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UMI
CULTURAL VOICES: WHERE ARE THEY IN CLASSROOM LITERACY PRACTICES?

DISSERTATION

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

By

Verdie D. Samuels, A.D., B.S., M.Ed.

*****

The Ohio State University
1999

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College of Education
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ABSTRACT

Language and literacy experiences in the classroom setting may differ dramatically from the shared learning environment of the home. In the school setting, the teacher may not understand the child's distinctive ways of knowing or speaking. Hence, when students come to school, they are confronted with a secondary discourse community that often differs significantly from the primary discourse that is used in their homes. Therefore, to address and understand this issue, the questions for this research study are:

1. How are students' and parents' cultural voices manifested in the school's literacy experience as viewed by the teacher and researcher?
2. How is the bridge that allows students' and parents' cultural voices to come into the school's literacy experiences co-constructed?
3. What are parents' and students' perceptions of their cultural voices in classroom literacy practices?

This study was founded on a theoretical framework that emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of literacy development; hence, a sociocultural perspective of literacy learning. The methods used by the researcher included: classroom observations, field notes, audio recordings, teacher interviews, parent interviews, student interviews and documentations of student class work and teacher home communications.
The findings revealed that the teacher in this study used six culturally responsive teaching strategies: providing choices in terms of participation structures, learning space, and materials; bidding for student voices; embracing constructivist literacy teaching and learning; promoting critical thinking during literacy discussions; providing authentic, multicultural literature; and bridging home and school via classroom activities and written communications.

The six parents in this study possessed confidence and trust that the school met their children's literacy needs. Additionally, the parents saw the school as a resource and support system. The student interviews revealed that both continuity and discontinuity existed between home and school literacy practices. Some of the students described reading and writing at home as an extension of classroom activities. Other students described reading and writing as a seamless process between home and school. Implications for the classroom teacher, curriculum planners and teacher education programs, along with directions for further research are offered.
Dedicated to My Entire Family
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Diversity in our nation's schools is increasing each year. With a more diverse student population comes diverse ways of knowing and doing literacy. Too often students' and parents' cultural ways of knowing are devalued in the classroom setting. Teachers might realize that parents' and students' cultural voices will have to come into classroom literacy practices if all students are to be successful with literacy learning.

This realization can be accomplished by connecting the school culture with parents' and students' home practices. Language and literacy learning are facilitated when students' homes and school discourses closely correspond (Gee, 1987 cited in Crawford, 1995). What students bring to school—their communities' cultural models or understandings of social realities and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within-school factors (Ogbu, 1988). Therefore, by including parents' and students' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices, teachers can effectively plan activities and experiences that utilize young students' literacy behaviors and learning styles in a contextualized method.

Dillard (1992) asserts that:
understanding the learning style patterns that seem to characterize various ethnic groups is not enough. Teachers must also consider ways to restructure the curriculum to truly allow students to learn in different ways—ways that are grounded in and in harmony with their cultural backgrounds. This requires broadening our perspectives to see learning styles as an extension of who our students are as individuals. (p. 218)

Schools that harmonize their pedagogical contexts with students' cultural backgrounds will find that students will perceive reading and writing as reaffirming their cultural identity. Consequently, these students become more engaged in literacy experiences. Accordingly, Ferdman (1990) asserts that if written tasks devalue students' cultural identity, the gap may widen between home and school contexts. Children, therefore, will become increasingly disenfranchised from what they regard as school-defined literacy practices.

Further, Ferdman (1990) notes that in a culturally heterogeneous society, literacy ceases to be a characteristic inherent solely in the individual. It becomes an interactive process that is constantly redefined and renegotiated, as the individual transacts with the socioculturally fluid surroundings. Therefore, according to Ferdman (1990), a new arrival to the United States from a small village in Malaysia, unable to read or write in English and unfamiliar with the Latin alphabet, would not immediately have all the skills required of a literate person in his new country and would in all likelihood be seen in the workplace as functionally illiterate. At home, however, he teaches his sons to read the Quran, maintains an elaborate accounting system for his lending society, and is revered as a teacher and wise person. As Scribner (1986) cited in Ferdman (1990) puts it, literacy is a social achievement.
When teachers teach students who are from different cultural backgrounds, they must call upon parents in a collaborative fashion if they are to learn who their students really are (Delpit, 1995). Parents, too can serve as important educators of their children in cultural functions (Swick, 1989). Therefore, it only seems natural to empower parents to share in the educator's role in educating others about their cultural ways of teaching literacy. From this perspective, teachers should realize that from birth parents have been sharing with their children literacy habits, skills, beliefs, values, and customs based on the culture they know (Priess, 1987). Parents are truly the best teachers of their own cultural lives, and it is hoped that teachers will realize this if our schools are to effectively and multiculturally teach literacy.

It is hoped that teachers understand that literacy embraces the ways in which different people use their cultural values, customs, norms and beliefs to make sense of the world. To not utilize parents' and students' cultural ways of doing literacy is to separate students from their cultural values, norms, customs, and beliefs. In other words, literacy teaching should be "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1992). If teachers adopt this pedagogy of teaching, literacy learning will be more purposeful for our students, especially the ones who do not belong to the dominant culture. Thus, teachers will be able to promote literacy instruction that simultaneously respects and advances all children's literacy learning.

Teachers, therefore, should become aware that they are the links to bridging home literacy voices and school literacy teaching. Consequently, teachers have the responsibility to include students' and parents' cultural voices in literacy instruction. It is
therefore hoped that teachers focus on providing classroom environments which are inclusive of students' and parents' cultural voices in order to meet the literacy needs of all children.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

This research study will shed light on the inclusion of students' and parents' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices. Through the use of classroom observations, fieldnotes, the teacher's, students' and parents' interviews, it is hoped that the following research questions will be answered:

1. How are students' and parents' cultural voices manifested in the school's literacy experience as viewed by the teacher and researcher?
2. How is the bridge that allows students' and parents' cultural voices to come into the school's literacy experiences co-constructed?
3. What are parents' and students' perceptions of their cultural voices in classroom literacy practices?

**Scope of Study**

This study is a classroom based inquiry that seeks to understand how the cultural voices of students and parents are included or excluded in classroom literacy practices. However, before proceeding, it is important to give definitions for three terms that will be used throughout this study: voice, culture and cultural voice.

Voice in this study was defined as “the process of expressing oneself in a meaningful way through orienting utterances and actions according to the rules of the social discourse” (O’Connor, 1989, p. 59).
I considered several definitions of culture as I conducted this research. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, several definitions of culture were considered. Hence, culture is the sum total of ways of living (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979), a way of life that was shared by members of a population (Ogbu, 1988) and includes rites and rituals, legends and myths, artifacts and symbols, and language and history, as well as "sense-making devices that guide and shape behavior" (Davis, 1984, p. 10). Culture is what one thinks is important (values); what one thinks is true (beliefs); and how one perceives things are done (norms) (Owens, 1987).

Further, I use the term "cultural voice" throughout this study. My choice of this term was indeed a purposeful one since voice can not be separated from one's culture: one's voice is determined by cultural factors such as ethnicity, religious, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, just to name a few. In this study, culture was therefore seen as the lens through which the students in this research defined their personal paths to and ways of doing and knowing literacy. To separate voice from culture is to devalue and ignore one's social discourse: this study recognized culture and voice as one entity or concept. As readers engaged themselves in this study, I felt it was important to remind them of these facts by fusing the terms cultural and voice as one concept: we can not view one without the other, they are inseparable.

Limitations of the Study

During the course of this study, two limitations were made visible; limitations that relate to the student population at the research site and that deals with the parents' gender.
Happy Alternative Elementary School is an alternative school which obtains its population by the lottery system. The lottery system requires parents to make a visit to the district office and fill out an application to ensure that their children's names are placed in the pool (to be drawn by a district official). Are all parents afforded the convenience of visiting the district office during work hours? Experience has warned me that parents who have white collar jobs usually are the ones who can actually afford to take time off their jobs to visit the district office in order to complete an application for their children. If one were to consider this position, it is clear that all students may not have equal access to Happy Alternative Elementary School. Thus, Happy Alternative Elementary School's student population possessed more children from families that fit this (white collar jobs--middle-class) description. Although, much effort was taken to secure students from varied cultural backgrounds, perhaps, this fact somewhat limited the cultural variation of this study's participants.

This study focused on the voices of the teacher, students and parents (in this case all mothers). Fathers' voices, too must be recognized if we are to include the entire family's voice. Perhaps the absence of the fathers' voices in this study points to another limitation of this study; simply because the inclusion of the fathers' voices could have provided more data which describes the inclusion or exclusion of students' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices.

By acknowledging my study's limitations and by making an effort to establish credibility and trustworthiness, the strength of this qualitative inquiry was enhanced as I
sought to understand how students' cultural voices were included in and excluded from their classroom literacy learning.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter Two will highlight works that represent a sociocultural perspective. That is, these works demonstrate that becoming literate encompasses more than becoming skilled in methods of representations such as in books, the alphabets or writing. This discussion will begin with three earlier works that make an excellent beginning to look at literacy in the context of social practices and worldview of particular groups; and will end with works that suggest techniques or practices that teachers might employ in order to bring continuity between students' home literacy practices and the school's.

Chapter Three will focus on the theoretical framework that helped shed light on this study's research questions. Additionally, data methods, data analysis, methods of data collection, design of the study and trustworthiness issues will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four will reveal how JB's (the teacher) students' and parents' cultural voices were manifested in her classroom literacy practices. Data from JB's interviews, classroom observations and classroom field notes will all shape the discussion of JB and the six strategies that she used to include her students' and parents' cultural voices/backgrounds in her literacy teaching.

Secondly, the students' voices section will focus on the interviews with six students: Joe, a third grader; Latonya, a fourth grader; Will, a fourth grader; Bill, a third
Justin, a fourth grader, and Apple, a third grader. The interviews were designed to understand these students' voices as they relate to the inclusion or exclusion of their cultural backgrounds in classroom literacy practices. In other words, the interviews gave me a deeper understanding of these students' perceptions of how their cultural voices were included or excluded in their classroom literacy experiences. This discussion will therefore assist the reader in understanding the continuities and discontinuities between home and school literacy learning as made visible through the students' voices.

Thirdly, the parents' voices section in this chapter will be presented in an overall discussion format that is supported by interview notes from six parents: Sara H., Lisa, Andrea, Tiffany, Marsha and Sara G. The presentation of the excerpts from the interviews, along with my discussion, will assist with contextualizing the parents' perceptions of their voices in classroom literacy practices.

Lastly, Chapter Five will review the study's relevant findings. Additionally, an implications and a significance section will be highlighted in this chapter.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
INTRODUCTION

The bare bones of my argument is that there are routine practices within the cultural life of communities that schools can draw upon to assist students in constructing concepts in a given domain the schools seek to teach. The challenge is to find that powerful match between the contours of the knowledge that is socially constructed in the community as well as the family context and those constructs introduced in the context of the classroom.

Carol Lee (1991a, p. 292)

Language and literacy experiences in the classroom setting may differ dramatically from the shared learning environment of students' homes. In school settings, the teacher may not understand students' distinctive ways of knowing, doing or speaking. Further, language learning strategies that once served the student so effectively at home may seem less successful and sometimes even counterproductive in the school context (Neuman & Roskos, 1994). Hence, when students come to school, they are confronted with a secondary discourse community that often differs significantly from the primary discourse that is used in their homes. Why is this the case? Roth (1984) argues that schools serve as agents for the culture; in other words, schools do not have students' cultural ways of doing and knowing at the forefront of education. Additionally, Roth notes:
Social/cultural control is tied directly to the structure of knowledge and to the manner in which knowledge is presented in the schooling context. Schools, acting as agents for the culture, control the extent to which personal knowledge may enter into the public knowledge of school curriculum; they thus have a direct influence upon cultural continuity and change. In selecting what to teach and how it is to be taught and evaluated, schools reaffirm what the culture values as knowledge.

Because literacy provides a powerful means for individuals to make a personal tie to society in general, literacy acquisition, particularly reading instruction, holds implications for cultural transmission, that is, for how knowledge is transferred, reproduced, and transformed. The prime focus of 1st grade is to establish reading literacy so that the "knowledge" our culture sees as significant may be maintained. (p. 303)

Moreover, Ferdman (1990) notes as part of their schooling, children are faced with preferences of the educational system regarding which behaviors to emphasize. These preferences have in turn been shaped by the sociocultural environment of the school and its agents (such as teachers, teacher assistants, principals, textbook writers, and editors). Other messages are conveyed through interactions with family and peers, the media, and even the various segments of the educational system. Whether these messages are congruent depends in part on the degree of cultural heterogeneity represented by the messengers. "In educating their pupils toward literacy, schools vary in the degree to which they incorporate the cultural views of the ethnic groups to which their pupils belong. To the extent that schools tend to reflect the dominant culture, pupils from the dominant ethnic group are more likely than are ethnic minority students to find consistency between the various constructs of literacy. In either case, because literacy education tends
to be left primarily to the school, children become literate in the cultural image represented by the school" (Ferdman, 1990, p. 189).

The cultural image of America's schools today is becoming more and more pluralistic. Given current immigration patterns and birthrates of minority groups, it has been estimated that by the year 2000, both Hispanic-American and Asian-American populations will have grown by more than 20%. The African-American population is estimated to grow by 12%. These changing demographic statistics will have a significant impact on our classrooms, as more students come from culturally diverse backgrounds while teachers remain overwhelmingly white (Tompkins, 1997). This change in demographics speaks to the reasons why teachers need to include students' cultural knowledge in developing and executing literacy experiences. To fail to attend to the plurality and diversity within the United States, and to fail to take seriously the historic past that has sustained it is to dismiss the cultural ways of knowing, language, experiences, and voices of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Willis, 1995). Language and literacy learning is facilitated when students' homes and school discourses closely correspond (Gee, 1987 cited in Crawford, 1995). Therefore, what students bring to school—their communities' cultural models or understandings of social realities and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within-school factors (Ogbu, 1988).

The inclusion of students' cultural backgrounds in classroom literacy practices is grounded in a sociocultural perspective. This perspective posits that literacy learning is
situated within the social and cultural contexts of people's communities, families and schools. Therefore, an understanding of the social contexts of students is a prerequisite to teaching literacy. Further, the sociocultural perspective recognizes the:

value placed on behaviors that are construed as literate in the context of one group will not be equivalent to the value given them by a different culture. For example, penmanship might be much more valued by the Chinese, who must spend long hours learning the appropriate brush-strokes for each pictogram, and who generally value the aesthetic qualities of text, than by North Americans, who might primarily emphasize the content. In a religious Christian community, it is likely that time spent reading the Bible is considered to be well spent; while among secular intellectuals, it may be considered more important to read the daily newspaper. Whereas those raised in upper-class New England may place a premium on being familiar with the classics of U.S. literature, midwestern farmers may be more concerned with their ability to read the latest commodity exchange tables and the manuals for their machinery. (Ferdman, 1990, p. 188)

Social and cultural contexts include factors such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic and sociopolitical status, religion and family educational history are considered in a sociocultural perspective. Thus, a sociocultural perspective seeks to understand students' literacy learning in their cultural and social contexts, instead of viewing literacy learning as the transmission and internalization of a set of universal cognitive functions and skills.

As Gee (1989) reminds us, literacy has "no effects-indeed, no meaning-apart from particular cultural contexts in which it is used, and it has different effects in different contexts" (p. 52). Literacy, then according to Ferdman (1990), involves "facility in manipulating the symbols that codify and represent the values, beliefs and norms of the culture-the same symbols that incorporate the cultures representations of reality" (p. 187). Yet Scribner (1988) and Resnick (1990) remind us that literacy is a set of social
practices situated in specific sociocultural contexts. As sets of social practices, specific literacies are evident in the ways people talk, read, write about and use printed texts. The enterprise of defining literacy as Scribner (1988) notes "becomes one of assessing what counts as literacy in the modern epoch in some given social context" (p. 72). For example, "the skills necessary to be considered literate in a society that employs pictographic writing can be quite different from those necessary in a society that uses an alphabetic system" (Ferdman, 1990, p. 187). In other words, each culture will have its own definition of the behaviors that designate a person as literate.

The following works represent a sociocultural perspective in that they demonstrate that becoming literate encompasses more than becoming skilled in methods of representations such as in books, the alphabets or writing, but, rather these studies view becoming literate as "developing mastery not only over processes, but also over the symbolic media of the culture-what ways in which cultural values, beliefs, and norms are represented. Being literate implies actively maintaining contact with collective symbols and the processes by which they are represented. Thus, literacy goes beyond superficial transactions with a printed or written page and extends into the ability to comprehend and manipulate its symbols-the words and concepts-and to do so in a culturally prescribed manner" (Ferdman, 1990, p. 188).

This discussion will begin with three earlier works that are landmarks in looking at literacy in the context of social practices and worldview of particular groups: Scribner & Cole's (1981) *Psychology of Literacy, Scollon & Scollon's (1981) Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication* and Heath's (1983) *Ways With Words.* All
these works recognize that what is at issue in the use of language is different ways of knowing, different ways of making sense of the world. Moreover, the discussion will continue with Taylor's (1983) *Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write*, Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines' (1988) *Growing up Literate: Learning from Inner City Families* and Fishman's (1988) *Amish Literacy: What and How it Means*. These studies confirm that literacy learning is very much situated within the cultural contexts of those living in them. Yet, Philip's (1972) *Participant Structures and Communicative Competence: Warm Springs Children in Community and Classroom*, Au's (1980) *Participation Structures in a Reading Lesson with Hawaiian Children*, Barnhardt's (1982) *Turning In: Athabaskan Teachers and Athabaskan Students*, Moll & Greenberg (1990) *Community Funds of Knowledge and the Practice of Literacy* and Lee's (1991b) *Signifying as a Scaffold to Literary Interpretation: The Pedagogical Implications of a Genre of African-American Discourse* demonstrate that schools can become agents for students by mediating the process by which the students become literate. Further, these studies show that students gain much more from their literacy experiences when their ways of doing literacy are included in classroom literacy practices. Finally, this discussion will end with Lee's (1992) *Literacy, Cultural Diversity, and Instruction*, Neuman & Roskos' (1994) *Bridging Home and School with a Culturally Responsive Approach* and Ladson-Billings's (1994) *The Dreamkeepers*. These authors suggest techniques or practices that teachers might employ in order to bring continuity between students' home literacy practices and the school's. The aforementioned works (and others) will be
discussed under the headings of either community, family or home/school continuity in order to show the contextual nature of literacy learning in each.

**Community**

Scribner and Cole's (1981) study of literacy among the Vai people revealed that literacy served many roles and functions outside school. In other words, there was a social significance of literacy that was embedded in the Vai community. Scribner and Cole identified three scripts utilized by the Vai. Each script carried its own distinctive form of social organization, transmission and function within the Vai community.

English literacy, which is associated with schooling outside the village as one of the scripts represented by the Vai, is learned in Western-style government schools and students must go away to school in order to become literate in English. English is the official script of political and economic institutions and is used for governmental and educational purposes. This was evidenced as Scribner and Cole recognized few texts in villages that were written in English.

Another script, Arabic literacy, was also identified as one of the scripts utilized by the Vai people. Arabic writing is an organic part of village life and is the script of religious practices and learning. Arabic script is used in a variety of religious practices, and its secular uses include correspondence, personal journal notes and occasionally trade records. Arabic literacy is associated with the learning of the Qur'an and is learned through a long process of schooling which consists of memorization of the Qur'an. Almost every town has a Qur'anic school conducted by a learned Muslim. Groups of boys
ranging in age from four years to twenty-four, can often be seen in the community meeting around the fire twice a day for several hours of recitation and memorization of Qur'anic verses. "The overwhelming majority of individuals with Qur'anic training, however, do not achieve understanding of the language and their literacy activities are restricted to reading or writing out known passages of the Qur'an or frequently used prayers, service performed for others as well as for oneself" (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p. 63).

Yet another script, Vai script, was also identified as important in the Vai community. Vai script is phonetic and it serves the village's personal and public needs for information, preservation and communication between individuals living in different areas. Thus, Vai script is secular, as it serves the "two classical functions of writing: memory (preserving information over time) and communication (transmitting it over space) in both personal and public affairs, with a heavy emphasis on the personal" (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p. 64). According to Scribner & Cole, knowledge of Vai script might be characterized as "literacy without education" (p. 63). Vai script is usually informally learned within a two week to a two month period with the help of a relative, friend or anyone who acts as a teacher, and learning consists of committing the characters to memory and practice in reading, first list of names, later personal letters written in the Vai script.

Moreover, the Vai have practiced literacy for 150 years and have passed the Vai script on from one generation to another in tutorial fashion without the benefit of a formal
institution such as a school and without the benefit of a teacher. In the study of the Vai, Scribner (1988) states the following:

> Literacy is not a necessity for personal survival. As far as we could determine nonliteracy status does not exclude a person from full participation in economic activities or in town or society life. As we look around Vai country and see major activities and institutions continuing to function in the traditional oral mode, we are at a loss to define the literacy competencies that might be useful in everyday life. But Vai literates have not been at such a loss and have found no end of useful functions for writing. Commonly they engage in extensive personal correspondence, which for some involves the composition of thirty to forty letters per month. Since Vai society, like other traditional societies, maintains an effective oral grapevine system, reasons for the popularity of letter writing are not self-evident, especially since all letters must be personally sent and hand-delivered. Yet literates find the advantage of secrecy and guarantee of delivery more than compensation for the time and trouble spent in writing. (pp. 78-79)

Similar to Fishman's (1988) study of the Amish, in the Vai script, literacy serves many personal and public record keeping functions. For example, heads of family maintain albums for family births, deaths and marriages. Artisans maintain lists of customers and farmers record the yield and income from cash-crop farming. The script also serves administrative purposes such as recording house tax payments and political contributions. Additionally, some religious organizations maintain records in Vai script. Yet, not all literacy uses are devoted to practical ends. In the privacy of their homes, many Vai literates engage in creative acts of composition. Almost everyone keeps a diary and some write down maxims and traditional tales in copy books.

Communication patterns differ across classes and cultures. They are culturally framed and defined. As Scollon and Scollon's study (1981) indicated, Athabaskans in
Alaska and Northern Canada differ from mainstream Canada and American English speakers in how they engage in communication patterns. First, Athabaskans have a high degree of respect for the individuality of others and they guard their own individuality. Therefore, they prefer to avoid conversation except when the point of view of all participants is well known. Contrasting, this discourse conflicts with American speakers who feel that the main way to get to know other people's point of view is through conversation with them.

Secondly, Athabaskans feel that it is considered inappropriate and bad luck to anticipate good luck, to display oneself in a good light, to predict the future, or to speak unfavorably of another's luck. Here again, this discourse conflicts with the American idea of putting your best foot forward. Consequently, in situations of unequal status relations, American speakers attempt to display themselves in the best light possible. Additionally, they speak highly of the future.

Thirdly, for Athabaskans, persons in subordinate positions do not display or show off; rather, they observe the person in the superordinate position. For example, adults, as either parents or teachers, are supposed to display abilities and qualities for the child to learn. Conflict in discourse patterns is readily seen as American children are rewarded to show off their abilities for teachers and other adults.

Lastly, Scollon and Scollon found that riddles are an important genre in Athabaskan culture. Riddles for Athabaskans serve as schooling in guessing meanings, in reading between the lines, in anticipating outcomes, and in indirectness. In the best telling of a narrative "little more than the themes are suggested and the audience is able to
interpret those themes as highly contextualized in his own experiences" (p. 127). Thus, Athabaskan children are expected to make their own sense of a situation and no one can unilaterally enforce one interpretation. Consequently, Scollon and Scollon were not surprised when, in a story-retelling exercise intended to test reading comprehension, Athabaskan children tended to modify the text of the story in their retellings. Yet, American schools do not value this discourse and would more than likely interpret individually constructed retellings as evidence that the students had not comprehended the story. Hilliard (1992) reminds us that “misunderstanding of cultural behavioral style has been shown to lead to errors in the estimation of a student’s or cultural group’s: 1) intellectual potential (the consequences of which mislabeling, misplacement, and mistreatment of children are enormous); 2) learned abilities or achievement in academic subjects such as reading; and 3) language abilities” (p. 372).

Moreover, literacy as it is practiced in American education, that is, essay-text literacy, is connected to a reality that Scollon and Scollon term "modern consciousness". Thus, Scollon and Scollon argue that literacy of the essay-text type might be experienced by Athabaskans as a form of interethnic communication. Modern consciousness, according to Gee (1989) is "consonant with particular discourse patterns, ones quite different from the discourse patterns used by the Athabaskans. As a result, the acquisition of this sort of literacy is not simply a matter of learning a new technology, it also involves association with values, social practices, and ways of knowing that conflict with those of the Athabaskans" (p. 53). Gee continues:
In the essayist prose, the important relationships to be signaled are those between sentence and sentence, not those between speakers nor those between sentence and speaker. For a reader this requires a constant monitoring of grammatical and lexical information. With the heightened emphasis on truth value, rather than social or rhetorical conditions, comes the necessity to be explicit about logical implications. A significant aspect of essayist prose style is the fictionalization of both the audience and the author. The reader of an essayist text is not an ordinary human being, but an idealization, a rational mind formed by the rational body of knowledge of which the essay is a part. By the same token the author is a fiction, since the process of writing and editing essayist texts leads to an effacement of individual and idiosyncratic identity. (p. 53)

The essayist style of writing definitely conflicts with the Athabaskan children's way of doing writing. Primarily, this style of writing would require the Athabaskan to produce a major display, which as discussed earlier, would be appropriate only if the Athabaskan child were in a position of dominance (superordinate) in relation to the audience. In the typical American classroom setting, the teacher, rather than the child, is in the superordinate position.

Heath's (1983) study offers yet another demonstration of how literacy is embedded and defined in the cultural context of three communities in Piedmont Carolina: Roadville, a white working-class community that has been part of mill life for four generations; Trackton, a working-class black community whose older generation was brought up on the land but which now is also connected to mill life and other light industry; and mainstream, middle-class, urban oriented blacks and whites.

Heath analyzes the ways these different social groups take in knowledge from the environment by examining "types of literacy events." Literacy events are characterized by Heath as any event involving print such as group negotiation of meaning in written texts,
individuals looking things up in reference books and dozens of other types of occasions when books or written materials are integral to interpretation in an interaction. Thus, Heath concentrated on how children in each community acquired language and literacy in the process of becoming socialized into the norms and values of their communities.

