To observe the children of this study, prior fieldwork was conducted to inform a research design. Initial arrangements for entering the site were made during Fall, 1989. At that time, the research questions and possible methods for investigation were discussed with the classroom teacher. From January through March 1990, periodic visits were conducted to determine possible data sources. Each subsequent visit refined or forged new ideas for methodology. The remainder of this
chapter describes the research methodology used in terms of: population and setting; data collection; the researcher's role; trustworthiness; and an overview of the data analysis.

**Population and Setting of the Study**

Personal circumstances afforded access to a first grade classroom in a suburban school district of a large midwestern city. My experience as a student teacher supervisor in the district provided an inside view of it's whole language program. Literature is used in the elementary classrooms on a daily basis, both for instructional and independent reading. In many of the classrooms, the children are responsible for selecting some of what they read. The selection and use of literature were important features to allow the maximum opportunity to observe children selecting and using texts in a variety of ways.

In Fall, 1989 I approached Mrs. B. about completing a graduate course assignment in her class. A sense of collegiality developed between us, and when I approached Mrs. B. about conducting my dissertation research in her classroom, she enthusiastically invited me to do so. The building principal and assistant superintendent were consulted and approval to conduct research was given.
Mrs. B. has been a first grade teacher for eleven years. She has a Master's degree in Early and Middle Childhood Education with a Supervision certificate. She described her classroom as "free, but structured". Within the structure she likes to allow choice. While she may maintain a "plan" in her head, the children have a great deal of input in classroom events. Her planning is process oriented and she believes in "praise and encouragement". She tries to know her students as personally as possible. Overall, she strives to meet the individual needs of her students. The specific classroom context is described in detail in Chapter IV of this report.

Mrs. B.'s first grade was one of four in the building. There were also three morning and two afternoon kindergartens, and four sections each of second, third, fourth and fifth grades. There were one teacher and one interpreter of hearing impaired, one teacher for learning disabilities, a learning disabilities tutor, two Reading Recovery teachers (a first grade early intervention reading program), and one teacher each for speech, art, music, physical education, English as Second Language (ESL) and gifted. Additional staff consisted of two secretaries (one full-time, one half-time), a librarian and two half-time aides, a guidance counselor, nurse and psychologist.
In general, the school served a wide variety of students. There were approximately 600 children. The majority were classified as middle class, but the continuum spread from poor (qualifying for free lunch) to wealthy (whose homes are valued in the $200,000+ range). Many of the students were white. There was also an interesting mix of ethnic and racial backgrounds. These included Swedish, Australian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, East Indian, Egyptian and Black.

The classes were self-contained, but there was some flexible grouping. The staff planned many school-wide literature related activities. There were also jointly planned units by the grade levels, carried out in the individual classrooms.

The principal assigned the children to their grade level teachers during the summer. The principal used teacher and counselor input to achieve a heterogenous grouping. No specific requests were made for this study in regard to the reading ability profile of the class. In this way, a typical first grade mix of abilities was available for observation. Mrs B.'s initial roster listed twenty-three children - ten girls and thirteen boys. In early February one boy was added to the class.

Initially, all twenty-three children were observed and given several assessments. After several weeks, ten children became the focus for this study. Selections
were made to provide a range of readers. Of the ten, some were already reading, others were not. A few of the children were quiet and shy about volunteering in the class. Others were quite verbal in their feelings, questions and ideas. The criteria for selecting the focus children emerged in September. The following factors were considered:

(1) a range that reflected the variety of reading ability with the class. For example, one-third of the class (8) were within the instructional levels 3 through 8, therefore approximately one-third of the focus children (2) were from that instructional range.

(2) diversity within a particular instructional level. This included children's interest in writing over reading and their ability to encode words in September.

(3) a variety of risk-taking behavior. Risk-taking behavior was defined as the children's willingness to move away from the familiar or to attempt something new on their own (such as trying a new strategy or choosing a new activity or text).

(4) a displayed difference in approaches to literacy learning. Some of the children always read with a buddy, others chose to read alone. Many seemed intensely interested in reading, others used much of their time writing.

The focus group reflected the variety within the class, had a diversity of approaches to literacy learning and differed in degrees of risk taking. The specifics of how each focus child was selected, are discussed in Chapter V.

One final consideration in reference to the population and setting was the ethics of observing
children in their established educational setting. The school district did not have specific guidelines. Therefore, after the initial proposal was filed with and approved by the assistant superintendent, all additions to the on-going procedures were cleared with the building principal. A letter notifying the parents of my presence and purpose was sent the second week of school (Appendix B). Accompanying the letter was a questionnaire for the parents to complete. The questionnaire is described in detail in the following data collection section.

**Data Collection**

Observations began the first day of school - August 29, 1990. A combination of techniques was used to yield a variety of data for comparison. This included systematic assessment for baseline testing, observations, recording of self-selected literature, planned conversations with the children, parent questionnaires, and document collecting. A full description of each is presented below.

**Systematic Assessment**

Several forms of inquiry were used to establish baseline information about each student in the class. In combination with other data sources, the assessments helped profile each child's status as a beginning reader. The assessments were chosen to coincide with those
already used as part of the first grade evaluation completed by the teachers.

The Concepts About Print Test (Clay, 1985) was used to identify each child's understanding of print, books, specific letters and words as they entered first grade. She states:

'Concepts About Print' has proved to be a sensitive indicator of one group of behaviors which support reading acquisition. As non-readers become readers changes occur in 'Concepts About Print' scores. The test is able to capture changes over time. (p.27)

The Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge (Schlagal, 1982) was used to gather information about the children's knowledge of representing words in print. This inventory contains graded lists of words that assess a child's conceptual knowledge of words. The child's strategies for encoding can be evaluated. The first list tests use of short and long vowels, nasal consonants, beginning and ending consonants, blends and consonant digraphs (see Appendix C). Scores were converted to independent and instructional levels. Lists of greater difficulty were administered until a score of 50% or below was obtained. The lists were administered again in January to measure growth in word knowledge.

Running records were taken by the Reading Recovery teacher or myself for each child in the room. The child's instructional level was established through use of graded readings (see grade level equivalents, Appendix
A). This information was used by Mrs B. to help form small, temporary reading groups. This also informed the Reading Recovery teacher of children that qualified for either individualized lessons or small group, daily instruction (called Bear's Den). In January, running records were taken using the same graded passages. The desire was to present the children with a text they had not used in class to eliminate the possibility of memorization. Instructional level was determined and compared to the first set of records to measure growth. Additionally, by listening to the children "tackle the print" (McKenzie, 1986), strategies they used to read were noted.

Observations

Erickson (1986) suggests:

It is necessary to begin observing...in the most comprehensive fashion possible. Later in the research process one moves in successive stages to more restricted observation focus. (p.143)

Therefore, observations of all twenty-three children were conducted during the entire school day. Time periods for collecting data concerning self-selection of texts and literacy events became apparent after several weeks. The opportunities for collecting the most informative data were during:

(1) Free choice (before the 9:00 a.m. tardy bell and when the child's morning work was completed and various texts, work centers and writing workshop folders were available for choice).
(2) **B.E.A.R. time** (Being Excited About Reading - an independent reading program that allowed self-selection of text. This was held at a specific time each day.).

(3) **Buddy reading** (two children reading together - either using the same text, or next to each other with texts of individual choosing).

(4) **Journal writing** (spiral notebooks the children wrote in regarding something "on their mind") and writing workshop folder (used during a specific time each day and available as a free choice activity. The children worked with ongoing stories for publishing).

The same four observation times were used for the ten focus children selected.

Complete fieldnotes were entered into the word processor at the end of each visit. Marshall and Rossman (1989) have suggested while many schemata exist for recording data on charts or checklists,

such techniques may streamline data management... [but,] much design flexibility may be lost. The serendipitous finding may not survive such techniques. (p.115)

Narrative notes were entered into two parallel columns, a wide one for fieldnotes and one smaller column for preliminary coding and observer comments.

Miles and Huberman (1984) have argued that "the great advantage of qualitative research is that it can change direction easily and refocus data collection". (p.29) Data analysis and collection were ongoing processes throughout the research.
Noting Literature Choices

Choices were noted when the children could independently choose big books, trade books, poetry and self-published books to read. Prior fieldwork had indicated that periods before the morning bell (8:45 - 9:00 a.m.), during work time, during B.E.A.R. time, at the school library, and during indoor recess provided observable events. These times were confirmed during the study as important to the self-selection of texts. Each child's choice for reading (texts, poems, bulletin boards, etc.) was noted and transferred to individual sheets. This allowed for comparison of self-selection over time.

The children were invited to choose something to read to me after all assessments were given. Books, both familiar and unfamiliar, as well as poetry and their own published stories were available for them to choose. What they chose to read, the type of help they needed to complete the reading and how they handled the task were a rich source of data.

The invitation to read to me was formally used twice during data collection (September and January). This took place during regular "free choice" time, thereby maintaining the regular order of the day. Fieldnotes of each reading were compared across time to other information gathered about the reader in order to
evaluate growth.

Conversing With the Children

Informal conversations with the children were utilized to discuss their perceptions of reading and selecting texts. Techniques for these conversations were established during the prior fieldwork Winter Quarter, 1990. While there were questions to guide the discussion (see Appendix D), particular answers altered some of the individual conversations. Previous experience had proven that children will freely talk with someone they feel comfortable with. Therefore, planned conversations did not begin until the children and I became well acquainted. The focus children were presented with questions at two specific times during the research - immediately after the assessments were complete and again before withdrawing from the site. The questions before withdrawal were slightly different, as new issues had become important to ask the children to discuss (Appendix E).

Due to the nature of individual differences in development, impromptu discussions were conducted at other times during the study. These were prompted by observations of changes in reading strategies or attempts to read new texts. B.E.A.R. time was particularly important for spur of the moment questions such as:

Tell me why you chose this book to read.
Why did you decide to put that book back?
How did you do reading that book?
Did any words give you trouble?
The observations guided the decisions to have the children talk about their own progress in learning to read.

**Parent Questionnaires**

Stake (1978) claims "one of the primary ways of increasing validity is by triangulation". (p.263) One source for yielding another perspective on observations of the children was a questionnaire sent home to all parents of Mrs. B's first grade students (Appendix F). The questionnaire accompanied the introductory letter sent the first full week of school. The parents were asked to return it by the end of the week. Any parents not returning the questionnaire were sent another with a reminder note the next week. Of the twenty-three children, only two did not return a parent questionnaire.

The format for this questionnaire was developed during Winter Quarter, 1990. Mrs. B. was initially consulted for general input of the topics covered by the questions. Three parents whose children were in first grade at that time were asked to complete the questionnaire. Immediately following the form return, I contacted each parent for feedback about the questions. Several suggestions were made and changes were completed. During this time, the form went through four revisions. The intent was to devise a questionnaire that could
broaden the picture of the learner obtained through classroom observations.

Another questionnaire was sent to the parents in mid-November. They were asked to rate their child's willingness to attempt various activities (Appendix G). The parents checked a continuum ranging from "will try under own initiative" to "will generally not try on own" for a variety of activities. Among the activities were the child's willingness to reread a familiar book, choose a new book, and/or attempt to read books someone else had already presented to the child. As with the September questionnaire, the desire was to confirm or refute findings suggested by classroom observations. Every parent in the classroom returned the November questionnaire. It was apparent that these "partners" in their children's education could provide a richer picture of the growing learner.

Documents

The primary focus of this study was to understand how children self-select texts and participate in literacy events as they become independent readers. In the "process" oriented activities planned in Mrs. B.'s room, reading and writing often occur jointly. Therefore, some of their writings were collected for study. Writing workshop folders were analyzed for movement toward conventional spellings. Sentence
structure and story language were often modeled after experiences with literature. Written stories provided a window for developing language. Writing was a favorite activity for some of the children. Home produced writings were often brought to school to share with Mrs. B, myself and/or the other children. The information gathered about writings was used in analysis of the total learner, and not as a separate feature of this study.

Any use of the children's photocopied written work was through the consent of the parents. Permission was sought after the importance of some of the documents became apparent (Appendix H). Of the twenty-three permission slips sent home, two were not returned. Work by those two children is not included in this report.

Other Data Sources

There were many activities within Mrs. B.'s routine that were used for additional information. About once a month she asked the children to write words they knew how to spell. Sheets were provided with boxes labeled with each letter of the alphabet. The children were given ten to fifteen minutes to write words in the boxes. During this "writing spree", Mrs. B. prompted the children with ideas for words (i.e.: names you know, words you've written in stories, etc.). The sheets were cumulative, and the children were encouraged to add new words each time. This provided a wide range of information. The
children's overall totals were compared both to their previous work and to other totals in the class.

Mrs. B. also tape recorded the children reading a book each month. This was added to throughout the year. The children were to record a book of their choice. Mrs. B. gave them a one or two day notice so books from home or the class might be chosen for recording. These choices were added to the analysis of self-selection.

There were many whole class activities, such as The Class News Book and their Poetry notebook, which provided additional texts for reading. The Poetry notebook, in particular, was often reread by the children. These were compiled over the year and kept in each child's desk. The poetry notebooks were available as a choice for self-selected reading.

Mrs. B. was another source for triangulation of the data. Observations about individual reader growth were discussed. Mrs. B. met individually with the children to hear them read and maintained reading record sheets for each child (see form, Appendix 1). Mrs. B. noted what the child read and if the child had chosen the text or if she had suggested it. She noted reading errors and self-corrections, when and how she had to provide help, and her evaluation of the child's willingness to take risks during the reading. She added anecdotal notes concerning conversations about the book or the child's performance.
These records, coupled with her insights about the individual learners in her class, added another dimension to information gathered about the children.

**Data Collection Time Frame**

Observations were conducted August 29, 1990 through mid-February 1991. The first three weeks consisted of full time, daily observations. This rendered information about the times in the day that were most conducive to data collection. These times were from 8:45 (when they entered the classroom) until lunch and during B.E.A.R. time in the afternoon. The remainder of September and the next four and one-half months consisted of focused observations of the children. These generally took place three to four days per week.

**The Researcher's Role**

As an observer in this first grade classroom, there were many factors to consider. While I was an additional adult in the room, I was not the teacher. The children, however, often viewed me as such, and the negotiation of my position and authority (or lack of it) occurred almost immediately. Certainly, the design of this study required personal interaction with individual children, and distancing myself from them would not have provided the rich descriptions needed. At the same time, I did not wish to somehow influence events due to my presence.
Striking the balance of observer and participant was carefully established by deferring many questions and requests to Mrs. B., while at the same time, becoming part of situations that could further inform data collection. My approach was that of reactive field entry (Cosaro, 1981). The reactive approach allows the child to take the lead. The children were often coming to me for help in spelling a word, attempts at reading a word or reviewing a direction. I responded by trying to elicit some possible answers to their own questions. This kept the response low key and away from instruction. Their questions were often informative about concepts they were struggling with. My presence could not be concealed, and to only observe would have led to voids in understanding the construction of meaning that was taking place (Denzin, 1989). I was more than a simple observer. By immersing myself in what Denzin (1989) calls the "culture of the classroom" I tried, as suggested by Erickson (1986), to "investigate the slippery phenomena of everyday interaction" (p.120) with texts.

**Trustworthiness**

A researcher's diary or reflexive journal was maintained throughout the study. This journal traced decisions made in the methodology, such as judgments to engage children in conversations, the selection of focus
children, the redefining of categories, the addition of a book sorting task, as well as the reasoning for such decisions. My personal belief in the use of children's literature could have "colored" what I saw. However, my personal primary teaching experience was with traditional phonics series. My previous schemata for growth in reading was a lock-step sequence. At the same time, I believed that using real books was an important aspect of learning to love reading. The children I observed were not instructed in a step-wise manner. Watching them gain independence in reading was through a new "set of lenses" for me. While knowing the process of teaching reading, my desire to understand how readers self-selected texts continued to make daily events informative. The journal was also a place to jot questions I had about events, ideas I wanted to discuss with Mrs. B. and questions I wanted to ask the children. Once in writing, these notions could be reviewed for use or discarded.

In my role as researcher I also had to consider the use of myself, the human, as an instrument. Decisions about observing, categorizing and interpreting all filtered through my "lens". Keeping careful fieldnotes, a complete reflexive journal, and documentation when appropriate provided a "paper trace" of the direction this study took. While there can never be, as Eisner (1988) stated "a value-neutral approach to the world"
(p.19), making available one's trail of decisions provides additional credibility to any study.

Another technique to assure rigor was to member check findings and emerging categories with Mrs. B. Informal meetings were held when the children were at lunch, recess or "specials" (art, physical education, music). My perceptions were checked against Mrs. B.'s experiences with the children. Important points from the meetings were recorded in the reflexive journal. Planned, formal meetings were held twice during the school year. Once mid-way through data collection, and once two months after withdrawing from the site. During the first meeting, fieldnotes were shared and discussed. This provided some new insights into the data collected. The second meeting provided Mrs. B. an opportunity to review my preliminary findings and respond to them. We agreed on major points, at the same time new insights were added to data analysis. Mrs. B. was also given each chapter of this report to read after each major revision. Her personal notes confirmed the accuracy of the report.

Peer debriefing was conducted approximately every other week with a small group of doctoral students in the midst of their own data collection and analysis. These colleagues, while also looking at some relationship between classrooms and literacy, had very different focuses. Our on-going studies provided a common base,
yet brought new perspectives to the sorting and categorizing of data. For example, the peer group suggested the use of *The Reading Recovery Booklist* (Peterson, 1990) as a means to evaluate the book selections. This brought a significant change in how the text selections were analyzed. The text levels were a way to see how a single child changed over time. The levels were also compared to the child's current instructional reading level. What was found as a result of using the list was then discussed with the group at a later date. Participation in the group discussions was most beneficial.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data collection and analysis were on-going. Because fieldnotes were typed into the computer after each visit, the entire day could be reviewed. Events a child participated in early in the day could be compared to events later in the day. Individual recording was completed each day for text selections, allowing comparisons across time to occur. From the analysis of events and texts selected, categories were formed. The categories were used to both guide and question subsequent observations. The categories were revised, as needed, to illuminate the importance of the events observed.
The results of the *Concepts About Print* (Clay, 1985), *Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge* (Schlagal, 1982) and the running records were analyzed two ways. First, a pre- and post-test analysis of scores was completed. Second, a qualitative analysis of the changes from the first assessments, through data collection, to the second assessments, provided information about change in reading strategies. For example, the child may have used graphic cues in September, but by January was using graphic and semantic cues when reading. Photocopies of the children's written work was analyzed in a similar manner. Growth in encoding, informed by growing reading strategies, was assessed.

To aid in the analysis of the children's text selections, the *Reading Recovery Booklist* (Peterson, 1990) was used. The texts are "leveled", or placed on a continuum that considers, according to Peterson (in press):

> content in relation to children's personal experiences, language patterns, vocabulary, illustration support for the meaning of the text, and narrative style. (p.7)

The booklist helps Reading Recovery teachers select texts for lessons. The levels are only guidelines. The individual reader remains an important consideration in evaluating what may be an "easy" or "difficult" text. The list did provide a way to compare self-selected texts for a single reader, but was not used to make
instructional decisions in the classroom. The list was used only in my notebook where daily text selections were recorded. By not identifying the texts in any way within the classroom, the children could self-select texts at any level of difficulty.

Finally, planned and unplanned conversations were analyzed for insights into the child's growing independence in reading. Self-evaluative statements were highlighted and studied for indications of change.

The analysis of data presented in the next three chapters are - the descriptive data, the ten focus children and a cross case analysis. First, Chapter IV describes the curricular setting that encouraged particular classroom events significant to the observations gathered. Next, Chapter V presents patterns that emerged concerning self-selection of texts and literacy events established for each focus child. Finally, patterns found across the ten focus children are discussed in Chapter VI. These patterns are summarized and implications are drawn in Chapter VII.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology for this study. This included:

- Population and setting;
- Data collection - consisting of systematic
assessment, observations, noting literature choices, conversing with the children, parent questionnaires and document collection;

- The researcher's role;
- Trustworthiness;
- Data analysis and interpretation.

The emergent quality of such a study afforded the possibility of unforeseen sources of data, but also demanded careful documentation as the research progressed. Consideration of the children observed, triangulation, maintenance of a reflexive journal and availability of notes, records and documentation were employed to establish trustworthiness. The next three chapters provide a description and analysis of the data collected.
CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTIVE DATA:

THE CONTEXT OF THE CLASSROOM

The surroundings in which this research took place were significant to observing the children self-selecting texts. Not only were the physical aspects of the classroom important, but also what Mrs. B. did to encourage the children to direct their own learning. An atmosphere of shared learning was a factor in being able to observe many of the events that took place in this whole language classroom. How the children worked together, and yet remained individual learners, created many avenues for literacy learning.

Room 20

Upon entering Mrs. B.'s room, one was immediately struck by the profusion of print. Every bit of wall space was used to display something for the children to read. The children created the majority of the "readable walls" over the course of the school year. Many group efforts were employed to compile word family posters, science predictions and observations, and so on. Changing exhibits of individual work were displayed, such
as literature extensions, bird reports, New Year's resolutions and stories written. These displays, along with other classroom materials were sources for print reading. The children were often observed using the displays, a beginner dictionary, illustrated word cards and available texts to check the spelling of a word. Mrs. B.'s intent was to have materials available to the children to solve their own problems and direct their own learning.

The physical set-up of the room encouraged movement and decision making (see Figure 1). A large open area on the carpet was used for "circle" (group activities such as "show and tell") or for sitting in front of the big book stand during shared reading. Later in the day the children used this area for their own reading or writing activities.

Next to the open area was a cardboard divider. This designated the "Reading Corner". There were four locations for selecting books within the corner. One basket held classroom books that the children had heard during shared reading or that they had read at the reading table with Mrs. B. A small copy of a big book was placed there after the group had heard it several times. Whenever a small group read at the table, Mrs. B. asked a child to place several copies in the basket. The contents continued to grow throughout the year. A second
Figure 1. Map of Room 20
basket and a wood rack held the current library collection. Every four weeks, Mrs. B. made a trip to the local public library and chose 40 - 50 trade books to keep in the corner. Some of the books were renewed if the children requested her to do so. Therefore, some of the library books remained in the classroom for as long as eight weeks. The fourth location for books was a metal spinner. This held a permanent classroom collection of "easy" readers. These were available from the first day of school, and the collection on the spinner did not change. These books were popular selections at the beginning of the school year because the text was short and highly illustrated. Across the four locations, then, approximately 100 books were available at any one time for the children to use for self-selection. The children were allowed to take books from the corner and read anywhere in the room, or they could stay in the corner and sit on the large floor pillow.

Another source for texts to read was the "Young Author Shelf". At the beginning of the year, the shelf consisted of the cumulative weekly "Class News" notebooks of the previous and current years, two stories written by Mrs. B. and a story written by Mr. B. (a picture book he wrote in high school). When Mrs. B. introduced the writing workshop, she modeled how to write, edit and then
publish a story. This story, called "The Mystery of the Lost Children" was added to the shelf. Thereafter, each time a child published a story, it was placed on the shelf for everyone to read. For many of the children, the availability of their own published work became an important cornerstone to their reading.

The big books Mrs. B. read to the children were yet one more source for texts to self-select. The large copy remained available on the stand, small copies were placed with it, and sometimes a recording of the story was available at the tape player. This allowed the children several ways to reread the story presented during shared reading.

Overall, there were many types of text available for the children to select. The library books were present for a least four weeks, sometimes eight. The other texts were accessible indefinitely. The availability of the texts for rereading, or for returning to after a period of time became a crucial element in the children's opportunities for self-selection. At no time were the children required to keep records of the books they chose to read. There was never reference made regarding a repeated reading of a text. There appeared to be no competition among the children to read a certain number of books since no record was kept. What a child read and how many times that text was revisited was never
an issue for Mrs. B. or the children. The children were empowered to make the decision each day regarding what to read.