Roadville adults did read books to their children, but they did not extend the habits of literacy events beyond book reading. For instance, they did not, upon seeing an event in the real world, remind children of similar events in a book or comment on such similarities and differences between a book and real events. Roadville adults tend to choose books which emphasized nursery rhymes, alphabet learning, and simplified Bible stories. The oral stories that were told to children were grounded in the actual and were drawn from personal experience; simply because members of the Roadville community view any fictionalized account of a real event as a lie; they regarded reality as being better than fiction. Concerning this Heath (1983) writes:

Neither Roadville adults nor children shift the context of items in their talk. They do not tell stories which fictionalise themselves or familiar events. They reject Sunday school material which attempt to translate Biblical events into a modern day setting. In Roadville, a story must be invited or announced by someone other than the storyteller, and only certain community members are designated good storytellers. A story is recognised by the group as a story about one and all. It is a true story, an actual event which occurred to either the storyteller or to someone else present. The marked behaviour of the storyteller and audience alike is seen as exemplifying the weaknesses of all and the need for persistence in overcoming such weaknesses. The sources of stories are personal experience. They are tales of transgressions which make the point of reiterating the expected norms of behaviour of man, woman, fisherman, worker and Christian. They are true to the facts of an event. (p. 62-63)
Thus, children in Roadville come to know a story as either an account from a book or a factual account of a real event. Because of this belief by the community members, Roadville children were not practiced in decontextualizing their knowledge or in fictionalizing events known to them and shifting them about in other frames. In school interactions, these children were rarely able to take knowledge learned in one context and shift to another or rarely did they compare two items or events and point out similarities and differences.

Children in Trackton were almost always held during their waking hours and were constantly in the midst of rich verbal and nonverbal communication. However, adults did not sit and read to children. There were no reading materials in the Trackton homes other than Sunday school materials. Adults did not ask children questions such as *What is Y?* rather, they asked analogical questions concentrating on nonspecific comparisons of one item, event or person, for example *What's that like?* Parents did not believe that they had a tutoring role and did not simplify their languages for children. Rather, parents believed children learned when they were provided experiences from which they could draw global instead of analytically specific knowledge.

Children in Trackton did not decontextualize, but rather, they contextualized nonverbal and verbal language. Consequently, these children engaged with print as a group activity for specific real-life purposes, such as reading food labels when shopping, reading fix-it books to repair toys or reading to participate in church. Trackton children learned to tell stories by rendering a context and calling on the audience's participation to join in the imaginative creation of the story. In an environment rich with imaginative talk...
and verbal play, these children had to aggressively insert their stories into an ongoing stream of discourse. Fictionalization and imagination were both encouraged. However, at school most Trackton children failed not only to learn the content of lessons but also to adopt the social interactional rules for school literacy events. Print in isolation carried little authority for these children and the children's abilities to link two events or situations metaphorically and to recreate scenes were not tapped in school. By the time in their education when their imaginative skills and verbal dexterity could really pay off (later in the elementary years), they had failed to gain the necessary written composition skills they would need to translate their analogical skills into a channel teachers could accept.

The mainstream middle-class parents, through modeling and specific instruction, give their children ways of using language and of taking knowledge from books, as was evidenced during bedtime story reading—a major literacy event in mainstream homes. In bedtime story routines, the parents set up a scaffolding dialogue (Cazden, 1988) with the child by asking questions like *What is Y?* and then supplying verbal feedback and a label after the child has vocalized or given a nonverbal response. The children, therefore, are socialized into the "initiation-reply-evaluation" sequences so typical in our classroom settings (Mehan, 1979). Through the bedtime story routine and many similar practices in which children learn not only how to take meaning from books but also how to talk about it, they repeatedly practice routines which parallel those of classroom interaction. That is, these children became quite familiar and skilled in labeling through learning to answer 'what-explanations' questions posed by parents. Children from the Mainstream community were rewarded and encouraged for developing "book talk." When these
children were away from books, they continued to use book knowledge and conventions to frame and describe experiences, such as ascribing fiction-like sentences to everyday objects. Contrastingly, children from the Roadville community were encouraged and rewarded for telling stories that derived a moral message from "real experience."

The differences among Roadville, Trackton and Mainstream communities' literacy practices will surely influence how the children from these communities respond to formal schooling as it relates to literacy. As was explained earlier, children from the Mainstream community will come to school with cultural capital that definitely corresponds to the school's ways of doing literacy. These children, more than likely, will be successful at literacy learning. On the other hand, children from the Roadville and Trackton communities do not share the same cultural capital as that of many schools. These children, as explained earlier, will more than likely experience difficulty in classroom literacy learning; simply because they will respond differently to schooling, as they have a different way of doing literacy—a way that schools do not value. Heath states that literacy events must be interpreted in relation to the larger sociocultural patterns which they may exemplify or reflect. When Roadville and Trackton children went to school, they faced a different meaning for reading. They were required, to "learn to read," by focusing on the process of reading with little real purposes or connections other than to get through a basal or finish a worksheet. For, there was no inclusion of the students' cultural voices in their literacy learning. Needless to say, these children were unsuccessful at this type of decontextualized literacy format (Delpit, 1995). These children's language strategies were not supportive of, or consistent with, those needed for success at school.
learning activities. Schools must lay the foundation for school-based literacy for children whose orientations to language and learning differ markedly from those assumed in schools (Heath, 1983).

**Family**

Taylor's (1983) study of six middle class suburban families demonstrated that children from these families grew up in literate environments where literacy was the only option, they learned of reading as one way of listening, and of writing as one way of talking. For instance, in the homes, print was displayed through lists, telephone numbers, messages left for various family members, newspapers, magazines and books. These language tools sent a powerful message to the children—that language and writing have many purposes and that both are important. Additionally, the parents in Taylor's study read often to their children and they provided their children with many opportunities to interact with books on a regular basis. It is no secret that parents from middle-class communities transmit much of the secret codes of symbolic capital (Anyon, 1980) to their children quite implicitly. Clearly, children from such literate environments have a big advantage of learning to read and write; simply because they will surely possess the symbolic goods that schools today highly value.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) conducted a similar study to that of Taylor's (1983) study. However, the major difference between these studies is that Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines's study focused on four Black poor urban families. By working with these families for four years, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) learned that the families
were "active members in a print community in which literacy is used for a variety of social, technical and aesthetic purposes, for a wide variety of audiences, and in a wide variety of situations" (p. 200). For example, in their homes, children in this study used drawing, reading and writing meaningfully in their everyday lives. These families were literate and, I might add, had to be literate in order to survive. Parents filling out applications for food stamps, WIC (Women, Infants and Children) or job applications are all reading tasks that faced these families on a daily basis.

These two studies (Taylor, 1983 and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) are important because they shed light on familial differences of doing literacy. These families, from completely different economic backgrounds, possessed literate environments unique to their needs. The families from Shay Avenue were indeed poor, but their home environments were rich in literacy. The learning from the Shay Avenue families can be summed in the following:

Education and literacy cannot be used interchangeably. We found family members who were highly literate, and yet they were not educated in the traditional sense of the word. (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 202)

Fishman's (1988) study offers an example of how family and community define literacy. Amish count on literacies of proven value in their culture, and only those that are situated in their religious beliefs. Fishman (1988) identifies six abilities that count as reading for the Amish.

First the Amish carefully discriminate among printed materials: thereby, choosing stores or stories, publishers or publications, reviews or recommendations, all help the
Amish maintain intercultural or intracultural balance of their community. "Trusting only certain publishers and publications, however, and allowing trusted friends, both Amish and English, to preview, suggest, or censor material limits intercultural exposure and strengthens intracultural bonds through shared texts (and shared meaning...)" (Fishman, 1988, p. 134). Once appropriate texts are located, the Amish scrutinize the texts and locate only relevant information, ignoring irrelevant or inappropriate information. This process was evident as Anna avoided certain kinds of magazine articles and book introductions.

Secondly, following written directions is important to Amish readers. Recipes, canning procedures, and road signs all provide instruction necessary for successful use. Amish occupations rely on written directions daily in their lives. For example, Anna's brother, who is a painter, must rely on the reading instructions on paints and solvents in order to effectively paint. A third requisite reading skill for the Amish is the ability to recall what is read. Reading is purposeful, implicitly if not explicitly so, and recalling text is both a reading skill and a reason for reading for the Amish. In school, children practice recalling facts from their classroom books and in church and home, children engage in recalling stories from the Bible.

Additionally, the Amish ability to synthesize what is read in a text with what is already known or synthesize information across texts into an organized whole (to draw conclusions) is their most complex reading ability. Individual synthesis is not encouraged; therefore, group synthesis often literally or figuratively replaces it. For example, "when Anna and her sisters hold different opinions of the same issue or text, for example, they work toward a shared conclusion, successful synthesis brings consensus within the group."
When Anna reads alone and has no one with whom to confer, however she may draw Amish-appropriate conclusions through consultation with her internalized sense of group norms synthesizing her personal interpretation with that of the imagined group, again aiming for successful consensus" (Fishman, 1988, p. 145).

In defining what counts as writing, the Amish categorize copying, encoding, listing, following format and choosing context as abilities that count as writing both, publicly and privately. Concerning copying, for example, the children copy their names and short notes. Teachers expect name copying from their students, and throughout their education students continue to copy their reports and Bible stories.

Further, encoding counts both in school and out. Encoding for the Amish includes legible penmanship, accurate spelling, and basic punctuation. Thus, these are the emphases that a teacher considers in grading students.

Listing serves as a personally and individually useful skill both in and out of school. List making is evident in church (making lists of nominees and Sunday school readings): in the home (children and parents making grocery lists before going to the grocery store); and in the community (business operators making lists for products and prices for customers).

Following format works across contexts. Additionally, in school, formats are modeled and when not modeled are clearly assigned. However, when not modeled, students call upon previous known forms and adapt these to the writing at hand.

Lastly, choosing content, the most problematic of all five abilities for the Amish, involves making audience appropriate decisions about what to include in writing. Context and purpose of the written text was the most important consideration for the Amish.
Moreover, there are concerns that are irrelevant for the Amish. For example, English grammar and punctuation are to a great extent unrelated to writing in school and out. Emphasis is placed on understanding a written piece to either extent that word arrangement must make sense to readers, and punctuation matters for much the same reason. "If a reader readily understands the intention of an adjective used as an adverb, a singular verb following a plural noun, a sentence fragment or a compound verb containing a misplaced comma, the Amish do not see these as errors warranting attention, despite the fact that an American reader might" (Fishman, 1988, p. 139). Fishman reminds us that such texts are written from the Amish culture and are thus intended for Amish culture. Additionally, just as there is no concern for grammatical and punctuation issues, the third person formal essay is irrelevant for the Amish community. Likewise, originality is devalued in the Amish community "where all aspects of life reward uniformity, writing may provide an outlet for individual expression, and identification, but singular creativity stays within community norms" (p. 140).

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study is the continuity that exists among home, community and school. Unlike the school community of Heath's (1983) study, the Amish community, school and home all collectively work together to provide continuity in literacy practices. This continuity allows home and school to be aligned with community, rather than home and community aligning themselves with school which is required by many of our schools today. Further, unlike many of our schools today, the Amish school "does not seem to be the primary vehicle for literacy transmission, however, nor does the focal community. Instead the home seems to be the dominant
educational institution implicitly and explicitly teaching what the community requires, effecting positive transfer of goals and methods shared with the community and school, and enhancing their parallelism with its own practices" (Fishman, 1988, p. 151). This collaborative union of home, school and community makes a strong, continuous effort for literacy learning for the Amish children.

Fishman (1988) reminds us that the degree of literacy attained by an Amish child can only be meaningful as assessed when measured against Amish literacy standards, against what counts as literacy for the Amish themselves. As we examine this study and how the children in the Fisher family make sense of literacy, it is evident that the way these children "read the world" (Freire, 1972) in their community, will definitely conflict with what counts as literacy in many of our formal school settings. Thus, if these children attend a school outside their community, they would, more than likely, be faced with a totally different meaning of reading; thereby creating discontinuity between the school's way of doing literacy and the home's as Heath's (1983) study clearly indicated. What will literacy education look like for these children in a formal school setting—one that is outside of the community? Will the students be told, explicitly or through more powerful behaviors, that they really do not know what counts as reading and writing, that their reading and writing are not real but other unknown or alien varieties are? What will happen as their very quiet imitative behaviors make their way in the classroom, and will the teacher assume that they are withdrawn, problematic or less than bright? Will their work be devalued because it is obviously copied or just unoriginal? What if they are called on to perform individually in front of the class, to stand up and stand out: or what if they
are asked to discuss private issues in public, or to evaluate what they read (Fishman, 1988)? The answers to these questions are quite obvious as we reflect on how many of our schools are operated today. With our schools' strong emphasis on essayist-text writing, correct grammatical structure, originality in writing style, Amish children will be faced with a different, conflicting meaning of literacy. Literacy will be presented to them in some abstract decontextualized method which is unrelated to their everyday definition of literacy. They will learn of literacy as a private, disjointed affair, something that happens in the workbook pages or impractical notions where teachers and children meet (Taylor, 1983).

**Home/School Continuity**

The most detailed ethnographic research on the discontinuities that children from minority cultures face in public school classrooms has been done by Philips (1972). This research examined four different participant structures (or modes for organization by which children and adults conduct everyday interaction) on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. On the Warm Springs Reservation, teachers used four participant structures:

In the first type of participant structure, the teacher interacts with all of the students. She may address all of them, or a single student in the presence of the rest of the students. The students may respond as a group or chorus in unison, or individually in the presence of their peers. And finally, student verbal participation may be either voluntary, as when the teacher asks who knows the answer to her question, or compulsory, as when the teacher asks a particular student to answer, whether his hand is raised or not. And it is always the teacher who determines whether she talks to one or to all, receives responses individually or in chorus, and voluntarily or without choice.
In a second type of participant structure, the teacher interacts with only some of the students in the class at once, as in reading groups. In such contexts, participation is usually mandatory, and each student is expected to participate or perform verbally, for the main purpose of such smaller groups is to provide the teacher with the opportunity to assess the knowledge acquired by each individual student. During such sessions, the remaining students who are not interacting with the teacher are usually working alone or independently at their desks on reading or writing assignments.

A third participant structure consists of all students working independently at their desks, but with the teacher explicitly available for student-initiated verbal interaction, in which the child indicates he wants to communicate with the teacher by raising his hand, or by approaching the teacher at her desk. In either case, the interaction between student and teacher is not witnessed by the other students in that they do not hear what is said.

A fourth participant structure, and one which occurs infrequently in the upper primary grades, and rarely, if ever, in the lower grades, consists of the students being divided into small groups, which they run themselves though always with the distant supervision of the teacher, and usually for the purpose of so-called "group projects." As a rule such groups have official "chairmen", who assume what is in other contexts the teacher's authority in regulating who will talk when. (Philips, 1972, pp. 377-378)

Many of our classrooms today exhibit the first participant structure. In this structure, the classroom teacher is the controller or the leader because of her role as a teacher and not because of individual students' choices to follow her. This leads to Indian children's indifference to directions, orders and requests for compliance with classroom social rules that the teacher issues; simply because Indian children have been socialized as a community. In the Native American's community, many people are involved in determining the development and structure of an event, in other words, there is no single authority, teacher or leader directing everything in the classroom. Additionally, the first
participant structure requires Indian students to display their knowledge in front of their classmates. This definitely conflicts with Indian students' way to show competence.

Although the group is much smaller in the second participant structure, direct emphasis is still placed on Indian children to perform by, for example, answering questions. This structure parallels with the structure of reading groups that is so prevalent in many of our schools today. The requirement to answer questions contradicts with Indian children's way to show competence; as the Native American culture does not display demonstration of skill via verbal performance. This explains why Indian children are reluctant to speak in front of classmates-not because they do not know but rather because this type of showing contradicts their cultural way of demonstrating a skill.

As the third and fourth participant structures are examined, it is readily evident that they correspond more closely to the cultural beliefs of the Indian children than any of the others. However, in the fourth participant structure, Native American children were comfortable and more involved in this structure rather than in large groups or any setting where they might be singled out from the rest of the students. These children participated more and felt more at "home" in smaller settings that did not single them out, simply because in their homes, Native American children are exposed early to activities that have the following properties:

1. they are community-wide, in the sense that they are open to all Warm Springs Indians; (2) there is no single individual directing and controlling all activity, and, to the extent that there are "leaders," their leadership is based on the choice to follow [which is] made by each person; (3) participation in some form is accessible to everyone who attends. No one need be exclusively an observer or audience, and there is consequently no
sharp distinction between audience and performer. And each individual chooses for himself the degree of his participation during the activity. (Philips, 1972 p. 390)

Clearly it is evident from the above properties why Native American children would not respond well in participation structures that include mandatory participation or individual leadership experiences. This is yet another example how discontinuity between school and home can inhibit students' literacy learning.

Willis (1995) argues that "to ignore consciously or not the culture and language that each child brings to the literacy table is to mis-educate him or her" (p. 43). Further, Lee (1991a) argues "that there are routine practices within the cultural life of communities in a given domain the schools seek to teach. The challenge is to find that powerful match between the contours of the knowledge that is socially constructed in the community as well as the family context and those constructs introduced in the context of the classroom" (p. 292). Au's (1980) study is an example that shows how Hawaiian children benefit more when cultural and linguistic adjustments are made in classroom literacy practices. Hawaiian natives belong to a speech community in which it is customary to tell anecdotes and discuss them in small groups of speakers who talk while others are talking. Such simultaneous speaking is not seen as impolite, interruption, but as comfortable engagement and as evidence of interest on the part of the participants in the conversation. The name for such speech events in the community is called talk story. Needless to say, this type of speech event was not evidenced in Hawaiian schools; therefore, Au designed a new Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP)-one that
made literacy learning congruent with the learning strategies already familiar to the Hawaiian students. Therefore, the students were allowed to engage in conversational turn-taking story reading discussions that were conducted with the overlapping turn-taking patterns characteristic of talk story. This study suggested that students spoke more coherently and learned more than they did when the lessons were conducted in a one-speaker-at-a-time pattern. Additionally, this study suggested that if classroom learning experiences and teaching strategies could be changed in order to make them more similar to those that the students are accustomed, learning might be improved.

Similarly, Bamhardt's (1982) study of an Athabaskan native village school gives another example of how changes in everyday practices within the classroom that are more familiar to students can improve learning. As was discussed earlier in Scollon and Scollon's (1981) study, Athabaskan students possess unique communication patterns—patterns that are non-existent in classroom settings. However, Bamhardt's study employed classroom instruction that was congruent with patterns of social relationship found in Athabaskan students' homes and community. Therefore, teachers utilized indirect social control which allowed students to freely make choices and practice in private until mastery had been achieved. These changes and others in classroom life allowed Athabaskan students to be successful in school.

According to Flippo, Hetzel, Gribouski and Armstrong (1997), in order to really understand learners whose cultures are different from our own, we must develop an awareness and understanding of their cultural community. Educators must be aware of cultural influences and use them in order to develop effective instructional strategies for all
students. Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) emphasize the importance of empowering parents to contribute "intellectually" to the development of lessons. They therefore recommend assessing the "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) in the community, citing a teacher who discovered that many parents in the Latino community where she taught had expertise in the field of construction. Consequently, the class developed a unit on construction, which included reading, writing, speaking, and building, all with the help of responsive community experts—the students' parents. This example is important because it clearly illustrates how the teacher invited parents and others in the community to contribute to the development of lessons; in other words, to access their funds of knowledge for academic learnings. Hence, the parents came to the classroom to share their knowledge and experiences with the students. The knowledge shared by the parents and other community persons, in turn, became part of the students' work. This example speaks to how powerful students' learning can become if teachers utilize parents and other community persons' cultural knowledge or funds of knowledge along with the classroom pedagogical practices and experiences.

Lee's (1991b) study, which was conducted with high school seniors, provides yet another example of research that suggests students perform better in school when teachers allow them to utilize their cultural way of doing literacy. Lee's research on signifying, demonstrates that African American students' skill in interpreting figurative language and ironic verbal constructions can serve as a scaffold to learning the more complex skill of interpreting complex implied relationships in literary texts (Hillocks & Ludlow, 1984). Signifying, according to Mitchell-Kernan (1981) is a "way of encoding
messages or meaning which involves, in most cases, an element of indirection" (p. 311).

Signifying can also be metaphoric as the following demonstrates:

(Grace has four kids. She had sworn she was not going to have any more babies. When she discovered she was pregnant again, she wouldn't tell anybody. Grace's sister came over and they had the following conversation.)

Rochelle: Girl, you sure do need to join the Metrecal-for-lunch bunch.
Grace: (Noncommittally) Yea, I guess I am putting on a little weight.
Rochelle: Now look here girl, we both standing here soaking wet and you still trying to tell me it ain't raining. (p. 322)

Lee's study clearly demonstrated that what the students intuitively knew about understanding the intended meaning in signifying talk served as the foundation of support for learning how to recognize subtle layers of meaning in fiction.

The inclusion of students' home and community literacy practices will allow students to utilize their cultural ways of doing and knowing to extend their language and literacy abilities. Thus, bridging home and school contexts is one way of bringing continuity in students' language and literacy learning. There are practices that teachers can employ to bring about continuity between home and school. What are the practices or methods teachers can utilize to bridge home and school literacy practices?

**Home/School Continuity -- Pedagogical Practices**

In attempting to bridge home and community literacy practices with the school's practices, Lee (1992) recommends the conceptual framework of *culturally sensitive scaffolding* as a pedagogical practice to make this connection. What is scaffolding?
Brown and Palinscar (1989) explain that "the metaphor of scaffolding captures the idea of an adjustable and temporary support that can be removed when no longer necessary" (p. 411). Therefore, the premise behind culturally sensitive scaffolding is that the teacher uses the students' prior cultural knowledge as a foundation or support for school learning.

The first model of culturally sensitive scaffolding that Lee (1992) recommends is signifying and the interpretation of speakerly texts. Lee developed this method of scaffolding for a group of African-American high school seniors. Even though her participants in the study were high school students, this method has implications for younger children. First of all, what is signifying? According to Lee (1992), signifying is a form of "social conversation in the African-American community that involves a high use of figurative language and often involves ritual insult" (p. 280). Additionally, this model utilizes signifying with "speakerly texts" (Gates, 1988) in African-American fiction. In such fiction, not only do characters "speak in the voices of the vernacular of the speech community, but also the texts employ speech forms such as proverbs and signifying for literary effect" (Lee, 1992, p. 619). An example of signifying is presented below:

**Speaker A:** I went to yo' house and wanted to sit down. A roach jumped up and said, "Sorry, this seat is taken."

**Speaker B:** So I went in yo' house and stepped on a match and yo' mamma said, "Who turned off the heat?" (Lee, 1992, p. 282)

In her study, Lee (1992) hypothesized that the intuitive strategies that students used to process the intended meaning of the metaphoric or ironic talk (as the example above illustrated) in extended signifying dialogue were comparable to the strategies that
expert readers use to interpret both, irony and metaphor in fiction. Therefore, the purpose of Lee's study was to "determine whether the students' knowledge and skill in signifying and their social knowledge about values and relationships within the African American community could be used effectively to teach inferential reading skills" (p. 282). The results of this study indicated that the students' prior social knowledge and skill in signifying proved to be meaningful variables in predicting how well they achieved on the pre and post tests. Hence, this study clearly demonstrated that the students' experience and use of signifying talk served as the foundation or support for learning how to recognize implicit meanings in fiction.

The second model of culturally sensitive scaffolding recommended by Lee (1992) is talk story, turn taking and classroom discussion. This method of scaffolding also focuses on including norms for communication outside the school with those within the classroom. This model of scaffolding is based on the preparation of verbal interaction styles that are premised in organizing reading instruction that is sensitive to cultural norms for communicating. The Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) in Honolulu, Hawaii and research on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon are two programs that illustrate this type of scaffolding.

As discussed earlier, the initial focus of the KEEP project was on underachieving Hawaiian students, and attention was placed on the dissonance between ways of speaking at home versus interactions in the classroom. Au (1980) reasoned that organizing instruction in such a way as to maximize continuity between classroom discourse and the students' cultural norms for speaking, listening, and turn taking in the students' community
would have positive effects on learning and students would significantly increase participation in instructional reading discussions. Therefore, the KEEP project employed instructional practices that included a participation structure comparable to the indigenous story telling genre among native Hawaiians called "talk story" (Watson-Gegeo & Boggs, 1977). Hawaiian children's participation in talk story involves co-narration and joint turn taking. Hence, Au (1980) showed that the "talk story" enhanced oral language learning by Native Hawaiians. Additionally, the children cooperatively responded in joint ventures involving two or more speakers. The KEEP project demonstrated that Hawaiian children were more successful at reading when the classroom environment included talk story as an avenue to literacy learning.

Similarly, as discussed earlier, Philips's (1972) study of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon suggested that Native American children were more involved in classroom activities when the dominant style of participation in their community was utilized. Native American children were more comfortable working in and participated more in small groups rather than in large groups or any setting where they might be singled out from the rest of the students.

The third model of culturally sensitive scaffolding recommended by Lee (1992) is community "funds of knowledge" (Moll and Greenberg, 1990) which is grounded within the social activity of community life. According to Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992), in classrooms, teachers rarely draw on the resources of the "funds of knowledge" of the child's world outside the context of the classroom. By placing emphasis on the students' home environment, teachers can prepare instruction that better fits their students'
needs. In other words, teachers can utilize the students' funds of knowledge to enhance the instruction of literacy for students. Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) emphasize the importance of empowering parents to contribute "intellectually" to the development of lessons.

Neuman and Roskos (1994) recommend bridging home and school with a *culturally responsive approach*. In this approach, teachers adjust and adapt patterns of instruction to be more congruent with those of the students' home and community. According to Neuman and Roskos "culturally responsive instruction that actively engages our increasingly diverse community of learners may help children build upon their own sense of identity and, at the same time, extend their emerging language and literacy abilities" (p. 211). Neuman and Roskos describe three distinguishing features of a culturally responsive approach. First, it acknowledges and appreciates children's home cultures and attempts to build upon the uses of language and literacy with which children are already familiar. Secondly, the culturally responsive approach promotes collaboration among children and between children and adults as they learn through social interaction. Thirdly, a culturally responsive approach shares the same standards of achievement for children of diverse backgrounds as for those from the mainstream. While the goals should remain the same for all children, the means of achieving these goals may be different for children from nonmainstream cultures. This approach allows teachers to view the cultural and language differences between home and school as contributions to the larger enterprise of continuity in students' language and literacy learning.
Ladson-Billings (1994) researched eight teachers in a small predominantly African-American elementary school. Based on her study of these teachers' teaching strategies, she recommends a culturally relevant approach to teaching. A culturally relevant approach to teaching is described by Ladson-Billings (1992a) as "the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students' culture but also to use students' culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. Thus, culturally relevant teaching requires the recognition of African-American culture as an important strength upon which to construct the schooling experience" (p. 314). Additionally, culturally relevant teaching attempts to help teachers understand and participate in knowledge building. Thus, culturally relevant teaching, according to Ladson-Billings (1994) possesses the following conceptions:

- Knowledge is continuously recreated, recycling and shared by teachers and students. It is not static or unchanging.
- Teacher is passionate about content.
- Teacher helps students develop necessary skills.
- Teacher sees excellence as a complex standard that may involve some postulates but takes student diversity and individual differences into account. (p. 81)

The works presented thus far in this section of this chapter have shown how classroom teaching can be relevant to the lives of students if certain techniques or pedagogical practices are employed by teachers. This section of the chapter can not conclude without discussing another method that teachers can employ to bring about continuity between home and school; that is, providing a literature rich classroom
environment. Teachers should therefore seek rich multicultural literature. The best in multicultural literature presents culturally authentic information (Sims-Bishop, 1992). Culturally authentic literature, according to McGee and Richgels (1996), portrays people and the values, customs, and beliefs of a cultural group in ways recognized by members of that group as valid and authentic. Teachers should consider all the cultural needs that exist in their classrooms, simply because all cultural beliefs, customs and values are important. By focusing on the different values and beliefs that might exist in their classrooms, teachers will be able to give students a wider range of literature experiences. If teachers are able to achieve this, students from different cultural backgrounds will be able to identify their voice in literature, and other students will be able to enhance their learnings by gaining insights into different cultures. Additionally, through multicultural literature, students discover that all cultural groups have significant contributions. Moreover, a well-balanced multicultural literature program includes literature that depicts people with a variety of aspirations, from different socioeconomic levels, with different occupations and with a range of human characteristics. This is echoed by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* (NCTE Standing Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification, 1986) in the following:

In a multicultural society, teachers must be able to help students achieve cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Teachers must be willing to seek and to use materials which represent linguistic and artistic achievements from a variety of ethnic and cultural perspectives. In such diverse cultural contexts, students explore their own perceptions and values. (p. 14)
Yes, providing a rich multicultural literature collection in the classroom environment is important; however, teachers must be warned that because a book displays a multicultural view, the view might be inaccurate for a particular culture. This is why it is so important for teachers to have guidelines in selecting books that depict cultural diversity. According to Kendall (1996), there are questions that teachers should ask themselves as they select culturally diverse books for their students:

- How are differences in skin color, lifestyles, or values systems treated? Are characters with skin colors, value systems, or lifestyles other than White and middle class presented in a positive light?

- Are the characters presented in a way that encourages children of diverse backgrounds to identify with them and care about them?

- Are children portrayed as working together, each bringing her or his special skills and qualities to a problem?

- Look at the street scenes, the playground and classroom scenes: How different are the children from one another? Could most children identify with the pictures?

- Look at the roles of the characters: Are interests and abilities stereotyped according to the color or gender of each person?

- How do authority figures interact with children? Is there respect on the part of each group?

- How do children reading the books see adults of color in the books? What roles do adults of color play?

- What is the vocabulary of the book? Look carefully at the use of words such as black and white. Is black associated with negative things or white with positive experiences if race is not being talked about? Examine the use of dialect to see if it is authentic and necessary to the story or a stereotypic gimmick.

- Are picture books describing historical situations written from a White viewpoint?
Are Native Americans presented as subhuman or one-dimensional? Do the people of various races (for example, all of the Asians) look alike? Is history skewed so that everything is presented from the Western European Perspective?

> Are differences presented as odd or other than normal? Is the person in the picture who is different being mocked or made fun of?

> Are children seen as strong characters? Are boys presented as "doers" and girls as "observers," or are risk takers of both genders presented? Are children empowered problem-solvers or following in their parents' footsteps? (p. 112-114)

These questions are provided to assist teachers in making careful and informed choices among the increasing number of books published under the umbrella of multicultural literature. If teachers use these questions and others as guidelines along with personal interactions with diverse groups, they will be able to assess whether the literature they are exposing their students to is indeed a true, authentic portrait of the students' cultures. This is summed as Sims-Bishop (1992) reminds us that:

If literature is a mirror that reflects human life, then all children who read or are read to need to see themselves reflected as part of humanity. If they are not, or if their reflections are distorted and ridiculous, there is the danger that they will absorb negative messages about themselves and people like them. Those who see only themselves or who are exposed to errors and misrepresentations are miseducated into a false sense of superiority, and the harm is doubly done. (p. 43)

**Conclusion**

The differences between the school and other cultural groups in how they socialize their children into language and literacy use provide an example of cultural discontinuity (Au, 1993 cited in McGee and Richgels, 1996). Cultural discontinuity means that there may be a mismatch between the literacy culture of the home and that of the school.
Teachers need to comprehend that students who experience cultural discontinuity are more likely to have learning difficulties in school. Consequently, if teachers are to support literacy development of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, they should be sensitive to the possibilities of cultural discontinuities as well as knowledgeable of how to change the classroom to better fit the learning of all children (Gee, 1990, as cited in McGee and Richgels, 1996). Therefore, to offset the disadvantages of cultural discontinuities, teachers should learn about the different cultures represented in their classrooms and be sensitive to the cultural differences, celebrate their students' cultures and relate their students' cultures to curriculum instruction. Further, to promote continuity between home and the classroom, teachers should continuously provide literacy experiences that reflect the students' cultural experiences. For example, the following activities are taken from a multilingual kindergarten classroom. Observation of these activities illustrates how literacy became culturally relevant and contextual:

♦ In studying about elephants, the teacher included a song in Lao. Laotian students were very enthusiastic and took an immediate leadership role in teaching others the words of the song, printed in Lao on a chart and posted near the writing center (a Laotian parent prepared the chart).

♦ During journal writing, the teacher would ask the bilingual children how to say a word in Spanish, Hmong or Lao, "so I can learn how to say it." She also encouraged LEP (limited English-proficient) students to discuss their story ideas among themselves in their first language.

♦ Children delighted in learning words in the language of their peers also. As part of the morning routine, the day of the week and the attendance count were done in one of the languages of the classroom—Lao, Hmong, Spanish or English. (Abramson, Seda, & Johnson, 1990, p. 71-72)
Ferdman (1990) notes that in a culturally heterogenous society, literacy ceases to be a characteristic inherent solely in the individual. It becomes an interactive process that is constantly redefined and renegotiated, as the individual transacts with the socioculturally fluid surroundings. It is an outcome of cultural negotiation. It is this cultural negotiation that teachers should be cognizant of in their daily classroom preparations. This can only be achieved if teachers open the doors of their classrooms for students to transmit their cultural knowledge of how they interact with literacy. Literacy embraces the ways in which different people use their cultural values, customs, norms and beliefs to make sense of the world. To not use the students' ways of learning literacy is to separate students from their cultural values, norms, customs, and beliefs. This is not what literacy should be about in our schools, rather it should be about utilizing our students' cultural values and norms in order to effectively and meaningfully teach literacy. In other words, teaching must be culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992b). If teachers adopt this pedagogy of teaching, literacy learning will be more purposeful and meaningful for our students, especially the ones who do not belong to the dominant culture. Thus, teachers will be able to approach literacy instruction of all children while simultaneously respecting children's cultures and advancing their literacy learning. Having said this, it is appropriate to conclude this literature review with the following from Lisa Delpit (1992):

Teachers must acknowledge and validate students' home language without using it to limit students' potential. Students' home Discourses are vital to their perception of self and sense of community connectedness. One Native-American college student I know says he cannot write in standard English when he writes about his village "because that's about me!" Then he must use his own "village English" or his voice rings hollow even to himself. (p. 301)
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

They told me my parents were wrong, their stories irrelevant. They told me to stop asking questions. They told me to stop putting the accent on my name. They told me to stop doing my math the way my father showed me. They told me I should be more like the other boys and girls. They told me that my parents were wrong. They never stopped to think that maybe they were wrong.

Monica Byrne-jiménez (1992, p. 18)

Language and literacy experiences in the classroom setting may differ dramatically from the shared learning environment of the home. In the school setting the teacher may not understand the child's distinctive ways of knowing or speaking. Further, language learning strategies that once served the child so effectively at home may seem less successful and sometimes even counterproductive in the school context (Neuman & Roskos, 1994). Hence, when students come to school, they are confronted with a secondary discourse community that often differs significantly from the primary discourse that is used in their homes. This difference speaks to the reasons why teachers need to include parents' and students' cultural voices in developing and executing literacy experiences; especially for students who do not belong to the dominant culture or the
school culture. Therefore, to address and understand this issue, the questions for this study therefore are:

1. How are students' and parents' cultural voices manifested in the school's literacy experience as viewed by the teacher and researcher?
2. How is the bridge that allows students' and parents' cultural voices to come into the school's literacy experiences co-constructed?
3. What are parents' and students' perceptions of their cultural voices in classroom literacy practices?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was founded on a theoretical framework that emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of literacy development; hence, a sociocultural perspective of literacy learning. The development of competence in literacy occurs through a form of apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990). This apprenticeship begins early in children's lives as they are exposed to cultural practices that provide opportunities for learning about reading and writing (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

A sociocultural perspective of literacy learning posits that literacy learning is situated within the social and cultural contexts of children. Therefore, an understanding of the social contexts of children is a prerequisite to teaching literacy to children. Social and cultural contexts include factors such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic and sociopolitical status, religion and family educational history. Thus, the sociocultural perspective seeks to understand children through the children's cultural and social contexts.
It is widely recognized that the home environment exerts a powerful influence on early reading (Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Taylor, 1983; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983). In almost all communities there is an expectation that the environments of school and home will be different, especially since our society is constantly becoming more and more multicultural. In some communities, there are distinct differences between learning in the community and learning in the school environment (Martin, 1982). Consequently, there are diverse beliefs and practices that exist as they relate to language and literacy learning for young children. It is because of these various beliefs and practices that discontinuities between home and school might exist. Many ethnographic studies have revealed that there is discontinuity between children's and parents' cultural ways of doing literacy and the school's ways of doing literacy. Heath's (1983) eight year study of two counties in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas explained the uses of language and literacy. The black children in the community called Trackton engaged with print as a group activity for specific real-life purposes, such as reading food labels when shopping, reading fix-it books to repair toys or reading to participate in church. In other words, very seldom did anyone in the community read as a solitary recreational activity. When these children went to school, they faced a different meaning for reading. They were required, to "learn to read," by focusing on the process of reading with little real purposes or connections other than to get through a basal or finish a worksheet. For, there was no inclusion of the students' cultural voices in their literacy learning. Needless to say, these children were unsuccessful
at this type of decontextualized literacy format (Delpit, 1995). These children's language strategies were not supportive of, or consistent with, those needed for success at school learning activities.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which students' and parents' cultural voices were included in classroom literacy practices. Voice may be defined as "manifestations of lived experiences within socially constructed contexts" (Dillard, 1997, p. 91). Further, Dillard states:

Consideration of social context is crucial to understanding the concept of voice, as voice is created and constructed through and out of such contexts. In the sense that individual voices are socially constructed, they are distinct and personal, inseparable from the lived experiences of the individual. To have a voice is to name your world, including what is oppressive, unequal, or unjust. To discover one's voice is necessary to examine one's background and culture and to view one's life in relation to the larger societal context. (p. 91)

However, voice in this study was defined as “the process of expressing oneself in a meaningful way through orienting utterances and actions according to the rules of the social discourse” (O’Connor, 1989, p. 59). It was expected that answers derived from this study would provide insight as to how teachers can include students' and parents' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices. Additionally, it was expected that this study would make visible the benefits that children gain when their voices are included in classroom literacy practices. Only by transferring material from students' “experimental arenas” (cultural backgrounds) to the classroom can the contexts, experiences, and skills students bring to the classroom be brought to bear on the knowledge they receive in
Consequently, studies have indicated that students benefit more from classroom literacy practices when there is a bridge between their cultural ways of doing literacy and the school's way (Au and Jordan, 1987; Taylor, 1983). Yet, other studies have indicated that there is discontinuity between home and school literacy practices (Philips, 1972; Heath, 1983).

**Design of the Study**

This study employed an interpretive framework using qualitative methods as a vehicle to uncover multiple dimensions as they relate to classroom literacy practices. According to Sevigny (1981), "The task of the qualitative methodologist is to capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world. In order to grasp the meaning of a person's behavior, the qualitative researcher seeks to understand social events from the person's point of view—to gain understanding through the participant's perspective" (p. 68). Additionally, Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. They can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Consequently, this study's utilization of qualitative (interpretive) methods, namely, interviews and observations, assisted me in understanding the participants' worlds as they relate to the incorporation of students' and parents' cultural voices in classroom literacy instruction.
This study embraced an interpretivist framework. According to Erickson (1986), interpretive methods can be used effectively in studying school classrooms to the extent that they maintain a focus on the following concerns:

(a) the nature of the classrooms as socially and culturally organized environments for learning:
(b) the nature (and context) of the meaning perspectives of teacher and learner as intrinsic to the educational process.
(c) the nature of teaching as one, but only one, aspect of the reflexive learning environment. (p. 120)

Interpretivist researchers reject the idea of a uniform nature and the belief that phenomena can be manifested in similar ways in different times and places. "The effects on people's actions of their interpretation of their world create the possibility that people may differ in their responses to the same or similar situations" (Gage, 1989, p. 5).

Further, interpretivist theory calls attention to the social nature of interaction and the ever changing role it plays in determining the constructions of reality. All of us, including children, live in a world where meaning is constructed out of events and phenomena of everyday life (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990). In understanding and making sense of this world, interpretivists try to pose questions that seek to both describe and expose meaning.

Through the use of interviews and observations, this interpretive inquiry presented an opportunity to discover how cultural voices of students and parents were included or excluded in classroom literacy practices. It should not be forgotten that
interviews are "particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world" (Kvale, 1996, p. 105). Yet, Fontana and Frey (1994) assert that the unstructured interview "provides a greater breadth than other types" (p. 365). Further, the use of the unstructured interviews was an attempt to understand as many complex behaviors as possible of members of a group without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the inquiry site (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Although this study utilized semistructured interviews, the relationship between these and unstructured interviews is a close one; for, both have phenomenological purposes. The human to human relationship that the semistructured interviews allowed certainly immersed me in the teacher's, parents' and students' stories as I attempted to understand, rather than to explain, their perceptions of how cultural voices were included in or excluded from classroom literacy practices.

Willis (1995) states that "to fail to attend to the plurality and diversity within the United States—and to fail to take seriously the historic past and the social and political contexts that have sustained it—is to dismiss the cultural ways of knowing, language, experiences, and voices of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (p. 39). This study's use of the semistructured interview method in understanding parents' and students' perceptions of classroom literacy practices, has attempted to bring to the forefront the very voices that are sometimes absent in many of our schools today; our parents' and students'.
Classroom observations gave me yet another insight into how this teacher called upon cultural voices to contribute to students' literacy learnings. According to Patton (1990), observations can lead to deeper understandings than interviews alone, because they provide a knowledge of the context in which events occur, and may enable the researcher to see things that participants themselves are not aware of, or that they are unwilling to discuss.

Anthropologists often employ the drama metaphor: the researcher, rather than appearing in the audience watching the drama unfold on stage, is himself on stage, acting a role in the production and interacting with the other actors (Sevigny, 1981). Research that employs this perspective is referred to as participant observation. My role in this research was classified as a "participant observer" (Gold, 1958). By assuming this role, I became an active part in the relevant activities of the group thereby experiencing similar events and experiences. In this way, I was able to acquire some sense of the subjective side of the events which I could less readily infer if I had observed without actively taking part. According to Tierney (1993), research on voice and on the absence of voice or silencing must "maintain traditional social-science standards of accuracy and representation, but it must also break down the shibboleths of disengagement and objectivity. Instead, postmodern research demands that the researcher be involved both with the "research subject" and with changing those conditions that seek to silence and marginalize" (p. 5). Consequently, my taking an active part in the sequence of events in the class culture afforded me personal knowledge of the setting which allowed validity to be tested against the everyday experience of the classroom culture.
Site Selection

Third and fourth grade students and their parents and teacher at a Midwestern urban, public alternative elementary school (Happy Alternative Elementary School) were selected as participants in this study. Additionally, the selection of third and fourth grade children was determined because these age levels are more adept (as compared to first or second graders) in verbally articulating their views and perceptions of classroom and home literacy practices. This selection was an important factor as I engaged these children in semistructured interviews as they told their stories of how they perceived their cultural voices were represented in their classroom literacy practices.

The program at Happy Alternative Elementary School was created in response to parents and community members' requests to create an alternative education program which was based on child development practices, theories and an interdisciplinary curriculum. Other alternative schools exist in the district and the demand for parents to send their children to these schools is high. In order to give all students a fair chance to attend an alternative school, a school lottery is held each year. Thus, students in kindergarten through fifth grades are admitted to Happy Alternative Elementary School through a city-wide lottery.

My investigation revealed that Happy Alternative Elementary School reflected the demographic, social and economic diversity of this Midwestern public district. Table 3.1 shows the ethnic composition of Happy Alternative Elementary School.
Table 3.1. Ethnic Composition for Happy Alternative Elementary School

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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ethnic</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Happy Alternative Elementary School community includes a "principal, fifteen classroom teachers, teachers in the visual arts, music, instrumental music, drama, dance and physical education, a competency based education teacher, library and educational aids, reading recovery teachers, L. D. tutor, and additional educational personnel from the district. Full day Kindergarten and before and after school care are also available" (Happy Alternative Elementary School Newsletter, 1998).

Furthermore, Happy Alternative Elementary School has a reputation of welcoming research studies, especially from its nearby university. This research "friendly" atmosphere was evidenced to me through the many projects that were ongoing from many other nearby universities. Additionally, Happy Alternative Elementary School's mission reflected a concerted effort of providing an environment which "encourages mutual respect and cultural understanding." Happy Alternative Elementary School's philosophy reflected classrooms that were structured to "meet each individual stage of the child's development." Its philosophy states:
The philosophy of the informal classroom is built primarily and fundamentally on a firm knowledge of child development and the best we know about how children learn. The informal classroom is structured to meet each individual child's needs (cognitive, physical, emotional and social) at each successive stage of his or her development. The informal philosophy recognizes the unique growth of each child and provides a personalized as well as individualized experience for that child. At the same time, it recognizes the stages of intellectual growth that all children go through and provides the materials, activities, and experiences needed for children at various levels...

(Happy Alternative Elementary School Handbook, 1998)

Thus, the aforementioned qualities are the reasons that directed my selection of this site.

**My Contextual Role**

A more contextual rationale for my selection of Happy Alternative Elementary School is that my role as a student teacher supervisor afforded me entree at the site. For the past two years and several times weekly, I walked through the halls interacting with the principal and many of the teachers who were there on staff.

In Happy Alternative Elementary School, the second floor lounge was the place where I rekindled relationships with teachers who had served as mentor teachers for student teachers. The first floor was the site where I often conversed with the principal. Usually these conversations centered around the student teachers at the site. However, we did find time to talk about the principal's children and my studies at the university.

Just as I formed relationships with the principal and teachers at Happy Alternative Elementary School, I did the same with students. Oftentimes, I saw students (from classes that had student teachers during the previous quarters) in the hallways, and they smiled, said hello or ran for a hug as one student, Antwan, did regularly.
My interaction with the teacher and class that participated in this study was a more situated one. I had supervised student teachers in this particular class for two years, during which time, the teacher and I built a reciprocal, professional relationship. As a former first and second grade teacher, I discussed “teacher stuff” with the participating teacher. For example, the dilemma of how to get parents more involved in the school was a common concern and conversation in which JB and I often engaged. If visitors were to come into this classroom, they would often find the two of us discussing both the students' and student teacher's classroom interactions.

Students in the class from which I collected my data were not strangers to me; simply because the teacher had the same group of students for two consecutive years. As a university supervisor for student teachers, I became involved in the culture of this class over a year before I began my data collection. Thus, the class culture remained somewhat the same and I was able to become an active participant in a more familiar class culture. Students saw me in the role similar to that of their teacher in many ways. For example, when students needed help, they oftentimes solicited assistance from me. Students also asked me for assistance with decoding information, and they asked me to assist them in locating, for instance, the next step in an assignment. Students could be heard asking “Verdie, what is this word?”; "Verdie, can I read to you?" or "Verdie, how do you spell...?" Students also felt comfortable asking personal questions, for example, "Why did you cut your hair? I like the braids better." or "Are you Pam's teacher?" (Pam was a student teacher during that time). Questions and comments such as these were often shared as I sat with groups of students while they completed assignments on the floor or in
their small chairs. Yes, small chairs that were so familiar; for the comfort of the small chairs often reminded me so much of my classroom back home in South Carolina where I was a teacher of young children for fifteen years before I returned to school as a graduate student.

Oftentimes, I attended most of the classroom functions. Field trips with the students were a treat for me, the students and the parents who traveled along with us. The students were always full of smiles as I boarded the bus with them to go on these field trips. Field trips to, for example, a safe house which escaped slaves used on their travel on the underground railroad were enlightening to me. A trip to a cave was the site where I learned all about stalactites and stalagmites. Additionally, trips to the public library, conservatory and recycling company were all experiences that I valued along with the students. Yet, the trips also provided avenues for me to make contacts with parents and interact with them. Often, when I could not attend a particular trip, upon seeing me on the next occasion, parents could often be heard saying “I missed you Verdie, where were you?”

**Human Subjects/Gaining Access**

A request to do research was made to both the University Human Subjects Review Board and the school district in which Happy Alternative Elementary School resides. Approval was granted. During the duration of the research, I dedicated careful attention to following the guidelines of the University and District. Specifically, much attention was given to anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudo names were used to secure anonymity of
all persons involved in this research. Additionally, collected data was secured in a locked file cabinet during the duration of the research.

Moreover, consent forms (see Appendix A) were given to all students in the class before the research period began. After a week, only eleven forms were returned. During classroom parties and field trips, I often secured signatures from parents who had not returned their forms. After I explained my research to the parents during a class party, one parent stated, “I will be happy to sign the forms. Do you have any with you now?” I was always equipped with at least five sets of consent forms just in case the opportunity arose. Yet, another parent said “I am so busy that I just forgot to send them back.” Another parent stated “I just forgot to send it back, but I can sign one today.” These efforts did not secure all parental signatures. After discussing this dilemma with JB, we decided to send a second set of consent forms to the parents who had not responded to the first set. This process worked; only two parents elected not to participate. During the collecting phase of my research, I carefully edited out audio pieces from the two students whose parents did not give consent. Additionally, I avoided collecting samples of these students’ work and I avoided recording field notes on these students.

**Participants**

The selection of the classroom teacher (JB) who took part in this study was determined based on my prior professional relationship with her. After several weeks of continued classroom observations along with the teacher’s assistance, I selected six students and their parents as my interviewees. My objective, as I selected my
interviewees, was to include as much diversity as possible. Therefore, during this selection process, the teacher and I utilized our prior and present knowledge of the students' and parents' cultural orientation, economic affiliation, race/ethnicity and religion. Of course, I relied solely on the participating teacher to direct me to the students who possessed various economic backgrounds; for example, the participating teacher identified these students by using the paid, reduced or free lunch schedule, as this information was not privileged to me. After much contemplation over our choices, the interviewees were selected and consisted of one Australian student, three white students, and two African American students. However, JB and I realized that our ethnic classification of these students was somewhat "on the surface" assumptions based on our classroom interactions with the students. I knew I would have to rely on parents to give me more accurate ethnic descriptions of their children. In fact, during the interviews, parents revealed more varied religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. After this insightful revelation, the student interviewees consisted of three White students; one German student; and two African American students. Table 3.2 presents demographic information about the children and their families based on parents' descriptions. Note that the contents of the table depicts exclusively the parents' descriptions of their children's religious, ethnic, and economic orientations. Additionally, parents' preference of their children's ethnicity is described in this table. This preference was indeed important because too often a child's ethnicity is classified based on personal and false assumptions. I, as a researcher, wanted to include the parents' own voices as I correctly identified the students' ethnicity.
Religious Background | Ethnic Background | Parents' Preference for Child's Ethnicity | Economic Status
---|---|---|---
Catholic and Jewish | Irish and European American | European American | Upper middle class
Lutheran and Methodist, but we do not go to church | German, Scottish and Welsh | White American | Middle class
None | Caucasian | Caucasian | Two professional working parents
United Methodist | German and Irish | German | One working parent—low middle income
Apostolic | African American | African American | Two working parents
Baptist, but I do not instill any one faith | White and African American | African American | One working parent

Table 3.2. Parents' Descriptions of Their Children

Of course, the parents' and students' willingness to participate in the study was definitely a contributing factor in the selection of the interviewees. Therefore, the use of signed parental consent forms was also a criterion used in the selection of students.

Most of the six students were interviewed in the familiarity of their school library. The students and I comfortably sat on the carpet as we talked about literacy learning at home and at school. Some of the interviews were completed in unused classrooms, as the library was not always available during some of the scheduled interview times. The students eagerly came to the interview sessions and excitedly wrote, what they called “their fake” names. Weeks before the interview, students could be heard in their classroom discussing what they wanted their pseudo names to be (they called them “fake names”). It is not clear where the students picked up the term “fake name.” I asked the
participating teacher if she had mentioned this term in her discussion of my research, and she stated that she had not; however, she did point out the student whom she felt began using this term. Wherever the origination of the term, the students certainly knew that I would not be using their “real” names during the interview. Thus, students writing their pseudo names began each session and immediately following this, I explained the reason for their pseudo names, and the interview began with the students consenting to a taped interview.

Four parents (all mothers) were separately interviewed at the school site. I envisioned that this would be the most convenient option for the parents. As I interacted with the parents, I realized that this indeed was the most convenient option for them. When asked if the school site was convenient, the parents overwhelmingly said yes. One parent added, “I drop off Joe at 8:45, so 9:00 will be a good time.” Still another parent indicated that, “I have flex morning hours at work so I can meet you right after I take Will to class so I will meet you in the classroom.” Yet, another parent said, “I don’t go to work on Mondays and Wednesdays, so I can meet you in the classroom on these days.” Two parents stated, “I can meet you where it is convenient for you, Verdie.” One parent was scheduled for a school interview; however, she experienced car problems on the day of the interview. I did not want to miss the opportunity to interview this parent because her schedule was not flexible and the chances of having another opportunity to talk to her were few. Therefore, we conducted the interview over the telephone on the same day of her missed appointment. Only one parent did not meet at the school site because we felt it was more convenient for both of us to conduct the interview in her university office.
Methods of Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted over a period of approximately four months from mid September to December. During this time, I spent approximately three and one half days each week collecting data for three and one half hours on each day (approximately ten hours per week) at Happy Alternative Elementary School. Classroom observations focused on what the teacher said and did in order to bring about her students' cultural voices in her literacy practices. My taking detailed field notes from these observations attempted to capture the essence of the ways in which the teacher implicitly and explicitly acknowledged her students' cultural voices as assets to their literacy learning. Additionally, I audio taped the teacher's literacy lessons to gain more insight into what she said to bring about cultural voices in her literacy practices. My use of a laptop facilitated my taking accurate field notes during the collection period. Initially, I was concerned about my laptop being too obtrusive. Students did make comments about the laptop and they would often ask questions about it. Their common inquiries were centered around my green mouse that appeared to be an eraser. Upon my demonstrating to the students how this mouse worked, they were amazed, but moved on to their task at hand. On the other hand, my microphone proved to be more obtrusive. Students often handled it, or asked often, "Verdie, is it on now?" Sometimes the students were in competition to sit near it. Realizing these constraints, I often attempted to move the microphone to different locations. There were occasions when JB momentarily stopped her lesson to ask students to move away from the microphone. The ideal place for the
microphone would have been some place on the wall; however, the layout (for electrical outlets) of the classroom did not allow for this adjustment.