Mrs. B.

Empowering the children to make decisions was undeniably an important factor in the events that were observed in this classroom. The children were fully informed of the day's events through the use of a written schedule. Mrs. B.'s techniques for teaching reading often involved the children making individual choices as well as opportunities for them to make other choices throughout the day. Additionally, learning activities were planned that often required interaction and cooperation to complete.

Daily Schedule

Mrs. B. began each morning by meeting in a circle on the open carpeted area and writing the day's schedule on chart paper. The children referred to the chart sporadically for three types of information: when they wanted to know what was next; when they questioned at what point in the day a particular event was to occur; and when they needed the spelling of a word printed on the chart. Mrs. B. did not refer back to the chart on the day it was written, but left it in view for the children to use if needed. The next morning, Mrs. B.
would review the day before, checking off each completed event. Then, the new day's chart would be written.

Generally, the daily schedule was:

9:00 - 9:20 -- Opening (attendance, lunch count, pledge, song, weather chart, calendar), a group inclusion activity, and writing the day's schedule.
9:20 - 10:30 -- Reading (shared reading and discussion of a big book), seatwork and individual or small group work and conferences.
10:30 - 10:45 -- Recess
10:50 - 11:40 -- Writer's workshop
11:45 - 12:15 -- Lunch
12:30 - 1:10 -- Math
1:10 - 1:25 -- Handwriting
1:25 - 2:05 -- Art or Physical Education
2:05 - 2:35 -- Science/Social Studies/Health
2:35 - 2:55 -- B.E.A.R.
2:55 - 3:15 -- Journal writing
3:15 - 3:30 -- Prepare for dismissal

The weekly exception to this schedule was a rotated late time slot (2:45 - 3:25) for Music. On those days, Science/Social Studies/Health, B.E.A.R. and journal writing were moved up to after handwriting, followed by Music. Also, on Wednesday, the children visited the school library from 9:45 until 10:15. Before library, was B.E.A.R. time. Afterwards, the children shared the title of the book they had checked out. This often generated interest in "borrowing" books from each other during B.E.A.R. time. Regardless of the necessary adjustments to the schedule, Mrs. B. tried to maintain B.E.A.R. and reading time.
Teaching Reading

Mrs. B.'s whole language philosophy was apparent in her techniques for teaching reading. Her approach was threefold through the use of large group shared reading, occasional small group work, and individual reading and conferencing.

Throughout the data collection period, Mrs. B. used a shared reading presentation of big books to begin each reading instruction time. When a big book was introduced for the first time, Mrs. B. had the children read the title and discuss what they thought the book might be about by looking at the cover. She asked the children to follow along with their eyes as she read the story through the first time. At the end of the reading, she invited them to comment about anything they wanted. This was usually phrased: "Is there anything you want to talk about or that you noticed?". This had two divergent reactions. One was to talk about the story, the other was to talk about the words in the text. Over time, the second reaction was most common, since Mrs. B. often used the story to draw attention to specific features of words. For example, on January 7, Mrs. B. read *The Jigaree* to the children. The next day, after rereading the story, she pointed out all the "-ing" words. She explained the ending shows "action" and had the children tell the root words. They then generated their own
"action" words and added these to a list Mrs. B. wrote on large paper for display. The use of action words was integrated into Science later in the day, when she discussed "push-pull" movement with the children.

The rereading of the big book was also part of her usual plan. The story was typically reread each morning for the remainder of the week. The children were involved in the rereading. This was done a number of ways. If the story had several character parts, the children might have read a particular segment of conversation. Or, the children may have been divided in some way, each reading different pages. Mrs. B. devised a number of ways to encourage the children to try to read along during the whole group lessons.

From mid-September through mid-December, small groups of children read together at the reading table. The group of children and the stories they read were chosen by Mrs. B. The groups were children with a similar skill level. The groups constantly changed, based on Mrs. B.'s current evaluation of reading strategies the children were using. The stories Mrs. B. chose were either small copies of the big book for that week or one from the Literacy 2000 series. When reading a story for the first time, the children worked cooperatively to derive meaning from the text. Through the group's efforts, the children provided support to
each other, taking the lead when they chose. During the reading, Mrs. B. questioned the children as to what they could do if they were stuck on a word. She tried to elicit three responses: (1) look at the picture, (2) skip it and come back to it to see what might make sense, and (3) use the letters to help sound out parts to the word. She also encouraged them to use a combination of the three techniques. After the reading, Mrs. B discussed ideas in the story, specific words and/or what they did as readers that was particularly successful. Mrs. B. intended this discussion time to be direct instruction. By mid-December, these small group lessons were discontinued, and Mrs. B. increased her time for meeting individually with the children.

The individual reading and conferencing were Mrs. B.'s predominant devices for instruction. The books for these lessons were selected in two ways. First, the children were given specific parameters for choice (e.g. a current collection by a particular author, such as Frank Asch or by Mrs. B. saying "Choose something you haven't read before and bring it to the table"). Second, Mrs. B. asked the children to "bring me what you're reading so I can hear you read". This technique was used during B.E.A.R. time and whenever she observed them reading during free choice. She wrote notes each time about what and how the child read. Her notations most
commonly recorded miscues, self-corrections, willingness to take risk, strategies used and ability to monitor own reading. She used this one-on-one time to help the reader sort through specific difficulties, and encouraged them to verbalize options for solving problems they had. Overall, in the process of monitoring the children's learning, Mrs. B. tried to make the individual reading and conferencing a time to encourage the children to take charge of their own literacy learning.

**Provisions For Choice**

As mentioned in the physical aspects of the room, Mrs. B. provided many opportunities for the children to make decisions about the materials they used. Once they selected a text or activity, the children also had the choice of where in the room to sit.

There was a large collection of books for the children to choose for reading. These books were chosen to represent a variety of text difficulty and genres. Mrs. B. tried to choose books with natural language, supportive illustrations, and topics that she thought would interest the children.

Three times during the data collection period, Mrs. B. had requested books by a specific author from the public library. On November 5, multiple copies of eighteen different Pat Hutchins' books were brought into the classroom. The books varied in format and
difficulty. A few children at a time were asked to the table during morning work time to choose a Hutchins' book to read. After choosing, they explained to Mrs. B. why they had picked the book and then took it to keep in their desks. During the week, the children spent the first ten minutes of seatwork time reading the Hutchins' book they had chosen. Mrs. B. called children to the table to read aloud. This was done in small groups (designated by the same title), or on an individual basis. When a child finished one book, they could "trade it in" for another. These could also be read during free choice or B.E.A.R. time. Two other author collections consisted of multiple copies of sixteen different Frank Asch books on December 10 and ten different Mercer Mayer books on January 8. Each author's collection was handled in the same way. While there were specific parameters for selection, the children not only were expected to choose, but also to justify that choice.

Many formats were available for revisiting a big book story (ie: big and small copy, tape recording). These were available immediately after hearing the book for the first time. The small copies remained accessible from that point forward, without ever being removed from the reading corner basket. Because Mrs. B. reread the stories to the class during the week of initial introduction, the children saw revisiting these texts as
both permissible and desirable.

The children were given times throughout the day for choice regarding specific activities. The children had several options before the 9:00 a.m. bell rang, when morning work was completed or during indoor recess. The work center table had four activities that changed about once a month. These included cut and color papers, writing activities, handwriting practice and projects tied into a current holiday or theme (animals, zoo, etc.). The tabletop had a wooden divider that separated the work area into four parts. The only limitation for visiting these centers was regarding the activities that had a page the children were to complete. The class list was posted, and when they had done the center, they crossed off their name. Any work produced at the table was placed in an individual file folder, which Mrs. B. reviewed periodically.

Another option the children had was to get their writing workshop folder and work on their current story. These were kept in a basket on the reading table, and were easily accessible to the children. They could take the folder to their desk, work at the table or go somewhere else in the room so as not to disturb others. When they opened the folder, the children consistently reread their current story from the beginning, and then began to write. Other children working in writing
folders often formed small groups. They read their stories to each other, asked for ideas, requested spellings and often discussed where their story was "headed". The way the children organized themselves to write during free time resembled regular writing workshop time.

Writing in a location of the child's choosing was a carry over from B.E.A.R. time. Every nook and cranny was available to the children to take a book to read during free choice as well as B.E.A.R. time. Children sat on the pillow in the reading corner, at the reading table, on the large carpeted area, at desks (not necessarily their own), in the cubbies and at the science table. They could also choose to read with someone. There was a limit of two children together, but three were left together if Mrs. B. judged the reading as being productive. The choices of where to read and with whom were always left to the child. Mrs. B. intervened only if a twosome were having problems (arguing over the book or whose turn it was) or if a child was making no choice.

Overall, Mrs. B. tried to find ways to make the child a decision-maker. She did not believe in "busy work" and wanted the children actively involved in their own learning. When group instruction was necessary, Mrs. B. found ways to allow for student input. She also planned many shared learning experiences.
Shared Learning

Two distinct types of shared learning were observed in Mrs. B.'s classroom. One type was purposefully planned and directed by her. The other type was unplanned, but permitted.

The shared reading lessons discussed earlier were springboards for a number of activities that required group participation. For example, after the children heard Mrs. Wishy Washy, a story about animals getting muddy, Mrs. B. had the group brainstorm what other animals could have been included. After talking about the possibilities, the children were each given a sheet with the repeated pattern. The sentence had been altered to have blanks to be filled in by the children. These were then illustrated and put together in a book. This "book" was available in the reading corner for the children to choose to read. Often, a child took the pages over to the "author" and asked for help in reading the sentence they had completed. The individual child became the authority for that page, and could share that knowledge with other children. Many sets of pages were created to go with a number of the big books read in class.

Thinking aloud as a group or trying together to solve problems was often used by Mrs. B. to teach math and science lessons. She planned many science lessons
that encouraged the children to make some predictions, to observe and then to discuss together what they saw. In math, she often set up situations where the children had to create a number of answers to solve a problem. The group brainstorming was used in smaller groups for other activities. For example, groups of four or five children wrote and drew all the words they knew about Christmas. These small groups came back to the whole group to share what they had written. In general, there were many opportunities for a child to express ideas and have the group listen and respond to them.

The opportunities the children had to read anywhere in the room and with anyone they chose were the outstanding features of the undirected, shared learning experiences observed in this classroom. When making these choices, the children used each other as sources for help and interaction during reading of texts. Children were permitted to seek help from each other when they could not read a word. Because moving around during reading was allowed, the help seeking events occurred fairly unnoticed. This was also observed during writing workshop time as children asked how to spell words, for new ideas or needed someone to listen to their story.

When reading a self-selected book, the children could "buddy read", that is, read with one other child. This was observed to occur a number of ways. First, the
child invited someone to read, and they went together to choose a book. Second, the child had a book and someone requested to read along. Third, the child noticed someone reading a text of interest and invited her/himself into the reading. The pairings were undirected by Mrs. B. Because the children were allowed to choose who to "buddy read" with, the pairings continued to change over the course of the data collection time.

Overall, Mrs. B. tried to use a number of techniques to encourage the children to make choices. She often spent time eliciting ideas from the children of ways to handle academic and social problems. She tried to create a community of learners who were charged with many responsibilities concerning their own literacy learning.

**The Children in Room 20**

In August, the population of the class was ten girls and thirteen boys. One boy was added to the class in February. Of the initial twenty-three children, seven were new to the school.

Mrs. B. evaluated all the children in September. She ranked the children and, as usual, recommended the bottom 20% of her list for evaluation by the Reading Recovery teachers. The Reading Recovery teachers also assessed the new children to help Mrs. B. plan
instruction. After the testing, Mrs B. was able to see what the children new to the district understood, how much the children moving up from kindergarten had grown over the summer and which children might qualify for placement in Reading Recovery or "Bear's Den" (small group tutoring). Mrs. B. assessed letter and sound knowledge. She also used a writing assessment checklist that evaluated the child's ability to write letters, words and sentences. The Reading Recovery teachers used six diagnostic tests to rank all the first graders tested (the bottom 20% of each classroom). The Reading Recovery teachers grouped three children from Mrs. B.'s class for "Bear's Den". The assessments completed by the Reading Recovery teachers also helped Mrs. B. plan activities based on the needs of the children.

The data collection began by observing all twenty-three children. After approximately two weeks, it was determined that a smaller number would be needed if the observations were to yield information about how the children were self-selecting texts. During the next three to four weeks, information was gathered to help determine the focus children. Mrs. B. helped with selection based on assessment profiles, one-to-one work conducted by myself or Mrs. B., and our observations. A range of readers was desired (as described in Chapter III). The children appeared to Mrs. B. and myself as
varying in willingness to take risks. All these factors were taken into consideration to focus on a smaller number of children. While ten children were the focus for observation, some data was collected concerning other children in the class. This was due primarily to the "buddy reading", seeking help from a friend, working together in their writing folders and the selecting of library books that involved one of the focus children. The entire social context of some events was important to consider in analyzing their meanings to the focus children.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the significant and relevant factors in Mrs. B.'s whole language classroom. The physical set-up of the class encouraged movement and decision making. Mrs. B.'s strategies to create an atmosphere of shared learning, cooperation, choice and participation in literacy learning, placed much responsibility in the children's hands. By having at least 100 books in the classroom for self-selection, the children directed their own reading. Revisiting of texts was permitted. The children were not asked to keep records of books read, thus making other texts (poetry, self-published books and pages compiled by the class) also acceptable. These were all important factors
influencing the self-selection observed in Room 20. The next chapter presents each of the ten focus children, traces their growth in reading and writing strategies, analyzes their self-selection and identifies patterns observed.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF SELF-SELECTION -
THE FOCUS CHILDREN

The questions of this research required an in-depth study of beginning readers. The purpose was to discern patterns and understand children's purposes and meanings during self-selection. Following ten children over a prolonged period of time provided detailed information. This chapter portrays each focus child's growth as a reader and writer. Progress in learning reading strategies and ability to draw on word knowledge to write are discussed in each case. Additionally, patterns of self-selection of texts and events pertaining to literacy learning are described. Chapter VI provides a cross-case analysis.

Many factors were considered in selecting the focus children. The desire was to obtain a range of readers in both instructional level and in ability to encode words. September scores from Concepts about Print (Clay, 1985, hereafter designated as CAP), Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge (Schlagal, 1982, hereafter designated as QIWK), and the running records taken were all used to gain baseline information about each child. The running
records were used to determine instructional level (90-94% accuracy). The selections used were from the Ohio Reading Recovery testing packet (see Appendix A for testing text level equivalence). Once the instructional level was established, a range of readers was selected. The factors considered, defined in Chapter III, were:

1. a range that reflected the variety of reading ability within the class,
2. diversity within a particular instructional level,
3. a variety of risk-taking behavior, and
4. a displayed difference in approaches to literacy learning.

The September scores of the focus children are summarized in Table 1. The children are arranged in rank order within three instructional ranges. Their instructional level (90-94% accuracy) is presented in the second column. The QIWK scores (maximum score = 20) are given in the third column. These scores were important for providing diversity within a single instructional range. While the total correct was significant, the children's actual attempts were analyzed for strategies and stages of development (Henderson, 1985). The last column presents the score obtained on the CAP (maximum score = 24).
Table 1. Focus Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>CIWK - list 1</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following section profiles each of the ten focus children. The format for each description is as follows:

1. **Personal sketch:** factors considered for selection as focus child; a vignette describing the child; and a synopsis of reading behaviors observed September through January.

2. **Data from assessments:** CAP (Clay, 1985); September and January instructional levels established by running records; September and January word knowledge obtained through CIWK (Schlagal, 1982); words generated by child in writing spree during data collection period; and additional examples of growth in word knowledge drawn from writing workshop folders.

3. **Self-selection of texts:** choices across time; and patterns displayed (Reading Recovery Booklist Peterson, 1990, used for level numbers).

4. **Self-selection of literacy events:** participation in events pertaining to self-selection; and self-evaluative statements during reading or conversing.
Table 2. Assessment Scores - Tom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September January</td>
<td>September January</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 28</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

Tom was chosen as a first grader beginning the school year with a number of reading strategies already in place. His ability to encode words was far below the word knowledge he demonstrated in reading. Tom was followed to observe how his literacy learning would continue.

Tom came to first grade with quite a bit of knowledge about reading texts. His CAP score was high enough to suggest most concepts about print were in place (e.g. directionality and some specific concepts about printed language such as the meaning of "?").

From the first day, Tom volunteered to correctly read a title or a word Mrs. B. pointed out. When the children were in large group and she encouraged them to read along, Tom always did. His voice could not be heard above the others trying to read, but I observed him keeping perfect pace with Mrs. B.'s oral reading.

During small group readings, Mrs. B. quickly realized that Tom could easily read the Literacy 2000
books. When the group was asked to first read the book alone, to be read together later, Tom always finished before the rest of the children. When the children read the book together, Tom could supply any word that stumped the rest of the group. Mrs. B. felt Tom's beginning reading strategies were fairly secure, so by mid-October she began having Tom complete more extensive comprehension activities. Her one-on-one conferences with Tom consisted of discussion of main idea, characters and plot. She continued with this approach for the rest of the data collection period.

Tom's participation in literacy events did not always reflect his reading ability. First, he had a difficult time verbalizing what he thought about when he chose something to read. In conversations with Tom, I asked how he selected a text to read. Tom had chosen from a large range of texts early in the school year, yet he could only eventually say that he looked at titles. While his ability enabled him to choose nearly everything in the room, he could not explain what made one text more desirable for him to read than another. Second, Tom was observed wandering during free time and B.E.A.R., sometimes unable to choose an activity or text to read. He watched other children's activities, left for the bathroom, or copied words. Of the ten focus children, Tom had the least number of free choice events recorded.
Many of the work center activities were designed to accommodate a variety of learners, but Tom generally did not select them. This may have been due to the amount of writing involved. This third area, difficulty in encoding words, provided insight about Tom's particular literacy development. This was especially noticeable in his completion of the writing tasks during the assessments, as described in the next section.

Data from assessments

Tom was one of five children in the class scoring in the top instructional levels of 13 through 16. He was generally an accurate reader, and could answer questions about the story with ease. Whenever Tom was required to choose a book to read to Mrs. B., or to tape record, his self-selections were always within his instructional level. For example, in October, Tom recorded From Gran, a level 18 book. At about the same time, Mrs. B. asked him to choose a book to read to her, and he brought Clever Hamburger, also a level 18 book. He continued to read more difficult texts as the year progressed, and when running records were taken in January, Tom was a Level 28.

As mentioned in Tom's personal sketch, he had great difficulty encoding words. This was particularly obvious the first time he took the QIWK. He appeared to work across the consonant sounds in some of the words, but did
not always add a vowel. Occasionally, a single letter represented the entire word, indicating Tom's encoding skill was situated in a preliterate/phonetic stage (Henderson, 1985). This differed sharply from his reading ability. His attempts for the first five words of the QIWK (girl, want, plane, drop, when) are displayed in Figure 2.

\[
\begin{align*}
&G\text{\n} \\
&L \\
&PA \\
&G/P \\
&W N
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 2. Tom's Attempts on QIWK Words 1-5 - September

When given the dictation sentence ("We are glad you came to school") during the Reading Recovery teacher's initial testing, Tom demonstrated again how differently his reading and writing had progressed. He used single letters to represent some words, correctly spelled two words and appeared not to hear sounds across entire words, such as "glad" and "school". His attempt was one of the few in the class written in sentence form. He wrote:

\[
\begin{align*}
&We \ R \ GA \ U \ CA \\
&M \ to \ SU
\end{align*}
\]
Tom's first writing spree consisted of family names and some simple words ("I, LOVE, thE, YOU, GO, NO, Yes"). As the year progressed, and the writing spree was done each month, Tom made steady progress adding to his list. While his total placed him in the middle of the class, he added such words as "going", "Seahawks", "today", and "chair". These were different from the majority of the other children. Most of the children added three letter words, word families or more names. Tom's January QIWK score was 4. He still did not use his reading word knowledge to aid him in writing, but it appeared he had moved into a letter name stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). For example, Tom wrote "wshh" for "wish", but ignored the need for a vowel. "Bike" was written "becg" and "flat" as "faat". Mrs. B. worked with Tom during September and October in writing workshop to listen for the sounds in a word, and then read back what he wrote to see if he had written a "real word". His early story attempt was one continuous string of letters, making it difficult for Mrs. B. or Tom to read back what was written. Spacing continued to be a problem for Tom through January. His writing vocabulary, however, did show constant improvement. For example, in September Tom wrote, "And they DA SA R MSTR" (And they didn't see their master). In November he wrote, "But th Dt see the missingKIDS" (But they didn't see the missing kids). By February he wrote:
And they herd somthing kinda like holing the wofs herd and falod the sond they fond what they herd

(And they heard something kind of like howling. The wolves heard and followed the sound. They found what they heard.)

The September, November and February examples display the change in Tom's ability to encode words. By February, his spellings were close enough to the sounds he heard to enable Mrs. B. to easily read his story. He did not always punctuate, but had become more conscious of leaving spaces between words. Because Tom did not approach Mrs. B. or me for help between writing conferences, she wanted him to develop skills to monitor his own writing. She hoped by emphasizing to Tom to read back his writing, with practice, he would use what he knew about reading to inform his writing.

Self-selection of texts

Tom appeared to be a good judge of what he could read. When requested by Mrs. B. to choose a book to read to her, he always picked one very close to his instructional level. During the invited reading I had with Tom on October 15, he chose to read *Will You Cross Me?*. This "I Can Read" text, approximately a Level 18 or 19, was at Tom's instructional level at that time. He made a few errors during the reading, which he self-corrected. In an attempt to keep a fast pace to his oral reading, he did not notice that he had skipped one entire right hand page. The next invited reading I had with Tom
was January 11. He chose *I'll Fix Anthony*, a text that was in the 20+ range, also Tom's instructional level at the time. This reading was virtually flawless. He appeared to be attending to the meaning as he laughed occasionally as he read aloud.

Observations of Tom self-selecting texts during the first month of school suggested he would choose from a full range of difficulty. From the easiest, repetitive book to the more complex "early reader" chapter books, Tom's range of choices indicated a willingness to self-select a variety of books during B.E.A.R. time. He did not, however, choose books to take home. Across the data collection period, only two instances of Tom taking texts home were recorded - his poetry notebook on October 29 and his own published book on November 5. Although he was often offered books to take home, Tom always refused. If he read books at home, he did not share this information in school.

Tom's text choices October through February ranged between one or two easy books to an occasional higher level book. For example ("level" indicates Reading Recovery Booklist, Peterson, 1990):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>TITLE:</th>
<th>(LEVEL, notes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class &quot;word book&quot;</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.J.'s Tree</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Fishy Color Story</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 16</td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.J.'s Tree</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As this pattern continued into the end of January, I asked Tom why he would choose a book that might be too easy. He said he wanted to read a lot of "little books" in B.E.A.R. time. When questioned why this was important, he said:

Reading a hard one, you waste all your time for reading - if it's a long book....Sometimes I pick one big one or about four little ones, little means short, and I read them all before it's over....It feels like WOW I just read a lot of chapters.

(1-29-91)

Tom had made his own "chapter books" by reading several easy books at one time. Although chapter books were available, it was important to him to feel he had read a number of books during B.E.A.R. time. Although there was no record keeping or reporting done, Tom was intent on reading quantity, which he defined as number of books, not number of words or sentences.

Self-selection of literacy events

Tom's choices pertaining to self-selection were very different from the rest of the focus children. As previously mentioned, Tom spent most of his free time making no choices. Although his work was completed, he generally did not use his remaining time to participate in reading or writing. He walked around, looked at
various activities, as if trying to make a decision, left for the restroom, or colored at his desk. For example, on October 23 the following free choice activity was recorded for Tom:

During free choice he [Tom] picks *Peterkin Meets a Star*, takes it to his desk to read. He doesn't finish the book and begins to wander around.