The semistructured interview method gave more insight into the teacher's perception of how she included students' and parents' cultural and community voices in her literacy instruction. Here, the teacher's voice is important too because so often, teachers truly believe that they are indeed allowing students' and parents' cultural voices to be heard in their literacy practices. However, upon closer examination of their literacy teaching practices, teachers might learn that the literacy practices they employ might not embrace students' and parents' voices. It was expected that the interview method used in this research would indeed shed light on this. Further, it was expected that the interview method used in this study would hopefully bring to the forefront all voices; those of our parents and students.

In order to provide a wide range of data, the participating teacher was interviewed twice—once near the beginning and once near the end of the study. Contrastingly, parents and students were interviewed once near the conclusion of the data collection period. Table 3.3 lists some of the questions that were asked during the interviews. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and checked for accuracy. Accuracy was tested by conducting member checks, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The transcribed tapes were analyzed to reveal key linkages in order that realities of the parents and students could be made visible as they relate to their perceptions of how their cultural voices are included or excluded in classroom literacy practices.
Moreover, Table 3.4, details other sources of data collection used in this research. Additionally, Table 3.5 lists the timeline and data gathering methods that I used to collect data for this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions that students were asked during their interviews are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me what kinds of things you are learning at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me what kinds of things you are learning in your community or neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Have you learned anything lately from mom, dad, sister or brother?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What kinds of writing do you do at home? Who writes with you at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What kinds of writing do you do at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is writing at home different from writing at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is writing at home similar to writing at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What kinds of reading do you do at home? Who reads with you at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What kinds of reading do you do at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is reading at home different from reading at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is reading at home similar to reading at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Does anyone tell stories to you at home? Who? School?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What do you like about learning at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What do you not like about learning at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What do you like about learning at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What do you not like about learning at home?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions the parents were asked during their interviews are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* What kinds of reading do you do with your child at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me about reading in your home (describe it).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is reading at home different from reading at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is reading at home similar to reading at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me about writing in your home (describe it).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is writing at home different from writing at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is writing at home similar to writing at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me about storytelling in your home (describe it).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is storytelling at home different from storytelling at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How is storytelling at home similar to storytelling at school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions the teacher was asked to answer are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* How do you plan to teach literacy (reading, writing, language) this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What is going to determine how you teach literacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tell me how you allow your students to use their cultural knowledge in reading, writing and language experiences. Why do you do this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What is your philosophy for teaching children literacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What is the role of parents' voices/culture in the teaching of literacy in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What is the role of the students' community voices in the teaching of literacy in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3. Students, Parents and Teacher Sample Interview Questions
Classroom Observations
Observations consisted of what the teacher said and did to include her students’ cultural voices in her literacy practices

Field Notes
Notes were written to indicate what the teacher did to include her students’ cultural voices in her literacy practices

Audio Recordings
Recordings were made in order to reflect what the teacher said to include her students’ cultural voices in her literacy practices

Teacher Interviews
Two interviews were given to gain more insight of the teacher’s methods of teaching literacy

Parent Interviews
Six parent interviews were given to allow parents to give their perceptions of the inclusion or exclusion of their cultural backgrounds in classroom literacy practices

Student Interviews
Six student interviews were given to allow students to give their perceptions of the inclusion or exclusion of their cultural backgrounds in classroom literacy practices

Student Class Work
Student class work was reviewed to reveal the inclusion or exclusion of their cultural backgrounds

Teacher Home Documents
Documents sent home (that were generated by the teacher) were reviewed to reveal the inclusion or exclusion of students’ cultural backgrounds

Table 3.4. Sources of data Collection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Time Span</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obtained Entry</td>
<td>Human Subjects Review</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University Public School System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Became an active member of the classroom</td>
<td>Observations and audio literacy lessons</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examined my role as a researcher</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developed procedure for recording field notes</td>
<td>Type transcriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance</td>
<td>Ongoing member checks with teacher</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted informal teacher interview</td>
<td>Observations and audio literacy lessons</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing data analysis</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance</td>
<td>Ongoing member checks with teacher</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began to locate six parents and students for interviews</td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance</td>
<td>Observations and audio literacy lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense</td>
<td></td>
<td>Located six parents and students for interviews</td>
<td>Ongoing member checks with teacher</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January-A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Located six parents and students for interviews</td>
<td>Ongoing member checks with teacher</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance, parents'</td>
<td>Ongoing member checks with teacher</td>
<td>3 days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and students' perceptions</td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>for 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted parents and students interviews</td>
<td>Parents and students interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents and students member checks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formulated emerging hypotheses concerning teacher's stance</td>
<td>Triangulation of methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continual data analysis and writing</td>
<td>Type transcriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Revisited site as needed</td>
<td>Peer debriefing, member checks</td>
<td>5 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted formal teacher interview</td>
<td></td>
<td>for 8 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5. Timeline for Data Collection
Methods of Data Analysis

In order to immerse myself in the process of "analytic induction" (Erickson, 1986), I developed a methodological procedure for recording field notes, coding and categorizing ways in which the classroom teacher included students' and parents' voices in classroom literacy practices. As I reviewed my field notes and transcriptions, I focused on key linkages for the major assertions I made. In searching for key linkages, according to Erickson (1986), "the researcher is looking for patterns of generalization within the case at hand, rather than for generalizations from one case or setting to another" (p. 148). Accordingly, "the task of pattern analysis is to discover and test those linkages that make the largest possible number of connections to items of data in the corpus. When one pulls on the top string, one wants as many subsidiary strings as possible to be attached to data. The strongest assertions are those that have the most strings attached to them, across the widest possible range of sources and kinds of data" (p. 148).

This study's ongoing data analysis was valuable as it informed future data collection. Further, through detailed ongoing review of field notes and transcriptions and through triangulation of data methods, themes and patterns represented as either indigenous concepts or sensitizing concepts (Patton, 1990), were produced; thereby supplying "evidentiary warrant" (Erickson, 1986) for the assertions I made from the data.
Data Analysis Procedures

Before continuing with this chapter, it is important that I make several comments concerning analysis strategies for my data. A central concern for rigor in qualitative research is evidentiary adequacy, that is sufficient time in the field and extensiveness of the body of evidence used as data (Erickson, 1986). My data corpus consisted of over 100 hours of audiotapes, which documented more than 12 hours of interviews, 5 hours of follow up interviews and over 90 hours of classroom observations. In order to remain connected to my data, I opted to personally transcribe my tapes immediately after each class observation or interview; this process yielded over 100 single-typed pages of transcriptions. Additionally, over 50 pages of classroom documents were gathered as part of my data corpus.

I was reminded that the corpus of materials collected in the field are not data themselves, but resources for data (Erickson, 1986). These materials are thus, documentary resources from which data must be constructed via my analysis.

Patton (1980) states:

The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volumes of information with which they will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. (p. 297)

Further, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) note that “working with the data, you create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you
have collected" (p. 127). Therefore, the process of converting my document resources into data began with my multiple readings of the entire data corpus. This process involved my using different colored pens to mark analytic codes as I read and reread my transcriptions. Through extensive rereading, emerging patterns pertaining to students’ cultural voices surfaced.

During the multiple readings, the computer became useful as I reduced my data by pulling out the various emerging patterns by cutting and pasting them into different computer files. For example, one file that possessed emerging themes that centered around the inclusion of students’ cultural voices was entitled “student voices.” As the analysis of the interviews continued, two more categories emerged: discontinuities and continuities. Therefore, the computer file was expanded to accommodate the data for these additional categories which stretched across reading, writing and storytelling. Another file that possessed emerging themes about the ways in which JB included her students’ cultural background was entitled “teacher activities.” As I engaged myself in the analysis of the data, it was evident that these teacher activities were more than the typical classroom activities. Therefore, this theme was reduced to “strategies for including students’ voices” because JB purposefully and strategically planned for the inclusion of her students’ voices. Additional patterns that emerged were parents’ voices and community voices. These files were cut and pasted into smaller files as I reread my data; thereby reducing the data into smaller themes and categories. For example, the patterns concerning the community’s, parents’ and students’ voices were each reduced to “passive and/or active voices.” Later, these files were printed and placed in colored folders.
according to the theme. Both the computer files and the colored folders assisted me much
as I analyzed my data and engaged in selective coding. I was reminded that selective
coding is the process of “selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other
categories, validating those relationships [by searching for confirming and disconfirming
examples], and filling in categories that need[ed] further refinement and development”
(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). As I immersed myself in this process, I was constantly
aware that my deliberate search for disconfirming evidence was essential to the process of
inquiry. In one case, for example, JB’s students were usually allowed to personally define
their working space in the classroom. However, on one particular day, I witnessed the
democratic process taking place during one of the many rugtimes held in JB’s classroom.
JB noticed that the students were becoming restless on the rug; therefore, she stated:

I am going to give you a vote and here are your choices; we can go ahead
and move on and do our first consumer test which means we need to stay
on the rug for about 15 to 20 more minutes. The first consumer test has to
do with two different kinds of candy bars. The other choice is that we get
up and have a work time and come back to the rug to do this in a few
minutes so that people are not... Raise your hands if you choose, if you
think that we can stay on the rug to get this done.

Since more students voted to stay on the rug, the lesson continued. Additionally, I was
aware that an active search for disconfirming evidence was necessary to achieve rigor
(Erickson, 1986); as disconfirming examples might disprove some initial hypothetical
constructs that I brought into the study. Codes and categories were sorted and compared
until analysis produced no new codes or categories. Final categories for the teacher
strategies included: choices; voice bidding; constructivist teaching and learning; critical
thinking methods; multicultural literature; classroom activities and written communications.

I wrote the data in narrative form supported by evidence from my data corpus. During the entire process of rereading and writing, various assertions concerning students’ voices were generated. I often reviewed and searched my field notes, classroom and interview transcriptions, reflexive notations and collected classroom documents during the writing process. Thus, assertions were repeatedly tested to warrant validation (Erickson, 1986). This process proved to be valuable as I refined assertions and continued to test them against my resources; thereby making visible JB’s six teacher strategies.

Validity/Trustworthiness

In order that I continue to critique how I make judgements, I must direct attention to validity issues. I am reminded that this critique must always include both the researcher and the participants. Reason and Rowan (1981) emphasized this collaborative effort when they pointed out "any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known; valid knowledge is a matter of relationship" (p. 241). With this in mind, I turn to issues of validity that I addressed in this study; that is, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), for each quantitative methodological procedure, qualitative inquiries have aligning and parallel procedures thereby establishing trustworthiness. These procedures involve examining the credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the data. Before I proceed, I should state that I
closely monitored my own personal subjectivities which overshadowed and placed undue limitations upon the study. I realized that my preconceived notions surrounding the inclusion of cultural voices in this classroom were an integral part of the study and I did acknowledge them as an influential component. Additionally, the critical reflexivity that I brought to this study allowed me to enter an altered state of consciousness (Heron, 1981; Rowan, 1981) and high quality awareness (Reason & Rowan, 1981) for the sole purpose of understanding others.

**Credibility**

A common concern of this study was centered around trustworthiness issues. What exactly establishes credibility of a qualitative study? Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that "...instead of focusing on a presumed "real" reality out there, the focus has moved to establishing the match between the constructed realities of respondents (or stakeholders) and those realities as represented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders" (p. 237). Consequently, the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytical process (Patton, 1990). As the instrument of data collection, I utilized persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checking in order to assist in producing credible findings.

**Persistent Observation.**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), persistent observation is necessary to add depth to the scope which prolonged engagement affords. Additionally, they state that
persistent observation entails, "Sufficient observation to enable the evaluator to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and [to focus] on them in detail" (p. 304). In order that I might build trust and rapport, become immersed in the culture of the classroom and locate the characteristics in the classroom setting that were most relevant to how students' voices are included in classroom literacy practices, I dedicated approximately ten hours weekly to classroom observations during the four month data collection period.

**Triangulation.**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) criticized triangulation as a credibility check. The reasons for their criticism are "triangulation itself carries too positivist an implication, to wit, that there exist unchanging phenomena so that triangulation can logically be a check" (p. 240). Patton (1990), on the other hand, states that triangulation is a means of substantiating the credibility and enhancing the quality of a study. In order that I might see a credible portrait view of how students' and parents' cultural voices were included in classroom literacy practices, and so that multiple layers of the data field were revealed, this study employed a variety of methods in the data collection phase via triangulation. Patton (1980) reminded me that "triangulation is a process by which the evaluator can guard against the accusation that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single data source, or a single investigator’s bias" (p. 332). Therefore, triangulating my field notes, persistent observations within the classroom setting and semistructured interviews with the teacher, parents, and students suggested that interpretations of the
findings were credible and the picture projected from these methods represented a more holistic one. For example, my juxtaposing what the teacher said in her interviews about the inclusion of her students' cultural voices in her literacy practices with my observation field notes revealed more layered data. Additionally, another layer of triangulation was yielded from parents' and students' interviews; specifically, about how they perceived their voices to be included or excluded in classroom literacy practices. Finally, my reflexive journal added yet another layer of triangulation.

Peer Debriefing.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) assert that peer debriefing is the "process of engaging, with a disinterested peer, in extended and extensive discussions of one's findings, conclusions, tentative analyses, and occasionally, field stresses, the purposes of which both "testing out" the findings with someone who has no contractual interest in the situation and also helping to make propositional that tacit and implicit information that the evaluator might possess" (p. 237). In order that my biases be probed, this study relied on two peer debriefers (who are colleagues in my graduate program) who worked with me and supported me on a continuous basis. On a weekly basis, one of these persons helped me understand my own values and their role in the inquiry. Further, my peer debriefers helped me to facilitate the testing of working hypotheses outside the context. Additionally, these persons offered probing questions and different insights into possible areas of future exploration. Through this process, I was challenged in examining the multiple possibilities of interpretation that influenced the way I constructed meaning from
the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) as it relates to the inclusions and exclusions of parents' and students' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices.

**Member Checking.**

I concur with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) definition of member checking as being the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility because it allows the researcher to test data, analytical categories, interpretations and conclusions with the stakeholders from whom the data were originally collected" (p. 314). Further, they state that the most certain test is verifying the constructions with those who provided them. Lather (1986) asserts that extensive use of member checks can heighten face validity. I employed both formal and informal member checks in order to clarify, confirm and disconfirm meanings from my data. To facilitate this process, parents were given a transcribed copy of their interviews, and asked to read over (in the comfort of their homes) the transcribed copy, and add or delete revisions as needed. Only one parent returned revisions to me, and these revisions were added to my final transcribed copy. Concerning their transcribed copy, some parents made verbal comments such as, "I don’t have anything to add or delete," and "I think I rambled a lot during the interview." Such comments occurred during my frequent interactions with parents during early morning classroom interactions, classroom parties, conferences and field trip excursions. During an early morning classroom visit, the following ensued between a parent and me:

**Parent**

Hi Verdie.

**Verdie**

Hello there. How are you?
Informal member checks with the participating teacher were done immediately after each classroom observation. So that I did not interfere with classroom instruction, I waited until lunch time and informally met with the classroom teacher to allow her to examine and critique sections of my written field notes. Additionally, following each teacher interview, the teacher was given a transcribed copy of her interview. Here again, I asked the teacher to critique the transcribed copies and make revisions as needed. The revisions were made as recommended by the teacher.

Thus, it was hoped through the above member checking process that the teacher and parents would confirm my notes or disconfirm them if discrepancies in fact or interpretations existed. Where discrepancies did occur, I made the necessary revisions as they relate to fact and/or interpretation. No formal member checks were done with students; however, during the interview sessions with the students, I stopped often to ask students to clarify their responses to the questions. This informal process is illustrated below during my conversation with Justin who is telling about writing at home.
Verdie What are some things that are different about how you write at home when you compare writing to school? In other words, what are the differences between writing at home and writing at school?

Justin Well, if I don’t really do something neat, sometimes I have to do it over or if it is too long, my step dad or mom will tell me to do spelling...

Verdie Stop for a second, when it is not neat you have to do it over. Is this at home or at school?

Justin At school, I mean at home.

Verdie At home if it is not neat you have to do it over, at school if it is not neat, what happens?

Justin Well, sometimes I just say that it is not neat...

**Transferability**

Applicability, which in the positivist tradition would constitute generalizability but in qualitative research is referred to as transferability, is another concern as it relates to trustworthiness. It is important here to note that generalizability to large populations is not the goal of this research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), "The object of the game in making transferability judgements is to set out all the working hypotheses for this study, and to provide an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context, the culture in which those hypotheses were found to be salient" (p. 242). Additionally, transferability is "always relative and depends entirely on the degree to which salient conditions overlap and match" (p.241). Lincoln and Guba (1985) remind us that the "burdens of proof of claimed transferability is on the receiver." Therefore, it was my goal to describe the "salient features of the context" (p. 125) of this study in such a
way that allowed implications to be drawn from the findings and perhaps point to suggestions for further inquiry. There are two mechanisms for facilitating the transferability of research findings to other settings: purposeful or theoretical sampling (Patton, 1990) and "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the study site; I employed the latter.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "thick description" is an important methodology for resituating findings. Thick description is wide and varied—is everything the reader may need to know in order to understand the findings (p. 152). Since thick description is a major technique for establishing transferability, an extensive and detailed description of the findings of this study was provided. The narrative that was produced from the findings of this study depicted the many ways in which the teacher connected her students' and parents' cultural voices to classroom literacy practices. Additionally, this narrative provided parents' and students' perceptions of how their voices were included and excluded in classroom literacy practices. Utilizing thick description in this way provided "as complete a data base as humanly possible in order to facilitate transferability judgements on the part of others who may wish to apply the study to their own situations (or situations in which they have an interest)" (Guba and Lincoln 1989, p. 242).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is concerned with "assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply
figments of the evaluator's imagination" (Guba and Lincoln 1989, p. 243). So that my data assertions and facts were tracked back to their sources, this study utilized triangulation of data methods (observations, parents', students' and the teacher's interviews and field notes).

Additionally, a reflexive journal was kept so that I maintained a check of my beliefs, values, biases and attitudes and balanced them with the data collected in this study. This “checking,” I knew would only take place through a continuous reflexive process. It was only through this rigorous, self critiquing process that I, as a graduate student, was able to effectively reflect on my position as a researcher. In confirming this notion about reflexivity and graduate students, Roberts and McGinty (1995) echo that “if graduate students do not have the opportunity to critically watch themselves and to openly receive feedback about research judgements and actions, they cannot become aware of the range of issues raised by their researcher presence in the lives of others” (p. 121). I was reminded that such reflexivity via my research reflexive journal enabled me to begin to uncover dialectic relationships, array and discuss contradictions within the stories that I recorded (Lincoln, 1995). This suggested that the findings of this study were rooted in the data themselves and not in my personal motives.

**Ethics and Politics**

Noffke (1990), states that "[m]ethodology, epistemology, and ethics are couched...not in terms of the establishment of the rules for proceeding, but in the
exploration of research relations and relationships" (p.5). She writes that for research to be "ethically defensible," not only anonymity and confidentiality are important but also responsibility for how the research affects "potentials for manipulation and misuse" (p.16) of the openings into the lives of the participants. I was aware that in order to offset this, I had to bring my biases and values to the "table" on a continual, reflexive basis. Additionally, I had to bring these biases to the forefront in my writing. By placing my values and biases out on the "table to be critiqued, I hoped to come clean about my "muddy boots" (Fielding, 1982, p.96) and "grubby hands" (Marx, 1980, p. 27).

My goal was to do research with the participants of this study rather than do research on the participants. Therefore, to inform them, participants were made knowledgeable of the purposes and methods that shaped this study as was demonstrated in the research consent forms. (see Appendix A) This was necessary simply because "[t]he researcher needs to share with...her subjects the discourses at work that are shaping the field site analysis and how the researcher's own personal and intellectual biography is contributing to the process of analysis" (McLaren, 1992, p. 84). Hopefully, by raising my conscious level of ethical and political dilemmas I avoided what Van Maanen (1988) labels "vanity ethnography."

Additionally, at the conclusion of this study, the principal of Happy Alternative Elementary School was provided the results of this study.
CHAPTER 4
VOICES OF THE STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHER

INTRODUCTION

My careful analysis of my data corpus has revealed many themes. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the teacher and will discuss emerging themes from my classroom observations and teacher interviews. Chapter Four will continue with relevant themes from the students' interviews, and it will end with themes that emerged from the parents' interviews.

Chapter Layout

In this chapter, I will first discuss six strategies that the participating teacher (JB) used in order to allow her students' cultural voices to come into classroom literacy learning: providing choices in terms of participation structures, learning space, and materials; bidding for student voices; embracing constructivist literacy teaching and learning; promoting critical thinking during literacy discussions; providing authentic, multicultural literature; and bridging home and school via classroom activities and written communications. These six strategies are therefore strategies toward a culturally responsive approach (Neuman and Roskos, 1994). Data from JB's interviews, classroom observations and classroom field notes will all shape the discussion of JB and the six
strategies that she used to include her students’ cultural voices/backgrounds in her literacy teaching. The nature of the six strategies was so compelling that I felt a need to embed my theoretical interpretations in this chapter rather than delaying them until Chapter Five. Therefore, the format for presenting the teacher’s data will differ from the presentation of the students’ and parents’ data displays.

Next, the students’ voices section will focus on my interviews with the students. The interviews were designed to understand the students’ voices as they relate to the inclusion or exclusion of their cultural backgrounds in classroom literacy practices. I will first introduce the students based on my observation of them in the classroom setting and my interview notes. Secondly, I will present excerpts from the students’ interviews and discuss relevant interpretations of the interview in a separate discussion section. Rather than delaying the discussion of relevant interpretations in Chapter Five, I felt that these discussions in Chapter Four will contextualize the students’ perceptions and will therefore assist the reader in understanding the continuities and discontinuities between home and school literacy learning as made visible through the students’ voices.

Lastly, the parents’ voices section in this chapter will be presented in an overall discussion format that is supported by interview notes. Unlike the students’ display of data, the parents’ display will be presented in an overall discussion format. Thus, the presentation of the data, along with my discussion, will assist with contextualizing the parents’ perceptions of their voice in classroom literacy practices.

It is important to note that JB allows her students to call her by her first name, JB. This practice is quite contrary to my own school experience, as this practice was not
acceptable. Additionally, my home teachings demanded that I prefaced any older person’s name (teachers included) with a Miss or Mr. This seemed to be the same home practice for some of the students in JB’s classroom, especially the African American students. These students resisted calling JB by her first name: instead, they called her “Miss JB.” Just as JB allowed her students to call her “JB”, she, too allowed those students whose cultural backgrounds demanded it, to call her “Miss JB.” Throughout most of the students’ and parents’ interviews, JB will be referenced as “JB.”

The Teacher’s Story

Through the use of classroom observation notes, teacher interviews and my coding process, I was able to arrive at an inductive model of six major culturally responsive teaching strategies used by JB: providing choices in terms of participation structures, learning space, and materials; bidding for student voices; embracing constructivist literacy teaching and learning; promoting critical thinking during literacy discussions; providing authentic, multicultural literature; and bridging home and school via classroom activities and written communications. The forthcoming sections give a detailed picture of how these six strategies impacted the inclusion of the students’ cultural voices in literacy learning.

It is 8:15 AM and it is a quiet morning in JB’s classroom. As I sat waiting for JB to do one more prepping task before her students arrived, I was captured by the many books displayed in the classroom. There are all types of books-informational books, cultural books, folktales, picture books, chapter books, fiction books, curriculum related
books, poetry, biographies, fairy tales, holidays and many more are all represented in JB’s classroom. Moreover, authors from various ethnic backgrounds are represented. There are Latino/a, African American, Native American, European American authors and other authors from different cultural backgrounds are all on the shelves waiting to tell their stories; just waiting for someone to relieve them from their positions and open them.

After the effect of all the books capturing my eye had worn off, I was once again captured by the many projects throughout the classroom. Many stages of writing are evident and displayed along side the projects. Some students have written lengthy pieces, others have written smaller passages. Various artistic mediums are also present. Some students chose to represent their work through paint, colored pencils, dioramas, paper sharings, poster board displays, markers or crayons while some chose other mediums.

**JB’s Philosophy On Literacy Learning and Teaching**

JB, a small frame, blond young lady who wears an inviting smile has been a teacher for six years. As she completed her last morning task, JB eagerly came to the table and sat in front of me. We chatted about the pleasures of a quiet classroom for a while and then I began my interview with a short introduction. I wanted to learn more about JB’s teaching philosophy; therefore the following conversation ensued:

Verdie: Tell me more about your philosophy of teaching literacy.

JB: I guess you can say that I am very supportive of emergent literacy theory. I believe that children...the beginnings of literacy begin at home at a very young age, long before the children ever enter school. So with that...because I am expecting them to come in at different places and I have a variety of books that are not only at different
developmental levels but will show different cultures, show different even communities in the literature so that all the children have something that they can relate to.

JB is cognizant that her students need literature geared toward their developmental levels. Yet, JB is able to provide books that meet both her students’ developmental levels and her desire to expose literature to students that depicts different cultural backgrounds.

JB continued:

I guess my overall belief is that children learn through interacting, experience, talking with others. That is why at silent reading we have the first fifteen minutes that’s supposed to be a self spot...

JB’s students are expected to make sense of literature in their own cultural way during the time that JB calls “self spot.” During this “self spot” time, students can be seen scattered throughout the classroom individually constructing meaning of the piece of literature at hand in their very own personal way. Yet, JB also realizes that some students might desire another classmate or other classmates to construct meaning from the literature. Therefore, to facilitate these students’ needs, JB also allows time for her students to read and “work with other people” because she knows “they will be talking about books and reading to each other through interaction.”

Concerning the relationship between home and school literacy learning, JB commented:

That’s where they are building. I do think the parents and community play an important role in literacy development. That’s where it all begins at home
when children are scribbling, reading signs or reading bus stop signs or looking at TV guides and seeing their parents reading or writing for real reasons is where it all starts.

JB recognizes the contributions that parents make toward their children’s literacy learning long before the children come to school. Because of this understanding, JB’s philosophy on literacy learning is rooted in students connecting their home and community ways of literacy learning to that of the school.

I then asked JB to "Tell me how you organize your literacy component of the curriculum including reading and writing." Specifically concerning writing, JB responded:

There is a regular writing time where they are writing in, we call them story writing logs, where they can write their journal entries and stories. Usually once a month we pick something to revise and edit. That is really writing of their choosing, it is self chosen writing.

JB further noted:

Another part of the writing component is there are some things that become you know a unit related work job that everyone needs to write and that- like when we did the tall tale health unit, we did the story map and also that was a writing process with the unit. So there is writing of their choosing to do and writing that I am asking them to do. But they still have the choice within that like I didn't tell them how to write their tall tale, just that your tall tale had to have a beginning, a tall tale had to have some exaggeration.

Even though JB realized that the curriculum needs must be met during the writing process, she nevertheless allows her students to have choices as they construct their writing pieces. I was curious as to whether there is a writing process or are there writing steps that JB uses in her classroom? This question elicited the following response from JB:
Well we start with brainstorming and a lot of times the brainstorming is as a whole group first and I will write things down for them and then sometimes we go through brainstorming in small groups orally. After that, we do some kind of story map or some kind of plan. That plan can even be oral or they use pictures...After that they do the first draft writing. But sometimes their first draft can be their final draft where we can go back and make changes. The first draft is sometimes the final draft but never without some type revisions and additions.

This collaborative process seemed to work for JB and her students. The students engaged themselves in the first draft; however, the requirement to complete the final draft presented some conflicts for the students. JB continued:

Because I found that when I was pushing them to do final drafts, they were hating to write or they didn’t want to make their writing long because they didn’t want to rewrite them or they didn’t want to type them.

Even though JB wanted her students to “know that revising and editing is not just fixing punctuation which is what they all seem to think; but adding words and adding parts,” she recognized that her classroom literacy practice of requiring her students to complete several drafts along with the final draft conflicted with her students’ ways of doing writing. Therefore, an adjustment was made; as JB reminded me that “they are not doing as many second drafts as they were at the beginning of the year because through talking to them, I found that they really resisted, they didn’t like that (rewriting) at all…”

One can not help but wonder what does assessing the students’ reading and writing look like in JB’s classroom. Therefore, the question, “How do you measure your students’ progress?” was posed to JB. She responded:
Well, I look at where the child started, based on that I try not to compare any two kids. It is not that I have the same goals for all the kids, I don’t know if that is confusing like you don’t expect everyone to do the same thing... I have different, it is not that I have different expectations but I have different goals. Does that make sense? Because I don’t want it to sound like one child is not going to be as successful as another.

JB seemed to recognize that students bring different needs to school. Therefore, all of her students were not expected to have the same goals even though her expectation for all students to learn is the same for all. JB continued to discuss her assessment strategies for literacy:

We use the portfolios a lot to look at their progress, I talk to the students a lot. A lot of the assessment, if you want to be specific about, reading, I watch what they are doing during silent reading, are they choosing books that are in their learning zones. I did a developmental reading assessment with them to assess their strategies and comprehension to see where they have grown and then I use that to decide what kinds of things I need to do with them on an individual or group basis.

Upon examining the above excerpt, it is evident that many types of assessment strategies are teacher directed. However, the following illustrates a collaborative effort as both JB and her students involve themselves in the assessment process. JB continued:

In writing, we use rubrics (some are kid created) and we use the grade card to kind of give us the categories, the grade card says outstanding—and so we (the students and JB) say what will be seen as outstanding writing and they list it and what will be seen as good writing. We (as a class) will have a score and I will have a score and I will tell them that this is what you will have to do to make this outstanding...
What does a successful student look like in JB’s class? To shed light on this, JB discussed two of her students as she elaborated on what constitutes a successful student:

Well, I see successful (student) on a very individual basis and for some, I try to celebrate each step toward the final goal... Antoinette (excels in reading) for example, we don’t need to celebrate every little thing that she does... Charles (who has difficulty with reading) on the other hand, when I was trying to do his developmental assessment to measure his specific reading level, I had to...

JB’s experience with Charles has informed her that unlike Antoinette, he requires much prompting as he completes his work. Therefore, during the assessment briefly mentioned above, JB had to continuously make remarks that Charles responded to in order that he finish the task at hand. Remarks such as “good for you, Charles,” “let me write a note for your mom,” “let’s finish this, Charles” were prompts that Charles recognized as relevant to him. With these prompts came positive responses from Charles: responses that motivated Charles to complete the assessment procedure.

JB’s philosophy is one that is student-centered and parent-centered. JB therefore seemed to understand that in order for classroom literacy experiences to be successful, parents and students must be connected to these experiences. So that this connection is maintained, JB employed the forthcoming teaching strategies: providing choices in terms of participation structures, learning space, and materials; bidding for student voices; embracing constructivist literacy teaching and learning; promoting critical thinking during literacy discussions; providing authentic, multicultural literature; and bridging home and school via classroom activities and written communications.
Providing Choices for Students

By allowing students to choose, they are empowered to use any avenue necessary to complete a task. JB seems to understand the strength in students being able to make choices in their literacy learnings lies in their ability to express themselves in their own personal, cultural ways. Therefore, by allowing her students to become engaged in choice making during writing experiences, JB has allowed her students to be able to call upon their cultural voice in order to organize and construct their pieces of writing. Students making their own choices is important to the writing process because choices allow students the avenue to reveal their cultural voices through writing. Additionally, choices aid students in expressing themselves. JB understands that when students are given choices to express themselves, they are able to show what they know from their own perspectives or world views. In other words, this process allows students to tell their own stories the way that their cultural way of knowing directs them. This usage of cultural voice by JB’s students was displayed as the students developed a story centered around their pets. One student, Will, wrote (as written):

“My cat is Goto and she’s the best cause she always lays on the chest. She’s the best cause she is clean and all cats are. But she is keen and not all cats are keen. And to me she is my queen. A very clean and keen Queen.”

Yes, Will enjoyed writing about his pet cat, Goto. However, when closely examined, it is evident that Will is experimenting with words and the usage of rhyming words. Notice how Will carefully described his cat as a keen, clean, Queen. Such a description was facilitated by Will’s personal and cultural affiliation with his pet cat. This
example clearly demonstrates that the merging of students' cultural voices or backgrounds and classroom academic skills can both be expressed in a meaningful way during literacy learning.

Another writing activity that illustrates how academics and students' cultural voices can work side by side during the teaching of literacy is demonstrated through JB's government unit. JB taught her students how the branches of government work and how bills become law. Further, she taught her students that as a citizen, the "people have a voice." Therefore, JB showed her students the political avenues to get their voices heard. One such way to voice their opinions was through letter writing. JB connected this unit with her persuasive letter writing lessons. Thus, JB directed her students to write persuasive letters to the government expressing something that "they wanted to change or make better." The students were empowered to choose a topic about which to write. The following is one such letter written by Rose:

Dear Mayor Lash,

My name is Rose Mea. I am a fourth grade student at Happy Alternative Elementary School. I live on Olene Blvd. in Beechwold. I am concerned that our neighborhood has no sidewalks. There are many people who use the streets in our neighborhood to walk their dogs, jog, roller blade and ride bikes. Also, many children have to use these streets to walk to school or their bus stops. I think parents and children would feel much safer if we had sidewalks in our neighborhood. It would also be better for everyone else who walks, jogs, or uses the streets now. I would like to meet with you or members of your cabinet to talk about what my neighbors and I could do to have the city consider putting sidewalks in our neighborhood. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I appreciate the opportunity to see how city government works.

Sincerely,
Rose Mea

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JB saw the government unit as an opportunity for her students to both practice how to write persuasive letters and voice their personal concerns. Thus, JB contextualized the learning process; thereby allowing Rose to choose to write about a needed change in her community. It should be noted here that this letter was the fourth persuasive letter written by JB’s students. Earlier in the year students wrote persuasive letters to their parents, their school and their teachers. JB explained “one of the students wrote a letter to Jon, our art teacher, asking for an extension of a homework assignment, and the teacher granted him his request.”

Yet, students utilize their cultural voice in other writing activities; as was evident after a class reading and discussion of Michael Rosen’s book, Moving (1993). In this story, the phrase “I am the one who” was repeated throughout the book. JB saw this phrase as an opportunity to let the students write about themselves; thus, all the students wrote a poem that centered around the title “I am the one who.” Justin wrote:

I am the one who plays soccer.
I am the one who plays the Bass guitar.
I am the one who likes video games.
I am the one who hates eggs.
I am the one who hates to write.
I am the one who gets in trouble {sic} a lot.
I am the one who is the one and only Justin!!!!!!

This piece of writing empowered Justin to express facts about himself-facts that he chose to share. Justin provided new information about himself. However, the facts provided by Justin were not all entirely new information for JB. For example, JB knew
Justin did not like to write. JB explained “I did not know Justin did not like eggs and I did not know about the bass guitar—that was new to me.” Later, during the year I too learned more about Justin’s love for the bass guitar. During one of the many rug time visits, Justin informed his classmates that his stepdad plays the base guitar during church services.

Additionally, concerning her allowance of choices for the students she teaches, JB further noted:

I think that when they have choices that is more motivating for them to write. I know real writers make choices about their writing. Real authors make choices about what they are writing and that is what I consider my kids to be, real writers and authors and they should have real choices in their writing. That helps me learn a lot about them and their interests. It gives them a chance to express themselves in a way that they may not if I were to constantly tell them what to do and truly I don’t think they will ever find their voice in writing if I were to always dictate what it was they were to write.

JB’s allowance of her students to use their cultural voice in their writing was also evident through the class assignment of writing a biography. The students chose one of their parents to interview. As a guide, JB provided a list of questions that directed the students as they interviewed the parent of their choosing. See Appendix B for these questions and a completed biography. After the students interviewed their parent at the home, they brought the written responses back to school. Over a course of several days, the students compiled the information from their interviews and wrote the biography at school.
Participation Structures.

The previous section illustrated that rather than decontextualizing the students' writing experiences, JB allowed her students to incorporate their cultural voice in their writing as they desired. In other words, JB's students were empowered to make their writing more culturally relevant by calling upon their cultural voice. Thus, JB's students were able to use their own cultural voice along with developing their writing competencies. JB's allowance of her students' use of their cultural voice or background was displayed often throughout the research period in other ways too; for example, various participant structures were welcomed in JB's classroom.

As was demonstrated in Philip's (1972) study of the Native American children on the Warm Springs Reservation, discontinuities, as they relate to participant structures, can exist between home and school. JB seemed to be aware of the possibility of the occurrence of discontinuity; as her students were usually given their choice of participation; that is, working alone, with a group, or in pairs. As the students began to write about a section in Cynthia DeFelice's book *Weasel* (1990), JB made the following comments:

I am going to give you paper and while I am doing this I need you to think about if you are going to work by yourself or with a partner. Please do everything in pencil first and then maybe we can add color pencil or something. If you are working with a partner, please raise your hand with your partner. If you are working by yourself you need to be seated and raise your hands.
On another occasion, as students completed projects surrounding Molli Hunter's book, *A Stranger Came Ashore (1975)*, I observed students working in large groups, small groups, pairs and individually. I wanted to know more about the groups. The following helped me to understand the formation of the groups.

Verdie: How are the groups formed?

JB: Friendship, based on the project castle, and similar ideas dictate the make-up of the groups.

Verdie: Who formed the groups?

JB: The children choose their own groups.

Although JB's students were usually given choices during writing (similar to the description above), JB sometimes chose the groups or working partner for the students. One morning, as the students began to prepare for a weather related writing project, I noticed the students did not have their usual choice in selecting their working partners:

Verdie: Why did you choose partners for the students today?

JB: Well, because there was a need for students to work with others they do not know.

Verdie: Can you elaborate more about this?

JB: Well, we have two new students and they need to work with others, also boys and girls needed to be mixed. Some students were not paired off because I knew certain students would resist certain people, and I also paired them off to compliment each other's strengths and weaknesses.
Hence, there are times when JB has to also consider her students' social needs as they complete writing assignments and projects.

**Allowance for Choice of Learning Space.**

My observations in JB's classroom evidenced, too, that students were given choices not only in their work style—participation, but also the students were given choices of their learning space. Students regularly had choices as they defined their learning space. For example, one can walk into JB's classroom and often see students completing their work at their seats, on the floor, in the hallway on the floor, or for the students who wanted privacy, the coat room became the students' learning space. Many times before the students set off to locate their learning space, JB's voice could be heard: "Okay, when I call your name you may find a quiet place." or "You need to find a self space." These statements alerted the students to find a place in which they will feel comfortable and secure as they completed their writing.

**Allowance for Choice of Materials.**

Often, students were given choices of materials they used while constructing projects or completing other assignments. Materials such as clay, scissors, cardboard boxes, tissue paper, paint, colored pencils, graphite pencils, colored paper, markers, crayons and others were always available and accessible to the students. Students needed not to ask for the use of any materials; for the selection was their personal choice. The selection of these materials allowed students to create projects from their own perspectives. One can walk into JB's classroom and see students using clay, cardboard
box dioramas, tissue paper, crayons, paint and a lot of other mediums. However, JB
sometimes has to interrupt this process by requiring her students to “make a proposal to
give me an idea of what they want to do.” According to JB, this is done “to make sure
everyone is not doing the same thing.”

**Bidding for Students’ Voices**

The inclusion of students’ voices was always welcomed in JB’s classroom.

However, students’ cultural voices sometimes had to be solicited. This solicitation of
students’ voices is termed in this research “bidding for voices,” and it was evident
especially during the time of the day JB calls “rugtime.” Rugtime is a special, interactive
time of the day when students and JB sit on the rug and discuss the day’s work and, of
course, literacy related activities. It is during this time of the day that bidding for voices
was overwhelmingly evident as the students and JB interacted. JB carefully and
systematically called upon all students’ voices to contribute to the rugtime conversations.
Comments such as "If I haven't heard from you, you really need to put your thinking cap
on, try to think of an idea." and "What else might we say? If I haven't heard from you, be
thinking" were constantly made by JB to attempt to provide all students an opportunity to
contribute to the conversation in their own cultural way. Through this process, JB
allowed the co-construction of meaning to take place.

This bidding process was made visible as JB and her students discussed a literacy
piece centered around slavery and Thomas Jefferson in the following conversation. JB
stated:
Why did he (Benjamin Banneker) write a letter to Thomas Jefferson? He had a problem with what Thomas Jefferson was doing. **You know I am seeing the same hands, so I want to hear from some different people.** Why did Benjamin Banneker have a problem with what Thomas Jefferson was doing?

During a discussion of goods and services, the following conversation took place. Notice how JB once again called upon multiple students’ voices.

Okay what about...that’s not the same, we can’t hold the haircut in our hands, what if we go to the doctor because we have a sore throat? What service are we going to get from the doctor? What service is going to happen there? **Who have we not heard from, who have we not heard from?**

Throughout the day, bidding such as the ones highlighted above was a normal routine. Usually, when such bidding took place, some of the non-participating students one by one began to participate. Yet, some students chose not to respond to the bids for their voices. Nevertheless, all students were indeed given an opportunity to verbally participate in the discussions. In addition to the bidding statements above, JB often used other phrases to include diverse voices during rugtime conversations. Table 4.1 gives other bidding phrases that JB incorporated in her daily dialogue with her students.
We need people who have not said anything yet to be thinking about how they can participate.

Someone who we have not heard from.

If you have not said anything at this time, you need to be thinking about what you can contribute. I need everyone to be a part of this.

Just give me one so that we can give a lot of people a chance.

Someone who we have not heard anything from today.

I don't want to see the same four people raise their hands.

Everybody needs to be thinking.

There is no reason why everyone should not have their hands up...

I want to see more hands.

Table 4.1. Teacher Bidding For Students’ Voices

**Embracing Constructivist Literacy Teaching and Learning**

Constructivist teaching emphasizes that thinking and understanding are inseparable from basic skills and knowledge. JB's literacy practices have evidenced to me that her instructional methods of teaching literacy fall under the umbrella of the constructivist teaching. My classroom observations revealed that JB's students learned by interactively engaging with other students and with JB herself. For example, during a writing activity, students were paired by JB. In her explanation to the students, JB stated “It is okay not to be with friends. You are learning from each other and you are paired with someone who is more familiar with the task.” JB realized the strength in students collaborating for both the skilled and the less skilled student. As Gee (1991) reminds us “Less skilled partners may provide the challenge to more skilled peers to develop new ways of expressing notions; such notions could otherwise be taken for granted in interactions.
with a more familiar and skilled partner” (p. 39). JB too, seems to understand that all
students gain much through collaboration. On another day, I observed JB interacting
with one of her students during silent reading time. The child was reading and came upon
the word "will" but could not readily pronounce it:

child  Wa, Wa,

JB    Look at it, what makes sense?

child  Wa, Wa, W-i-l-l.

JB    I like how you did that. How did you know it was will?

child  Cause it said w-i-l-l (child spells "will").

JB    OK, because you know the word "will." That's what really super reading
strategy is all about. When you say a word and you know the word is not
right go back and reread it and correct it. It is a super reading strategy.
Good for you.

The constructivist perspective relies on teacher instructional methods such as
scaffolding to assist students in learning. Similarly, the social interaction illustrated above
between JB and her student is referred to as scaffolding (Cazden, 1988), which is
described as help provided while the child is engaged in a meaningful task. During the
above process, the student used all the strategies he knew in trying to decode the word
"will." Through scaffolding, JB provided the assistance this student needed in order to
complete reading the sentence successfully. As illustrated in this method of scaffolding,
JB was aware that skills are taught in relationship to her students' needs and interests, and
that skills are not taught in isolation apart from situations in which students can come to
understand their usefulness, but rather through socially mediated interactions. Further, Cochran-Smith’s (1984) study has shown that through social interactions, young children learn literacy behaviors from other children and from adults who are present in the environment. It is through these interactions that children learn, for instance, how to co-construct meanings from decontextualized and contextualized print. Additionally, further studies have shown over and over again the benefits of socially constructed meanings of literacy (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983; Kantor, Miller, Fernie, 1992; Taylor, 1983).

Within JB’s literacy curriculum was a time that she labeled "formalized literacy instruction." It was during this time of the day that JB was able to work with students on an individualized level. JB stated:

> During that time I am able to meet the kids in their zone of proximal development and work with them one on one or in small groups to meet their needs to work on strategies that they need to work on.

JB was indeed cognizant that there were certain tasks that her students could do independently and there were certain tasks that required her guidance. The idea of the zone of proximal development suggests that adult guidance or scaffolding should be both temporary and adjustable. Additionally, Vygotsky, suggested that a child learns through interactions that take place in the zone of proximal development; thus, he defines the zone of proximal development as:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as
determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in
collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 76)

In the following vignette, JB provided just the amount of scaffolding that she felt
the child needed, but no more; simply because the child needed to assume as much
responsibility for the task as possible. The child is seated on the floor reading aloud a
book about sharks. JB sits beside the child and eagerly listens to him read. The child is
reading this book well, but he places an “s” on a word that does not have an “s.” The
following vignette demonstrates how JB used scaffolding as the avenue through which she
was able to work with this student in his zone of proximal development:

Child  Great white sharks swims... (should have read "swim")

    JB    Can you swim?

    Child  (Laughs) I can in my bathtub.

    JB    In your bathtub you can. (Points to the page) Can you look at that page for a
           second. You said great white sharks swims. Where would you expect to see the
           word s-w-i-m-s? S-w-i-m-s?

    Child  (Silence)

    JB    An "s," is there an "s?"  (As she points to the word “swim”)

    Child  No.  (And shakes head)

    JB    So what's that word?

    Child  Swim. ( Says it with excitement)

    JB    Can you read that page over?

    Child  Okay. (JB reads with the child) “The great white sharks swim.”
My observations demonstrated that JB taught skills in relationship to students' literacy needs. During one observation, the students were writing thank you letters to various community persons who had contributed to classroom activities in one way or another. Yet, before the letter writing process began, JB gave her students instructional information on how to correctly write a letter:

What I have is just an example to share to show you how to write thank you letters. Remember, we are thanking her for arranging for us to go to the music library class. What I want you to notice as I read this is how it starts out letting her know what I am thanking her for. I am really giving her detail. So we don't want to say dear whoever, thank you for this and then get to the end. We want to tell what we are thanking her for and really give some detail. This one says dear Sharon, (teacher reads sample letter). You get the idea?

This process demonstrated how effectively JB embedded literacy instruction (letter writing format) in a meaningful social context—a context that links classroom learning to community. As JB stated during her interview, "Like you saw us writing letters that's the other day you were in here. It was for a real reason; we had a real reason for writing those letters." That is, JB bridged the need for her students to know the correct way to write the thank you letters with the need of her students to show respect for kind deeds; that is the community persons' gifts to the classroom. Through this process, skills were taught in relationship to the students' needs; thereby, contextualizing literacy learning. JB's skill in contextualizing learning assisted in building bridges in order to facilitate her students' literacy learning. Such an authentic activity provided a more meaningful
experience for the students as compared to an activity which was solely based on letter writing formats in isolation from actual, meaningful experiences.

According to a social constructivist view, learning and thinking are "situated in physical and social contexts" rather than occurring solely in an individual's mind (Greeno, 1989, p. 135). Additionally, we are reminded that meanings are constructed through the interaction of participants in context-specific and socially situated activity via social interaction. In JB's classroom, interactions were often socially and collaboratively displayed. Collaborative and social interactions provide several benefits. For example, group members seem to have a "synergistic" effect on insights and problem solutions (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Further, collaborative groups create group norms where effort and intention to learn are valued, thereby enhancing learners' motivation to learn (Ames & Ames, 1984). The following lesson details a group biography writing effort during a literacy rugtime. JB and her students had just completed various readings about John Glenn. After reading a piece from a clipping about John Glenn, JB allowed her students to make sense of the piece. JB remarked, "Somebody, besides Holly Noel tell me what this sentence can mean." To which the following interaction between Justin and JB occurred:

Justin: Seven men including John Glenn were chosen out of 110 men to be a part of the Mercury Program.

JB: Okay, good Justin, now should we include the year?

Justin: Yeah, in 1969 seven men including...

JB: (Writes and repeats out loud the revised sentence by Justin) In 1969 seven
men including John Glenn were chosen out of 110 men to be part of the mercury program.

Justin  (Excitedly raises his hand and yells) “back up…”

JB Now we need to say what the Mercury Program is... Oh Justin were you going to say something about back up?

Justin Yes. That he was a back up.

JB We should probably say that Glenn was a back up. (Inserts and repeats out loud-John Glenn was a back up) Now what is the mercury program? We need to include that. Will?

Will It was to send an American to space.

JB (Repeating out loud as she writes) The goal of this program was to send an American to space. Okay, what is next? Do you think we are ready to move to the section where it says Glenn’s historic flight?

Class (In unison says) Yes.

The above lesson illustrated the synergistic effect of the collaborative effort displayed as JB and her students co-constructed the biography writing of John Glenn. As was illustrated above, JB and her students created a biography together. Within a social constructivist perspective, meanings are constructed and influenced through the interaction of the participants and materials in the classroom setting (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Green, 1983). Similarly, through the efforts of the total group’s social interaction, a biography was constructed—a biography that encompassed the students’ and JB’s various contributions.
Promoting Critical Thinking During Literacy Discussions

Another strategy that JB employed is what I have termed “promoting critical thinking.” As mentioned earlier, during rugtime, students and JB often deconstructed class readings. It was during this time that students were empowered to critique what had been read and to make visible any distortions of reality. During these times, JB carefully and conscientiously guided her third and fourth grade students into a zone of critical thinking. For example, the following reading discussion, which centered around the Land Ordinance of 1785, took place one day during rugtime:

JB  The second step toward statehood would come after at least five thousand white males have settled in the territory. Then they will vote to elect a legislature for the territory. A legislature is a group of people like the U.S. Congress that makes laws. So that is why they called that branch of government the legislature branch. Could it be any five thousand people to move in?

Class  No-o-o.

JB  No. It had to be five thousand white males. So it had to be at this time only white men were allowed to vote. So stand up if you would not be allowed to vote at this time.

Class  (All girls and black males stood.)

JB  Yeah, that is about all of our class. Okay, have a seat please. Stand up if you would have been allowed to vote at that time.

Class  (All white boys stood. Charles, a black male, laughing, also stood.)

JB  At this time they only let white men vote.

Charles  I don’t like it. (Swinging his arms)

JB  I know. How would you like if these seven people got to make all of the decisions about what happens in our classroom? Raise your hands if
you can think about how it would feel if Joe, Apple, Will, Tiger, Bill, Bullet, Zak (all white males) got to make all the decisions about what happens in room twenty. Let's say more than just bad or sad to describe what you mean, describe what you mean. Antoinette.

Antoinette It would not be fair because just seven people ought not to decide what happens and everybody... If seven people decided what would happen to everybody and there are five thousand people then that wouldn't make sense.

JB You are right. I bet if it's a football game outside would change if those seven people got to make all the rules. Cherry.

Cherry It's not fair because they might not be thinking about what everyone else is thinking.

JB You are right, only white men would be able to vote and that wouldn't be fair because they might not be thinking about what everyone else is thinking. You are right. What else? Polly.

Polly With just seven people you don't get to hear what the other people are thinking.

JB Yeah, just seven people you don't get to hear what other people think. You are absolutely right. Rose.

Rose I would feel like I was not a part of the world...

JB Holly said it would make her feel like she wasn't part of the world and it will make her feel like she didn't have any rights.

On another occasion during the discussion of McCully's (1998) book, *The Battle Box Battle*, which focuses on the voting rights of women, the following dialogue took place:

JB Now, another question I have for you and I do need to ask that you are not talking out—was everybody always able to vote even if they were an United States citizen and even if they were over eighteen? Was everybody always able to vote?
Class  Nooo.

JB  Who can tell me some of the people who might not have been able to vote in the past?

Will  Women were not able to vote.

JB  Yeah, at one point in our history women were not able to vote. In this book..., *The Battle Box Battle* actually has to do with women not being allowed to vote. What else?

Bullet  Black people could not vote.

JB  Yeah, there was a time in our history where only white people could vote, there was a time when only white men could vote. So only white men were making all the decisions for our country. Okay, luckily we have come away from that. (JB continues to read the book)

Yet, on another day, the students and JB were discussing a section of Benjamin Banneker’s biography. Concerning the section of the biography that dealt with Benjamin’s letter to Thomas Jefferson, the following dialogue took place. Notice how JB’s careful questioning style assisted her students in interrogating the text and filling in omitted information.