Between the comments written by his mother on the Parent Questionnaire ("has a strong interest in science so he enjoys science related stories" 9-27-90), and his own apparent interest in science books (including spending the entire December school Book Fair at the table of science books), Mrs. B. brought some nonfiction and science related stories into the classroom. She hoped the covers and topics would be of interest to Tom for self-selection. He gave most of them a cursory glance and read a few only when asked by another child to buddy read. Mrs. B. made other attempts to encourage Tom to select something to do during free choice. Once she handed him a book and asked him to "give it a try". He returned to his desk, flipped through the entire book, returned it to the book corner and left for the restroom.

Eventually Tom became interested in the books published by his classmates. He chose these books during B.E.A.R. time for several days prior to completing his own story. It appeared, from observations and conferences with Mrs. B., that Tom needed access to his
classmates' books to help in the completion of his own. Once his book was published, he no longer reread his classmates' stories. Using the other children's books was a good sign. Mrs. B. hoped it signaled that Tom had begun to understand that his reading could inform his writing.

TRACY

Table 3. Assessment Scores - Tracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

Tracy was chosen as a focus child because her literacy learning appeared to have developed more evenly than Tom's. She was a skillful reader who demonstrated an understanding of how to represent words in her own writings. She also tended to be slightly more interested in writing than reading. Therefore, I expected her growth in literacy learning to follow a different path than Tom's.

Like Tom, Tracy entered first grade with many reading strategies already in place. She was willing to volunteer to read in the large group from the first day
of school. Her mother had written that Tracy tended "to be an observer before she is a participant in certain activities", and that "she appears to evaluate the usefulness of certain activities before taking part!". She apparently felt comfortable very quickly in Mrs. B.'s room, as she calmly raised her hand to volunteer.

Tracy enjoyed reading a book aloud to Mrs. B. or me and often requested to do so. Whether the book was familiar or not, Tracy read with few errors. When she was stumped by a word, she would study it a few seconds and then ask for help. These were words such as "particular" or "glanced", and were often difficult to decode through use of sounding or meaning. In mid-December, Tracy brought in a "Babysitter Club" book, a middle grade fiction series, written by Ann M. Martin. She could easily read the book aloud. When I asked her to recap what happened so far in the story, she did so with a good sense for sequence and main idea. Overall, she had come to first grade with many reading strategies already in place. Throughout the data collection period she demonstrated her ability to successfully read books well above level 20.

Data from assessments

Tracy had an instructional level of 14 in September. During the running records she used sounds and illustrations to read. She self-corrected her errors,
indicating attention to the meaning and to visual information. Her attention to visual information was also apparent during the CAP when she could pick out the words "was" and "no" (distinguished from "saw" and "on").

Tracy's attempts on the QIWK displayed her understanding of many conventions of writing words. She spelled five of the words correctly and had ten that were incorrect by only one letter ("shep" for "ship, "driv" for "drive"), indicating an understanding that words have beginning and ending consonants and a vowel. She appeared to be beginning the move from letter name stage to within word pattern stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985).

She easily handled the writing spree tasks, adding up to thirty new words each month. As in the other writing tasks, Tracy's dictated sentence displayed a good understanding of encoding words when she wrote:

Wie r Gat
YOU KaM
to school

As expected, Tracy's growth was reflected in both reading and writing. By January, her instructional level was 26. She was accurately completing comprehension and extension activities. Her writing continued to be important to her as she wrote and published several books. Tracy's writings were spaced and her spelling
attempts were close to conventional spellings (i.e. in October she wrote "it is omost halloween", in December - "A Tornado comes form a funl clowd"). Therefore, Mrs. B. conferenced with her about story content rather than mechanics. Her spelling accuracy continued to improve, as she scored 17 on the QIWK in January, missing only girl ("gril"), plane ("plan") and fill ("feil"). The second grade list was administered. Tracy scored a 10 out of 25, missing words with doubled consonant or final, silent "e". Her spellings were indicative of children in the within word pattern of development (Henderson, 1985). The growth appeared to have continued on the same even path on which it had started.

**Self-selection of texts**

Tracy began the year self-selecting texts across a full range of difficulty, but tended to concentrate choices at the higher levels. She interspersed rereadings of big books with new texts from the library. During an invited reading I had with Tracy September 24, she chose *A Fishy Color Story*, a Level 6 text. This was an easy text for Tracy. Again in January's invited reading, Tracy chose a simple book, *I Need a Lunch Box*. Both times she expressed an interest in the story. Because a large range of texts was available to Tracy's level of skill, she appeared interested in both the story and difficulty during self-selected reading. In an
October conversation with Tracy, she said:

What's fun about books is you can read some easy ones, then read a hard one.

Her reading skill made nearly every book in the room available to Tracy to read, and she appeared to take advantage of that ability.

A pattern that emerged over time for Tracy was the intense rereading of three particular texts. One was a trade book, the other two were primer books from an old Scott Foresman reading series. Mrs. B. had made old basals available for self-selection. The children chose the selections they wanted to read and kept the books in their desks for as long as they wished. They were permitted to exchange the books at anytime. The books were offered to the children, but never required. Tracy appeared more interested in reading from the series than any other child in the class. The books Tracy chose were Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (trade book, Level 18), Hang On To Your Hats (Scott Foresman, Primer 1) and Kick Up Your Heels (Scott Foresman, Primer 2). The following rereadings were recorded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Hang On To Your Hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (twice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hang On To Your Hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hang On To Your Hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (twice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kick Up Your Heels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kick Up Your Heels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tracy also took these three texts home on a regular basis. Interspersed among the rereadings were a variety of texts. For example, in November the following self-selected choices were recorded for Tracy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>The Big Sneeze</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHHHHI</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>unleveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>unleveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animals Should Definitely</td>
<td>unleveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Wear Clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tikki Tikki Tembo</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But No Elephants</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smile for Auntie</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td>unleveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Kick Up Your Heels</td>
<td>Primer 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Cookie</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three of the texts she reread were available as part of the permanent room library. In this way, they were available to Tracy to return to, even after several weeks. Although Tracy generally chose higher level texts (Levels 12 - 20+) after the beginning of November, she appeared to enjoy rereading some of the selections in the old basal as well as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. 
Self-selection of literacy events

Tracy's participation in self-selected reading had a distinct social aspect. This was evident at two times - first, with Mrs. B. or me, and second, with the other children in the room. She often requested to read a particular book to Mrs. B. or me. If we were delayed in getting to her, she began reading another book, holding on to the requested one until we were free. It appeared, each time, that she didn't just need us as an audience, but that she had a specific book she wanted to read aloud to an adult. Tracy's buddy reading with classmates was distinctively cooperative. The same four girls were recorded as individually approaching Tracy to read over the data collection period. She acted as a listener or a turn taker. During B.E.A.R. time, Tracy would either listen to one of the girls read an entire book, or they would take turns reading pages or entire short texts. While the buddy reading appeared to be based somewhat on friendship, Tracy also held a position of knowledge and authority. Her role in the buddy reading was generally to supply words her partner did not know.

Tracy's word knowledge was helpful in completing writing tasks. Tracy was interested in writing and sometimes chose her journal as a free choice activity. Once writing workshop was introduced, she often worked in her folder during free time. When given a choice to read
or write, Tracy generally chose writing. Through her writings she had worked through many specifics of spelling words. Her invented spellings were very close to conventional words. Her self-selected texts and choices to spend free time writing facilitated Tracy's tremendous growth in both reading and writing.

SARA

Table 4. Assessment Scores - Sara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

Sara was chosen as a focus child because her high confidence level during group participation and when making texts choices, made her stand out from the other children scoring at a similar instructional level. Sara had self-selected texts with varying degrees of difficulty the first few weeks of school. She typically would attempt to read a text well above her instructional level, immediately followed by several fairly simple texts. For example, September 10, her first choice was *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Level 18). Her next choices were *The Bus Ride* (Level 4) and *What Could You Do?* (Level 1). Her dramatic swing between levels of difficulty
became interesting as she appeared to be quite confident each time she tried a new book. Sara was chosen to follow how her continued literacy learning would influence her book choices.

Sara appeared to be a child quite at ease with beginning first grade. She seemed confident during any activity in which she participated. She often voiced her enjoyment in coming to school and in completing the tasks involved. Sara often imitated Mrs. B.'s teaching techniques. Sometimes, when reading a book, she would show the illustrations to a "pretend" class.

Sara's confidence was displayed in a willingness to volunteer within the first week of school. When the children were in a large group, Mrs. B. occasionally asked if someone could give a word with a particular feature (i.e.: rhyme; an -ing ending; -ow as in cow; etc.). Sara always volunteered, but generally had incorrect answers. For example, on September 11, Mrs. B. had asked for words that rhymed with "creep" and "asleep". Sara volunteered "doll". On September 25, Mrs. B. asked the children for words that rhymed with "pig". Sara volunteered "witch" and, later, "goat". Although she knew her attempts were incorrect, Sara never became reticent when volunteers were requested. This high level of confidence carried over to Sara reading print. She did not monitor well, but continued to read a story even
if the meaning was lost. She would often "boast" that she had read a book, but when asked to read part to me, sometimes had great difficulty in doing so. She appeared to be fairly confident about what she thought she knew, and this attitude never waned throughout the data collection period.

**Data from assessments**

Sara's instructional level in September was Level 6. During the running record and the CAP, she appeared to have general concepts about print, such as book handling and directionality, well in place. She displayed an eagerness to read as she attempted each reading passage for the running records. She had a core of sight words but had some inconsistent strategies in decoding words. At times she was totally distracted by the first letter of a word and its accompanying illustration (ie: saying "girl" for "grandma"). At other times the illustration took precedence and little attention was given to first letter sound (ie: seeing a picture of a girl and saying "she" for "her"). Both sounds and illustration were ignored when she brought The Bus Ride to me for help in reading the title. She did not use the "b" or the illustration of a busload of animals.

During the first week of school the children were asked to generate a list of words they knew how to spell. Sara produced a list of twenty words. Her list consisted
almost entirely of two- or three-letter sight words (ie: on, go, me, the, you, yes, and). When asked to write the dictated sentence, "We are glad you came to school."

Sara listed the words:

WE
RO
GOED
YOU
KAM
TO
S011

Sara's attempts to write the first five words of the QIWK (girl, want, plane, drop, when) appear in Figure 3.

Figure 3. - Sara's Attempts on QIWK Words 1-5 - September

From these three writing measures, it was determined that Sara was in the preliterate/phonetic stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). She had a basic understanding of how to write words as bound figures. She attempted to sequence all the sounds she heard. She generally had most of the consonant sounds and one vowel.

In an October writing workshop story, Sara wrote: 
"...I WNT TO BAD" (I went to bed). By January, when
taking the QIWK, she correctly spelled "bed". Her early writings contained some accurate spellings of sight words (like, at, it, are, she, took). When inventing, she generally could identify the first sound of a word, and would include several correct sounds. She had moved between letter name and within word pattern stages of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). For example, in a story she was writing in late November, Sara appeared to be sounding across entire words as she wrote:

Babies Drink oft uv a BuDil Thau Drik Milk AND utr Thngs Thau eet BaBies foD I Thik BaBies foD is Gros But BaBies dot ThiNg BaBies foD is Gros BaBies War DiPRVS BaBies Drool alit BaBies Gat pusT in a STRoLR

(Babies drink out of a bottle. They drink milk and other things. They eat babies food. I think babies food is gross, but babies don't think babies food is gross. Babies wear diapers. Babies drool a lot. Babies get pushed in a stroller.)

Sara was not always consistent in her spelling attempt strategies. For example, in attempting "because" in a December writing workshop story, Sara wrote "Becue". She had ignored the "s" (or "z" sound) at the end of the word. She also wrote "SantaKlovs" for "Santa Claus", indicating some visual similarity and attention to sounds. This further supported the reading measures and observations that suggested inconsistencies in understanding letter/sound associations.

By the end of January, Sara's word knowledge had grown considerably in both encoding and decoding. When
she took the QIWK she had six correct answers and eleven that were incorrect by one letter (ie: "wont" for want, "kut" for cut). Her spellings at that time indicated she was in the within word pattern stage (Henderson, 1985) as she began to correctly use short vowels and diphthongs.

Her instructional reading level, determined by the running records, was Level 22. The errors she made, although at a lower frequency, resembled those in September. She occasionally ignored meaning, visual and/or syntactic cues. She appeared to be concerned with momentum to her oral reading, and would not always monitor what she was saying (Bussis, et al., 1985). Her growing word knowledge had a considerable impact on her text selections, as illustrated in the following section.

**Self-selection of texts**

As suggested in Sara's personal sketch, she began the year making wide choices for reading. When Sara went to the reading corner, she usually knew immediately which trade book she wanted. She often sought help from Mrs. B. or me when she was unsure of a word. No matter how many times she needed help, Sara stuck with her book choice. Everyday, for the first month, she tried to read a different book. She generally chose books from the reading corner, but occasionally would read the big book Mrs. B. had just read to the children.
 Approximately one month into the school year, Sara's text choices changed. She began to make choices closer to her instructional level. At that time, Mrs. B. was using small group instruction and Sara was reading between Levels 6 and 8. Sara also started to reread texts. The following choices were noted (levels refer to Reading Recovery Booklist):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>Who Sank the Boat?</td>
<td>20,</td>
<td>(with buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Night</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Going up</td>
<td></td>
<td>Preprimer 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toby in the Country</td>
<td></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little New Kangaroo</td>
<td></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Night</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Legs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Night</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Class News&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>(last year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pattern of rereading texts over several days continued throughout October, November and December. Sara took the same texts home to read at night. She chose as many as four books to go home overnight, depending on what she had read during B.E.A.R. time that day. When the invited reading was held, Sara chose two familiar stories in Taking Off, an old Scott Foresman Preprimer 1 (see Tracy for description of availability).
At the beginning of January, Sara began to choose higher level texts, closer to her independent level of 19. Her January 4 invited reading choice was *The Napping House*, a Level 15 text. She was periodically rereading lower level texts when self-selecting. These were Sara's mid- to late January choices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 16</td>
<td>Wacky Wednesday</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big Goof, Little Goof</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Benny's Bad Day</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat Your Peas, Louise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat Your Peas, Louise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tikki Tikki Tembo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(unleveled - above 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bear and Mrs. Duck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(unleveled - above 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amelia Bedelia and the Baby</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benny's Bad Day</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She continued to take home the texts she had self-selected during B.E.A.R.

Across time, Sara appeared to change her book choices in sync with her growing reading strategies. As she worked through the complexities of reading text, Sara practiced with the same book. The rereadings of old favorites eventually became separated by several days, and a variety of higher level texts were chosen.

Self-selection of literacy events

Sara made choices that supported her literacy learning. Fifty-six free choice events were recorded for Sara. Of those, forty-four were related to choosing texts, books with listening tapes, or reading environmental print (ie: bulletin boards, posted...
information). During free choice and B.E.A.R., Sara reread books of her choosing. These were not necessarily books already introduced by Mrs. B., but were books with which Sara had become familiar. During September, Sara generally read alone. She chose her text and found a spot to read. Beginning in October, she began to read with another child, but only once or twice a week. Sara almost exclusively initiated and made the book selection for the "buddy" reading. When I questioned Sara about why she might choose to read with someone, she replied, "Sometimes I trust them that they can read". In November, when asked why she would read a book more than once, Sara replied, "to get better at it". She had realized the need to practice, and rereading texts was her way to accomplish that. She seemed to need the support of rereading and that the person she might chose would also provide success.

By December, Sara was frequently asking to read to Mrs. B. or me. On many occasions, she would read a book alone, reread it to Mrs. B. and again to me, all within fifteen minutes. Thus, her rereadings were further supported by having an adult listen to her.

By the end of January, Sara felt she had changed as a reader since the beginning of first grade. When asked if she had "gotten better", she replied,

Yuh huh! When I looked at a book at the starting, I just looked at the pictures.....I'm done with that! I was just looking at the pictures. But now I read
every single, solitary word. (1-29-91)

Sara's statement was a good indicator of her growth, as well as her ability to evaluate her own learning. Her text choices became more consistent with her reading level. Sara changed as a reader and selector of texts.

JILL

Table 5. Assessment Scores - J'ill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

Jill was chosen as a focus child from her instructional range for two reasons. First, she had some knowledge of print reading, yet when left alone was inclined to create stories to go with the illustrations. Second, as shown later in Jill's assessment (see Figure 4, p.104), her strategy for writing words was different than anyone measured in the same range. While some children wrote one letter (and usually a consonant) to represent a word, Jill's writings were filled with vowels. The relationship between the vowels and the actual sounds in the word was somewhat limited. Therefore, Jill was chosen to observe how becoming an independent reader would change both her reading attempts
during self-selection and her spelling attempts during writing.

On the first day of school, Jill volunteered to read what she knew in the title *Will I Have A Friend?*. She said, "A". One day later she volunteered to read a line from a poem the class had reread for two days. She accurately read, "one is silver". She appeared to have an understanding of what one needs to do to "read". Jill's own definition of "reading", given in November was "looking at the words" (11-5-90).

Jill tended to be a watcher in large group readings. When on the carpet for shared rereadings, Jill would watch rather than try to read along. When she sat at the reading table in a small group, she hesitated at unknown words, allowing someone else to make an attempt first. She seemed to have books in her hands during all free choice times, but did not attempt to read the print when she was alone. When Jill self-selected a book, she generally created stories to go with the illustrations. She also seemed interested in "getting through" a number of books at one sitting. For example, during one B.E.A.R. time on September 7, Jill created stories to go with the illustrations in the following texts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE:</th>
<th>LEVEL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Bus Ride</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ten Little Bears</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rudy's New Red Wagon</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Colors</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What Could You Do?</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jessie's Flower
Katie Can

Jill was observed talking uninterrupted, focusing on the illustration and not attending to the print. She continued to do this periodically until mid-October.

When Jill did attempt to read the print, she finger pointed, used the beginning letter and the illustration to make a guess. Gradually, she began to skip words she did not know, but did not return to them unless reminded. Jill repeated this same approach through November during self-selected reading. She could be heard reading aloud, pausing at words she did not know, skipping them and continuing the reading. She did not return to the "skipped" word once the page was completed and generally completed the book in that manner. Occasionally, if Jill was skipping too many words on a page, she would stop the reading and return the book to the corner.

During the month of December, Jill changed in her approach to reading self-selected books. She studied the first page, and then continued reading or rejected the book and made a new selection. By January she read most of her self-selected choices all the way through. During oral reading, Jill's accuracy and fluency improved steadily. Mrs. B. needed to occasionally encourage her to skip and use the context to help her decode unfamiliar words. She was still somewhat reliant on the first letter coupled with the illustration, but her word
knowledge had grown enough to reduce the number of times she resorted to this strategy.

Data from the assessments

In September, Jill was an instructional level of 5. She scored the same as Tom on the CAP, demonstrating an understanding of directionality and some specific concepts such as knowing the meaning of "." and "?". During the running record, she relied on the first letter of a word, and often abandoned meaning to sound out words. Her sounding strategy influenced her attempts on the QIWK, as she wrote "drive, fill, sister, bump, plate, mud, chop". She appeared situated between the preliterate/phonetic stage and the letter name stage (Henderson, 1985), as seen in Figure 4:

![Figure 4. Jill's Attempts on QIWK Words 13-19 - September](image)

The high frequency of "a" was most likely due to the exaggerated sounding out she used to write the words.
This was also observed in the dictated sentence ("We are glad you came to school"): 

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{WiAR} \\
\text{ReA} \\
\text{eAIaAll} \\
(\text{backwards Y}) \text{OU} \\
\text{CIAm} \\
\text{TO} \\
\text{STuR}
\end{align*}
\]

Spellings similar to those in the QIWK and dictated sentence appeared in stories Jill wrote. In September she wrote:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{YieaT To The DANNs AND The DATrx LHiAST a TOCS.} \\
\text{SieH PAiTT iAeT rArel PAu AND The FAIRcGlAHC Momir} \\
\text{GaeT The DATrr A Dari Bal}
\end{align*}
\]

(They went to the dentist and the daughter lost a tooth. She put it under her pillow and the fairy godmother gave the daughter a dollar bill)

When asked to write all the words she knew how to correctly spell in the writing spree, Jill had a strategy to generate three types of words - (1) family names, (2) sight words (all, and, on, no) and (3) a word family (bat, cat, hat, pat, sat). She produced thirty-two words in September, the third highest in the class. During the remainder of the year, Jill's total for the writing spree placed her fifth or sixth in the class.

Over time, Jill's writings moved towards more conventional spellings. Figure 5 displays how she had moved to the letter name stage (Henderson, 1985) by January. The change her attempts of the same seven words exhibited in Figure 4 were considerable:
Figure 5. Jill's Attempts on QIWK Words 13-19 - January

Her total score was 4, and some of the words tended to be exaggerated "sounding out". Her story writings were spaced and contained within word patterns conventional enough for Mrs. B. to read. The growth exhibited in Jill's writing can also be seen in the following January writing workshop story:

Mom you stae downe Hae and You go to the mettol flore I'll go to the top flore said dad

("Mom, you stay down here and you go to the middle floor. I'll go to the top floor," said Dad.)

Jill's growth was also apparent in reading. In January, she was at an instructional level of 20. She was reading more fluently. Her errors indicated her attention was still drawn to the first letters (ie: "shouting" for "showing"). The errors often went uncorrected, and Jill did not seem to notice if the reading made sense. When reading with Mrs. B., she sometimes skipped an unknown word, but had to be reminded to go back and attempt to read the word, using the
context. Jill changed outwardly as she read along in large group readings, or became the leader in a small group. When she read with someone, she verbalized strategies, such as, "Let's skip that". She had changed from a watcher and waiter to a reader with enough confidence to lead.

Self-selection of texts

As mentioned in Jill's personal sketch, she frequently chose a book and created a story to go with the illustrations. Jill's mother had written on the parent questionnaire in September that Jill "has always had a great interest in books (making up the story by using the pictures.)". Jill was often observed during free choice carrying a stack of books. Fifty-four free choice events were recorded for Jill. Of those, forty-six involved print reading (creating stories to go with text, reading, listening and following along in text). She seemed involved in print whenever the opportunity arose. While some children colored, Jill reread a poem. While some children chose to use the math junk boxes, Jill went through the reading corner rack, trying to choose a book. But, throughout the early weeks of school, Jill seemed to always be reading aloud a story she had created to go with the illustrations.

Sometimes, during B.E.A.R. time, Mrs. B. asked Jill to bring what she was reading to the table. There, Jill
tried to read, word by word. Once alone again in the reading corner, Jill returned to creating. Jill also did not take to texts suggested by Mrs. B. or me. If asked by Mrs. B. to bring a certain title, or even one she had not read, once Jill left the reading table, she returned the book to the corner and began one of her own choosing. Jill always refused books offered by other children. She appeared to have definite ideas about the books she chose to read.

Jill's definite ideas for book choices were also displayed during the invited reading held October 5, Jill selected *Go, Dog, Go!* to read with me. She had read this Level 8 text the day before during B.E.A.R. time and had taken it home. When I requested she choose a book to read, she immediately brought *Go, Dog, Go!*, and read with little trouble. The amount of previous practice she had with the book may have influenced her choice for reading aloud to me.

As the year progressed, Jill continued to visit great numbers of books in one day. More books per day were recorded for Jill than any other focus child. A sampling of dates exhibits Jill's tendency to handle many texts each day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TEXTS HANDLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
January 29

She also consistently took one or two books home each night to read. The texts going home were always the ones she had chosen during the day to read, but not ones in which she had created stories.