JB  What else did he (Benjamin Banneker) do? Will?

Will  He was the first black man to write an almanac.

JB  Ok, he was the very first black man to write an almanac. Polly.

Polly  He was trying to free slaves.

JB  Yeah, he was trying to help the slaves to become free. Why did he write a letters to Thomas Jefferson? He had a problem with what Thomas Jefferson was doing. Why did Benjamin Banneker have a problem with what Thomas Jefferson was doing? Tiger.
Tiger  Because he said all men are equal, but he still had slaves...

JB  Okay, he signed the declaration of independence and said all men are to be created equal right, and then he was still using slaves. When someone has slaves, does that mean that they are creating all people equally?

Class  (In unison) No-o-o.

JB  No, that does not make sense, he was being a hypocrite. (Class—laughs). That is what you call a hypocrite—kind of saying one thing and doing another, acting like you believe in something and then not doing the thing you said or follow that belief.

The above vignettes illustrated how JB, through her questioning style, led her students to critically think during the rugtime reading discussion in order to uncover hidden meanings. JB’s method of critiquing of the “word” is similar to that of critical pedagogy. According to Giroux (1987), developing a “critical pedagogy that takes the notion of student experience seriously also involves rethinking the very nature of curriculum discourse.” JB could have easily read the aforementioned stories, asked a few low level questions about the story and closed the books. However, she chose to present these stories in a environment free and open to various discussions and interpretations; thereby, promoting her students’ critical thinking. Giroux (1987) further adds, “at the outset this demands understanding curriculum as representative of a set of underlying interests that structure how a particular story is told through the organization of knowledge, social relations, values, and forms of assessment” (p. 16). The critical pedagogical approach that JB employed during the rugtime discussions allowed her students to think critically and to interrogate the structure and meaning of textual information (Gordon & Thomas 1990); thereby, revealing the underlying and omitted
meanings that existed in the readings. Most educators, according to Fine (1987), teach the curricula and pedagogical techniques they hope will "soothe students and smooth social contradictions." Conversely, as the above discussions clearly show, this was not JB's attitude toward teaching literacy; for she often sought to reveal the hidden stories within stories as she mediated her students' understanding during the rugtime reading discussions.

Similarly, JB's use of a critical pedagogy allowed relevance to be brought to the rugtime reading discussion by grounding the discussion in experiences that are a part of the actual lives of her students. This was shown through JB's choice to read the story The Battle Box Battle (McCully, 1998) on a voting day. The students were indeed excited about this day because they knew their parents were going to the polls to vote on issues that affected them. The following shows some of the relevant issues the students were able to share during the discussion:

JB What else can you vote for, Heather?

Heather Different issues.

JB You know any of the issues you can vote for, Heather?

Heather Issue one.

JB Yeah you can vote on issue one, it's about whether or not you can... What is another issue people might vote for, Haley?

Haley Governor.

JB Okay, governor, people can vote for governor. Bullet.

Bullet President.
People can vote for president, not today, that only happens in how many years?

Class (In unison) Four years.

Every four years, but voting for the president is something that people are going to do. Okay, what issues you can vote for Rose?

Rose Issue 39.

Do you know what issue 39 is about?

Holly (Quickly interrupts) Morse Bethel connection...

Yeah, the Morse Bethel connector. They want to tear down houses and build a road to connect Morse Road and Bethel Road. What are some other things that people might vote for Antoinette?

Antoinette Issue 30. It’s about...

JB empowered her students to discuss their ideas; thereby, allowing them to connect their home lives to school learning. The various issues that were referenced above by the students were all relevant to many of the students’ lives, and the students were able to share how and why these issues were important to them. JB took an opportunity, that is voting day, to make a story more connected to her students’ lives; thereby, allowing her students to voice their home and community concerns about voting.

Further, as the above class discussions illustrated, JB’s success with using a critical pedagogy was enhanced by her use of higher order questions. Reflective questions such as, “When someone has slaves, does that mean that they are creating people equally?” and “Why did Benjamin Banneker have a problem with what Thomas Jefferson was doing?” facilitated the students’ critical thinking as they uncovered and co-constructed meaning.
from their reading. These reflective and higher order questions assisted JB's students as
she guided them into a zone of critical thinking. Higher order questions are therefore
important because they: 1) "promote the development of analytical and evaluative thinking
skills; 2) affirm the students' self-perceptions as learners, and; 3) allow students to see
themselves as knowledge producers rather than knowledge consumers" (Jackson, 1994. p.
301).

Providing Authentic, Multicultural Literature

Books, books, books everywhere. This is the picture one gets upon entering JB's
classroom. This classroom is filled with "approximately five hundred" picture books,
folktales, chapter books and many, many more. To maintain such a literacy enriched
environment, JB made biweekly visits to the local library that is located in her students'
community, not in her community. JB explained that, "There is a bigger variety and my
small community doesn't seem to have as large a variety as like cultural groups
represented. There will be a few books but it is not... Here (local library), there is a better
book selection." These trips to the students' local library supported the selection of
books that JB obtained from Happy Alternative Elementary School's library. During each
of her visits, JB usually checked out between "thirty and fifty" books. JB is such a
frequent visitor to the library that she stated, "the people know me, not only the check out
people, but the security people because I can never lift my books up on that ...because
there are so many in my bag-they always have to lift it for me. So the people are always
laughing at me. The people know me so well that one of the ladies there feels that she should be invited to my wedding....”

I have termed JB a “cultural liaison” simply because she provided a literacy enriched environment for her students—one that was rich with authentic, multicultural literature. The best in multicultural literature presents culturally authentic information (Sims-Bishop, 1992). Similarly, culturally authentic literature, according to McGee and Richgels (1996), portrays people and the values, customs, and beliefs of a cultural group in ways recognized by members of that group as valid and authentic. This portrayal was evident in JB’s classroom; as she considered all the cultural needs that existed in her classroom; simply because all cultural beliefs, customs and values were important to JB’s literature selection. By focusing on the different values and beliefs that existed in her classroom, JB was able to give students a wider range of literature experiences; thereby, allowing her students from different cultural backgrounds to be able to identify their voice in literature, and allowing students to be able to enhance their learnings by gaining insights into different cultures. As the books in Table 4.2, 4.3 and Appendix C illustrate, JB celebrated her students’ cultures and related the students’ cultures to curriculum literacy learning via her selection of rich, authentic literature.

Such a literacy enriched classroom comes with many decisions by JB, decisions surrounding diversity and authenticity issues. As I observed books in JB’s classroom, it was clear that JB spent much time in assuring that books she brought into the classroom possessed diverse issues and authentic portrayals. Further, JB’s introductions during her literacy circles evidenced that she was committed to providing rich literature for her
students. (See Table 4.2) During literacy circles, JB gave a brief introduction to each book. After the introduction, JB asked her students to “look at books before selecting. I want you to look at the books before selecting one. So take a few minutes to look at them first.” The students then selected the book of their choice by raising their hands as JB held up the books. In order to meet the demands of students’ various desires, multiple copies of most books were provided for the students. JB’s students were able to read, discuss and critique a book of their choosing for a period of three to four weeks. One purpose of the literacy circles according to JB was “to get kids to talk about books about how they connect to their own lives. Another thing about the literacy circles is that we have more diverse children working together so their connections to their own lives are made.”

According to Jackson (1994), some of the criteria (other criteria can be found in Chapter Two) that might be used in selecting cultural sensitivity books are:

1. Accurate portrayal of the perspectives, attitudes, and feelings of the groups being studied.
2. Inclusion of strong ethnic characters in fictional works.
3. Ethnic materials devoid of racist concepts, cliches, phrases, or words.
4. Historically accurate factual materials. (P. 302)

Here again, JB’s monthly visits to the local library evidenced that her selection of literature portrayed the above considerations. Yet, as JB took these considerations into account, other curricula needs had to be considered as she selected her third and fourth grade
students' books. The following conversation between JB and me illustrates her consideration of both the curricula needs and testing fulfillments as she selected the books listed in Table 4.3:

Verdie Why the selection of these new classroom library books?

JB Some were selected because I had not seen them before, looking for historical perspectives, for example voting, women's rights. I chose some because the authors are coming. I looked for different genre, poetry and I looked for a variety of different reading levels.

Verdie Did you look at ethnic background?

JB I try to make sure that all the books are not one ethnic background. But my goal for this selection was to select books about Ohio history. There is not much diversity during this period and I am bound by the fourth grade proficiency...

Even though JB felt that the fourth grade proficiency test requirements and the lack of diversity during that particular period of study restricted her selection of books, it is evident that JB nevertheless managed to select books that represented a varied range of authentic multicultural voices. A look at the authors and short descriptions of the books in Table 4.3 readily shows that these books indeed represent a diverse, multicultural perspective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Classroom Event</th>
<th>Title/Author</th>
<th>JB’s Book Introductions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 6, 1998—1:00</td>
<td><em>A Taste of Blackberries</em> By: Doris Buchanan Smith</td>
<td><em>A Taste of Blackberries</em>—“this is another sad story. It is about death of a friend...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Circle</td>
<td><em>Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes</em> By: Eleanor Coerr</td>
<td><em>Sadako</em>—“Is about a girl who has cancer radiation from the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima which is why she has cancer. The ending of this book is very sad—I want to warn you about this...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB introduces new books for literacy circle</td>
<td><em>Followers of the North Star</em> By: Susan Altman and Susan Lechner</td>
<td><em>Followers of the North Star</em>—“...Rhymes about African American heroes, heroines, and historical times...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Meet Kristen an American Girl</em> By: Janet Shaw</td>
<td><em>Meet Kristen</em>—“About a Sweden family’s journey to America...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Koko’s Kitten</em> By: Dr. Francine Patterson</td>
<td><em>Koko’s Kitten</em>—“You can learn sign language...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Whipping Boy</em> By: Sid Fleischman</td>
<td><em>The Whipping Boy</em>— “About a boy who uses his street smarts to outwit his kidnappers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The North Star to Freedom</em> By: Gena K. Gorrell</td>
<td><em>The North Star</em>—“A poetry book- I chose it because a lot of you are writing poetry—poetry about African Americans”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Introductions of Literacy Circle Books
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Classroom Event</th>
<th>Title/Author</th>
<th>Verdie's Notes About Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19, 1998-- 9:50</td>
<td><strong>Who Came down That Road</strong> By: George Lyon</td>
<td>A son’s questions lead a mother down a road of historical answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB introduces new books for class library</td>
<td><strong>A Street Called Home</strong> By: A. Robinson</td>
<td>Tells of a black family’s settlement in a shanty town called the blackberry patch. Tells how the shacks were torn down to make room for the largest metropolitan housing authority development in the US: tells how the community was self sufficient because of all the different businesses that thrived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lake Erie</strong> By: Ann Armburster</td>
<td>A true book about our fourth largest lake, Lake Erie, and sights surrounding this lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Letting the Swift River Go</strong> By: Jane Yolen</td>
<td>Tells how a town was transformed from rural America right before a little girls’ eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Miz Berlin Walks</strong> By: Jane Yolen</td>
<td>Tells of one woman who shares the magic of story telling and the magic of sharing between generations that leads to real friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>To Be a Drum</strong> By: Evelyn Coleman</td>
<td>Highlights the drum - the pulse that has moved through the African people and through time and place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Dust Bowl</strong> By: David Booth and Karen Reczuch</td>
<td>Tells of one prairie family’s experience during the dust bowl as told by the grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A Place Called Freedom</strong> By: Scott Russell Sanders</td>
<td>Tells former slaves’ journey to a free land to Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I Have Heard of a Land</strong> By: Joyce Carol Thomas</td>
<td>The author draws on her own family history to tell the story of her family’s journey to Oklahoma in the quest of a new life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. New Books for Class Library--Ohio History Focus
Bridging Home and School via Classroom Activities and Written Communications

During the school year, JB made numerous attempts to bridge home and school via two methods of communication, classroom activities and written notes sent home. Classroom methods of communication that allowed parents to come into the school setting and interact with both students and JB included parent teacher conferences, student-led conferences, classroom parties, K.I.S.S. (Kids Invite Someone Special) Day, and evening sharings.

Parent teacher conferences are ideal ways to bridge home and school. JB conducted a total of three parent teacher conferences during this school year. Although the parent teacher conferences are held three days of the school year, special circumstances dictate additional conferences as needed. For example, JB stated, “some parents like Joe’s parents I have met with several times because there are several things that we want to stay in contact with.” JB did not only use parent teacher conferences as a method to inform parents, but she also used parent teacher conferences as a method for parents to inform her. One way that JB allowed her students’ parents to inform her was through a “conference confirmation form” that preceded each of the scheduled parent teacher conferences. As Table 4.4 shows, parents’ voices were solicited as JB prepared for the parent teacher conference. The inclusion of parents’ voices was evident through yet another written communication. JB sent parents a letter before each parent teacher and student led conference allowing parents to designate their choice of their conference appointment time. JB states in her letter “This year, instead of your scheduling parent-
teacher conferences through the office, I am asking that you schedule directly with me. Below is a list of possible conference times. Please list your first, second, and third choice.” Appendix D provides this letter in its entirety.

Another important method that JB used to bridge home and school was providing student-led conferences. My journal notes captured the following scenario during one such student-led conference session:

Parents and students are scattered in class. Some are sitting on the floor with large portfolios beside them, others are demonstrating the energy projects to their parents—they are busily pressing buttons and pulling switches to allow the energy to flow. Still other students are seated at either round or rectangular tables with their parents beside them. Parents are eagerly and attentively listening to their child who now is the teacher and student. Parents are walking behind the child from place to place in the room—students are displaying and discussing their projects eagerly.

JB is walking around waiting for a chance to make a comment about her students’ progress. A part of her wants to jump in and tell her story and another part of her wants to empower her students and let them tell their stories. I posed the question, how does this make you feel? JB responded “I feel like an outsider in a bad sense, but in an empowering sense—part of that is because of the many years of doing conferences the other way. I can walk out and they would not miss me. I think it is important that my presence is here at the beginning and at the end of the conference.” Nevertheless, she makes a number of comments to her students and parents in order to clarify or enhance the conference—“Holly did you show the math you worked with today?” Holly quickly remembers and retrieves the regrouping math work that was completed earlier today.

Besides allowing student-led conferences at the school site, JB also allows her students to conduct at least one student-led conference in the comfort of their homes (without her presence). JB reminded me that the students “take their portfolio home and
they do the same thing at home, the only thing that they don’t do is show the parents around the room but they still take books home to read and they schedule a time for the conference with their parents.” JB included two student-led conferences during this school year. During these student-led conferences JB empowered her students to “be in charge.” Even though the students were in charge, they had a written agenda provided by JB (as Appendix E illustrates). Yes, JB indeed prepared the written agenda; however, upon closer examination, one will find that JB carefully included many opportunities for her students’ voices to be empowered. This empowerment was allowed by providing her students with choices. For example, questions such as “What would you like to improve in your writing?” or “What do you like best about reading?” allowed JB’s students to tell their personal stories of their progress in reading. JB designed other questions to help bridge home and school within this same document; for example, the question, “How can your family help you with this at home?” is included many times in this agenda. The inclusion of this question allowed parent voices to come alive during the student-led conference. Yet, another way JB attempted to bridge home and school during the student-led conferences was by allowing her parents and students to set school goals as a collaborative effort. Appendix F provides one such goal sheet completed by a student and her parent.

Concerning student-led conferences and the reason she provides them for her students and parents, JB stated the following:

I feel like the students are able to give their parents a different perspective or view of what is actually happening in the classroom and what they are
learning. I feel that through the student led conference, parents are able to see their children's strengths even if they feel like they are always struggling...they are able to see their child's strength. I think for them (students) to be able to reflect in the way they have to prepare for the conference really helps them. The kids get a really good view of what they are doing as a learner. And they are able to see how much of learning is in their control and how much of learning they can take responsibility for...

But I think the real advantage too is for the kids to talk about what they have learned and share with their parents. They really have to synthesize and reflect and integrate everything that is going on. I think that it is a good bonding, for the parent and child, it is a good time for parents to see how their children see learning and the importance of learning and by being here it shows the children that their parents view what they are doing as important work, and I think that is important. And the kids feel proud and I think that no matter where they are at, development continues and they feel proud and that is a boost for them, the classroom...to try harder to see what they can do.

JB also provided classroom parties for holidays such as Halloween and Valentine's Day as avenues for parents to come to school and interact with their child and with JB herself. During these class parties, parents always donated their time and contributed supplies and food for the parties. Contributed foods ranged from commercially bought foods to favorite home cooked foods.

K.I.S.S. Day, which means Kids Invite Someone Special, is yet another avenue for bridging home and school. As the written communication in Appendix G explains, this yearly event is designed to allow parents (or any special guests) to come to school and learn more about the students' learnings. During this event, the students shared their class work and goals with their special guests. Additionally, students prepared snacks for their special guests and parents; and their guests or parents were allowed to have lunch with their child either at the school site or off site. In fact, Apple happily reminded me on this
day that “My mom and I are going to get pizza for lunch.” However, upon returning to the classroom after lunch break, Apple’s mother informed me that their lunch plans changed and they ended up visiting a different restaurant.

Evening sharings provided other avenues to bridge home and school. JB provided five evening sharings during this school year; all of which occurred after school hours. Evening sharings allowed parents to come to their child’s classroom to see the many learnings that had taken place. Students displayed their learnings through sharing projects, singing songs, and dancing creative dances. Often, a portion of the sharing was held in another part of the school (other than the classroom) and included other teachers such as the dance and music teachers. All parents had opportunities to participate by bringing a favorite family dessert for all to enjoy. Other parents participated by using a needed skill. For example, during the December evening sharings, one parent donated dry ice, and provided the special effects (fog) for the sharing event. In order that parents be informed of the happenings during evening sharings, JB sent home a letter (see Appendix H) explaining what was going to occur during the evening sharing. Along with named activities, JB explained the relationship between these activities and the students’ ongoing learnings.

As mentioned above, one parent donated dry ice for an evening sharing. During the school year, many other parents were welcomed to come in JB’s classroom to share their expertise and special skills with the students. Table 4.5 details these and other parents’ classroom contributions.
In addition to communications that invited parents to the classroom setting, JB also provided parents with written communication that provided additional information concerning class plans and events. These written communications served to provide an interactive line of communication between school and home and they served to provide information about classroom events and happenings. Table 4.6 lists some of the topics that were included in JB’s home communications. Some of the actual written communications can be located in Appendix I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference Confirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your parent-teacher conferences is scheduled for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________________________ at __________________________. Please call as soon as possible if you need to reschedule. I will send you a reminder note one week prior to the conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please help me prepare for our parent-teacher conference by filling out and returning this form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What questions or concerns do you have concerning your child’s time in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are some goals you would like to see your child reach this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s Name __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Name __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Conference Confirmation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent's Community Role</th>
<th>Class Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dad (Engineer)</td>
<td>Works with a group of students each Friday to challenge their math skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dad (Teacher)           | Typed poetry book for a group of students  
                         | Video taped an evening sharing |
| *Mother                 | Coordinated and conducted all of the in-class baking activities with the students |
| Mom (Scout Leader and business owner) | Made bead craft with the students and conducted a long term craft with two students (at the students' request) |
| Dad (Teacher)           | Did "green house things, planting and stuff" |
| Grandparents            | Brought guitar in and sang to the students at class parties |
| Dad (Magician)          | Came to class and performed a magic show |
| Dad (Music Teacher)     | Made balloon art with the students |
| Dad (Chemist)           | Donated dry ice and performed special effects with the dry ice |
| Mother (Artist and potterer) | Stapled books for students in her home |
| *Mother (and Nanny)     | Invited class to visit her church (neighborhood church) in order to expose students to the sound of a pipe organ. The church persons prepared special t-shirts and other gifts for the students |
| Two Mothers (Artist and Caterer) | Assisted the students in making a class quilt |

Table 4.5. Parents Contributing Their Knowledge  
*Denotes “stay at home mothers”
As both, Table 4.6 and Appendix I indicate such written communication provided an avenue for parents to remain in touch with both their child’s classroom learnings and classroom/school happenings.

The six teacher strategies presented above showed how JB included her students’ and parents’ cultural voices in her classroom literacy practices. These strategies therefore allowed a bridge between the students’ home and school.

Additionally, JB’s utilization of these six culturally responsive strategies seem to suggest that she has taken a proactive stance toward the problem of devaluing literacy experiences of students from culturally different backgrounds. This stance shows that JB values her students’ culturally varied literacy experiences and backgrounds; thereby, seeing these varied literacy experiences as assets rather than deficits.
Students’ Perceptions

This section of Chapter Four will tell the stories of the six students who so willingly participated in this research. Excerpts from student interviews combined with classroom observation notes will highlight the continuities and discontinuities that exist between school and home literacy practices.

Each student eagerly waited for his or her name to be called because the students knew that if I called their names, they would exit the classroom and interview with me. The students who will be highlighted in this section are: Joe, a third grader; Latonya, a fourth grader; Will, a fourth grader; Bill, a third grader; Justin, a fourth grader; and Apple, a third grader. After the students gave their pseudo names and permission to tape the interview, the dialogue began.

Joe

Joe is a tall, dark haired third grader. He enjoys making artistic creations and he sometimes spends lots of time working on detailed illustrations before he actually completes a writing piece. Joe likes art, music and dance at school particularly because “we get to do stuff we normally don’t get to do at school.” One aspect that Joe does not like about school is “I don’t like how we don’t get much time to eat.” According to Joe’s mother, this “is an attention thing. He can talk through the meal, we will be totally done with our meal and Joe will have taken like one bite.” During our interview, I asked Joe to...
tell some of the things “you learn at home.” Joe responded, “I learn sometimes how to
read better when I am doing the computer.” This dialogue continued:

Verdie So you have a chance to read the computer at school?

Joe Not really.

Verdie Let’s think more about reading and writing right now. You just mentioned
the computer. That is something you can do at home?

Joe Yeah. You can’t really read on the computer here.

Verdie You can’t?

Joe Not you can’t but it is very rare.

Verdie It is very rare. So that is something you miss?

Joe Yeah.

Additionally, concerning reading, the following conversation occurred:

Verdie Okay, tell me about reading at home. How is reading at home the same as reading
at school?

Joe Sometimes you have to read the same books that you do at school.

Verdie Okay, so tell me some other ways that reading at home is the same as reading at
school?

Joe It usually just the same. It is just as easier or harder as it would be at home.

Verdie So it is just as easier at home as it is at school.

Joe Sometimes, yeah, usually.

Verdie So usually it is the same hardness or the same easiness.
Concerning writing, the following conversation took place:

Verdie Tell me about writing. How is writing at home the same as writing at school?

Joe Sometimes when we have homework we have to do the same as we do at school.

Verdie What about some of the other things you like, how is that different from what you do at school from what you do at home?

Joe I... What did you say?

Verdie Okay, how is writing at home different from writing at school.

Joe At home sometimes I get to write longer at home...

Verdie Okay, so that is one difference. Can you tell me some more?

Joe Where you can read, you can read outside at home.

Verdie So you can read outside at home but you can't at school?

Joe No.

Lastly, I asked Joe to tell me how story telling at home was the same as story telling at school. The interview continued:

Joe Sometimes you tell the same stories as we do at school.

Verdie Sometimes you do. Do you like to tell stories?

Joe Most of the time, yeah.
Verdie Most of the time. What kinds of stories do you usually tell?

Joe Usually ones about what I have been doing in the past few days or something.

Verdie So do you get to do that at school too?

Joe Yeah.

**Discussion**

Joe seemed to explain experiences at school similarly to the experiences he has at home with reading, writing and story telling. As Table 4.7 illustrates, his description of school and home seemed to suggest that there is a match between school and home reading; as Joe reminds us "reading is just as easier or harder as it would be at home" when compared to school.

Joe realized that the computer plays a part in his reading experience at home. However, Joe felt that he did not get many opportunities to utilize computers in class to further his reading.
Continuities Between School and Home

Reading
Reading overall is the same at home as at school. "It is just as easier or harder as it would be at home" as compared to school.

Sometimes "we have to read the same books that you do at school."

Writing
"Sometimes we have homework we have to do the same as we do at school."

Storytelling
Sometimes "you tell the same stories as we do at school."
He gets to tell stories at home and at school.

Discontinuities Between Home and School

Reading
"It is very rare" that Joe can utilize his reading skills via using computers.
Where you can read-you can read outside at home.

Writing
At home "sometimes I get to write longer at home."

Table 4.7. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Joe

Justin

Justin is a thin, talkative fourth grader. In fact, during one of Justin’s writing assignments, he stated “I am the one who talks a lot.” Justin, too, seemed to realize that talking much is a part of his personality. Justin was very eager to talk to me. He sat beside me and stared into my eyes with his sparkling gaze; he was ready to get “the show on the road.” By the way, Justin is the student who first began using the term “fake names” in JB’s classroom. Of course, he was absolutely ready to give me his “fake name.” With this giving, the interview began. For my inquiry statement, “Tell me some of the things you learn at home,” Justin began his story:
Justin  Well, I get multiplication tests everyday.

Verdie  At home?

Justin  Yeah. And I when my stepdad talks to my sister he makes me sit there and listen to learn new stuff so that I won't have to learn it in 6th grade. And I like reading at home cause I have a lot of books that I like to read.

Verdie  Like what kinds of books do you read at home.

Justin  Like chapter books and different Porquoi tales.

Verdie  Different what type tales?

Justin  Porquoi tales, they are like things like they ..lead up to now...

I then asked Justin how the above reading description was different from learning to read at school. Justin responded, “Well, they (mom and stepdad) don’t really tell you what the words are they just tell you to sound it out. And stuff like that.” The question, how is reading at home similar to reading at school? elicited the following response:

Justin  Well, sometimes they (teacher) make you read like certain kinds of books and do something with it like read a book and write a report on what you read about.

Similar to home, Justin writes reports at school. On any given day, one can find Justin writing reports about a story that was read or about his family, pet, etc. Justin seemed to suggest that he does not have a choice to write or not to write in his home setting; as he states, “they (mom and stepdad) make” him “read...and write a report...” However, at school Justin states that he does not “have to do it (read and write a report), it is just that I do it.” Freedom to choose seemed to allow Justin the opportunity to
connect his reading and writing experiences at home with those at school. In other words, even though he is not required to read and write reports in school, his home experience with reading and writing reports directs Justin to carry the same practice to school. JB’s allowance of her students to choose assists Justin in expanding his literacy experiences in a more meaningful manner.

Concerning writing, the following dialog took place:

Verdie Let’s talk about writing at home. How is writing at home the same as writing at school?

Justin Well, like when you learn it at school, like when I first started to learn cursive I just went back home...and started to write more cursive for practice.