When inviting her to read to me January 4, Jill chose *The Stupids Die*. This Level 20+ book suggested that Jill's self-selections had changed in two ways. First, she no longer chose books for creating stories. Jill was observed finger pointing and requesting help from a classmate for words she could not read on her own. Second, she chose less texts in a day, spending time to return to the higher level texts in order to finish reading them. While she still used most of her free choice time to read, she had begun to concentrate on reading one longer text through to completion. Jill's changes in text selections were also reflected over time in her self-selected literacy events, as described next. **Self-selection of literacy events**

From the first day, Jill appeared to be a lover of books. She continually looked at them as an activity of choice. Although early encounters generally were to create a text to go with the illustrations, Jill spent a good deal of time looking through the books before taking them off to read. Once Jill had enough strategies to read some of the print in the books she chose, she still
reverted to story creations when alone. Eventually, she began giving books a "quick" read, skipping the words she did not know and finishing the book. Occasionally, after a quick read of the first page or so, Jill closed the book and set it aside. If asked why she stopped reading it, she answered, "I don't know". Whether it was the complexity of the words, or the storyline itself that discouraged Jill, she could not immediately verbalize her decision-making. During a conversation in February, I asked Jill why she had started reading longer books. She said she liked to read "a lot of words" and,

In shorter books, the part that's exciting happens too fast. The books that are longer are usually better. [pointing to Now We Can Go]...that one's not really that exciting (2-8-91).

Her judgment appeared to be based first on the number of words in the text, and then on the value of the story.

Jill spent most of her B.E.A.R. time reading alone. She often sat next to another child in the room, a friend, to read. They each attended to their own pile of books, and rarely interrupted each other. In time, Jill used her friend as a resource to occasionally supply an unknown word.

Jill did a limited amount of rereading of texts. Observing the small numbers of rereadings recorded for Jill, I asked her in February if there were any books she read more than once. She immediately answered,
Big books...I like to sometimes get old ones down...you get to read them again (2-2-91).

Since these texts were much easier than her usual choices for reading, I asked why she might pick a book that's too easy for her. She stated:

Sometimes the bell's almost ringing, or we're going somewhere and I want something short. I want to read, but I'm hungry - so I read an easy one - or I'm tired, or I want to do some other thing (2-1-91).

Jill had developed a number of ways to direct her own literacy learning. Her early book choices allowed her to look at a great number of books. Later, she stopped creating stories and scanned the pages for words she knew. By January, she chose books she could read alone, her preferred situation. She did explain that indoor recess might be a time to take turns with someone reading pages in a book. But B.E.A.R. time, when she was expected to make all the choices, Jill chose to read alone. If she was near someone who was reading aloud, Jill continued in her own book, undistracted. She appeared to be intent on her own experiences with books. She had progressed from a reader who created stories, to one who read them.
DAVID

Table 6. Assessment Scores - David

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

David was chosen as a focus child because he appeared more at ease when writing than reading. He appeared to rely heavily on sounding out new words, yet occasionally used picture cues for help when reading. He had a high level of confidence in group activities. For example, on the second day of school, Mrs. B. asked what we "call a person who writes a book". David was the only one to volunteer, and answered correctly, "author". Later the same day, after having the children reread sentences they dictated about themselves, Mrs. B. asked, "What are we doing?" David immediately volunteered, "We are looking at letters." The next day, David stated that a book's "copyright" means "they made many copies". He remained an active participant throughout the data collection period, volunteering whenever possible. At the same time, David was more conservative than others in his instructional range for book choices. When reading alone, he generally chose only those books already read to the children by Mrs. B. and appeared
reluctant to self-select new texts. David was chosen to observe to see how his texts choices would change as his reading strategies expanded.

David had moved to the school district during the last twelve weeks of Kindergarten. He often spent free time looking at an "address book" of his old classmates. This contained photos and comments written by children he had begun Kindergarten with in another state. He seemed to adjust to his new school and was not shy about participating when volunteers were requested. He was quite confident in offering help to other students if he perceived they were in need of his "expertise". He would offer a spelling or pronunciation of a word, fully confident that he was right (although this was not always the case).

David had a good grasp of the necessary concepts of print a beginning reader needs. He was just beginning to sound words out in September, and used some picture cues for help. He almost exclusively self-selected books read to the children by Mrs. B. in September. By the fifth week of school, David had chosen a new text only four times - twice by himself and twice to read with Tom.

As the year progressed, sounding out remained David's primary strategy. He often had to be encouraged to skip a word to use the context, or to listen to what he just read for meaning. David also used his sounding
strategy to help him write. He had scored almost as well as Tracy on the QIWK, yet was twelve levels below her instructional reading level. He appeared to have an interest in writing, and seemed more skillful in that area than in reading. He often produced home writings that he shared with Mrs. B. Overall, he remained more at ease with writing than reading.

Data from assessments

David exhibited an understanding of directionality and one to one matching of words to print during his running record. He scored at an instructional level of 2, relying heavily on sounding as a decoding strategy. He exhibited many of the same book handling skills and basic understandings of words during the CAP, scoring a 15 of 24.

His writings, while having some letter reversals, were closer to conventional spellings than all but one child scoring within the same instructional level. His attempts on the first five words of the QIWK in September are displayed in Figure 6. At that time, he appeared to be operating in the letter name stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985) as he attempted to match phonemes with letter names.
David had difficulty producing words during the writing spree each month. Compared to children writing twenty to thirty words each month, David wrote:

- September - 14
- October  - 18
- November - 16
- December - 13
- February -  6

This did not reflect the growing vocabulary displayed in David's writings. The stories generated by David suggested he could spell many words correctly in context. For example, in the first three months of school David used "run, bit, me, this, it, is, can, town, home" all correctly in this writing workshop stories. Yet, none of these appeared on his writing spree lists. It appeared the task of generating words out of context was not easy for David. During conferences with Mrs. B. he often discussed how he "finally figured out" how a word was spelled. For example, on November 15, Mrs. B. pointed to "r" written at the beginning of one of David's writing workshop stories. She began, "I want to tell you
about..." David cut in to say, "I know, I figured that out today... a-r-e", and had written it correctly in the pages completed that day. She asked how he "figured that out". He referred to "roses are red", some verses the children had written the day before. Yet, during the writing spree four days later, and in the next two months, David did not add this word to his lists.

By January, David was an instructional level of 26. He still relied mostly on sounding out words, but was doing some monitoring for meaning. Graphic errors were most common - such as, "grass" for "greatest", "told" for "took", "shoo" for "shut". He also appeared to do some sounding in his head as he scanned the word, swept along it with his finger and then pronounced it (for example - "sunshine" and "answer"). Throughout Mrs. B.'s notes on David's Reading Record, she commented: "still relies on sounds" (Nov. 19), "uses sounds primarily" (Dec. 18) and "uses sounds first - encourage to skip and use pictures" (Jan. 10).

David's results on the QIWK given in January showed a combination of conventional spellings and invented spellings that relied heavily on the sounds he heard. He scored 9 out of 20 and had eight close attempts ("wont" for want, "plan" for plane, "jrop" for drop, "chrap" for trap, "chrip" for trip, "bup" for bump, "driw" for drive and "plat" for plate). His writings also displayed the
common errors of using "chr" for "tr" and "jr" for "dr" as well as not using the final "e" to mark a long vowel. He appeared to still be firmly placed in the letter name stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985).

Overall, David's reading ability had grown considerably, although he remained reliant on sounding out new words. This strategy continued to inform his writing. For example, in December, David wrote:

"RThQuax Go wraud The wrLd and Thay coz a Lot uv damig. See wht cozis a RthQuac is PLates undr The graud. The Plac are togethr and Huu The Plac cred uPurt the graund storts to mov."

(Earthquakes go around the world and they cause a lot of damage. See, what causes a[n] earthquake is plates under the ground. The plates are together and when the plates crack apart the ground starts to move.)

David's ability to sound out words had become quite efficient, aiding him in both reading and writing.

Self-selection of texts

Throughout the data collection period, David almost exclusively chose texts to read alone that had already been read to the children by Mrs. B. He generally chose to read the small copy of a big book soon after it was presented during shared reading. David also chose shared reading stories during both invited readings I held with him. On October 17, he chose a Fishy Color Story, and on January 4 he chose Hairy Bear.

David self-selected trade books previously read to the children by Mrs. B. or me. Occasionally, he would
read new texts with a buddy. The following samples display David's pattern of self-selection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td><strong>Who's in the Shed?</strong> (big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Legs</strong> (read earlier in small group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Wrinkles</strong> (read earlier in small group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I Love Cats</strong> (big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>I've Got a Secret</strong> (with Mitch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Just Camping Out</strong> (with Mitch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mrs Wishy Washy</strong> (big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td><strong>Leo the Late Bloomer</strong> (read by me)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Bus Ride</strong> (reread)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td><strong>My Family and Me</strong> (big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mrs Wishy Washy</strong> (reread, big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own published book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>26 Letters and 99 Cents</strong> (wordless)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I Like</strong> (flip through, level 1 text)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Bus Ride</strong> (reread)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classmate's published text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own published text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 9</td>
<td><strong>The Jigaree</strong> (big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I Just Forgot</strong> (from Mayer collection - read with Tom day before)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><strong>My Family and Me</strong> (reread, big book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rereading of teacher-presented texts was the most common pattern in David's self-selections. He continued to revisit those texts he had already heard, practicing his reading strategies in stories he was familiar with. On a regular basis, David took home the texts he reread during the day. He occasionally tried a new text with a buddy, but was generally observed reading alone, displaying a seriousness concerning independent reading.

**Self-selection of literacy events**

David read alone most of the time. He was observed sitting in a cubby, off in a corner by himself or at his own desk reading. He often moved away from groups of
children to be by himself. When he did buddy read, it was with one of the same three boys. Usually, this was to read a new text together. During the buddy reading, David liked to function as the leader. He confidently tried to read words that stumped them. If his "buddy" challenged his attempt, David used his sounding skills, and not the illustration, to "prove" that he was correct (ie: "see, l-l-l-e-g-s-s-s-s"). If David had read with someone, he usually told me "I helped so-and-so read". When I observed him requesting help from a classmate, I asked what he had requested of her. "Oh, no," he said, "I helped her...". He appeared to not only want to be in charge, but to also have all the answers.

David was observed on many occasions as having a serious approach to independent reading. He generally chose to read during free choice, choosing occasionally to write in his folder. His deliberate moving away from other children, along with comments he made suggested his intention to read during both free and B.E.A.R. time. On October 17, David was listening to another boy in the class read *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*. They both began to look at *Our Cat Flossie*, however, the other boy began to play around with the book, not letting David hold it. Finally, David said loudly, "Come on, I need to read this!", grabbed the book and held it up so only he could see it. On December 18, in a similar incident,
David and another boy were looking at Round Robin. The other boy kept turning the pages, not stopping to read any of the print. David continued to yell, "READ!", but when he could not make him stop he got up and said, "I'm leaving!". He chose his own text and found a spot alone to read.

David's ability to express himself about his growing reading skill was also displayed in comments he made during conversations. His comments reflected his use of sounding words out as a primary strategy. In October he stated that when he came to a word he did not know, he would "go to the next one and sound that one out, then go back and try to sound that out" (10-31-90). He said that reading required "taking my time and figuring it out". Through January, David maintained his "sounding out" approach for reading. In discussing what makes a book "hard" or "easy" for him, he stated that a harder book has "words I'd have to look at for a long time". He knew a book was too "easy" because "I don't have to look at any of the words". David continued to sound out nearly every unknown word he encountered, and he explained that he had to "look at" a word to "figure it out". While his approach to reading had not significantly changed (ie: he continued to sound out), he was able to more efficiently process words.
At the end of October, David was also verbalizing his discoveries about words (i.e. as Mrs. B. wrote “writing” on the day’s schedule, David stated, "Hey, the ‘w’ is silent!"). At the end of January, David made a statement that was a window to the learning and thinking he was doing. Mrs. B. was discussing the silent "e" at the end of words. Nick had pointed out that "done" sounds like "dun". She agreed and stated that "done" does not follow the rule, and "that's why you can't sound every word out when you are reading". At that point, David exclaimed, "The English language!". Mrs. B. asked, "What about it?". David returned, "It’s hard to learn!".

LEE

Table 7. Assessment Scores - Lee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal sketch

Lee was chosen as a focus child due to the two different ways he participated in literacy events. He remained a watch in large groups, but was an initiator in small groups. He balanced his free choice time among reading bulletin boards, big books and trade books, writing folders and going to the work centers. Lee
appeared to be attracted to small social circles such as buddy reading. He was chosen to follow what influence this attitude would have on his continued literacy development.

Early observations of Lee suggested that he had two very different ways of participating in literacy learning. In large group activities, he remained a quiet watcher. He did not volunteer to answer any of Mrs. B.'s questions until early October. However, when it was time for free choice, B.E.A.R., or working in writing folders, Lee was often an initiator of activity. He involved other children in the constant rereading of big books. He conferenced with other children about his writings and both offered and sought help in spelling words. On a one to one basis with other students, Lee was confident and appeared willing to take risks. In the large group, he remained on the fringes of involvement.

During Lee's September running record he began to invent text. In both the running record and CAP, he had difficulty with pointing for word by word matching. These early assessments suggested Lee was insecure with book handling skills as he entered first grade. When reading with Mrs. B. he remained tentative and unwilling to attempt sounding or using picture cues. Mrs. B. provided much guided help as they read at the table together. As the year progressed, Lee began to combine
sounding with using the illustration to tackle unknown words. He also skipped words and returned to them, but his monitoring was not consistent enough to help him use context efficiently enough. He appeared to be learning to use meaning, visual and syntactic cues, but was hesitant about which cue would be most helpful to him at any given time. By January he used sounding as his primary strategy, but still had trouble monitoring himself. At the same time, he was self-selecting books that were well above his instructional level, thus challenging himself with longer texts that were less supported by illustration. Mrs. B.'s notes in his reading record show the struggles he was having in these higher level texts. Yet, when revisiting a big book with a buddy, Lee initiated many conversations concerning the "correctness" of their guesses on unknown words. (Examples of Lee's comments are provided later in the section on self-directing.) Whenever he read with another child, Lee displayed an understanding of using a variety of strategies to read.

Data from the assessments

As mentioned, Lee's book handling skills were somewhat insecure in September. His performance on the CAP displayed problems with one-to-one matching, understanding the concepts of first and last, and locating requested letters from the text. His
instructional level was 2, and during Level 3 (on which he scored below 50%), he began to invent text. The on-to-one matching was evident again in both small and large group readings, as he lagged in pointing to words.

Lee reversed letters in his early writing. During the QIWK he spelled one out of twenty correct. Letters reversed during that assessment included p, n, k, b, c, e, f, and s. Some of the reversals could also be seen in his attempts at the last five words of the QIWK — bump, plate, mud, chop, bed. Figure 7 suggested Lee's developmental stage of spelling was moving away from preliterate/phonetic, but was not yet firmly placed into the letter name stage (Henderson, 1985).

![Figure 7. Lee's Attempts on QIWK Words 16-20 - September](image)

Lee stopped reversing by mid-October and continued to move toward conventional spellings in his writing folder. The following example is from an October story in his writing workshop folder:

my Bryzr PLaz Foot Ball at Home Act siD in Rao Bac rad and we Plaz TaKgol FooT Ball anD I gat my faz
and we plaz Foot Ball in rac Bac yrd and I wyn The Foot Ball Gam and Mi fraz hd to go Home and I wat to Thr Hoos and we PlaD soqr at my faz Hoos.

(My brother plays football at home outside in our backyard and we play tackle football and I get my friends and we play football in our backyard and I win the football game and my friends had to go home and I went to their house and we played soccer at my friends house.)

Lee's most observable change over time was in writing. His printing was legible and he produced many near-conventional spellings. He scored an 8 on the QIWK in January and had many closer approximations in the incorrect spellings. The work he did in writing moved Lee into the letter name stage, (Henderson, 1985). He was accurately using short vowels and beginning and ending consonants. The number of sight words he could correctly spell had grown considerably. Lee's performance in January (Figure 8) on the same five words of the QIWK displayed in Figure 7, showed this growth.

![Figure 8. Lee's Attempts on QIWK Words 16-20 - January](image)
An additional example of the change Lee was experiencing as he tackled print in both reading and writing, was the writing spree done each month. Lee's totals each time varied greatly, but overall a pattern of generating words emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF NEW WORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the new words were either sight words (red, so, he, it) or words used in his story writing (our, Falcons, Ohio, browns). The words he chose to write were more complex and related to his reading and writing.

By January, Lee was at an instructional level of 12. This was considered the average level in January for first graders. He used strategies somewhat unevenly when reading at or above his instructional level. When he revisited big books on his own, he tapped into all possible strategies to deal with unknown words. His improvement in writing and increased proficiency in self-correcting during reading, indicated that Lee had made steady growth in all areas of his literacy learning.

Self-selection of texts

Lee's self-selection of texts had two distinct patterns. One was the revisiting of big books with a buddy. Many observations were recorded of Lee choosing
the big copy of a shared reading book to read with another classmate. The second pattern was the intense rereading of a text for a few days. This text was then replaced with a new one, again constantly reread for several days. These patterns are displayed in the following choices recorded for Lee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>(level, notes - type book; how read)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>Mrs Wishy Washy</td>
<td>(8, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Fishy Color Story</td>
<td>(6, buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>Mrs Wishy Washy class pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>(18, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who's in the Shed?</td>
<td>(16, buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>(18, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who Sank the Boat?</td>
<td>(16, big copy; alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>(18, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is Everybody?</td>
<td>(18, alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>(18, alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>Poetry notebook</td>
<td>(alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking Off</td>
<td>(Preprimer, alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>(18, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/15</td>
<td>Who Sank the Boat?</td>
<td>(20, big copy; buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>(8, alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten Bears in my Bed</td>
<td>(11, buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>(8, big copy; alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.J.'s Tree</td>
<td>(11, alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Wishy Washy</td>
<td>(8, big copy; alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The constant revisiting of big copies of the shared readings is evident over the three weeks. Other books chosen were generally read with a buddy. The "alone" readings noted on October 9 were during individual testing Mrs. B. was doing. The children were completing individual projects at their desks. As they completed their project, they could read or write in their journal. The availability of a "buddy" was limited to Lee.
Lee chose his first invited reading to be a text he thought was familiar. On October 23, he chose *Carrot Seed* out of the new pile of books. He said he heard it in Kindergarten. He had trouble reading the text throughout the story (needing help on much of the vocabulary), but assured me he "knew the story". This Level 12 text was considerably more difficult for Lee than the Level 8 and 10 texts he was self-selecting. He was, apparently, attracted to a familiar story.

Lee's selection patterns which continued through the end of December were buddy reading big copies of shared readings and intense rereadings of a book for several days. Some titles, such as *Mrs. Wishy Washy* and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* continued to appear through the end of December as self-selections recorded for Lee. When the children returned to school after Christmas/winter break, Lee's selections changed. He buddy read, but he no longer chose the big books Mrs. B. was reading to the class. Also, several days passed before he revisited the same book. He chose higher level texts regularly (12 to above 20), many of which were considerably higher than his instructional level. He continued to appear to be more willing to attempt to read new words with a buddy than when reading alone with Mrs. B. or me. As he read the higher level texts with a buddy, he was heard suggesting a variety of strategies to tackle unknown
words. The suggestions Lee made to other children were, perhaps, the best indicators of his growing reading strategies. These were not always displayed when Lee read to Mrs. B. or me. For example, his text choice for the invited reading on January 10 was Mud Pies, a Level 3 book. He made many errors on the simple text, paying little attention to meaning. The picture cues were also ignored. However, Lee appeared to have a command of various strategies when he read with a buddy. The following section provides examples of Lee’s ability to use a variety of cues when needed.

**Self-selection of literacy events**

As described above, Lee was an initiator of buddy reading. He appeared, at first, to be interested in the small social circle "buddy reading" provided. He had certain classmates he always liked to choose, and seemed to be having fun while reading together (laughing, pointing, flipping pages of big copies). A cursory look at Lee and his "buddy" made one wonder if any learning was taking place. However, an event that occurred on October 29 suggested that real learning, problem solving and reading were taking place. Lee was sitting on the floor with Jim, with the big copy of Hattie and the Fox open. This story is about a hen, Hattie, who keeps warning the farm animals that a fox is nearby. She begins with "I see two eyes in the bushes." The other
animals mock her and pay no attention. There is a repeating, cumulative phrase that continues "I see two eyes and a nose in the bushes", supported by the illustration that shows more and more of the fox. Again she is ignored. When Lee and Jim got to the third set, "I see two eyes, a nose and two ears in the bushes", they got stuck on the word "eyes". Lee suggested they go back to "where we first saw it" and turned back to the first time Hattie talked. They used the illustration to help them decide that the word was "eyes". As they turned back to where they were, Lee pointed to the text and said, "See that's eyes and that's ears!" Lee displayed his ability to use context, illustration and his own resourcefulness to tackle an unknown word. Other similar events were recorded for Lee. He was often heard saying, "Let's skip that!" Once, on the second read through of Mrs Wishy Washy with Jim, Lee said, "We didn't get this before...let's skip it." At the end of the page they went back to figure out that the word was "know". When buddy reading Where is Everybody?, an alphabet book, on October 8, Lee not only corrected Jim, but also explained why. Relying on the illustration Jim read, "Bunny is...", Lee cut in and said, "No, rabbit..." and pointed to the "r" at the beginning of the word. Later, Jim read "donkey" for "vicuna" and Lee stated, "Donkey would start with a 'd'." Similar incidents suggested
that Lee could employ a variety of strategies, and was aware that a combination of cues was helpful. This ability, however, was showcased best during buddy reading, and not one-on-one with Mrs. B. or me.

Direct contact with Lee by Mrs. B. or me did not give the complete picture that this learner was progressing. Questions posed by me throughout the data collection period to Lee were usually answered with, "I don't know." Whether I queried about a book he picked or one he put back, Lee was never able to verbalize his thinking. Restating the question in a different form obtained the same answer, "I don't know". In early February, when asked what kind of reader he was, Lee said, "I don't know." I asked if he was a different reader than when he started first grade.

Lee: Yes! I didn't even know how to spell "has".
MJP: Did you know how to read it?
Lee: No! Not even "sun".

While he could somewhat verbalize how he had changed, it was difficult for Mrs. B. and me to appraise his growth through direct work with Lee. Observations of the buddy reading provided more information about how his reading strategies were developing and being utilized.

Lee's idea of what constituted a "story" was also best displayed during an observation of him at B.E.A.R. time. On February 4, Lee picked up I Like, a Level 1 text. Every page had photographs of various items
children would be familiar with. At the top of each photo was the sentence, "I like." Lee closed the book and said aloud, "This is a preschool book." Upon seeing me, he commented, "Hey Mrs. Fresch, this is not a story! I can't believe a guy got that published!" Other than occasionally choosing the class-compiled pages that were extensions following a big book reading, Lee always chose a "story". This was most obvious in his selections, but not in direct conversations with him. The most powerful information of how Lee was learning was obtained through observations. While being a watcher in the large group readings may have aided his growth, progress was best assessed through observations of Lee reading on his own.

MITCH

Table 8. Assessment Scores - Mitch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Sketch

Mitch was chosen as a focus child by the first week of October. His confident approach in early text selections, coupled with his insecure print concepts, provided diversity within the lower range of his instructional range. Mitch was considered "at risk" by
Reading Recovery criteria (indications of possible reading problems — such as poor strategies and slow progress). He was followed to observe how his text choices might change over time. The desire was to see how this child's growth in reading strategies would influence his literacy learning.

Early in the school year, Mitch displayed a self-assured approach to reading. He was confident and often made statements such as, "I learned to read The Hungry Caterpillar today" (9-11-90). He appeared to be quite eager to participate in book choosing and tried to join in large group readings. However, many concepts about print (such as one to one correspondence) were not secure for Mitch. His printing was immature and it appeared he still had a coordination problem with holding a pencil. Mrs. B. was concerned about Mitch after working with him a few times, and requested that the Reading Recovery teacher test him. Mitch was considered "at risk" after the testing, but, because the number of children qualifying for Reading Recovery was larger than could be serviced, Mitch was placed in "Bear's Den", a daily, one hour, small group session. He remained in this program until mid-January, when he tested out at an instructional level of 12.

In September and October, Mrs. B. concentrated instruction for Mitch in securing one to one
correspondence when reading. She often asked, "Where does it say that?" and "Point with your finger." She encouraged Mitch to verbalize what he should do as he read, such as point, or skip a word that stumped him. He willingly practiced each strategy Mrs. B. suggested. Throughout September and October, though, he needed help remembering what strategy would be most beneficial to him at a particular moment. By November, he began self-selecting strategies on his own. He had realized that at times he needed to skip words, or at other times to use the illustration to aid him. Mrs. B. occasionally helped Mitch on difficult words, such as "echoed". Mitch had begun to self-correct and by the end of November was attempting to self-correct during small group reading. For example, on November 27, Mitch met at the table with Jim, Lee and Nick. They were given Buffy's Tricks, a new book from the Literacy 2000 series. As they read, the following fieldnotes were recorded:

They get stuck on "ordinary", "idea" (which they skip and Mitch gets using context) and "listen" (which Mitch also gets by using the context).

Mitch had used the most useful cue, context, to decode two new words for him - idea and listen.

Throughout the data collection period, Mitch watched the first time Mrs. B. read a big book in shared reading. After that, Mitch joined in every group reading. He paid close attention as Mrs. B. pointed to words, often moving
around other children to get a better view. When he joined the reading, he tried to mouth the words, and generally could remember repeating phrases. Mitch did not choose to revisit the big books when he self-selected texts in September. He chose texts from a varying range of difficulty, sometimes to only look at the illustrations. In time, this changed, as will be discussed below in the description of Mitch's self-selection of texts. But this early display of text choices set Mitch apart from other children scoring within the same instructional range. He did not appear interested in rereading the texts that he heard in shared reading.

Data from the baseline measures

Mitch's September instructional level was 1. During the CAP, Mitch had enough basic book handling and directionality skills to score 13. However, when he did the reading, he did not consistently match words to print (demonstrated by saying more or less words than what was actually printed on the page). This was also displayed when he listened and followed along in the text, either in small group or with a taped story. The one-to-one correspondence problems continued through October.

When writing the dictated sentence, words for the writing spree and List 1 of the QIWK in September, Mitch used all capitals and had many letter reversals. His
QIWK score was 0. Each attempt consisted of three capital letters, placing him in the preliterate/phonetic stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). His spellings of "girl, want, plane, drop, when" are displayed in Figure 9.

![Figure 9. Mitch's Attempts on QIWK Words 1-5 - September](image)

Except "girl", which may have been written right to left, Mitch produced spellings that showed his attempts to sound out as much of the word as he could. He appeared to be sounding across the word, and then approximated the sounds. As he attempted to write the sounds, we confused the order of the letters. This was also evident in the dictated sentence ("We are glad you came to school."):

![Figure 10. Mitch's September Dictated Sentence](image)
When asked to produce words he knew how to spell in the monthly writing spree, Mitch chose basic sight words (a, I, no, the). By November's spree he was using word families to produce words (hat, pat, rat, sat). The use of sight words continued throughout the data collection. In February he wrote such words as "in", "for" and "on". Most of these words appeared in Mitch's writings. He had considerable trouble with spacing words during writing workshop. His first attempt at a story was a jumble of capital letters on an unlined piece of paper. In conferencing with Mrs. B., Mitch stated that he no longer wanted this story because there were no spaces and he could not read it. She encouraged him to start again, use lined paper and leave spaces so he would be able to read what he wrote. His next attempt had spaces, but he could not always remember what he had written. By mid-October, his writings made sense, and he was better able to read his own work. He told Mrs. B. he knew the letters and sounds had to match, and attempted closer matches. He wrote a dog story during writing workshop that began:

I HaV a DOG Has name Harld He is TaLV Ues Lad Has GLrs wia baWN and Bacca

(I have a dog. His name is Harold. He is twelve years old. His colors [are] white, brown and black.)

The content of his stories continued to be quite good, and he worked on making the sounds he heard and letters
he wrote match as closely as he could. For example, in early November, Mitch wrote " Tau" for "there". By the end of December he wrote " ther", a much closer match. Mrs. B. continually used his writings as a point of instruction, helping Mitch listen for vowel sounds, and eventually to teach conventions such as the final "e" to mark a long vowel.

When Mitch took the QIWK in January he scored a 2, spelling "bed" and "flat" correctly. His printing had improved, and was very readable. He had made some good attempts on other words in List 1. For example, he had "plat" for "plate", "chrap" for "trap" and "palen" for "plane" (note exaggerated sounding). He had listened across the words, and had attempted to spell the words he did not know. He appeared to be working in the letter name stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985), as he still did not have control over spellings such as "dr" and "tr".

His reading strategies had also improved by January. His instructional level at that time was 14. This was the top level for testing out of the Reading Recovery Bear's Den, and he was discontinued from the program in mid-January. He was monitoring his reading, self-correcting fairly regularly. During his running records in February, he had read "The quills are pointed and sharp" as "The squills are petted and sharp". He stopped
at the end of a sentence and stated, "That doesn't make any sense" (2-5-91) and started over. Whenever Mrs. B. asked Mitch to point out "hard parts" of a text he had read to himself, he could immediately leaf through the pages and find such words as, "bruises" and "finish". These were generally words he could not sound out or successfully use the context to read. Mitch had progressed from trying to master one-to-one correspondence, to a reader who had begun to monitor his reading for meaning.

Self-selection of texts

As mentioned earlier, Mitch did not choose to reread the big books from shared reading at the beginning of the school year. He chose books of varying difficulty, studying the illustrations, and sometimes pointing to words. The following texts were recorded for Mitch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Room</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten Bears in my Bed</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Big Sneeze</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I Want to be an Astronaut</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Our Puppy's Vacation</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>There's a Dragon in my Wagon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Want to be an Astronaut</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We're Going on a Bear Hunt</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bus Ride</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Building a House</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Dark, Dark Tale</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Fishy Color Story</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the time Mitch was making these choices, his instructional level was about 1. Yet, the only
rereadings of shared texts were *There's a Dragon in My Wagon* and *A Fishy Color Story*. Mitch self-selected a text he had previously read during an invited reading on September 21. At the time, he chose *The Bus Ride*, a Level 4 he read ten days before. Overall, revisiting a text, particularly a big book, was not common for Mitch.

This pattern changed in October. Mitch added big books and *Literacy 2000* books used in small group reading to his self-selections. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>TITLE:</th>
<th>LEVEL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td><em>The Shopping Basket</em></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I Love Cats</em> (tape)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Rudy's New Red Wagon</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Winnie the Pooh</em></td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Bruno's Birthday</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sharks</em></td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>I Love Cats</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mrs Wishy Washy</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Mrs Wishy Washy</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Yes Ma'am</em></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Wrinkles</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What's in the Cupboard?</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>At Night</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* = Previously heard in shared or small group reading.)

He began taking home books read during the day, rereading them again the next day.

Later in October, Mitch changed his selection pattern again. He reread a Mercer Mayer book, *Just Camping Out*, every day for a week. At the same time, Mrs. B.'s anecdotal records noted Mitch taking "risks" in small group readings. An intense rereading was repeated in mid-November with *Mud Pies*. Mitch interspersed the
rereadings with days of scanning the pages of many different texts without reading them. He studied the illustrations and some of the print, flipped through the remainder of the book, and returned it to the book rack. These texts were generally at the 10 - 20+ level, but some were as low as Level 8.

In early January his text selections changed slightly again. Mitch chose to reread texts, and flipped through and rejected unfamiliar ones. The texts he reread were often books by Mercer Mayer, perhaps because the format was very similar from story to story. His text selection for the invited reading January 4 was This is My House, a Mayer book Mitch read before on his own. He did not return to read the books he scanned and rejected with the exception of one book. Mitch had flipped through But No Elephants on January 10th and 14th. On January 29 he sat off by himself to read the text from beginning to end. This Level 14 text was at Mitch's instructional level at that time.

As Mitch changed as a reader, so did his self-selections. He had become more willing to chose books to reread. The change in Mitch's selections was also noticeable to him, as displayed in the following section.

Self-selection of literacy events

Early in the school year, Mitch made comments such as, "I learned to read The Hungry Caterpillar today" (9-
11-90) and "I can read half this book" (9-26-90). He appeared to be eager to learn to read. For example, in an October conversation, I posed Mitch with this: "Tell me how you pick a book to read."

Mitch: I look for a book I want and try to read it.
MJJ: How do you know you want it?
Mitch: I want to try to read it, so I'll be able to read it all the other times and maybe read it to someone else. (10-31-90)

He was observed handling many books whenever possible, many of which were well above his reading skill. This was particularly displayed during free choice. Mitch chose print or text reading thirty-one of thirty-nine events observed over the data collection period. The monthly breakdown of free choice reading and writing events recorded for Mitch were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>WRITING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A change in selection of free choice events was recorded for Mitch in November. Previously, in October, he was intensely interested in using his time to read. In November, Mitch changed and used more of his free time to work on a story in his writing workshop folder. By December, he returned to handling books whenever he had free choice time.
Mitch made an effort to participate in the large group, shared readings after listening to the story once. He was observed mouthing the words, particularly during the repeating phrases. However, Mitch did not choose to revisit the shared books on his own until mid-October. The revisits were only during B.E.A.R. time, and not free choice. At about the same time (September 25 and October 8, 9, 15, 29), Mitch's B.E.A.R time was spent watching other children reading books aloud. October appeared to be a month of change for Mitch in both reading and writing (see above section concerning writing workshop).

In February, I asked Mitch to discuss how he had changed as a reader and participant in literacy learning.

MJJ: What kind of reader are you now?
Mitch: A good reader.
MJJ: Are you different than before?
Mitch: Yep, when I first got into first grade, I didn't listen for sounds - now I do.
MJJ: Do you pick books differently now?
Mitch: In the beginning I picked easy books.
MJJ: What's an easy book?
Mitch: The Bus Ride.
MJJ: How about now?
Mitch: I pick a little harder, like The Napping House. (2-5-91)

Both books mentioned above by Mitch were appropriate instructional reading levels for him at the time he chose them. The Bus Ride, a level 4 text, was chosen in mid-September. The repeating pattern ("the goat got on the bus, the rabbit got on the bus"), reinforced by the illustration, was ideal reading for Mitch at the time. The Napping House, a level 15 book, was chosen by Mitch
at a time when he had tested out of Reading Recovery at a level 14. The cumulative, repeating storyline in that book, was also an excellent self-selected text for Mitch. Although he did not read every book he handled, Mitch chose books at or slightly below his instructional level from mid-October through the end of data collection. He developed a variety of reading skills and became a better judge of what he could read. The books he flipped through were generally too difficult, and he did not return to them once rejected. The growth of this "at risk" reader, had changed both his text selections and choice of participation in literacy events.

NICK

Table 9. Assessment Scores - Nick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Sketch

Nick was chosen as a focus child because his quiet manner and need for constant guidance provided diversity within his instructional range. Also, of the twenty-three children in the class given the CAP, he had the lowest score (10 of 24). He did not "stand out" from the crowd in terms of participation or volunteering. In
general, his approach was very reserved. He was chosen to see how such an unsure, quiet child would participate in literacy learning.

Nick's cautious nature became apparent within the first few days of school. His activity choices, self-selected texts and willingness to volunteer all remained safe and low risk. For example, in large group activities, Nick paid close attention but did not volunteer to answer any questions posed by Mrs. B. During the fifth week of school, Nick listened as three other children responded to Mrs. B.'s request for action words ending in "-ed". He volunteered "walked" and later, "bike riding". Another week passed before Nick volunteered again. By January, Nick began to raise his hand to give an answer, but those events were spaced by several days. His participation revolved around what he considered obviously correct answers.

Mrs. B.'s anecdotal reading notes about Nick repeatedly recorded his reluctance to take a risk when confronted with an unknown word. He would often stop, look at Mrs. B. and wait for help, unwilling to attempt sounding or using picture or context cues. Once Nick began to self-monitor, he continued to stop, look at Mrs. B., shake his head "no", but he still waited for help. Although he realized he was wrong, he had trouble deciding what to do about it. Nick sought similar
guidance during writing workshop. From the first day the children began to work in their writing folders, Nick spent most of his time following Mrs. B. or me around asking for spellings. No amount of encouragement could get Nick to attempt invented spellings.

Mrs. B.'s anecdotal records showed a shift in Nick's reading strategies around December 5. He began to sound out words, using the illustration for help. However, when doing this, Nick did not self-monitor his reading. The meaning of the text was ignored as he paid more attention to sounding out the words. By mid-January, Nick was better able to self-monitor for meaning while still using the illustrations and letter-sounds to read. Nick gradually changed in his willingness to attempt new words as he gained command of reading strategies. The progression of Nick's development is described in the next section.

Data from assessments

Nick scored at an instructional level of 1 in September. His score on the CAP was low enough to be considered "at risk" for understanding concepts about print (such as opening the book from the back cover to begin reading and pointing to the right page instead of the left to begin reading). Nick's low risk tendencies (ie: refusal to volunteer; choosing only familiar books for rereading; unwillingness to attempt unfamiliar
words), along with his baseline scores, indicated Nick needed to be encouraged and made to feel successful.

He also needed reassurance when writing. He generated nine very basic words (I, you, go, no, mom, dad) for the beginning of the year writing spree. He was able to match a few sounds when he attempted the first five words of the QIWK in September, placing him in the preliterate/phonetic stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). He had to be encouraged throughout to "do the best" he could. Figure 11 illustrates his ability to generally write one beginning and one ending sound.

![Figure 11. Nick's Attempts on QIWK Words 1-5 - September](image)

In writing the dictated sentence ("We are glad you came to school"), Nick wrote, in a column:

```
We
R
g
U
KM
t
SARI
```

While some words showed sound/letter relationship, others
(e.g.: "SARl" for school) indicated some basic concepts about encoding were not established.

Nick's initial experience with his writing workshop folder consisted of him following Mrs. B. or me around, asking for the spelling of words. He wrote only the words he was certain that he knew (ie: the, it, my). On September 24, after some encouragement from me, Nick tried to write the sounds he heard in "festival". He pronounced it over and over "festibul", and ended up writing "FStIBOIL". The next day, the following field notes were recorded concerning Nick:

During writing Nick comes up to me and asks if "then" is on the Word Wall (Observer comment: the Word Wall is a bulletin board where frequently requested words are written on strips and then posted for future reference). I help him look, but only find "when". I ask how he might change that to "then". We work through changing the "w" to "t". He comes up a few minutes later and asks if "over" is on the Word Wall... and then he'll "stop bugging" me. I tell him he is not bugging me, and that I am glad he is trying so hard to find the words he needs. The word is not on the wall. I remind him we had a book with "over" and "around" and "through" ... what was that? He cannot remember, I remind him of Rosie's Walk. We go get the book and as I flip pages I ask if he remembers what she went over. He says "Haystack!". We find that page, and I point to the word. He takes the book and says: "Yeah!" (9-25-90)

After the September 25th incident, Nick became more resourceful in finding words he needed. He used books, bulletin boards and friends to find spellings. He also gradually reduced the number of requests for spellings from Mrs. B. and me. By mid-November, Nick was also more
willing to invent a spelling to keep his writing going. For example, in one story he invented "dtectv" (detective), "talfon" (telephone) and "prse" (purse). This was a turning point in Nick's writing. He continued to use his writing workshop time without requesting help from Mrs. B. or me. The most dramatic change for Nick was his willingness to attempt spelling words in his writings. Nick knew his writing approach had changed. On January 11, I invited him to read a book to me. He chose the first book he published. Afterwards, I asked how this was different than the second book he published. He said there were "a lot more words". This, he said, was because:

I write more, I use to spend all my writing time trying to find out how to spell words, and it used up all my time. Now, I just write and write and don't worry about it. (1-11-91)

Nick had changed as a writer. He appeared to be more confident as he worked in his writing folder, rarely approaching Mrs. B. or me for help in spelling on his rough drafts.

His January QIWK score (4) reflected this confidence. He had many invented words closer to conventional spellings ("driv" for drive, "wont" for want), indicating a firm placement in the letter name stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985). He maintained some misunderstanding of basic concepts of words, such as spelling without a vowel ("shp" for ship,
"thump" for trip), but Nick had attempted to write the words without reluctance.

Nick's change in reading also indicated the growth he had experienced. By the end of January, Nick had moved to an instructional level of 14. He was taking more risks in attempting words he did not know. Rather than wait for help from Mrs. B. or me, Nick was coordinating his strategies to read new words. As he became a more skillful reader, his approach to literacy learning also made a gradual change. This was particularly exemplified in his text choices, as the following section portrays.

**Self-selection of texts**

The first few months of school Nick's text choices tended to have a familiar structure. He chose books Mrs. B. had introduced, or texts with highly repetitive phrasing, and then read them over and over. The rereadings are apparent in Nick's early choices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>(LEVEL, notes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td><strong>Where is Everybody?</strong></td>
<td>(10, repetitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Bus Ride</em></td>
<td>(4, repetitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><em>The Bus Ride</em></td>
<td>(4, repeat reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Look for Me</em></td>
<td>(5, small group reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Bus Ride</em></td>
<td>(4, repeat reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td><strong>Where is Everybody?</strong></td>
<td>(10, repeat reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Who's in the Shed?</em></td>
<td>(16, repeat with buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Who's in the Shed?</em></td>
<td>(16, repeat with buddy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Where is Everybody?</strong></td>
<td>(10, repeat reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Look for Me</em></td>
<td>(5, repeat reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Elephant in Trouble</em></td>
<td>(13, new text)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nick reread *Where is Everybody?* once or twice a week for one month. This was a highly illustrated alphabet book with sentences such as "Rabbit is on the roller coaster". When Nick selected the big book, *Who's in the Shed?*, he chose to read it to Mrs. B. the same afternoon it had been introduced. After she helped him through the entire book once, he read it again with Lee. The next day he chose the book and read it with Lee and David. While Nick generally chose to read alone, he had support from Mrs. B. and two classmates when he attempted this new, more difficult text.

A few weeks later, his text choice for the invited reading returned to the familiar. On October 17 he chose *Yes Ma'am*, a big book read to the class one month earlier. He had "verified" with me that he could chose "any book". And thus, he chose what he knew he could read.

Yet, when self-selecting for reading alone in mid-October, Nick began to choose unfamiliar texts. He still occasionally revisited a variety of old favorites. As he had done in September and October with *Where is Everybody?*, Nick had one particular book that he chose every few days. His own published story - typed, illustrated and bound in early October - became the text he returned to time and again. He took it home several times to read, bringing it back to read again the next
day. This "anchor book", or text he returned to between other choices, was replaced by his next published book in mid-December. While Nick was finally attempting unfamiliar books, he maintained two distinct patterns for choosing texts. First, he tended to choose a text and then reread it for several days. The rereadings included taking the book home overnight. Second, he generally had an "anchor book" (a text he returned to every few days). When his own published books were complete, they became his "anchor books". During the January 11 invited reading, Nick chose to read to me his first published book. When he again "verified" with me that he could choose whatever he wanted, he decided to return to what he termed his "own good book". Overall, Nick had gradually integrated some risk taking (or moving away from the familiar) while maintaining a "safe" approach through the use of an anchor book.

**Self-selection of literacy events**

Nick participated in a variety of literacy activities. He chose to read in his free time as often as he worked in his writing folder. Whether reading or writing, Nick generally chose to do it alone. Over the months of data collection, only twelve instances of buddy reading were recorded for Nick. He explained that "I just get a book and read by myself." While buddy reading was an option open to Nick, he generally took his book,
found a spot and began to read. He often knew a particular book he wanted for B.E.A.R. time and did not spend time looking at other titles. Five instances of watching other readers were recorded for Nick. Those events were all used to wait for a particular book to become available. For example, on September 24 Nick watched David and Tom read The Bus Ride. While they read, he went to the reading corner and chose Where is Everybody? When he returned to David and Tom, The Bus Ride had been chosen by another child. He watched that child read The Bus Ride. In the meantime, he was offered Mrs. Wishy Washy by another child. He refused and pointed to the spinner to indicate that she should return it to the book stand. He finally got The Bus Ride and the following fieldnotes were recorded:

\textbf{G\textit{ets The Bus Ride} - walks by me saying "There!" and begins to point and read. (9-24-90)}

His specific ideas about which books he would choose were also apparent during the browsing time for a school book fair. Nick asked Mrs. B. for "the beginning reader table of books". When she pointed out the table of picture and short chapter books, Nick spent the majority of his time looking at titles he was already familiar with.

Nick's reserved manner concealed much of the thinking going on in his head. Through conversations I initiated in January, Nick demonstrated an understanding of his growth in a most unexpected way.
MJP: What kind of reader are you?
Nick: Kinda good, other older people can do better.
MJP: Is that different than when you started first grade?
Nick: Pretty much.
MJP: How so?
Nick: I skipped a lot of pages 'cuz I couldn't read them. I saw neat books and they had neat covers on them, I wanted to read them but couldn't.

***
MJP: How do you think you compare to other readers in the class?
Nick: I'm ahead a couple and a couple's ahead of me...somebody might get another book, like if the book's too hard...they put it back and get an easier one, and I don't do that.
MJP: Are you better at reading or writing?
Nick: Writing! I write a lot! It helps me a lot.
MJP: How?
Nick: It helps me write better and helps me spell more better and get more words right.
MJP: Does it help you read better?
Nick: Yes, 'cuz if you write words and you might see them in books and be able to read them...but reading doesn't help you write, 'cuz you'd have to copy and that's illegal.

Nick had developed his own understanding about the reciprocal nature of reading and writing. He could articulate the control he had begun to feel over his own reading and writing.

KATIE

Table 10. Assessment Scores - Katie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Sketch

Katie was chosen as a focus child because she spent a great deal of time watching other children participate in literacy learning. She was an observer, or onlooker, of other children reading. She often stood within earshot of two readers, watching and listening, as they read a book aloud. She never invited herself into the reading. She remained on the fringes, watching. She was chosen to observe how she utilized the onlooker strategy as she gained control over her own reading.

Katie appeared very interested in studying print from the beginning of first grade. She browsed the room each morning, looking at bulletin boards or activity centers Mrs. B. had made available. When children gathered to read displays or books, Katie stood back and watched. The first recorded "watching" was on September 7. A group of five children looked at the photo bulletin board, a display of a child's photo with accompanying, descriptive sentence (i.e: "I like to go to the pool in the summer"). As the children read the sentences aloud, Katie's presence was recorded in the fieldnotes as:

Katie stands behind the group, looking over their shoulders watching as others read [the sentence on the outside and look at the photo on the inside]. She does not try to get close to the board. She remains on fringes.

A similar event, again with the photo bulletin board, was recorded on September 11. This strategy continued
throughout September, October and November. Katie also watched the rereadings of big books during shared reading. She rarely joined in, even during the repeating phrases. She also observed whenever Mrs. B. requested rhyming words. Katie's first attempt to volunteer was October 3 when Mrs. B. had asked for words beginning with the "sh" sound. Katie volunteered "champagne". It appeared at that point she was attending to the beginning sounds, as all previous requests for rhyming words had been for ending sounds (ie: rhymes for sleep and creep on September 11; rhymes for pig on September 25). This was also apparent in her attempts to read. Katie generally focused on the beginning sounds. Although Katie's print concepts were more secure than either Mitch or Nick, Mrs. B. was concerned about her beginning strategies. The Reading Recovery teacher tested Katie. After the testing, Katie was considered "at risk". During the Level 1 text she scored less than 50%. The Reading Recovery teacher had noted:

Not attending to print
No 1 - 1
Said 1 word when there were three on the page
(undated)

Like Mitch, Katie was placed in Bear's Den (daily, one-half hour small group lesson) due to limited availability of the Reading Recovery program.