Justin seemed to see the relationship between home writing and school writing as an extension process. In other words, school writing experiences are transferred to the home. The dialogue continued:

Verdie What are some things that are different about how you learn to write at home and when you compare it to school? Are there any differences and what are they?

Justin Well, if I don’t really do something neat, sometimes I have to do it over or if it is too long, ..will tell me to do spelling.

Verdie Stop for a second--when it is not neat you have to do it over. Is this at home or at school?

Justin At school, I mean at home.

Verdie At home if it is not neat you have to do it over, at school if it is not neat, what happens?
Justin Well, sometimes I just say, that it is not neat and I will do it over or I will do a final draft of it.

Verdie So you choose when you want to do it over when you are at school. But at home your stepdad or your mom lets you know when it is not neat?

Justin unhum.

Verdie So you have to do it over because they say you have to do it over?

Justin Shakes head, yes.

Here again, as was illustrated earlier, Justin utilized his freedom to choose to help direct his literacy learning. In this case, self assessing his written work and determining whether or not it was neat or whether or not it needed to be written over seemed to allow Justin the opportunity to call upon his personal criteria for neatness in assessing his written work. My questions concerning story telling at home yielded the following conversation:

Verdie What about story telling...do you tell stories at home?

Justin No, I just read a lot of them.

Verdie Do you hear anyone at your house telling stories?

Justin Yeah, my sister, her unit at school is ancient Greece and she got a book from the library and my dad reads them out loud and I just stay there and listen.

Verdie And at school is there story telling going on at school?

Justin Those are read a lot too some of them but in like dance Maureen (school’s dance teacher) reads different stories and we do different dances on them...
Discussion.

As shown in Table 4.8, Justin described reading at school as a somewhat seamless process; however, within the seamless process, Justin stated that his mom and dad required him to sound out words: this conflicts with his school's way of reading; as he reports someone at school usually helps him to read.

Justin explained writing as a fluid process between home and school. That is, writing at home is focused on an extension of experiences that had occurred at school. For example, Justin explained the similarity between home writing and school writing by stating “Well, like when you learn it at school, like when I first started to learn cursive I just went back home...and started to write more cursive for practice.” This extension theme is echoed by his mother (Lisa) and will be further explored later in this chapter. On the other hand, Justin seemed to have had control over his writing at school. That is, Justin had choices that helped direct his assessment of his writing; as Justin reminded me that “sometimes I just say that it is not neat and I will do it over or I will do a final draft of it.” Conversely, at home the choice was not there; when Justin’s work was not neat, he did it over because his mother and stepdad said to do it over.
Continuities Between School and Home

Reading
Sometimes they (school and home) "like you read like certain kinds of books and do something with it like read a book and write a report on what you read about."

Writing
"Like when you learn at school, like when I first started to learn cursive I just went back home and started to write more cursive for practice."

Storytelling
Does not tell stories at home. At school stories "are read a lot."

Discontinuities Between Home and School

Reading
They (school) don't really tell you what the words are they just tell you to sound it out.

Writing
At home if writing "is not neat I have to do it over." At school "sometimes I just say, that it is not neat and I will do it over or I will do a final draft."

At school Justin does his "writing over" because he chooses to when it is not neat.

At home Justin does his writing over because his mom "says to do it over". (when work is not neat)

Table 4.8. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Justin

Will

Will is a somewhat quiet fourth grader. He enjoys writing, especially, as he calls it, "action writing." Will enjoys working with two other boys on classroom projects. The partnership with these three boys has been a long-term one. As one parent of the three boys informed me, "They have been together since kindergarten." Often, one will find Will and the other two boys in a circle on the floor creating a writing piece collaboratively.

Such was an occasion one day when I walked in JB's classroom and spotted them creating a story that they called "Spy Cats."
Will describes both reading and writing as a collaborative process at home. His mom and dad help him to read by helping Will with words. Assistance with writing comes in the form of Will’s mom and dad helping him spell words.

During the interview, Will was concise as he answered the questions. Not much elaboration occurred; yet, the questions were answered in the way he chose to answer them. During the interview, I inquired about writing. The following details the dialogue that transpired concerning writing:

Verdie Let’s switch to writing. Who writes with you at home?
Will My mom and my dad.
Verdie And how do they help you to write at home?
Will They tell me how to spell words.

Will defines help with writing in terms of getting assistance with spelling words that he can not spell alone. He further explained the kind of writing he does at home as “action writing and stuff like that.” Similarly, action writing, as Will explains it, further describes the kind of collaborative writing that Will often engages in at school; as was shown by Will and two of his classmates when they collaboratively completed a story in class (Spy Cats) that stretched over a course of two weeks.

Will expressed the differences that he sees in writing at home and school:

Verdie Well, what kinds of things that you do in writing at school that you don’t do at home?
Will  Rewrite it.

Verdie  So you rewrite at home but you don’t rewrite at school, no, no I have it backwards, you rewrite at school but you don’t rewrite at home?

Will  Yeah.

Verdie  Are there any other differences between writing at home and school?

Will  No.

Rewriting in JB’s classroom is centered around writing several drafts to enhance written work. According to Will, rewriting is the only difference between home and school writing. Concerning reading, the following dialogue took place:

Verdie What about reading at home. Who helps you to read at home?

Will  My mom and dad.

Verdie  How do they help you, for instance in reading stories.

Will  We take turns with the chapters and they help me with words.

Reading in Will’s home is a collaborative experience, as Will explained the process, “it is like two of us sometimes” and he would read a chapter and the next person will read a chapter. Similar to how Will explained the writing process at home, Will stated that “they (mom and dad) help me with words” as they collaboratively read in their home.

The dialogue concerning reading continued:

Verdie What about reading at home, what kinds of reading do you do at home?

Will  Like mystery chapter books and action stuff.
Verdie Can you tell me about one of the stories you read lately.

Will I am reading animorphs at my house.

Verdie Animorphs?

Will Animorphs.

Verdie I have never heard of that one, what is that about?

Will It is a series about these kids who got powers to allow them to morph into different animals if they get the DNA from them.

Verdie Ohhh, are these chapter books?

Will Yeah.

Verdie Do you read a lot of chapter books at home?

Will Yeah.

Verdie What other kinds of books do you read at home?

Will Mysteries, and stuff sort of like the titanic.

Similar to Will’s home, mystery books, chapter books and action books can all be found in JB’s classroom. Perhaps this familiarity with the various types of books is the reason Will answered “nothing” to the question, What do you not like about reading at school? The dialogue continued:

Verdie Are there any differences between reading at home and reading at school, what are the differences?

Will At school I just read by myself and at home I read with my parents.

Verdie You read with your parents. Okay, does that happen all the time, do you have to read by yourself all the time at school?

Will Chapter books I usually read by myself.
Verdie: Is that by choice or...

Will: Yes.

Verdie: So you choose to read by yourself. But if you wanted a partner you could get a partner?

Will: Yeah.

Unlike the collaborative reading experiences that Will enjoys at home, Will chooses to individually read at school. However, Will does realize that a reading partner is only a step away if he wants one. The conversation continued:

Verdie: What about at school, what kinds of things do you not like about learning to write at school?

Will: Rewriting.

Verdie: Rewriting? (laughs because this is Will’s second time referencing rewriting) You don’t like the rewriting.

Discussion.

Will’s experiences with reading at home and school seemed to be connected as shown through Will’s utilizing chapter books. Both at home and at school, Will’s focus in reading seemed to be centered around chapter books. However, Will’s reading at home was different from the process at school (see Table 4.9). At home, Will reported that he and his mother or father read together. In other words, they take turns reading pages in the book. Yet, at school Will stated that he “reads by himself.” The reasons why this was the case were not clear; however, reading by himself was a choice made by Will and not
by JB because my classroom observations have indicated over and over that students often have the choice to choose partners as they read.

Concerning writing, Will was able to incorporate his favorite kind of home writing (action writing) in his school writing. This was evidenced as I observed Will completing his section of a collaborative story named "The Spy Cats" in class one day. There is one conflict that Will saw in writing at school, and that is rewriting his writing. Rewriting is one of the processes that students go through before completing a final draft in JB’s classroom. Will consistently stated that the one thing he did not like about writing at school was "rewriting."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities Between School and Home</th>
<th>Discontinuities Between Home and School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will reads chapter books</td>
<td>At school, &quot;I read by myself and at home I read with my parents.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will writes action stories</td>
<td>Does not rewrite pieces of writing at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Will

Latonya

Latonya is a lively fourth grader who stretches in height high above all of her classmates. In her community, Latonya stated that she learns "how to do cheers and movement and mounting" from her cheerleader instructor. Latonya enjoys talking and this sometimes gets her in compromising positions with both her classmates and her teacher.
However, when she is not in those compromising positions, Latonya is eagerly engaged in her class work.

Much reading at home is centered around a cookbook entitled *The Black Family Reunion Cookbook* (The National Council of Negro Women, Inc., 1991). Latonya explained that both she and her mother read recipes together as they prepare the ingredients for a dish. The context of this cookbook in Latonya’s home is further explained in the following:

Verdie: What about reading. What kinds of reading do you see your mother doing at home?
Latonya: She will read like really the book she reads the most is the cookbook because she would use the recipes to cook to take over to somebody’s house and just like a special like if it is a family reunion or a special day or somebody’s birthday party or something.

As we began the interview, I asked Latonya “What kinds of things have you learned at home?” In addition to her enjoyment for writing poems and stories, Latonya proudly stated, “My mom teach me how to write in cursive and how to cook.” I wanted to learn more about the cursive writing that Latonya referenced, so I began the dialogue:

Verdie: Tell me more about your cursive. How does your mom teach you how to do cursive writing. Tell me how she does that.
Latonya: Well, we get paper and then we get pencil and paper and then she will like write the alphabet for me in cursive and then she makes words out of the letters and stuff in cursive and make me copy them.

I was very anxious to hear more about the cooking that Latonya referenced earlier. Therefore, immediately after the above dialogue I directed this inquiry:
Verdie Well, tell me about your cooking, you said your mom teaches you how to
cook. Tell me how that works.

Latonya Well, we got this cookbook called *the Family Reunion Cookbook* and we
look up recipes and my teacher gave me a recipe for cookies and stuff.

Verdie So do you choose the recipes or does your mom choose the recipes?

Latonya She would let me choose them sometimes.

The *Family Reunion Cookbook* that exists in Latonya’s house assists the family’s
meal preparations. However, Latonya also gets practice with reading, too; as she
reminded me that “both of us (mom and Latonya)” read the recipes when the *Family
Reunion Cookbook* is in use. Additionally, Latonya uses recipes from JB at home. When
I inquired about how she knew the sequence of ingredients to put in a particular cookie
recipe, Latonya, with a smile stated, “My teacher gave me this paper and she put the
ingredients in order which one goes first.”

Concerning writing at home, our conversation transpired as followed:

Verdie Let’s think a little bit about writing at home. What kinds of writing do you
do at home?

Latonya I write stories, poems, I just write about my favorite authors and that’s all.

Latonya stated, “I like doing acrostic poems, really that’s my favorite.” I was
curious about where Latonya had learned to do acrostic poems. The following helped
shed light on this.

Verdie Where did you learn about acrostic poems?
Latonya From the book we read.
Verdie We? Who are we?
Latonya My class.
Verdie So you learned at...
Latonya (Immediately completes the sentence for me) School.

Latonya also talked about a restriction surrounding writing at home. This restriction centers around having privacy as Latonya writes in the comfort of her bed.

Latonya states, “I am comfortable on my bed writing so I get on the bed and my baby brother comes along and then he will start jumping on my bed and make me mess up and things and all that.”

Reflecting on writing at school, the following conversation ensued:

Verdie Okay, let’s switch from home and let’s talk about school. What kinds of writing do you do at school?
Latonya Poems, stories, work and we got like these, I forgot what they are called I think they are called...it is like a tablet and we, the books we read, we would have to write the title at the top and the date and then we have to write what they are about. And that’s all.
Verdie Writing logs?
Latonya Yeah.
Verdie What about reading at school?
Latonya Do you want me to start with what I like to read?
Verdie You can start with that.
Latonya: I like to read chapter books by Julie... and Beverly Cleary and I like to read picture books.

Verdie: And these are all books that are in your classroom?

Latonya: Yeah, and sometimes I bring in books to read.

Verdie: What kinds of books do you bring in to read?

Latonya: It's this book called Dr. Doolittle and Chocolate Fever and Winnie the Pooh and Super Fudge.

Latonya seems to enjoy writing poems and stories both at home and at school. Not only does she enjoy the classroom's books and authors, but Latonya also contributes to her classroom literacy experiences by bringing her books from home to read and share. According to JB, "Latonya and many of the other students often bring in books from home to share."

The following shows how Latonya sees reading at home:

Verdie: What about reading at home. Tell me about reading at home.

Latonya: Well, I like to .. down a big stack of books or usually I get the dictionary and look words up to see how to spell them and ...like cooperation like you use either a "k" or something to show you how to pronounce it.

Verdie: So you use the dictionary a lot?

Latonya: Not that much and sometimes when I read the dictionary, this is like for reading and writing, when I read the dictionary I look for certain animals or any thing about the human body or the skeleton or like a... like a certain...

Verdie: Like a certain topic?

Latonya: Yeah, and then I would rewrite it on a piece of paper.
Verdie: Rewriting on a piece of paper, does that help you in any particular way?
Latonya: Yeah.
Verdie: How?
Latonya: It teach me more like they taught me about the human body or animal or something.

The dictionary seems to be instrumental to Latonya's home literacy experience. It is evident through Latonya's comments above that the dictionary assists her with spelling, pronunciation and learning about novel topics. Latonya also shared what she did not like about reading at home:

Verdie: What is about reading at home that you do not like about. Is there anything you don't like about reading at home?
Latonya: Trying to read, like I will get a really hard book with really hard words and I will try to sound them out so that I will know them after I get older. And my brothers and my cousins they just run around the house and be loud and that is what makes it hard for me to concentrate.

Difficult words do not restrict Latonya's literacy learning; however, environmental factors such as noise from her brothers and cousin seem to be quite distracting to Latonya as she engages in reading. As the conversation continued, Latonya revealed that, similar to literacy learning at home, at school she likes "to figure out big words and hard words and words that I never heard of." Latonya also uses the dictionary and other books in her classroom to assist with learning challenging words. On many occasions, I have witnessed Latonya and her classmates using their personal dictionaries to look up words and record new ones. Further, similar to home literacy experiences, Latonya enjoys
“writing stories and poems...” Are there any factors about reading at school that Latonya does not like? The following will shed light on this question:

Latonya That I don’t like about school? None.
Verdie So do you like everything about reading at school?
Latonya Yeah.

Concerning story telling, Latonya really enjoys story telling at home. With a big smile on her face and a hint of excitement in her voice she stated, “I tell scary stories to my brothers and my cousins. We were like making sheets in the room where we get up under the cover and we take turns telling scary stories to make people scare. And I be telling scary stories and they get so scary that they jump from up under the cover and run downstairs to my mom.” However, at school Latonya initially stated, “Well, I don’t really tell scary stories at school, I just read.” After a little talk about scary stories, Latonya recalled that during “silent reading” she and her classmates can indeed tell stories. According to JB, the “coatroom is the place Latonya uses as a place for privacy” while she tells her stories in class. Additionally, Latonya likes to “turn off the lights” as she tells her stories. JB also stated that once Latonya told a story so scary that it actually scared the students. Perhaps, this is the reason why Latonya has elected not to tell scary stories at school.
Discussion.

As I talked to Latonya, it was evident that the relationship between school and home was a connected one. As indicated in Table 4.10, experiences such as using classroom recipes at home and bringing her own books to school to read, and using the dictionary at school and at home all indicated to me that Latonya saw reading at school and home as an interactive process.

Additionally, at home Latonya enjoys writing poems, specifically, acrostic poems. Describing acrostic poems, Latonya stated “Acrostic poems they go down like straight down and the big letter like if it is the ‘I’ you can add a ‘t’ to make it ‘it.’ And just regular poems, you just write instead of going down.” Further, Latonya stated that she learned about acrostic poems from “a book that was read in class.”

Latonya enjoys storytelling at home, as she reminds me that she likes “to tell scary stories to my brother and cousins.” Latonya does tell stories at school during silent reading time; however, it is her choice not to tell scary ones at school.
Table 4.10. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Latonya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities Between School and Home</th>
<th>Discontinuities Between Home and School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recipes given at school are used at home</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya reads chapter books</td>
<td>None Noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya brings her books from home to school to read and share</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dictionary is used for challenging words</td>
<td>None Noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya writes poems (acrostic)</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya writes stories</td>
<td>None Noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dictionary is used for challenging words</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Storytelling</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tells stories at home and at school</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya tells stories during silent reading time</td>
<td>Does not tell scary stories at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bill is a soft spoken third grader who enjoys skateboarding and playing chess at home. Bill answered his interview questions very succinctly and it this reason that I included his interview nearly in its entirety.

Comic books, Simpsons books and scary books are the types of books Bill enjoys reading. Bill stated he likes reading at home because “I have a lot of books I like.” Bill reported that his mom reads with him at home; yet, he did not recall any of his favorite books that he likes for his mom to read at home.
As far as writing is concerned, Bill enjoys making comic books. His interest in reading about The Simpsons and scary themes is utilized in his school writing as Bill reported that the kind of writing that he does at school is centered around “Simpsons and Star Wars.” The interview began:

Verdie Let’s talk a little bit about learning to read at home. What kinds of reading do you do at home?

Bill I read comic books, Simpson books.

Verdie So what kinds of books do you like to read?

Bill Simpson and scary ones.

Similar to Bill’s reading at home, his writing at home also reflects his interest in comic books; as Bill reminded me that one kind of writing he does at home is “I make comic books.” Bill, smilingly, told me that one of his comic books he has written at home is “about aliens.” As Bill and I continued to talk, it was evident that Bill’s interest in Star Wars and The Simpsons manifested itself in his school writing:

Verdie So do you write at school?

Bill Yes.

Verdie What kinds of things do you write about at school?

Bill Simpson and Star Wars.

So that I might learn more about the similarities and differences between school writing and home writing, the following dialogue occurred:
Verdie What about writing at school? How is writing at school different from writing at home?

Bill I do more of it at school.

Verdie What about writing at school—what is it about writing that you like?

Bill That I have more time to write.

Verdie Is there anything about writing at school that you do not like?

Bill No.

Verdie What about writing at home? What is it about writing at home that you like?

Bill I can write anything I want.

Verdie Can you write anything you want at school?

Bill No.

Verdie What is it about writing at home that you don’t like?

Bill Nothing.

According to Bill, he does not tell stories at home; however, there is one person who tells stories to Bill at home:

Verdie Does any one tell stories to you at home?

Bill My mom.

Verdie What kinds of stories does she tell?

Bill Scary.
Bill’s enjoyment for scary themes seems to manifest itself even during story telling at home. What are the similarities and differences between home and school reading? To answer this question, our conversation continued:

Verdie Do you have reading at school?
Bill Yes.
Verdie How is reading at school different from reading at home?
Bill I read more at school.
Verdie What about the kinds of things you read at home and the kinds of things you read at school. Are they the same?
Bill Yeah.
Verdie I want you to think about school for a minute. What at school do you like about reading?
Bill I can read with my friends.
Verdie So what is it about reading you don’t like at school?
Bill Nothing.
Verdie What about reading at home? What is it about reading you like at home?
Bill I have a lot of the books I like.
Verdie Is there anything you don’t like about reading at home.
Bill No.

Discussion.

As shown in Table 4.11, Bill reported that he read more at school, and he wrote more at school. Also, concerning writing at school, Bill felt that he was restricted in his
writing themes, as he stated “I can write anything I want” at home, but, Bill felt he could not write about anything he wanted to at school. This seemed to contradict his stated examples of incorporating his favorite TV characters, The Simpsons, in his school writing; as Bill reported that the kind of writing that he does at school is “Simpsons and Star Wars.” Perhaps Bill has additional themes which he desires to explore. Nevertheless, Bill likes writing at school because “I have more time to write.”

The kinds of books that Bill reads at school are similar to the kinds of books that he reads at home. Bill recognizes that at home he has more books that he likes; yet, there is “nothing” that he dislikes about reading at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities Between School and Home</th>
<th>Discontinuities Between Home and School</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kinds of books that Bill reads at home and at school are the same. Bill stated there is “nothing” about reading at school that he does not like.</td>
<td>“I read more at school.” “I read more books at home that I like.” “I have lots of books I like” at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill incorporates his favorite tv character in his writings at school (The Simpsons and Star Wars)</td>
<td>“I do more writing at school” and can not write anything he wants to write at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Bill
Apple

Apple is a third grader who always displays a calm and caring demeanor as he interacts throughout the classroom. Apple has cerebral palsy which limits the use of his right arm. After two weeks observing JB’s classroom, this was not evident to me until one day Apple said “I can’t do this because I am handicap.” Immediately I looked to locate the handicap to which he was referring. Then I realized his almost immobile right arm. Even though Apple calls it a handicap, my classroom observations have not evidenced a handicap; for, Apple works around his immobile arm to the point that one does not see a handicap. Nevertheless, Apple displays a high self esteem. Throughout the research period, Apple and I grew close to each other. While I was visiting during one of the classroom parties, I saw Apple’s mother. She said “Apple talks a lot about you…”

Apple’s description of his learning at home consists of doing “math, reading and learning about consequences.” One example of learning about consequences is “like staying in your room for fifteen minutes or not getting to play or anything that day.” Reading at home for Apple consists of playing “video games and playing checkers” with his dad. Reading books is not something that Apple does a lot of as he reminded me that “I do read a little bit but I don’t really like to read sort of sometimes. I read Christmas books like Santa, *Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1982) and books like that.”

As far as writing is concerned, Apple writes letters to his aunts, uncles and cousins. Apple reported that “I write a lot and I like writing.” Yet, he does not write a lot at home because “most of the time I like to play with my friends at home.” Apple made another point about writing: I asked him to describe the kind of writing he does in school,
Apple said “I do nice writing.” Apple takes much time in producing written class work in his best penmanship. This is one of the first qualities one notices about Apple’s writing. The other quality one will notice is that Apple’s content in writing is one which is almost always profound and has a spiritual nature to the theme. In fact, Apple’s mother and I, on several occasions, talked about Apple’s writing and how his writing has such an emotional effect on the reader. After talking about home and community learning, Apple’s interview continued:

Verdie Let’s compare learning to read at home and learning to read at school. How is learning to read at school the same as learning to read at home?

Apple Well, I don’t really like reading in home and school. I like it sometimes when I feel like it is a really good book like a kid’s Bible or sort of medium books to me like in the middle like hard and easy.

Verdie So do you read the Bible a lot at home?

Apple Well, I have this kid’s Bible and it is really good and it is easy for me to read.

Verdie So do you read the Bible a lot at home?

Apple About, (thinking) two or three times a week.

Verdie So how are they the same again, reading at home and reading at school?

Apple Sort of hard.

Apple describes reading both at home and at school as being hard; however, he does feel his kid’s Bible and other books that are in the middle range of reading difficulty (between “hard and easy” to read books) are most appealing to his reading desires. Apple also discussed differences between reading at home and school:
Verdie Think about reading at home and reading at school. This time I want you to tell me the difference between reading at home and reading at school.

Apple I don’t really read a lot at home. I hardly read at home. And I don’t have a lot of time to read at home but I read at school because we have silent reading.

Verdie What about the kind of reading you do at home and the kind you do at school. What are the differences?

Apple Ummm, ummm.

Verdie Like you were talking about your Bible at home.

Apple Well, we don’t have a Bible at school. I read very easy books at school. I read more at school.

Time constraints seem to be one of the reasons Apple does not read often at home.

On the other hand, “silent reading” in school seems to be the contributing factor to Apple’s reading at school. During the silent reading period in school, Apple is able to read the kinds of books he likes to read— the “very easy” ones.

As was shown earlier in this chapter, JB offers literacy circles on a regular basis.

Concerning literacy circles and his reading, Apple had this to say:

Apple I don’t like to have literacy circles because she gives us chapter books for literacy circles and I can’t finish the chapter book in like one day or like a week, but everybody else finishes it in and that’s the same thing with Castle in the Attic (Winthrop, 1986), it was in literacy circle...

Verdie But in your literacy circle, aren’t there some picture books?

Apple Yeah, but not for our high reading. JB gives us chapter books.

Verdie So you have to choose from the chapter books?

Apple Yeah. And usually the picture books are not really good.
Apple seems to be constrained by both the selection of chapter books and the limited time he has to read the books. In one of my observations of literacy circles, I learned that the literacy circle groups consists of mini groups: Apple belongs to one. Each mini group decides collaboratively the time span in which they will complete the reading of its selected book. However, sometimes the group sets unrealistic time spans. It is during these times that JB intervenes and negotiate the goals with the group members. Nevertheless, as a member of the group, Apple has a voice in deciding how long the group will take to read the book. Concerning writing, the following conversation ensued:

Verdie What about writing at home and writing at school. What are the differences?

Apple I kind of do it quick because I don’t have to do... I do it off and on like one story off and on because I don’t have to do it in one day.

Verdie This is where, at home or at school?

Apple At home. And at school I have to finish my story in one day. So they are kind of faster and softer paces.

Verdie At school you have to work faster and at home you have to...

Apple Work off and on.

Verdie Do you like working off and on? Do you prefer that rather than.

Apple I prefer that than doing it fast.

Verdie Who said you had to do it fast at school? Did someone say you had to or is this something that you think you have to do?

Apple It is something that JB said to do. Like sometimes we have to like for like practice or pufis, I can’t say it...

Verdie Purpose?
Apple  Yeah, purpose. Well I have to write in about five minutes and that’s really, really fast.

My classroom observations have evidenced that the five minutes limit that Apple referred to above is applicable during the selected times throughout the year that JB allows her students to practice test taking skills for the writing portion of the district wide test. Otherwise, the regular morning writing block lasts anywhere from thirty minutes to one hour. Apple enjoys writing, and he takes extra care in making sure his written presentations are very, very, neat. Because of his enjoyment for writing and the special detail with his penmanship, perhaps no specific amount of time is long enough for Apple. How is writing at home and at school the same? To this, Apple responded:

Apple  I write a lot and I like writing.

Verdie Do you write a lot at home and at school?

Apple  Well, not very much home, but at school, yeah.

Verdie So why do you think you write a lot at school and not at home. Is that something you choose to do or what?

Apple  Choose, because most of the times I like to play with my friends at home.

As discussed above, Apple takes pride in his written work. Because of his pride in written work, Apple constantly seeks ways to improve his writing at school; as the following excerpt illustrates:

Verdie What do you like most about learning to write at school?

Apple  Like things I left out and things that make my story better.
Verdie Like what kinds of things that make your story better?