Katie used the beginning sounds of words as her primary strategy through December. For example, she said
"was" for "witch" when reading Which Witch is Which? aloud to Mrs. B. She did not self correct, and did not appear to realize the sentence did not make sense. Mrs. B.'s anecdotal notes reflected Katie's reliance on only one strategy:

doesn't "get it" with context (10-23-90)

NO risks - "with" (I had to tell), "candles" (I had to tell) - doesn't skip (10-29-90)

"leave" (trouble with), not looking at pictures, a teeny bit of a risk (10-31-90)

"hurry" - told her - got "working, carry, heavy" had to tell "tiring and easy". *needs to use pictures - a bit more risk-taking (11-5-90)

By mid-December, Katie used pictures to aid her reading, although somewhat inconsistently. When encouraged by Mrs. B. to use the context, Katie could monitor her reading well enough to use the meaning of the sentence. By January her self-monitoring had become consistent enough to use a variety of strategies. For example, Mrs. B. noted:

after/afraid - self corrected - said doesn't make sense (1-9-91)

using pictures/context/sounds (1-14-91)

The gradual growth in Katie's word knowledge was most apparent in her writing. The next section presents the change in Katie's word knowledge over the course of the data collection period.
Data from assessments

Katie's instructional level in September was Level B. As mentioned, she was very reliant on beginning sounds and used sounding as her primary strategy. While she appeared to handle books well and knew some specifics about print, (such as the meaning of "?"), consequently scoring 15 of 24 on the CAP, she was unable to read many of the texts in the room.

Although her instructional level was one of the lowest in the class, Katie's performance on the QIWK was an indicator of her ability to listen for sounds and reproduce them in writings. Her attempts were more advanced than Tom, Jill, Lee and Nick, all of whom had a higher instructional reading level. She had correctly spelled "trap", and had some very good attempts on other words (ie: "derap" for drop, "draev" for drive, "kat" for cut, "plat" for plate and "mad" for mud). She began the school year already in the letter name stage (Henderson, 1985).

Katie's performance on the writing spree each month was another indicator of the growth in word knowledge she experienced. In October, Katie generated 11 words, the lowest in the class. In November, she wrote 21 words, moving her total ahead of seven other children. The 26 words written in December, moved her total ahead of thirteen children, including Tom, Sara, Lee, David, Mitch
and Nick. Katie wrote 15 words on the writing spree on February 1, maintaining the same place in relation to the other children in the class as she had in December.

Her writings reflected similar growth. Spelling attempts, based on what she knew about words, were displayed in Katie's first story in September. She relied on sounding and her knowledge of some sight words to write:

```
I LAK SCHOOL. YE RAT POems I M AN FrserAd YE MAd BAKS. I et MY oaNdascas Ye lard a NeYH book. Ye HV a NuY caledr My clasmoom is FaN to be in.

(I like school. We write poems. I am in first grade. We made books. I get my own desk. We learned a new book. We have a new calendar. My classroom is fun to be in.)
```

By December, her invented spellings displayed the growth in word knowledge as she wrote:

```
It WOSS the Nit Bifor cHristMas aNd I HoP I Will get a BorBe Doll House from Santa.

(It was the night before Christmas and I hope I will get a Barbie Doll House.)
```

In January, when Katie took List 1 of the QIWK, she correctly wrote nine of the twenty words, scoring better than the other children within the same instructional reading level. Incorrect spellings demonstrated her attempts listen across the word for beginning consonant patterns followed by vowels with an ending consonant (ie: "plan" for plane, "waen" for when, "sistor" for sister). Her spellings suggested she had an understanding of beginning blends such as "dr", "tr", "fl" and "pl". She
generally had correctly identified short vowels and ending sounds such as "mp". She was moving from the letter name stage into the within word pattern stage (Henderson, 1985) as her attempts became more accurate as she relied on her growing word knowledge.

The change in Katie's reading strategies was not as apparent as the same gradual improvement in the writing. There appeared to be months of reliance on sounding only. Mrs. B. continued to encourage Katie to use context and illustrations to aid her reading, but she generally reverted to sounding. I had a conversation with Katie about reading in November:

MJP: If you come to a word you do not know, what do you do?
Katie: Sound it out and sometimes I get it right. That's what I do with my dad at home.
MJP: Where might you go for help?
Katie: The pictures. (11-12-90)

Katie's reply to the last question was the only one like it that I received. Most of the children said they would go to the teacher, adult or friend. She had begun to think about the use of some other cues, but only after sounding attempts did not help.

About the middle of January, Katie began coordinating sounding, context and picture clues to read. At that time she scored well enough to be exited from the Reading Recovery Bear's Den. By the time running records were completed by me February 1, Katie was reading at an instructional level of 14. She self-corrected throughout
the readings. Errors that she did not correct were changes in tense that did not hamper the meaning (i.e: "lives" for lived, "come" for came, "feed" for fed). Katie's sorting out of the usefulness of reading strategies may have taken place during her independent time with books. As mentioned earlier, she spent a great deal of time watching other children read. She also displayed a specific pattern to self-selection of texts, as discussed in the following section.

**Self-selection of texts**

Katie began self-selecting a variety of texts from the reading corner the first few weeks of school. She looked through the pages from a range of levels. Occasionally, Mrs. B. would offer a book to Katie they had read together, to encourage her to read books on her own level. She always refused the offers, and never chose the offered texts over the course of data collection. For example, Katie had heard *A Fishy Color Story*, a Level 6 text, in shared reading and had read it at the table in a small group with Mrs. B. When she was offered the book to take home September 12, Katie said, "No thanks." No revisiting of *Fishy Color Story* was recorded for Katie. Katie took books home regularly, but the selections were always the ones she had read in B.E.A.R. time. Occasionally, a text she had not looked at was chosen to take home, but Katie appeared to want
the texts she could already read.

As mentioned, Katie began the year by selecting from a wide range of difficulty. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Ten Apples up on Top</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Bird's Spring Words</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Burningham's 1,2,3</td>
<td>unleveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stop! Go! Word Bird</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>There's a Dragon in My Wagon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There's a Dragon in My Wagon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom &amp; Pippo and the Washing Machine</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom &amp; Pippo and the Washing Machine</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first appearance of There's a Dragon in My Wagon, a shared reading big book, in Katie's self-selected texts was about two weeks after first hearing it. This pattern reappeared quite regularly for Katie with books Mrs. B. read to the children. By mid-September Katie was balancing her selections with rereadings of big books and familiar books. The following sampling of self-selected big books was recorded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PRESENTED</th>
<th>SELECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There's a Dragon in My Wagon</td>
<td>Aug. 30</td>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>Sept. 14</td>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's in the Cupboard?</td>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hattie and the Fox</td>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Red Rose</td>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</td>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>Dec. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Family and Me</td>
<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>Jan. 29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once Katie had self-selected a big book, she revisited it repeatedly within a short period of time. For example, she chose Hattie and the Fox for the first time November 12. She reread it November 13 and twice on November 14.
(once with a small copy, once with the big copy) and again December 5. Over a three week period, she revisited Hattie and the Fox six times. A similar approach was used with other texts she chose. For example, she selected Bruno's Birthday four times on October 29, and Mud Pies November 15, 16 and twice on December 3. Further study of Katie's self-selections displayed another pattern to the texts chosen in-between the big books. She appeared to read at a comfortable level for a time, and then attempted to read a text several levels higher. Both the repeated readings and the move to higher levels are apparent in the following two periods of self-selection recorded for Katie:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>Naughty Baby</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naughty Baby</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Wishy Washy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Eat Your Peas, Louise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Wishy Washy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There's a Dragon in My Wagon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do You Know What I Think?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mrs. Wishy Washy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Wishy Washy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten Bears in My Bed</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bus Ride</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this first set, Katie read and reread familiar texts for several days. Then, on October 30 she selected Ten Bears in My Bed, which was a considerable move for her. This text had been read to the children on August 31.
Katie selected the text to take home October 9, and during B.E.A.R. time October 22 she tried to point to and read the text. The October 30 reading was a complete reading, with no requests for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td><strong>The Red Rose</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Red Rose</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hattie and the Fox</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Hattie and the Fox</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Hattie and the Fox</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Mud Pies</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>From Gran</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Mud Pies</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><strong>Little Cookie</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Little Cookie</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td><strong>Mud Pies</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Bus Ride</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mud Pies</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Little Cookie</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>own poetry notebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Hattie and the Fox</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This second set shows Katie's repeated readings of the big books, **The Red Rose** and **Hattie and the Fox**, followed November 15 with her selection of **From Gran**, an unfamiliar, higher level text. **From Gran** had also been a text Katie watched another child read aloud on October 29, once again displaying the delay in Katie's choices. Each move to higher level texts was followed by a text considerably easier than Katie's ability at the time. Those choices were then followed by a gradual move toward books more on her instructional level.

The availability of both the big books as well as some of the other texts was key in Katie's pattern of
self-selection. While Mrs. B. introduced a big book and then reread it several times over the course of a week, Katie was delayed in a self-selected revisiting. Once she chose to read the book, her intense revisiting allowed her to read the book fluently. When I invited Katie to read a book of her choice to me on October 23, she chose *Mrs. Wishy Washy*. She had previously reread this text eight times.

The availability of the poetry notebook in her own desk also became important in early December when, after months of delay, she began to reread the poems. By mid-January, Katie was rereading the poems quite often. She transferred the poems from the folder provided by Mrs. B. to a three-ring notebook. She read the poems page by page, and once completed began the notebook all over again. The poetry revisiting was followed by a large selection of unfamiliar texts (*Pardon? Said the Giraffe, This is My House*). Her selection for the invited reading in January was also an unfamiliar text, *The Napping House*. Katie appeared to be attempting more new texts, supported by rereading the familiar poems. Several days later, Katie returned to some old favorites, such as *Secret Soup* and *Mrs. Wishy Washy*, but continued to occasionally select an unfamiliar text. She appeared to choose certain texts only when she was ready, supported first with practice in many familiar books.
Self-selection of literacy events

As mentioned in Katie's personal sketch, she was a watcher. Compared to the other focus children, Katie had the largest number of "watching" events recorded. To compare, the following totals were recorded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS CHILD</th>
<th>NUMBER OF WATCHING EVENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bulk of the events took place in September and October, but watching was a strategy Katie used throughout the data collection period. Katie's watching of other children reading resembled how she watched Mrs. B. reread a text (watching the print, but not joining in). As mentioned above, two weeks after watching a child read From Gran, Katie self-selected the text. She also used the watching strategy to keep pace in her own copy of a text two children were reading aloud. She sat away from the "buddy reading", and as they read, she followed along in her copy. Katie appeared to use the watching strategy as a way to participate in books she was not quite ready to read alone.

Katie also used buddy reading to support her attempts to read. Some of the first revisitings of big
books were done with a buddy. I asked Katie February 5
why she sometimes read alone, or sometimes with a buddy:

MJJF: When do you like to read alone?
Katie: When I read little books.
MJJF: What are "little" books?
Katie: Books that are small, short and when books
are so easy for me.
MJJF: What might be a little book?
Katie: *Little Sister's Birthday*
MJJF: When would you read with someone?
Katie: When I read a big book.
MJJF: Why?
Katie: It's big and we both can see and it has hard
words and someone can help me.

Once supported by a buddy reading, Katie returned to big
books to reread alone, even on the same day.

Besides seeking the help of other children when
reading, Katie used the classroom to support her
developing literacy skills. A set of picture word cards
Mrs. B. left out were one of Katie's favorite items to
work with at writing time at the beginning of the year.
She flipped through the ringed cards during nearly every
writing workshop in September. She did not copy the
words, but spent a good deal of time just looking through
them. She spent many of her free choice times in October
working in her writing folder. At that point, she was
beginning a number of stories, many which she abandoned.
By December, when she began writing the "Night before
Christmas" story displayed above in the "Data from
Assessments", Katie was focused on writing her entire
workshop time.
Overall, Katie had shown growth in word knowledge that was apparent in both reading and writing. She was aware of the change from September when we had a conversation in February:

MJP: Was there something you read that made you realize you are now a better reader?
Katie: I got two - Just Camping Out and Little Sister's Birthday. When I read those and B.E.A.R. time, I thought I'd love to take them home.
MJP: Why?
Katie: I found I could read them and I could read them to my mom - then she could see I knew the words.
MJP: OK, anything else you want to tell me about reading?
Katie: I sometimes have a hard time finding books I can read, so I try hard books and I can read them!...At first I try easy books, then a hard one. Maybe I'll try the hard one first to get done with it, then I'll read easier ones. (2-5-91)

The pattern that was observed for Katie's self-selections was thoughtfully planned by her. She knew she was choosing "easy" books, and then moving to a more difficult one. When I asked Katie why someone would read a book that was too easy, she said:

Maybe at first it might have been hard - but now it might be easy. (2-5-91)

Katie's idea of "easy" was directly related to the reader's ability at that point in time. Starting the school year "at risk" and at an instructional level of B, may have given Katie a clear perspective of how one might change their self-selected texts. The availability of texts for revisiting, even after several weeks, may have
helped Katie transform a "hard" text into an "easy" one. Her pattern of self-selection, coupled with her self-evaluative comments, indicated her understanding of how she could direct her own literacy learning.

JIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>QIWK (list 1)</th>
<th>CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Sketch**

Jim was chosen as a focus child for a number of reasons. First, although his instructional range was similar to Katie's, he lacked considerable understanding about encoding words. Some of his first attempts on the QIWK and the dictated sentence consisted of letters and symbols (see following section). Second, he developed an intense interest in writing. Once writing folders were introduced, Jim constantly requested time to work in his. Third, he appeared to be a very poor judge of what he could read. While Jim revisited big books, he continually self-selected new texts far above his instructional level. He followed Mrs. B. or me around, constantly asked for words, but never gave up on reading the text. Jim seemed to notice words and letters
everywhere, often pointing them out to Mrs. B. and me. It appeared Jim would approach literacy learning by an entirely different avenue than any of the other children in the class. He became a focus child to follow how his constant writing and text selections would inform learning to read.

Jim appeared interested in print from the beginning of school. Although he could not read most of what he studied (as he often requested "what does that say?"), Jim tried to participate in most print reading that took place. He volunteered on the third day of school to read a line from the poem "Make New Friends" the children heard the first day. He read "and one is gold" for "and the other is gold". Mrs. B. had pointed out that the number of words he said did not match the page, but he could only "read" what he remembered. His early reading showed no attention to sounds or even one-to-one correspondence.

At the end of October Jim still did not understand that what he read had to match what was printed on the page. He often pointed as he read, but did not necessarily match beginning sounds or number of words. By November he began to use some context to help him, and used the illustrations regularly. During that time, he reread a number of familiar books, and appeared to have a particular book he returned to time and again.
As Jim began to use a variety of strategies to read, although somewhat inconsistently, he returned to self-selecting texts well above his reading level at the end of December. About mid-January, when reading with Mrs. B., Jim coordinated use of several reading cues. He still did not self-correct on any regular basis, even when given appropriate texts by Mrs. B. The self-selection of such difficult texts may not have given Jim a place to practice strategies he was learning. The writing Jim did, however, was a place for learning and experimenting with print. The significant growth experienced by Jim in this area is described next.

Data from assessments

Jim's instructional reading level, established by the running records done in September, was B. At that time he did not understand one to one correspondence and did not attend to the print in the text. He was confused during the CAP and was not able to make a one-to-one match (pointing) while I slowly read the text.

Jim's performance on the Q1WK suggested he did not have a firm understanding of the relationship between what he wrote and what he heard. He was the only child in the class to use symbols and letters to represent words, placing him in the preliterate/prephonetic stage of spelling development (Henderson, 1985):
LIST 1 WORD:  

JIM WROTE:

girl  
want  
plane  
drop  
when  
trap  
wish  
cut  
bike  
trip  
flat  
ship  
drive  
fill  
sister  
bump  
plate  
mud  
chop  
bed  

(symbol similar to m), L, (same symbol)
N
A
I
K
A
K
I
LA
I
O
S
P
a
P
L
ph
(no response)

His attempt to write the dictated sentence (We are glad you came to school) showed similar problems of combining letters and symbols along with one-to-one matching problems (one less word than in actual sentence), as seen in Figure 12:

Figure 12. Jim's Dictated Sentence - September
The results of the assessments, in conjunction with work Mrs. B. had done with Jim, indicated a need for further testing. The Reading Recovery teacher assessed Jim and considered him "at risk". During running records, Jim did not have one to one correspondence and was not attending to print (i.e. reading "And here he goes" for "See it go"). She also asked Jim to write all the words he could in a minute. He wrote his name, his two brother's names, THE, NO, SEY ("yes") and backwards Z, O, backwards Z ("zoo"). This was well below the ten generated words Reading Recovery teachers look for at the beginning of first grade. As with Mitch and Katie, Jim was placed in Bear's Den (a daily, one half hour small group lesson) due to limited program slots available in relation to other children in the school qualifying as "at risk".

Jim's reading and writing development progressed at two very different rates. While he seemed to be stalled in learning reading strategies for the first two months of school, he actively sought writing. Throughout September and October Mrs. B. concentrated instruction for Jim on paying attention to the print. While he seemed to see print everywhere (e.g. "as we walk up the hall for recess, Jim points to a display on the wall - spells out 't-h-e' as he points to each letter and then announces 'THE!'" [fieldnotes 9-24-90]), he struggled
with the specifics of reading print in a text. She encouraged him to look at the first letters, to be sure the number of words he read matched the print for one-to-one correspondence. In late October, she stressed skipping a word to use the context. The apparent carry-over of this strategy was displayed in the following event, recorded in October 31 fieldnotes:

Mrs. B. asks Katie to get *The Birthday Party* and read it at the table with her. Katie gets stuck on "leave" and Mrs. B. tells her to skip it. She reads the rest of the sentence and they come back to the word. Mrs. B. asks what would make sense. Jim is standing at the writing folder basket, getting his folder out. He overhears Mrs. B. and says "leaves" when Katie does not answer. Mrs. B. asks him if he saw the words, he says, "no". She asks how he knew it was "leave". Jim says: "It makes sense."

Other similar incidents were recorded for Jim. He often offered the "missing" word from hearing Mrs. B. reread a sentence to another child.

By early November, Jim appeared to change in use of various reading strategies. He began to self-correct when the first letter of a word did not match what he had said (e.g.: he realized "said" did not match "called"). Jim's developing skill was particularly apparent in an event recorded about him November 9. The fieldnotes recorded were:

At the end of the day, Mrs. B. hands out a notice from the gym teacher about gymnastics beginning the next week. Jim runs up, holding it in his hand saying: "I CAN READ THIS!" and begins "November 9, 1990 ... Dear Parents ... We will start ...".
Jim stopped at "gymnastics", but was very excited that he could read the notice. Mrs. B.'s anecdotal reading notes describe Jim as "searches pictures - tries hard" (11-12-90), "happy with himself" (12-11-90), "using sounds and pictures - doing so much better" (12-20-90), and "using sounds - monitoring himself" (1-2-91). By mid-January, the Reading Recovery teacher exited Jim from Bear's Den. He had scored "instructional" on Level 10 and 12, thus qualifying him to be exited. On the running records, she noted that he was not self-correcting, and that he did not start over when he had problems in a sentence. His self-correcting improved by the time I took a running record on Jim February 11. He read at an instructional level of 14. He used sounding (such as on the word "stuck") and studied the illustrations. He followed the meaning of the story, using the context to aid him. Errors left uncorrected generally did not hamper the meaning (such as "pointy quills" instead of "pointed quills"). Jim had begun to monitor at the end of the data collection period. Although he occasionally did not self-correct, he was paying closer attention to all aspects of print on a regular basis (such as saying "would" could not be "won't" because "there's no 't'"). Jim had made considerable growth in reading. Writing, however, revealed Jim's real efforts to learn about words.
As illustrated earlier, Jim had considerable problems encoding words in September. When he began working in his writing workshop folder, Mrs. B. noted on her conference sheet, "no words, just pictures" (9-13-90). With her help, he wrote "yrk is hrd" (working is hard). Her next notation, almost two weeks later was - "wrote one word since last conference" (9-24-90). On Friday, October 5 Mrs. B. noted - "sat and invented spelling together". They worked together on a story Jim wanted to write about a ghost. On Monday, October 8, he brought the story to me during indoor recess for help. The fieldnotes recorded were:

He asks me to reread a word Mrs. B. went over and corrected the last time. This is "scares". He comes back to have me read the whole sentence - this is where he left off. He writes a few words, erases, writes, watches John draw, goes back to his desk. He asks me to again read the sentence. He tells me he wants to add "He flies at night". He uses "flying" on the previous line for "flies" and ends up writing "flying" again. He has written "he fling at joint". As coloring and games are going on around him, he concentrates on his paper.

The next day he added "at Po Kaoln at Po Kalon he go ahoat sient he he Onhi", which he later could not read back to Mrs. B. About a week later, when the children were given the first writing spree, Jim correctly wrote 25 words. Only five children in the class wrote more words than Jim. A week later, he abandoned the ghost story and began to copy *Casey at the Bat* - a text he mentioned at the end of September as one he "already
knew". Although he may have heard the story before, Jim could read only a few words of the lines he copied:

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day. The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play. And then when Cooney died at first and Barrows did the same, a pall like silence fell upon the patrons.

This writing was also left unfinished, and Jim began a football story at the beginning of November. Nearly every free moment (before the 9:00 a.m. bell, indoor recess, free choice) was used to work on the story. On the mid-November writing spree, Jim wrote 23 new words, again placing him high (sixth) in the class. Throughout November and December, Jim worked on his football story. The twelve handwritten pages reflected Jim's growth in word knowledge. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE NUMBER</th>
<th>WRITTEN:</th>
<th>(CORRECT SPELLING)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>tyih</td>
<td>touchdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>tuchdown</td>
<td>touchdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>radr</td>
<td>yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>urd</td>
<td>yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>cou off</td>
<td>kick off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>kick off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once this story was published, Jim began an ABC book ("A is four aipp. and b is four bat. and c is four cat" [A is for ape. And b is for bat. And c is for cat]). He wrote 19 new words in the December writing spree, placing his total seventh in the class.

Jim worked in his writing folder whenever given the opportunity. He wrote a story about his dog and more
sports stories. When Jim took the QIWK in January, he scored 8 out of 20, correctly spelling "wish, cut, flat, ship, fill, mud, chop", and "bed". He had some misspellings, such as "plan" [plane], "sisdr" [sister] and "plat" [plate], that indicated he had moved into the letter name stage of spelling development. Jim's February 1 writing spree reflected the word knowledge he had worked through in his writing. He wrote 23 new words, making his total fourth in the class. He wrote words he practiced in his writing folder - "bay, Giants, Packers, raiders, super, tape". Jim made great strides in understanding the complexity of encoding through his interest in writing. His way into print appeared to be through his writings. The football story was written at a time when he was trying to use a variety of strategies in reading. His text selections across the data collection period suggest how Jim used writing to inform his reading.

Self-selection of texts

In September, Jim appeared to be a very poor judge of what he could read. He chose books well out of his reading range (approximately level 1). At the beginning of September he chose such titles as Ten Bears in My Bed (Level 11), A Dark, Dark Tale (Level 10), The Big Sneeze (Level 19), Funny Bones (Level 17) and We're Going on a Bear Hunt (Level 15). When he attempted to read The Big
Sneeze, he started at the back of the book. I suggested he start at the beginning and turned to the front cover. He turned the book back over and said, "I read backwards". He generally looked at the pictures of the difficult texts during the first weeks.

Jim's choices changed in mid-September and he revisited texts he heard in class. On September 17, Mrs. B. read the big book, Yes Ma'am (Level 8). Jim revisited that text the same day, the next day and several times the next week, including taking it home overnight several times. Throughout October, Jim's primary self-selected choices were the big books he heard or texts he read in small group readings. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL (notes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrinkles</td>
<td>3  (small group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secret Soup</td>
<td>8  (small group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td>8  (small group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.J.'s Tree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I Love Cats tape</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I Love Cats tape</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>&quot;Traffic Safety&quot;</td>
<td>8  (poem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes Ma'am</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Elephant in Trouble</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I Love Cats</td>
<td>8  (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>One Hungry Monster</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>One Hungry Monster</td>
<td>(unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Morris the Moose</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Hattie and the Fox</td>
<td>15 (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8  (small group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Hattie and the Fox</td>
<td>15 (big book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bruno's Birthday</td>
<td>8  (small group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I wish</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ten Bears in My Bed</td>
<td>11  (unleveled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casey at the Bat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The repeated readings of familiar texts are evident in the texts selections recorded above. An occasional higher level, new text was attempted, with a return to the familiar. When reading the higher level texts, Jim often approached Mrs. B. or me for help with words.

During the invited reading October 1, Jim chose I Wish (Level 6), a text he had only taken home once. He had trouble reading the title, and requested my help throughout. He made guesses for many of the words that did not match letter sounds or meaning. Jim did not return to I Wish until October 30, when he buddy read it with Lee. Jim also had trouble making an appropriate selection when Mrs. B. brought in the collection of books written by Pat Hutchins (November 5) and the books written by Frank Asch (December 5). Both times, Jim selected texts far too difficult for him to read alone. Mrs. B. used those times, as she had the small group readings, to guide Jim's selection to something closer to his instructional level.

Throughout November, Jim stopped revisiting big books and began to "sample" a variety of stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>The Trek</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mud Pies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>26 Letters and 99 Cents</td>
<td>wordless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chipmunks</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>There's a Nightmare in My Closet</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This variety continued until Jim had his football story published. He returned to his story as a "familiar" text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 17</td>
<td><strong>This is My House</strong></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>own published story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>own published story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>own published story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Three Happy Birthdays</td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2</td>
<td><strong>Little Sister's Birthday</strong></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Little Sister's Birthday</strong></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sam's Cookie</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>This is My House</strong></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Just My Friend and Me</strong></td>
<td>unlevelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>There's an Alligator under My Bed</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>own published story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>own published story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On January 10, when Jim was invited to choose a text to read to me, he chose his own published story.

About mid-January, Jim chose texts well above his reading level again. He chose *Old Turtle's Baseball Stories*, an "I Can Read" book in the range of Level 19 or 20. He also chose *Frog and Toad Together* (Level 19) several days in a row at the end of January. Each time, he sought help from Mrs. B. or me throughout the readings, but tried to read the entire book. Jim took the same books home each evening, reporting the next morning that he had read them several times with his mom or dad. His continued problems with selecting texts too
difficult to read was observed once again on one of the last data collection days, February 11. Jim was to choose a text for his tape recording for the month. He chose *The Tub People*, a new book Mrs. B. had put in the reading corner that morning. Mrs. B. encouraged him to choose something else since the text was well above Level 20. Jim insisted it was "OK". A few minutes later, the mother helping with the recording, returned with Jim. She had to help him "with every other word" and convinced him to make another selection. Jim looked through the corner, chose *Sam's Teddy Bear* (Level 6), put it back, picked up *Old Turtle's Baseball Stories* (approximately Level 19 or 20), put it back, and settled on *Sam's Teddy Bear* for his recording. Jim's reasoning for the high level texts selections, although not apparent from observations, were discussed in a February conversation we had. This and other decisions Jim made are discussed in the following section.

**Self-selection of literacy events**

Jim became an avid writer after the introduction of writing workshop. Thirty-three free choice events were recorded for Jim over the data collection period. The events took place between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m., when morning work was completed, and during indoor recess. Twenty of the thirty-three events were working in his writing folder. The number of events recorded for Jim
were:

EVENT:TIMES RECORDED:

Coloring 1
Discussing map 1
Reading texts 6
Reading bulletin boards 2
Listening 4
Working in writing folder 20

The majority of the events other than writing took place in September and October. The dates of the free choice writing took place October 8, 9 (twice), 15, 16, 31, November 15, 16, 19 (twice), 20, 27 (twice), December 4 (twice), 17, 18, 19, 20, and January 4. During October he concentrated on the ghost story described above. All the November and December dates were related to his football story. The combined time of free choice and writing workshop allowed Jim to work over an hour in his writing folder some days. His undirected, independent reading time was generally half of that. It appeared that writing was Jim's way into understanding how print works - both through encoding and decoding (having to read back his own work).

Jim's views about how he read and selected texts had changed over time. In November, I asked Jim how he picked a book.

JIM: I look for one that's good and I take it.
MJJ: How do you know if it's good?
JIM: I look at the pictures before I read it.
MJJ: Do you sometimes read a book more than once?
JIM: Yes.
MJJ: Why?
JIM: So I know I read better, so I'll be a good
reader.  (11-14-90)

By February, Jim's ideas about how he read and selected texts had changed.

MJF: What kind of reader are you?
JIM: Good.
MJF: Is that different than when you started first grade?
JIM: Yea.
MJF: How?
JIM: A little, I usually forgot some of the words, now I know more words.
MJF: Do you pick books to read differently than before?
JIM: I use to, never use to, look at pictures, I just took a book. Now I look at the pictures to see if its a good book.

******
MJF: Do you ever pick a book that's too easy?
JIM: No, I like to pick new books. (2-11-91)

Jim's comments could explain some of the book choices he made. Apparently, the books' illustrations were an overriding factor to him. In both November and February he suggested that the pictures were important to his selections. He also mentioned wanting to choose new texts in February. This may be an indication of why he had stopped choosing big books. He wanted to pick new books. He spent his reading time generally reading the new books alone. When I asked him why he sometimes read alone, he said:

When I get really far in a book, I like to read at my desk. (2-11-91)

Although his text choices were sometimes far beyond his reading level, Jim worked very hard at reading them. He stuck with his choice, asked for help when he needed it
and then took them home to practice again. While Jim may have chosen texts that were too difficult, he appeared to challenge himself to finish them. He remained intensely interested in writing and continued to write one lengthy story after another. Jim's largest gains appeared in his writing. His process of learning to read was assisted by his growth in word knowledge.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the ten focus children for this study. Each child's description presented information concerning:

1. how the child was selected to be a focus child and her/his reading behaviors observed over the course of data collection;

2. how the child completed the assessments given in September, the growth over time related to those assessments and how the child completed the assessments given in January/February;

3. how the child self-selected texts. Patterns displayed over time were presented;

4. how the child self-selected literacy events, the type of events chosen to participate in and self-evaluative comments the child may have made.

While each child in this chapter stood as an individual, many commonalities were found. These will be discussed in a cross-case analysis in Chapter VI. Chapter VII then provides conclusions and recommendations that may be drawn from the interpretation of the data.
CHAPTER VI
CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

Ten children were observed to discern patterns of self-selection of texts and literacy events. The preceding chapter presented each focus child, discussing individual growth in reading and writing and types of self-selection. This chapter analyzes the commonalities and differences the children displayed as they became independent readers.

Following the writing of the individual case studies, analysis across the ten cases was conducted. Features from each case study were clustered to establish relevant areas. Five major themes were found. The ten children were compared and contrasted for each theme. The five themes common to all the focus children were:

1. Reading strategies used - September through January. Strategies were appraised during reading with Mrs. B. (individual and small group) and on own.

2. Writing strategies used - September through January. This included informal (writing workshop folders) and formal measures (QIWK, CAP).

3. Pattern to text selection - illustrating patterns and/or changes over time.

4. Selection of free choice literacy events - how free time was used.
(5) Participation in literacy events – described the social interactions the children chose (ie: alone or with buddy).

Observations, conversations and formal assessments provided a variety of information concerning each child's growth in word knowledge (in reading and writing), the kinds of self-selected texts for reading, how the child used free time and the type of social interaction that took place during literacy events. Each of the five areas are presented with illustrations from the ten focus children discussed in Chapter V.

Reading Strategies Used

Clay (1985) outlined four cues children learn to use when reading. Readers may attend to one or more (as a means of cross checking) of the following cues:

- semantic - "Does it make sense?"
- visual - "Does that look right?"
- graphic - "What would you expect to see?"
- structural - "Can we say it that way?" (p.74)

The core to Mrs. B.'s reading instruction was to explicitly discuss the use of the four cues and how they can be used together. She encouraged the children to use the illustration to help read the text. The techniques she used included asking what sound the word began with or what letter they would expect to see for the word they read, drawing attention to the picture or asking if something the child just read made sense. In September, the majority of the children relied on sounding to help
them read. During conversations with the children, many said this was something they had practiced or been taught at home. Mrs. B. attempted to introduce meaning cues ("Does that make sense?") as quickly as possible. The children generally tried to use this cue, although if the reading did not make sense, many were unsure what to do next. The reading behaviors of the focus children are summarized in Table 12. The children are listed in the same rank order (instructional level) as in Table 1 (see Chapter V).

Table 12. Change in Reading Strategies Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>All cues</td>
<td>All cues (fluently)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>All cues</td>
<td>All cues (fluently)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>Primarily graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven use of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uneven use of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>Graphic, Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of pictures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>(invented story)</td>
<td>Uneven use of all cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>(invented story)</td>
<td>All cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Sight words</td>
<td>Graphic, Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>All cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>(invented story)</td>
<td>Generally all cues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The children learned and coordinated the cues at different rates. Tom and Tracy, who were already using all the cues in September, improved in fluency. Mitch, Katie and Jim coordinated use of all the cues, but had not yet reached a fluent stage of reading. David and Nick used graphic and meaning cues to help them, but could not necessarily coordinate use of both as a cross-check. Lee could use any single cue, but did not always choose the most helpful one for the particular situation. Finally, Sara and Jill continued to use sounding as their primary strategy, inconsistently attempting to use other cues.

By January, the ranking by instructional level shifted (Table 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Together, Table 12 and 13 provided a broader picture of the focus children's growth in reading. Consideration
of the "level" only overlooked important information gathered as the children were observed reading. For example, Lee tested higher in September than Katie, but she had a better understanding of the concepts of print (ie: one to one matching). She also had some knowledge of graphic cues that Lee did not. In January, Tracy and David tested at the same instructional level (26). Yet, Tracy was a fluent reader using all cue systems. David continued to rely on sounding and the context of the sentence to aid his reading. No single measure provided complete information about each child's growing reading skill. Strategies displayed when observed during shared and buddy reading, small group readings, and individual readings along with formal testing measures were combined to provide a complete picture of each reader.

The assessments were particularly useful in telling what each child could do as well as displaying basic misunderstandings. Although Katie tested at Level B in September, she knew enough about using graphic cues to use them as a base for new strategies. This was a starting place for her in reading and writing. Lee best displayed what he could do during buddy reading, rather than working directly with Mrs. B. Therefore, knowing what the child could do was significant in planning appropriate instruction.
Summary

The children's reading strategies developed at individual rates. While many began the school year with only graphic cues to inform their reading, the children all could use multiple cues by January. Some of the children were able to use the cues more efficiently than others. The children were observed in various contexts, thus producing a complete picture of readers using reading strategies.

Writing Strategies Used

The strategies the children used to write were displayed in a number of tasks. First, a formal assessment, the Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge, was used in September and January. This provided a common list of words for measuring growth. Second, each month Mrs. B. had the children generate words during a writing spree to add to a cumulative list. Third, writing workshop folders held an accumulation of stories showing growing word knowledge and strategies for encoding. Looking across the three tasks provided a variety of information about writing strategies employed by the children. What the children read often informed their writing. Conventional spellings were seen in writings after the children had experience seeing the words in print. For example, David understood "are" is
spelled "a-r-e", not "r", after seeing several verses of "Roses are red, Violets are blue". Many of the children began the school year with a basic understanding of how to invent spellings. They used what they knew about letter sounds to begin spelling words. Later, most of the children began to use the conventional spellings of some words, particularly high use words. High use words varied for each child, depending on the type of writing being done at the time. For example, Jim began to spell "football" correctly each time he used it after writing his November football story. Lee, however, had just begun to write about football in January, spelling it "fotball". High use, therefore, referred directly to the individual child's usage of the word. Table 14 displays the change in writing strategies for the focus children (ranked by September instructional reading level, as are all Tables hereafter, unless otherwise noted).

Table 14 suggests the variety of writing strategies with which the children started the school year. By January, all the focus children had progressed to the stage of writing words that were readable by someone else. Many of the children had an individual core of high use words they could consistently spell correctly. A few of the children knew a great number conventional spellings. The words they knew informed other words they attempted - such as using "cat" to spell "hat". Each
child's ability to encode words changed over the course of the data collection period, based on their starting point in September.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>limited relationship between word and letters written</td>
<td>invented, conventional, and high use words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>invented to conventional</td>
<td>consistently near conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>invented - first sounds generally correct</td>
<td>invented, some high use words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>exaggerated sounding</td>
<td>invented, some high use words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>invented - first sounds generally correct, some high use words</td>
<td>invented and conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>letter reversals, invented - some first sounds correct</td>
<td>invented, many near conventional, high use words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>letter reversals, limited relationship between letters and words</td>
<td>invented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>some high use words, many requests for help</td>
<td>invented, conventional, high use words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>invented - with various strategies</td>
<td>invented and conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>little relationship between letters and words</td>
<td>invented, many conventional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The development paralleled the findings of Henderson (1985). As children develop a concept of words in print (Morris, 1980), they begin to understand how to represent words in their writing. Children pass through the same sequential stages. The progression of the stages is dependent on when the child begins to write. Jim began the year writing letters and symbols that had little relationship to actual words. During the year, he spent a great deal of time writing, and developed an understanding of encoding that rivaled any of the children many instructional reading levels above him.

Table 14 also suggests that reading level and ability to write are related. There is variation within similar instructional reading levels. Tracy had many reading and writing strategies already in place in September. Her writings contained a consistently high number of conventional spellings as she became a more fluent reader. Tom, however, did not have the same encoding understanding Tracy did, even though he was already a very good reader. He had spent a good deal of time before first grade learning to read, and very little time learning to write. In January, he had moved to using both invented and conventional spellings. Lee, who invented text in his early reading attempts, began the year writing reversed letters. By January, he was attempting to coordinate use of reading cues. He
developed good strategies for writing words and had learned many conventional spellings. David used what he knew about sounding to aid him in reading and writing. It appeared that some underlying concepts of words informed reading and writing.

During the data collection period, it also became apparent that different writing tasks placed different demands on the writer. For example, when David took the QIWK in January he spelled "want" as "wont". Yet, a few days earlier he began a story about the war in Iraq and correctly spelled "want". At the same time, "want" never appeared on his list for the writing spree. By combining David's performance on all three tasks, a better understanding of his word knowledge emerged. His self-generated words tended to be more novel - such as "jolly" and "yak". Also, his writing workshop folder seemed to be a better display of his ability to encode than a formal assessment. By combining all three, one could see David appeared to have a good variety of encoding strategies and a large number of conventional spellings. The combination of writing assessments were helpful in showing the growth over time.

The performance needed on each task differed for each child. Some of the three tasks appeared more difficult for some of the children. First, the QIWK was perceived as a "test" and many of the children were
concerned about what to do if they "didn't know the word". Nick, for example, needed constant reassurance to complete the test. Other children were heard sounding the word aloud over and over to attempt to get the correct spellings. This was significantly different than being asked to correct a spelling in a writing workshop story when conferencing with Mrs. B., who could support their attempts.

Second, the writing spree each month had the most variation for performance. Self-generating words was a difficult task for some children, regardless of their ability to write words in stories in their writing workshop folder. The task demanded thinking of words out of context to be placed in a box labeled with a letter of the alphabet. Strategies the children used were visible, such as writing word families or familiar names. The number of the words they generated was not related to their particular reading level. Jim remained high on his overall total compared to the entire class. Jim wrote twice as many words in the writing spree as some of the children at much higher reading levels. While gaining additional information about the children's writing strategies, the writing spree could be used only as part of the picture. The word knowledge of some children was not displayed during the spree. It did not tell the full story about what the children were learning about
encoding words.

Finally, the writing workshop folders appeared to provide the most information about the children's writing strategies. Attempts to spell words, along with later corrections were examples of the learning that took place. The stories the children wrote often provided a point of instruction for Mrs. B. as she elicited conversations about the words written. The writing workshop folders were an excellent display of the children's changing writing strategies.

Summary

The children's strategies for writing were best displayed through a variety of tasks. In this way, the progression through the stages of development of word knowledge (Henderson, 1985) was assessed. The different tasks placed different demands on the children's performance, thus providing pieces of information that fit together to render one complete picture of the learners. The children's concurrent development in reading and writing often complimented one another, thus adding another dimension to assessing growth of the individual learner.

Pattern to Text Selection

The focus children chose from a large variety of texts. They chose from:

- trade books (literature),
- big books and other books read during shared reading,
- poetry notebooks,
- texts used in small groups (Literacy 2000 series),
- old basal readers,
- stories written and published by the children, and
- class compiled pages centering around a theme ("I feel great when...", Mrs. Wishy Washy, etc.).

Many children changed how and what they self-selected over time, others did not change. Table 15 displays each child's particular approach for self-selecting texts.

Many of the focus children began the year selecting a variety of texts, not necessarily on their reading level. They experimented with looking at illustrations, leafing through pages or simply handling a great number of texts. Within the first month or two of school, they began to reread texts. Some rereadings were of the shared big books, others were of a particular text the children chose from the trade book collection. A few children did not use rereading as a strategy for selecting texts. Jill began the year selecting many different texts to create stories to go with the illustrations. Mitch, who was inventing text during early readings, chose from a variety of titles and levels of difficulty. Jim, who began the year with few reading strategies in place, chose books well beyond his instructional level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>One or two easy texts, followed by text at instructional level</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Reread basal and one trade book, also variety - attracted to story</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Read variety, then rereads close to instructional level</td>
<td>Higher level texts (close to instructional level), fewer rereadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Any text - created story to accompany illustrations, large quantity</td>
<td>Longer, higher level texts (close to instructional level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Reread shared reading texts</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Reread big books Intense rereading of same text</td>
<td>Higher level texts (many above instructional level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>Chose variety - titles and difficulty, no rereadings of big books</td>
<td>Reread known text combined with scanning new texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Rereadings of familiar only</td>
<td>Rereading and return to an &quot;anchor book&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Chose variety - two week delay before rereading shared text on own</td>
<td>Delay before first rereading, constant rereading of familiar with occasional move to higher levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Beyond instructional level, then reread shared readings</td>
<td>Often beyond instructional level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The children needing the most support for learning to read appeared to select texts far too difficult for them to practice their new strategies. At the same time, they did not abandon the texts they attempted. Many of the children appeared attracted to the books' covers as they browsed through the available texts. During informal conversations, the children often related that the title sometimes made them want to read the book, that it sounded like a good "story". The children generally stuck with their choices, working through the vocabulary with the help of Mrs. B., me or other children.

In time, all the focus children began to reread texts at some point. The text selection for the rereading was a big book or a particular text from the trade book collection. Self-selecting shared reading texts for rereadings remained, in general, the most popular selections.

The difficulty level of the self-selected texts varied for each child. In time, most of the children's choices centered around their own instructional level, changing in sync with their improving reading skill. While some "easy" texts (for their skill level) were selected, subsequent choices were at or above their instructional level. For example, Figure 13 displays Sara's book choices in September in relation to her instructional level.
Figure 13. Relational Graph of Text Level and Instructional Level for Sara - September

Figure 14 displays her choices for January. The change in Sara's selections is apparent. The clustering near her instructional level was evident in January.
Another pattern observed was the move back and forth along the continuum of "text levels" (Peterson, 1990). Selections the child could read with relative ease (designated "easy") were often followed by "instructional" level or more "difficult" texts. "Easy" and "difficult" are directly related to the skill of the reader at a particular point in time. For instance, Katie's move back and forth along the continuum of text difficulty is displayed in Figure 15.
Figure 15. Relational Graph of Text Level and Instructional Level for Katie - November

Some of the focus children self-selected familiar texts only, regardless of the level of difficulty. The texts were reread many times. For example, Nick only chose familiar texts for rereading, many of which were well above his instructional level as illustrated in Figure 16.
Individual patterns of self-selection emerged, yet many commonalities were found. Strategies for selection changed as the reader's skill improved. Choosing familiar texts to reread, regardless of level, was the most common activity. Some of the focus children chose texts well above their instructional level and needed assistance to finish the book. The "story" and familiarity with the text appeared to have the greatest influence on selecting the texts.

Summary

The children selected from a large variety of texts. When given the choice of what to read, the following patterns were observed:
(1) rereading big books was a popular activity,

(2) rereading a book the child was familiar with, either through previous experience or practice in the classroom, was eventually observed for every child,

(3) text level was not always a consideration if the child was attracted to the "story",

(4) many selections clustered around the child's instructional level, and

(5) the children's selections moved back and forth along the continuum of "text level". At times an "easy" text was chosen, followed by a "difficult" or "instructional" level, followed by an "easy" text.

Selection of Free Choice Literacy Events

An important feature of this classroom (as described in Chapter IV) was the opportunity for the children to self-select from a variety of activities. There were several times in the day this was possible. When the children first entered the room (8:45 a.m.) until the tardy bell (9:00 a.m.), when morning work was completed, and during indoor recess. The children chose work centers, writing workshop folders, or texts to read. How the children used their free choice time changed for all but one focus child, as displayed in Table 16.
Table 16. Selection of Free Choice Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Wandering, leaving for bathroom, some reading</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Writing, buddy reading, request to read to adult</td>
<td>Variety of writing (journal, folder, notes and letters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Reading familiar texts</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Looking at books, creating stories</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
<td>Reading texts, writing folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Rereading texts</td>
<td>Writing folder, buddy reading new texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>Handling texts</td>
<td>Rereading familiar texts, writing folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Reading familiar texts and print</td>
<td>Writing folder, some rereading of familiar texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Reading texts, watching others read</td>
<td>Rereading familiar texts, writing folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Handling texts</td>
<td>Writing Folder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children's free choice activities changed. The September choices were a variety of handling texts, looking at illustrations, rereading familiar texts or attempting to read a variety of texts. By January, the children favored reading of texts OR working in their
writing workshop folders. Some of the children excluded one event entirely (i.e.: Jim choosing only writing folder or Sara selecting to only read texts). Table 17 displays a pattern to their January instructional reading level (as displayed in Table 13) and their primary use of free choice time.

Table 17. January Instructional Level and Free Choice Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Primary Event Chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wandering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Variety of writing activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Reading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rereading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rereading texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Writing folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Writing folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Writing folder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children in the lower instructional ranges selected their writing folder as a primary free choice event. Another group in the same range chose to reread texts. The children in an instructional range of 20 or above selected a variety of texts to read. In addition
to writing in her workshop folder, Tracy chose to write notes to Mrs. B. or me, letters to classmates, stories at the work centers and in her journal. Tom, as mentioned, continued to wander during free choice. He remained the exception to both patterns of selection (favoring reading or writing; selecting one exclusively). Throughout the data collection, he appeared unable to decide what to do with his free choice time. He was generally observed wandering, looking as if he was deciding, but rarely settling into an activity.

**Summary**

Selection of free choice literacy events shifted over time. By January, the primary use of free choice time appeared to be related to their reading level. With the exception of one focus child, the children selected reading, writing or a combination of both. Using free choice time in a productive way was the common feature for nine of the focus children.

**Participation in literacy events**

The children used different ways to participate in reading events. Many chose to read alone. Some read only with a buddy. A few watched as others read. Pairs of children worked out a system for reading a common text. For instance, one child read the left page and the other read the right. Other pairs of children chose to
sit next to each other, attending to their individual pile of texts. As the social interaction was observed, categories similar to Parten's (Bailey & Wolery, 1984) descriptors of preschool play emerged. Parten found sequential categories:

(1) Unoccupied Behavior - child does not play, watches anything that catches attention for the moment, moves around, constantly changing activity.

(2) Solitary Independent Play - child plays alone, pursues own activity.

(3) Onlooker - child spends time watching other children play, does not enter into activity.

(4) Parallel Activity - child plays beside other children, does not influence their activity.

(5) Associative Play - child plays with other children, common activity, yet own interests maintained.

(6) Cooperative or Organized Supplementary Play - child plays in organized group, one or two in group command control for entire group. (Bailey & Wolery, 1984, p. 219)

Striking similarities were found between the play categories and the social interaction observed as the children read during free choice and B.E.A.R. time. Therefore, Parten's play descriptions were utilized to categorize the way the children interacted during literacy events. While Parten found the categories to be sequential, the focus children used the approaches in various sequences. The descriptors used were:

(1) Unoccupied Behavior: walks around room, leaves for bathroom, stacks and restacks piles of books.

(2) Solitary Independent: reads alone - gets behind dividers to be separated from other, sits in coat
cubbies or at own desk - ignores conversations and movement.

(3) Onlooker: stands by, listens to another child or children read, but does not try to join in.

(4) Parallel: two or three children are in one location, they arrive at different times, each reads own text aloud - but do not distract each other, two children chose own books to read - chose to sit next to each other, but read on own, with little interaction.

(5) Associative: two children read together, listen to one another read books of own selecting or read different parts of common text - the turns are happenstance.

(6) Cooperative or Organized: two children select texts to read together. They agree on texts, who reads what parts, and where the reading will take place.

As the children read texts, notations were made of the interaction involved. Table 18 displays the primary interactions recorded for each focus child during September and January. The skill of the reader did not appear to dictate the type of interaction chosen. It did appear that the children made minor changes over time. For example, Tom chose the same type of interactions in September as in January. Tom changed by switching use of Associative more often than Unoccupied in January. Similarly, Katie chose the Onlooker and Solitary strategies in September, switching their use by January. Mitch appeared to change the most. In September, his interactions were Onlooker and Associative. By January, he primarily chose to read alone.
Table 18. Change in Interaction During Literacy Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Child</th>
<th>Interaction (Primary choices)</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Unoccupied, Solitary</td>
<td>Associative, Unoccupied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Associative</td>
<td>Associative, Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td>Solitary, Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td>Solitary, Associative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Associative</td>
<td>Associative, Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>Onlooker, Associative</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Onlooker, Solitary</td>
<td>Solitary, Onlooker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Associative</td>
<td>Associative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading alone (Solitary) and unplanned reading with a buddy (Associative) remained the most common interactions selected. The number of children selecting a particular interaction appear in Table 19.
Table 19. Number of Focus Children Selecting Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach Selected</th>
<th>Number of children in September</th>
<th>Number of children in January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onlooker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During conversations held in January and February, the children were asked why they might like to sometimes read alone or with someone. Of the children using Solitary reading as a primary strategy, some responses were:

David: Sometimes I have a new one [story] and want to read alone (1/29/91).

Jim: When I get really far in a book I like to read at my desk (2/11/91).

Katie: When I read little books. Books that are small, short and when books are so easy for me (2/5/91).

Many of the focus children could not specify why they chose to read with someone (Associative). The only specific reasons given were:

Katie: When I read a big book, because its big and we both can see and it has hard words and someone can help me (2/5/91).

Jim: When I need help (2/11/91).
Both children used associative reading as a way to "help" themselves. This may have been a reason for other children using associative reading. Many observations were recorded of children verbalizing strategies to "figure out" words in texts they were reading together. The example of Lee and Jim working through the words "eyes" and "ears" in *Wattle and the Fox* (see page 130 for complete description of event), was a good example of the kind of learning that took place during associative reading.

**Summary**

The focus children selected a variety of ways to participate in literacy events. Some children chose to be independent of others and read alone. This gave them opportunities to work through new or difficult texts. Many children chose to read with a buddy. This was often unplanned, but appeared to be the situation that generated the most discussion about stories and words. The children always had the choice of the level of interaction they wanted, and they were observed selecting various ways to participate.

**Cross Case Summary**

A cross case analysis of the ten focus children was conducted to find common themes. Issues that surfaced for each child were:
(1) Reading strategies used - the children learned and coordinated use of reading cues at different rates. Many could select from multiple cues.

(2) Writing strategies used - these were best displayed through a variety of tasks due to the different demands each one placed on the writer. All the children progressed to invented and/or conventional spelling of words.

(3) Pattern to text selection - the children chose from a large variety of texts, and they reread big books and familiar texts. Their choices moved back and forth along a continuum of easy and difficult, with many choices clustering near their instructional levels. Level of difficulty did not appear to be an issue if the child was familiar with the text or was attracted to the story.

(4) Selection of free choice literacy events - the children used this time productively. They chose reading and/or writing. Shifts over time were observed in their primary selection.

(5) Participation in literacy events - the children had various levels of social interaction. Based on Parten's (Bailey & Wolery, 1984) preschool play descriptors, the categories of interaction were Unoccupied, Solitary, Onlooker, Parallel, Associative and Cooperative. Solitary and Associative were utilized most
often. The categories were not related to the skill of the readers.

The five themes suggest when children are given the opportunity to self-select texts to read and literacy events in which to participate, some common incidents occur. The next chapter summarizes this study. Findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study are then presented.
CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discern patterns of text and literacy event self-selection as children became independent readers. Observations and assessments focused on changes and choices the readers made.

The Problem of the Study

Whole language classrooms are places where learners participate in decision-making. As children self-select texts to read and literacy events in which to participate, a greater understanding of the kinds of choices they make is needed. How these choices change as children become independent readers suggest how, as well as what, they are learning.

The purpose of the study was to trace changes over time in the kinds of texts and events children self-selected. Placing responsibility on the learner poses questions about the type of learning occurring. The children of this study made choices that appeared to facilitate the changes observed in their reading and writing.
Procedures

The nature of this study required a multi-faceted approach to gathering data about the children. Observations of naturally occurring events in the classroom took place two to five times per week from the first day of school in August until mid-February. The twenty-four weeks of data were gathered in a suburban, whole language first grade. Text selections, choice of literacy events and interactions between children, were tracked over a prolonged period of time.

Assessments used in September and again at the end of January, provided additional measures of growth over time. Concepts About Print (Clay, 1979), Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge (Schlagal, 1982) and running records were used to assess how the children changed as readers and writers.

Data were presented in three ways. First, Chapter IV provided the context for the study. The setting provided specific opportunities for collecting the kinds of data that could address the research questions. The teacher facilitated self-selection. She provided a physical setting that invited children into literacy events. She also believed children could self-direct their learning. By providing time and materials that required decision-making, she deliberately placed a good deal of responsibility in the hands of each learner.
Second, Chapter V presented the ten children who became the focus for the study. Their self-selections and growth in reading and writing were reported and analyzed.

Finally, Chapter VI provided a cross-case analysis. Analysis of the ten focus children yielded five major themes - (1) reading strategies used, (2) writing strategies used, (3) pattern to text selection, (4) selection of free choice literacy events, and (5) participation in literacy events. The ten focus children were compared and contrasted across the five themes.

Findings

Based on the cross-case analysis, findings from five areas of the data are presented.

Reading Strategies Used

1. The most common reading strategy already in place at the beginning of first grade was sounding (graphic cues).

2. Sounding words continued to be relied upon most often by early readers as a way to deal with words they could not identify quickly.

3. Using illustrations and listening for meaning were strategies generally learned next (but not necessarily one before the other).

4. Children had to be reminded most often of the strategy to skip a word (context cues) and return to it later.

5. The children often verbalized the options they had when coming to an unknown word, modeled after those used in explicit instruction with the teacher.
6. Children learned the personal usefulness of various strategies at different rates.

7. The assessments were useful in displaying what reading strategies the children knew, thus, showing what they could do.

**Writing Strategies Used**

1. Many children were reluctant to attempt to write words they did not know how to spell at the beginning of the year.

2. Sounding was a primary strategy to encode words observed throughout data collection.

3. The children progressed through the stages of development (Henderson, 1985), at individual rates.

4. As the children increased the amount of writing time, the more readable their invented spellings became.

5. The children found many sources for spelling a word - familiar books, environmental print, the teacher and other students.

6. The children each had an individual core of words they could spell correctly, depending on the type of writing they had done.

7. Writing strategies changed with the demands of the writing task (writing spree versus writing folder versus spelling test).

8. Writing strategies were often learned or changed through reading the child did.

9. As with reading, assessing with a variety of writing tasks was useful in displaying what the child could do.

**Pattern to Text Selection**

1. Rereading of big books presented during shared reading was a common activity.

2. Rereading of a book the child was familiar with, either through previous experience or practice in the classroom, was observed for all the children.
3. Some rereadings were within a single day, but generally they were observed across several days or weeks.

4. The children's choices moved back and forth along the continuum of text levels between "easy" to "instructional", with the frequency of each being dependent on the skill of the individual reader.

5. The children frequently chose texts at or above their instructional level.

6. The level of the text was not always a consideration if the children were attracted to the story (title and/or illustration being influencing factors).

7. Some children appeared to have a difficult time making appropriate book choices. Some children chose texts far too difficult, yet they continued to try to read the text.

8. Some children had a particular text they returned to occasionally. This "anchor book" choice was dispersed between other rereadings or new text selections.

9. Rereading of big books did not always occur immediately after a shared reading. Some children waited as long as two weeks before they were ready to attempt the book independently.

10. A cumulative poetry collection was revisited quite often by most children.

11. The children's writings provided another text available for children to self-select. The reader occasionally took the published writing to the "author" for help in reading a word.

12. Many children had a specific text they wanted to self-select and waited until it was available before beginning to read. They sometimes made great efforts to obtain the specific text, offering trades or following a child around who had the text until it was available.
Selection of Free Choice Literacy Events

1. Selection of events during free time shifted over time.

2. The children's primary use of time was related to their reading level. Children in the lower instructional levels consistently chose writing; in the middle levels reading and rereading of texts were chosen.

3. Most children consistently chose either reading or writing.

4. Most children used their free choice time productively each day. They made their selections quickly and worked intently.

5. One child had a difficult time making a decision concerning free time. He wandered and did not choose activities indicative of his ability. The teacher found it necessary to provide various suggestions to help him make a selection.

Participation in Literacy Events

1. Most children chose to read with a buddy when possible.

2. Reading alone was a selected activity when the child attempted a new text or was well into a longer text.

3. Requests to read to an adult from a familiar text were observed quite often.

4. Social interaction during reading and writing resembled play categories described by Parten.

5. Social interaction during reading and writing was not related to skill of reader.

6. Activity and noise associated with social interaction during reading and writing consisted of conversations about words, illustrations and stories.
Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the findings of this study fall into two areas. The first set of conclusions is related to children's self-selections during literacy learning. The second set is related to specific organizational needs for classrooms.

Self-selection During Literacy Learning

1. When children are given the opportunity and materials from which to select, they can make decisions that aid their literacy learning. The texts chosen by the children of this study and the events in which they participated facilitated their learning. The children continually chose texts at or above their instructional level with no direction from the teacher. Easier texts may have been selected as confidence builders before trying a more difficult one. A familiar text provided a place to practice reading strategies with immediate feedback concerning accuracy. When the children chose to write, they used many sources in the room to aid them—they found ways to complete their tasks. The children also appeared to have a tendency to want to write OR read. For some children, writing was a way into print. Through experimentation with writing words, the children facilitated learning to read. The children successfully completed literacy activities that nudged them to new learning.
2. When the teacher reread texts, the children imitated it as a permitted and desirable activity. The rereadings done during the week by the teacher with big books demonstrated to the children the value of that activity. During shared reading they discussed the story, specific words, illustrations and reading strategies that would be useful for a particular reading. This modeling carried over to the children's independent rereading of text. Conversations between children were filled with phrases from the teacher's explicit teaching of reading through big books. The children extended the idea of rereading to texts they self-selected from the book corner. While the children appeared to slide back by rereading a familiar, easier text, they may have been regrouping their strategies before attempting a new, more difficult text. By having a time to self-select texts, without keeping records the children could reread texts without penalty. The value of rereading may be its use as a confidence builder, a safe place for practice that allows immediate feedback or simply an imitation of what the teacher models as desirable for reading. Whatever the individual reasons, the children of this study accepted rereading as an important activity during literacy learning.

3. The children needed several options for the type of social interaction they could choose from when reading
and writing. Buddy reading may simply have been a case of "two heads are better than one". Each child had an individual way to use reading strategies. The combination of two readers allows problem solving while, at the same time, permitting instruction by each child. As the children discussed stories and words, they heard how someone else went about decoding words. Children who have trouble making self-selections can be influenced by others who have a clear sense of how to make choices.

4. The range of texts the children self-selected indicated that there is great value in having a variety of texts from which to select. Big books in both large and small copies encouraged rereading and buddy reading. Poetry, children's published writings and quality children's literature in various genre tapped into the interests of individual readers. Texts at all levels of difficulty reached all types of readers. The children may have selected an "easy" or "difficult" text, depending on the personal need the reading fulfilled. Adult perceptions about what is too difficult for a child to read may be different than the child's perceptions of difficulty. The children often selected texts well above their instructional level if they were interested in the story, or familiar with it. Availability of a wide variety of books provided children with familiar selections for rereading or new texts to catch their
interest.

Organization of the Classroom

1. Since children reread texts several times over many weeks, it was necessary to have a large, quality room library that remained constant over a prolonged period of time. A child that heard a book during shared reading may not have been ready to revisit that text until some time later. Having a constant collection allowed delayed revisiting to occur. Texts needed to be available to be reread after a passage of time. While children were trying to coordinate new strategies, they could return to familiar texts as confidence boosters. Adding new texts sparked children's interests, but these too needed to remain for a long enough period of time to be available for rereadings.

2. The teacher used shared reading to provide opportunities to model reading strategies. The children were invited to join in reading through this approach. Shared reading allowed children to take in a variety of information about reading in a safe encounter. How to use reading strategies or illustrations were discussed. Comparisons to other stories were made. The children could join in on repeating patterns or simply watch and listen. Children could benefit from the instruction during shared reading even if they were not risk takers. The big book format encouraged social interaction and
children could repeat the experience during buddy reading. The success children felt during shared reading fostered confidence to attempt books on their own.

3. Time was provided each day when the children were in charge of their own learning. This became an important time for the children to experiment with text of varying difficulty. One goal of education is to make children decision makers. This can only be accomplished through practice. The teacher who places responsibility on children to make choices, enables them to develop autonomy. The teacher has the responsibility to be a facilitator of learning. This means organizing the classroom to have materials and events that demand choice. The children of this study were encouraged and provided opportunities for self-selection. The teacher created the atmosphere that defined self-selection as acceptable.

4. Activities that integrated reading and writing provided children with ways to expand word knowledge. The word knowledge gained through writing informed reading. The strategies used to read drew attention to words, thus aiding writing. Activities that drew attention to words supported the children's writings and reading. The use of activities appropriate to their current word knowledge furthered the children's understandings of print. To begin memorizing lists of
words, when some children had limited understandings of the connection between what they wrote and an actual word, would have been an exercise in futility. To delay reading until all short vowel sounds were mastered, suggests knowing the parts makes one capable of accomplishing the whole. The children used print they wrote to inform their reading. They used the print they read to inform their writing. Each child had the opportunity to approach literacy learning along an individual path.

5. On-going assessment that used both formal and informal means, yielded broader information about each learner. The children performed differently in various activities. By piecing all the information available, the teacher had an accurate idea of what the child could do. Watching the children read and write, their strategies were displayed in use. Different assessments placed different demands on the learner. Formal measures may give quantifiable results, but the child may not have performed as well as daily work indicated. Perception that they were taking a "test" may have provoked an anxiety response that hindered display of knowledge. Children working together provided a forum for discussion of strategies and ways to problem solve. Observing and documenting cooperative learning may be time consuming, but provided the broadest information about what the
child could do. By combining all forms of assessment, both formal and informal, the teacher planned the most appropriate and productive instruction.

6. **The teacher was informed about whole language and the reading and writing process.** This knowledge enabled her to provide the learning environment described. The teacher's plans were child-centered. A curriculum that drives the classroom, without allowing for individual differences, ignores the importance of the active participation of the learner. Keeping current with research and theory is essential for stimulating new ideas and broadening professional understandings. Knowing how to select quality books to bring into the classroom was important. Listening to children read and watching them write suggested ways to nurture new learning. The teacher encouraged the children to develop reading strategies, appropriate to their needs, which included sound-letter relationships, and the use of meaning, structure and illustration cues. The teacher recognized that children could support each others' learning and encouraged this by allowing buddy reading and writing to occur. **Believing** children can successfully self-direct their own learning was as important as providing the opportunity to do so.
Recommendations for Further Study

1. Replication in other whole language first grades. Replicating this study would provide information about the patterns of self-selection other first grade children exhibit. Do they reread big books? Do they latch on to one particular text for rereading?

2. Replication in a first grade where basals are used for reading instruction. This study was set in a classroom that does not use a structured reading program. Do children in a step-wise reading program self-select texts in the same way the children in this whole language classroom did? Do they reread texts? How is the buddy system of reading addressed in that classroom? Are there differences in literacy learning in general?

3. Replication in a classroom that allows self-selection during sustained silent reading and requires record keeping of texts read. The children in this study could read aloud together. They were not required to keep track of the books they read during free choice and B.E.A.R. time. Would record keeping discourage rereading and/or rejection of an undesirable text? Do the children reread on their own during sustained silent reading? What happens to individual reading time when social interaction is not permitted?

4. Longitudinal study of the children in a whole language classroom. Observing the children over time may
provide additional information about how their patterns to self-selection aided or hindered further growth in reading. Is there a significant difference in the types of readers and writers they are in later elementary years in relation to their primary use of free time (writing versus reading) in first grade?

5. A two year study, beginning in a whole language kindergarten and ending at the completion of a whole language first grade. What types of activities in kindergarten encourage self-selection? Do children revisit texts in first grade they heard in kindergarten? What writing events in kindergarten appear to impact willingness to write in first grade.

6. A study of the characteristics of the texts in the classroom library. The big book format and texts with features such as natural language, supporting illustrations and repetitious phrases were most often chosen. What of the texts not selected? What made them undesirable? Some texts were rejected by all the children. Knowing about what they did not pick may provide helpful information about selecting quality books for the classroom.
APPENDIX A

TESTING PACKET GRADE LEVEL EQUIVALENCE
THE CORRESPONDING GRADE LEVEL EQUIVALENCE FOR THE MATERIALS IN THIS TESTING PACKET ARE AS FOLLOWS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basal Level</th>
<th>Testing Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>B, 1, and 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP2</td>
<td>5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>7 and 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primer</td>
<td>9 through 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>14 through 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>18 through 20</td>
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<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>22 through 24</td>
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<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>34</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

SEPTEMBER PARENT LETTER
September 4, 1990

Dear Parents,

During the past week I have been observing the students in Mrs. B ----'s first grade as part of my doctoral dissertation research. My interest is to understand the early processes of learning to read through observing and conversing with the children. I will also be assisting Mrs. B ---- with her daily routine as necessary. I will continue to visit the classroom every day this week and then approximately three mornings per week until the end of January.

I have been involved in the education of children for nearly fifteen years. My experiences range from teaching third grade to being an instructor in elementary education departments at the University level.

So that I may know your child better, please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to Mrs. B ----'s room by the end of the week. Research ethics guarantee the confidentiality of all information gathered, along with your child's identity. All data gathered will be used only by me and will not be part of the school records. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have. I can be reached at -------- School during the day or at my home (761-1110). I will also be available for questions on curriculum night, September 13. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Fresch
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University
APPENDIX C

QUALITATIVE INVENTORY OF WORD KNOWLEDGE

LIST 1 AND 2
### Qualitative Inventory of Word Knowledge

*(Schalgal, 1982)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List 1</th>
<th>List 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>girl</td>
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<td>want</td>
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<tr>
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<td>bump</td>
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<td>grabbed</td>
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<td>train</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shopping</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>float</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CONVERSATIONS
WITH FIRST GRADE READERS
QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CONVERSATIONS
WITH FIRST GRADE READERS

NAME:
DATE:

1. Tell me how you pick a book to read.

2. Do you sometimes read a book more than once?

   (Why or why not?) Title:

3. Do you read at home? What do you like to read?

4. If you come to a word you do not know, what do you do?

5. Where might you go for help?
APPENDIX E
QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CONVERSATIONS FOLLOWING RUNNING RECORDS
QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CONVERSATION FOLLOWING RUNNING RECORDS (January):

What kind of reader are you?

How is/Is that different than when you started first grade?

Do you pick books to read differently than before?

What would be a book that is too easy for you?

Why would someone pick a book that is too easy?

What would be a book that is too hard?

Sometimes you read alone, and sometimes with someone else. When do you like to read alone; why do you read with someone else?

Who picks the books when you read with someone?

(If appropriate ask if there was something they read that made them realize they were a better/good reader)
APPENDIX F
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

So I may know your child better, please answer the following questions. Use the back if you need more space. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me. I am at the school during the day, or call me at 761-1110.

Thank you - Mary Jo Fresch

1. What kind of printed material does your child choose to look at? (ie: books, magazines, catalogs, cereal boxes, etc.)

2. Describe how your child picks a story to read, or have read to her/him.

3. Does s/he have favorite books? What are the titles?

4. Has your child ever memorized a story, and "read" it back to you? If so, what was the story?

5. What might I need to know about your child to understand her/him as a learner?

Thank you for your time!

Child's name:

Parent's name completing form:
APPENDIX G

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE TO EVALUATE
CHILD'S WILLINGNESS TO ATTEMPT
VARIOUS ACTIVITIES
Dear Parents,

As my research in Mrs. B's class continues, many aspects of your child's growth has interested me. Below is a short list of activities you may have seen your child try. Please check the statement that describes your child's reaction to each activity, based on your observations. As always, any information you provide is strictly confidential. I appreciate your time and help. If possible, return this to school by Wednesday. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Fresch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Will try under own initiative</th>
<th>Will try with adult suggestion and/or presence</th>
<th>Will try with peer suggestion and/or presence</th>
<th>Will try only if sure of success</th>
<th>Will try occasionally on own</th>
<th>Will generally not try on own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a new friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempt a new physical activity (such as jumping rope, kicking or catching a ball)</td>
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<td>Join in a group activity already in progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiate a phone call to a friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempt to read books someone else has presented aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reread a familiar book</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose to read a new (unfamiliar) book</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader in play with peers</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX H

PARENT CONSENT FORM TO USE
CHILD'S WRITTEN WORK
Dear Parents,

During the next few weeks I will be completing data collection for my doctoral dissertation. As I present my findings, I may use photocopies of work completed by your child. As promised earlier, any reference to your child and his/her work will not be identifiable. A fictitious name will be used for each child. Please complete the form below to authorize use of your child's work.

If you have any questions, please contact me at school (-- ----) or my home (761-1110).

I want to thank each of you for your cooperation and support during this time. I've enjoyed being in the classroom. Thank you for sharing your children with me!

Sincerely,
Mary Jo Fresch

------------------------------------------

Please return this form to Mrs. B ----.

Child's name________________________________________

I consent to the use of my child's work collected during the study conducted by Mary Jo Fresch during the 1990-1991 school year. I understand his/her name will be concealed.

Parent signature_____________________________________

Date_______________________________________________
APPENDIX I

READING RECORD
APPENDIX J
CHILDREN'S BOOKS MENTIONED REGARDING SELF-SELECTION
Many editions of these titles exist. The bibliographic information listed is from the specific text used in the classroom of this study.


- At Night
- Bruno's Birthday
- Buffy's Tricks
- Legs
- Secret Soup
- Sleeping
- T.J.'s Tree
- Wrinkles


- Taking Off
- Going Up
- On Our Own
- Hang on to Your Hats
- Kick up Your Heels
Glenville, IL: Scott Foresman.

Chipmunks  
Duke  
Homes  

Titles from Scott Foresman Supplemental Readers. (1971).  
Glenville, IL: Scott Foresman.

The Bus Ride  
Colors  
I Like  
Rudy's New Red Wagon  
Ten Little Bears  
What Could You Do?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