Apple Like adding words and exclamation marks or question marks.

Apple does not leave his learnings concerning punctuation at school; he transfers these learnings to his home writing. To the question, Do you use those marks at home also?, Apple gave a cheerful "yes." Apple also discussed some factors that he does not like about writing at school: the following dialogue points to these factors:

Apple When people correct me. Like when I end a story and I am really, really happy. My mom says you missed this letter in this word. I don’t really like that. Because if I had finished the story I have to do it again.

Verdie You can add that little arrow, right?

Apple Yeah, but when I have the exact space between words I have to erase the whole thing.

Just as Apple has to “erase the whole thing” at home when he makes a mistake during writing, at school he also has to “do it over and over” only when it is a final draft because Apple stated, “the final draft you have to have everything exactly right.” At school, Apple has other options to correct written mistakes. For example, Apple stated that he can “Ask JB if she has white out or I can put a piece of tape on it (the mistake).” These two methods and others such as using arrows to redirect a sentence are often evidenced in Apple’s written class work.
Discussion.

My conversation with Apple revealed that there is much discontinuity between home and school writing. Expectations pertaining to time constraints, speed in reading and writing and the amount of reading and writing all seem to differ between home and school. Concerning writing expectations pertaining to time constraints, Apple stated that he works off and on only at home and at school he has to write faster. As indicated earlier, Apple really enjoys writing. Perhaps this is the reason why he does not realize that the majority of his class writing is indeed completed across time. My observations evidenced that, in most instances, Apple and the other students work on their written pieces for a period of days, and in some cases, weeks.

Continuity between home and school exists as it relates to the strategies of writing (punctuation). This was evident through Apple's discussion that similar to home writing, he liked writing at school because he liked “things I left out and things that make my story better. Like adding words and exclamation marks or question marks.” The information concerning punctuation that Apple learns at school is therefore transferred and incorporated in his home writing.

Moreover, Apple described reading experiences at home and at school as “hard.” Further, Apple stated that he really did not like reading either at home or at school. However, Apple seemed to have an interest in his kid’s Bible. He classifies his Bible as “sort of medium” book. As shown in Chapter Two, Fishman's (1988) study illustrated how reading for the Amish was socially constructed and defined. Similarly, it seemed as though Apple, too, is defining his kid’s Bible as a “good book”- one that is contextually
meaningful to him. Later in this chapter, Apple's perspective of the Bible will be further explored as Apple's mother (Sara G.) gives more insight in Apple's home life. Table 4.12 highlights the continuities and discontinuities that exist between Apple's literacy learning at home and school.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities Between School and Home</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I don't really like reading in home and school. I like it sometimes when I feel like it is a really good book like a kid's Bible or sort of medium books to me like in the middle like hard and easy.&quot;</td>
<td>Does not have a kid’s Bible at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading at home and at school is &quot;sort of hard.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Reads more at school-hardly reads at home&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses punctuation in writing at home and at school</td>
<td>At home Apple does not have to finish a story in one day. At school “I have to finish my story in one day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewrites written pieces both at home and at school</td>
<td>At school Apple works “faster” and at home he works “off and on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None noted</td>
<td>Does not write much at home, but at school does write a lot.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4.12. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for Apple
Summary of Students' Interviews

The student interviews revealed that both continuity and discontinuity existed between home and school literacy practices. One continuity that was revealed centers around the students' indication that they often read chapter books at home. My classroom observations have evidenced that the students are exposed on a daily basis to many varieties of books including chapter and picture books.

Some of the students described reading and writing at home as an extension of classroom activities. For example, Latonya learned how to write acrostic poems at school. She transferred this learning to her home writing and presently, Latonya writes acrostic poems often at home. Other students described reading and writing at home as a seamless process; as one student stated, reading at home is just as “easier or harder as it would be at school.”

Even though there were many continuities between reading and writing at home and school, discontinuities, too existed between home and school reading. One such discontinuity is centered around the amount of reading in which the students were engaged. For some students, more reading was done in the home, while others engaged in more reading in the school setting.

Time constraints, that is, students having to complete their writing within a specified time period, seem to indicate discontinuity between writing at school and home for some of the students. Additionally, the volume of writing differs at school and home; as some students stated that they did more writing at school than at home.
The classroom process of rewriting conflicted with some of the students' home writing experiences; rewriting pieces of writing was simply not a process that was required in these students’ homes.

Concerning storytelling, many students stated that either they or a parent told stories in the home setting. However, few of these students elected to tell stories at school even though, as Latonya stated, they can indeed tell stories during "silent reading." Table 4.13 shows a compiled list of ways that suggested both discontinuity and continuity between home literacy experiences and those of the school.
## Table 4.13. Home and School Continuities and Discontinuities for All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities Between School and Home</th>
<th>Discontinuities Between Home and School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I don’t really like reading in home and school. I like it sometimes when I feel like it is a really good book like a kid’s Bible or sort of medium books to me like in the middle like hard and easy.”</td>
<td>Does not have a kid’s Bible at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading at home and at school is “sort of hard.”</td>
<td>“Reads more at school-hardly reads at home”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kinds of books that Bill reads at home and at school are the same.</td>
<td>Does not have enough time to finish chapter books in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill stated there is “nothing” about reading at school that he does not like.</td>
<td>“I read more at school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipes given at school are used at home</td>
<td>“I read more books at home that I like.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latonya reads chapter books</td>
<td>“I have lots of books I like” at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latonya brings her books from home to school to read and share</td>
<td>At school, “I read by myself and at home I read with my parents.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dictionary is used for learning new, challenging words</td>
<td>They (school) don’t really tell you what the words are they just tell you to sound it out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will reads chapter books</td>
<td>“It is very rare” that Joe can utilize his reading skills via using computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes they (school and home) “like you read like certain kinds of books and do something with it like read a book and write a report on what you read about.”</td>
<td>Where you can read-you can read outside at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading overall is the same at home as at school. “It is just as easier or harder as it would be at home” as compared to school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes “we have to read the same books that you do at school.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses punctuation in writing at home and at school</td>
<td>At home Apple does not have to finish a story in one day. At school “I have to finish my story in one day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewrites written pieces both at home and at school</td>
<td>At school Apple works “faster” and at home he works “off and on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill incorporates his favorite tv character in his writings at school (The Simpsons and Star Wars)</td>
<td>Does not write much at home, but at school does write a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latonya writes stories</td>
<td>“I do more writing at school” and can not write anything he wants to write at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>The dictionary is used for writing new words and topics</td>
<td>Does not rewrite pieces of writing at home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will writes action stories</td>
<td>At school “sometimes I just say, that it is not neat and I will do it over or I will do a final draft.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Like when you learn at school, like when I first started to learn cursive I just went back home and started to write more cursive for practice.”</td>
<td>At school Justin does his “writing over” because he chooses to when it is not neat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Sometimes we have homework we have to do the same as we do at school.”</td>
<td>At home Justin does his writing over because his mom “says to do it over”. (When work is not neat)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Storytelling</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tells stories at home and at school Latonya tells stories during silent reading time</td>
<td>Does not tell scary stories at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not tell stories at home. At school stories “are read a lot.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes “you tell the same stories as we do at school.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>He gets to tell stories at home and at school.</td>
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Parents’ Perceptions

This section of Chapter Four will highlight the stories of the six parents who so willingly participated in this research. The parent’s name will be listed along side the child’s name for ease of reading. The parents who will be highlighted in this section are Sara H., Lisa, Andrea, Tiffany, Marsha and Sara G. Various methods of displaying these parents’ voices will be evident; simply because each parent had her unique way of talking and expressing herself. I attempted to capture this uniqueness as I presented their data. One parent, Sara G. (Apple’s mother), dialogued in a manner different from all the other parents; therefore, her display of data is much more detailed from the others. I hoped by presenting Sara’s data in a detailed manner that her contextual meaning of reading and writing at home will become visible. Shorter vignettes could not have effectively shown the contextual nature of reading and writing in Sara’s home.

Similar to the students, parents chose their pseudo names. The interview began immediately following the parents’ permission to tape the interview.

Sara H. (Joe’s Mother)

Early morning “drop off” time was the opportunity to see parents interact with their children and interact with JB. Because of these intimate times, Sara H. and I usually said hello to each other at least twice a week during my collection period. On the morning of the interview, Sara was excited and anxious to get started. During our dialogue, Sara revealed her description of Joe’s reading as that of “struggling.” Sara stated that Joe “really struggles with reading and he had reading recovery in first grade and he has had a
tutor from September to December and we are noticing he is reading more.” Some of the activities that Sara does at home to enrich Joe’s reading are helping Joe with rhyming words, working with syllables, helping Joe with reading the computer games, letting Joe write the grocery list, reading recipes and measuring ingredients for the recipes. Further, Sara commented:

Sara Reading wise too he sees his father is buried into the sports page. He sees him read that every single day that’s like before we even dress or have our coffee we have that sports page. So he seeing him reading that. He also reads to him at night, if we get him to bed on time he gets read to after he is in bed. And I almost always read to him at night—usually a chapter book, a book he can’t yet read by himself or a picture book. He has certain topics that he is very interested in like cats and we had a picture book last night about cats, I read him that.

Reading is modeled at home by Joe’s father and Sara, as she reminds me that, “I read, too myself; I always have a book going...” Additionally, the importance of oral reading is evident in the home as both Sara and Joe’s father read to Joe on a regular basis.

My classroom observations indicated that Joe and the rest of his classmates are routinely involved in cooking activities at school. Similarly, at home, Joe has cooking experiences. Sara shared one such cooking experience with me:

We were making popcorn the other day and I said look at the recipe we are going to make this much popcorn, how much oil do we need? How much popcorn do we need, so he was reading the measurements and getting the measuring spoon out and picking the right one out and that kind of thing.
Sara always seeks ways to assist Joe with his reading, and she relies on the school to give suggestions that might help her at home; as is evident through the following excerpts from Sara:

I think we’ve (Sara and her husband) always asked them (teachers) for you know how you are doing this at school and they have always been, the teachers here have been really good about sending home or giving us help you know telling us giving us like examples of ways that can help Joe with reading.

Sara sees the school as a support system; one that gives Sara and her family suggestions about activities or educational methods that can be done in the home. Such activities or methods are helpful because they strengthen Joe’s reading. Additionally, as Sara stated, “Those are methods that I think they use in the classroom that I think are good and we have from here (school) that we probably would not have thought of ourselves.” Sara elaborated on one such reading activity that was suggested by JB:

She (JB) would send home activities like some letters that he was supposed to cut up and make words with and that was really helpful for him. We would get the scrabble board out and get those wooden letters and have him make as many words as he could, and he liked that and I think that helped him a lot...

Sara continued to talk about a method that was suggested by JB—a method that she still uses with Joe:

Besides the nudge paper..., I mean that is a tactic that JB has told us that is a good one with him. And like she (JB) said the picture thing, but we haven’t done the picture thing—unless that is part of the assignment.
Utilizing the school’s ways of assisting Joe with reading seems to support Sara in her quest to help Joe become a better reader. Although Sara welcomes and utilizes many suggestions of activities from the school, sometimes she sees conflict with some of the suggestions. For example, JB recommended that Joe utilizes pictures to help him with constructing his writing pieces. Sara reminded me that “I know JB has had him to do stories of little pictures but then he (Joe) ends up taking all the time making the pictures and he thinks he has already told the story by the time he is done writing all the pictures down.” However, the “picture thing” did work once when Joe “did that about the cave trip that we went on—he drew his cave pictures first and then he did the writing afterwards.” However, Sara admitted that this is not a method that she employs on a regular basis at home.

According to Sara, everything that Joe does is a very slow process and Joe “can not hurry, he is physically not able to hurry and you can try anything you want, bribery anything, it doesn’t work. He is real slow with everything especially with homework.” At home, Sara has to work around Joe’s slowness. Additionally, Sara recognizes that the school, too adjusts to Joe’s needs surrounding unfinished class work, as is illustrated in the following narratives below:

And the homework that he had, we just did not have time to do it all. And his teacher is wonderful and said that if you don’t have time to do the homework fine, do whatever you think will help him. So I think they are very flexible here too, if the homework is too much for them they say you do what you can and that’s okay. JB will send home work that he didn’t finish. Because he doesn’t’ concentrate, he does not focus on the stuff. He goes off in a tantrum. She sent home, he was supposed to be doing some cursive writing and there were probably about five or six sheets stapled together and he had done like two sheets...
Concerning the computer, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, Joe stated that he learns to read better when he is “doing the computer” at home. I wanted to know Sara’s perspective about this; the following dialogue took place:

Verdie Okay, one thing that Joe stated that he learns at home is that he learns to read better when “I am doing the computer at home.” Can you talk more about his learning to read and the connection between the computer and his reading?

Sara When he plays with the computer it is mostly games. Oh yes, totally. How he learns to read from that is a mystery to me (laughs). He got one name Gubble and one called Shattered Steel that he plays most of the time.

Unlike Joe’s perspective, Sara does not see the relationship between Joe’s playing the computer games and reading. In fact, at this point Sara doubts any reading is going on as Joe plays his computer games. I questioned Sara again:

Verdie There is no reading involved in those games?

Sara There is a little bit but not that much, well things like music on/off. Like he will go to options, yeah he can read the top like file, option all that stuff. He will know like okay I wonder how you will print that and he will say you probably go under file and he finds print and so he is learning that kind of thing so he can get what he needs. (Laughs) If it is going to get him what he needs that’s going to work, but really there are words in those games that they have to select, options they want, they have to select weapons like....

Verdie So he is learning..

Sara Definitely.

Verdie It is more applicable to his needs and that is why he is so interested in learning file options and all...
At this point, Sara revisited her thinking about Joe’s reading and the computer games. She now realizes that Joe was indeed reading as he manipulated his way through the games via selecting options—options “that gave him what he wanted.” Sara continued:

Sara That’s where all that comes in... In a way, the way that we have raised him, he has always had very stimulating things around him, like his computer he has gotten to select the games he wants, nintendo, all those kinds of things are very stimulating so when it comes to something that is boring that he has got to learn, he really gives up. He doesn’t put much effort into it. In a way I see that as bad, that is one bad part that comes out of it...interesting video games and things you know if something is not real stimulating they just turn off. There got to be a way around that.

Yes, Sara sees the computer as a learning tool for Joe as far as reading is concerned. However, Sara attributes the stimulative effects of the computer as a major factor contributing to Joe’s success with reading via the computer—not Joe’s interest in reading.

Writing can be a challenge; according to Sara, Joe avoids writing. Additionally, Sara stated, Joe “really does not like to write. So when he has homework that has writing in it he...when school started this year, he was, I think, completely overwhelmed by that and he would just not be able to do it at all and we would have to help him sound out the words and we would say the word slowly and he will guess a letter and we will say yeah that’s right and it was very tedious and time consuming.” However, presently, Sara stated, “he (Joe) is receiving services now, tutoring (at school) one on one every morning before school. Actually, at a quarter till nine, he gets here early and she (school tutor) is
working on reading and writing. He is learning disabled in reading and writing. We are working on that at home and she (school tutor) is working on it at school...”

Even though Sara states that writing can be a challenge for Joe, in our interview Sara painted a different picture of Joe interacting with writing, as she stated:

We do the list, the grocery list and oftentimes I will ask him how we make that list like eggs, I would say how do you spell eggs, okay eggnog well that’s two words so he will spell them separately and then we will put them together. And oftentimes I have him to write, especially if it is something he wants me to buy, like a snack thing...okay then you write that on the list...

Because of Joe’s “learning disability,” as described by Sara, more time is spent on helping Joe with his writing. Sara confessed that she can not adequately assist Joe in his writing; therefore, she utilizes the school’s resources (tutor) to assist her with Joe’s writing experiences.

When asked if she saw a correspondence between home and school, Sara responded, “Yeah, I don’t understand completely how they teach reading and writing at school here and I feel very confident in their methods although I don’t really understand them, I mean I trust that they know what they are doing. I know that they are different from the way I learned how to read.”

Sara does not quite understand how reading and writing are taught at school; however, she still feels confident that her educational expectations for Joe’s reading and writing experiences are being satisfied at school.
Lisa (Justin’s Mother)

After making initial contact with Lisa at a classroom party and after many conversations over the phone, our interview was finally set. Unlike many of the other interviews, this one was scheduled in the afternoon. As Lisa and I spotted each other in the hallway, Lisa smiled and said, “Justin told me that the interview will be in room five.” Indeed, Justin was correct. Lisa and I found our way into room five and both of us sat comfortably. Then the interview began.

Reading is important in Lisa’s home and she wants Justin to succeed in school. Lisa, therefore encourages Justin to read a lot at home. Also, “He (Justin) has his favorite books that he likes to read which are of course are really easy for him to read because he has read them over and over again. And he will prefer to just stick to that. But we encourage him to read more chapter books.” Yet, overall, Lisa realizes that Justin “does not enjoy reading, he does not enjoy doing anything that he has to just sit down and be quiet and take his time. Like I said, he would read the little short books because they don’t take him long.” Because of this, Justin opts to read books similar to “Matilda, the little spy story, because the chapters are real short.”

Reading is not only important in Lisa’s home, but also reading plays a big part in Lisa’s church. The following dialogue took place concerning reading and Lisa’s church:

Verdie You spoke of church, as far as spending a lot of time there, is there an extension as far as reading that goes on?

Lisa In Sunday school they (Justin and his sister) read in their Bible, and I encourage them to read their Bibles at home. And they also have what we call children church.
Verdie: Do they have a youth minister?

Lisa: Yes, especially on Sunday morning, they will have children's church and he will give them assignments sometimes like he will have them memorize the Old Testament or he will have them write down all the tribes of Israel, "I want you to have those for me when you come back," different things like that, and he will give them a dollar or something, some incentive to do it.

Lisa: And they have Bible bowls at church, where they have to study a certain section of the Bible and they will have questions and answers on that. They have spelling too.

Concerning similarities between school reading and home reading, Lisa recognizes reading at home for Justin in terms of an extension of what he has experienced in school. Lisa stated:

At school, I try to keep in touch with what they are doing, mostly through Justin because I used to have more time I would come out and talk to the teacher. This year I just didn't have the time to come up. I try to focus on what they are doing so he'll feel like it is an extension and he will come back and say this is what I did at home you know and be really excited about it. So if she says he needs to read chapter books then that is what I am going to encourage him to do. So what ever they are doing, that is what I encourage at home.

Thus, Lisa seems to allow the school's goals and objectives to drive Justin's reading activities at home. Therefore, Lisa does not recognize any differences between home and school reading. Defining differences between home and school reading was not easy for Lisa. My inquiry about differences led Lisa to confess, "That is hard to say. You know I am not here (at school) to see exactly what goes on at school" with reading.
Nevertheless, Lisa stated that she saw home reading as an extension of activities that Justin is exposed to at school. Viewing home reading as an extension to school readings seems to be a very comfortable bridge between home and school for Lisa.

As far as writing at home is concerned, Justin assists Lisa in writing grocery lists and he makes lists of his daily chores. Further, Lisa stated:

I make them write, I make Justin write, like I said if he reads something to me, I won’t let him tell me what he read. I make him write what he read, you know-give me a summary of what you said. Which he says can’t I just tell you. He doesn’t like to write. He will prefer to print but I know he is learning to write in cursive. So I tell him to write in cursive. Or he’ll print a few lines and then write in cursive a few and I try to explain to him, in being consistent, if you are going to print you need to print everything. If you are going to write in cursive, you need to write everything in cursive.

Appraising consistency and appearance in Justin’s writing are both important factors for Lisa. Further, as a way to strengthen Justin’s writing, Lisa places emphasis on reading as an avenue to generate writing in the home for Justin. This is illustrated in the following statements made by Lisa:

I encourage him to get the encyclopedias out and read about different places different things he might be interested in and he reads to me and we frequently makes him write reports and he has to do a lot of revisions because (laughs)...

I make them (Justin and his sister) write, I make Justin write, like I said if he reads something to me I won’t let him tell me what he read. I make him write what he read, you know give me a summary of what you said.

Writing for a purpose seems to be a goal that Lisa has for Justin’s writing- a purpose that is generated from various home readings. Additionally, content, too seems
to be another goal that Lisa has for Justin’s writing, as she reminded me, “he will just write anything, he will run his words together, run his sentences together and I will read it back to him exactly the way he has written and you know I would say you can’t understand what I am talking about. I then say you need to write this so that when you read it, you can understand it.”

Similar to reading, Lisa sees writing at home as an extension of school experiences. She reported that “He doesn’t like to write. He will prefer to print but I know he is learning to write in cursive (in school). So I tell him to write in cursive.”

Nevertheless, the following dialogue took place concerning differences between writing at home and school.

Verdie Any differences?

Lisa As far as differences go I would say that I would encourage him to be more consistent in his writing where as sometimes in his papers that he brings home I don’t see that.

Verdie Consistency as far as..?

Lisa As far as you know like I said he will print a few words, letters he knows how to write in cursive those might be print. Some of the easier shorter words might be in cursive and other words might be printed.

Just as Lisa expects Justin to be consistent with his home writing, she, too, expects Justin to be consistent with his school writing.
Andrea (Will's Mother)

Similar to many of the other parents, Andrea was usually present in the classroom when I arrived to begin my morning data collecting. Andrea was also present in the school more than many of the other parents because she managed Frederick’s Bookstore (in-school bookstore) a number of days per week. Andrea owns her own business and therefore has a flexible schedule, which facilitated our interview appointment time.

Andrea values reading in her home and she has always read to Will even before he “could understand language.” Andrea further informed me, “Primarily, from birth on that’s what we have done is that we read out loud. There are always books in the house and I buy books at garage sales; so at a quarter a piece you can have books overflowing, so they rotate through...I buy them and we have them and when no one is reading them anymore they come here to Frederick’s Bookstore (the school’s in-house bookstore). So we just have shelves of books at our house.” Additionally, to add to her book selection, Andrea often orders books from the Scholastic Book Club at school. Now that Will is older, Andrea, her husband and Will all take turns and read together: “he reads a chapter and we read a chapter.” Besides reading chapter books, Andrea stated that lately Will has been “liking to cook, so we read recipes and measure things and follow directions and do that. He has to read the recipe and find the ingredients in the house or figure a substitute, often if we don’t have what is needed.”

Other activities centered around reading were done in the home, as the following dialogue illustrates:
Andrea He (Will) just built, not he did not build it, we had a waste basket with a foot pedal where the lid open. Well, he made it into a monster, I helped him, it was all his idea though. We bought fur, we covered it with fur and put some eyeballs on the top and some jagged teeth where the mouth opened...

Verdie Creative, this is so neat.

Andrea He saw the idea in a book, it was in a book and he followed the directions in the book. He used the directions as a starting point and went from there.

Verdie He read the directions?

Andrea Yeah, and then embellished their idea, it was a Jim Henson puppet book and then he embellished on the one in the book and made it his own. And it is just a wonderful little thing..(laughs) It is delightful.

JB’s classroom is always busy with students designing and completing projects centered around reading and writing. Similarly, at home, Will engages in making projects-projects in which he must incorporate reading in order to complete them.

On discussing the similarities that Andrea sees between school reading and what she does at home with reading for Will, Andrea reported, “With what I know that goes on at school, I know JB reads out loud to them so that is the same. The silent reading and he goes off to his room sometimes, although he likes to draw more than read, he sits in his room and draws fantastic drawing. I mean reading is integrated into everything, when we are driving around we read signs, he just does it on his own now.”

Although Andrea prefaced her response with somewhat uncertainty as far as what actually goes on at school, Andrea sees a relationship between home reading aloud and school read aloud sessions. Similar to school, even silent reading is an activity that occurs at home as Andrea reminded me that “he goes off to his room sometimes” to read.
On the other hand, reporting on differences between reading at home and school, Andrea stated, “It’s for fun at home and it’s driven by him. If he wants to read he reads, I mean I can suggest but if he gets tired and doesn’t want to read, then we will just stop. I don’t know what option he has at school. I mean silent reading time is silent reading time. Although he loves reading—when we start reading out loud he doesn’t stop.”

Here again, Andrea shows some uncertainty of school reading as she stated, “I don’t know what option he has at school.” However, Andrea does recognize that at home Will’s reading is not confined to certain time periods. How much reading Will does, the length of the reading period and the purpose of reading are all determined by Will, not Andrea.

Unlike reading, writing presents a challenge for Will, and his interest level for writing is quite low. According to Andrea, Will “hates to write. I’ll have him to write whenever possible but it is always with a fight so I usually choose not to fight with him over that.” However, Andrea did reveal in her interview that Will does write phone numbers of his friends, writes grocery lists and writes phone messages for her. Yet, Andrea believes “writing is not a strong point for him, he is being tutored. He is getting extra help with... (the school tutor) on that. It was his reading, now it is his writing. Last year he shot up like four or five grades in his reading so I am hoping his writing will... He will occasionally start thinking about something and will start writing a story at home, but he doesn’t usually finish it—a big start and then he moves on to other things.”

Upon closer examination of Andrea’s earlier description of Will’s writing at home, it is clear that writing for Will is contextualized in his daily experiences. Even though
these home experiences are many, Andrea does not recognize these acts as “strong, relevant reading experiences.” In Andrea’s eyes Will needs a tutor to help him to write.

Emphasis on spelling in Andrea’s home is dependant upon the purpose of the word. Andrea doesn’t want “to correct him all the time,” so sometimes she will write something out for Will. However, if the word serves the purpose as Will is writing the grocery list and “I know that ‘letus’ is lettuce and then it is correctly thought through, I may just leave it one time or if there are five (misspellings) I may point one out.” Such practice was also evident in Will’s classroom writing.

As was shown earlier in this chapter, Will described rewriting as a process he did not have to do at home. Upon my asking about rewriting, Andrea commented, “I hadn’t really thought of that, but yeah he doesn’t have to rewrite it at home. But he’s writing for just for fun at home, except for that one thank you letter, and writing lists at home.” Another difference that Andrea sees between school and home writing is “Maybe the same thing, I will suppose here (at school) that he has to keep writing when he doesn’t want to write any more. And at home he doesn’t do that. Although, I did—when his uncle sent him those tools I did make him (laughs) write a thank you letter.”

**Tiffany (Latonya’s Mother)**

Tiffany’s interview was done over the phone. Her love and care for her children were demonstrated often as she interrupted our conversation stating, “excuse me Verdie.” Immediately after stating this, Tiffany left the phone to attend to the needs of her children. Tiffany’s voice could be heard in the background reminding her children what was
expected of them. Tiffany informed me that Latonya learned how to read by the phonics method. “Basic phonics, what each letter sounds like. And basically telling them (all of her children) that if you put the letters together, you end up with a sound. When they were two and three, like on my shirt I would tell them the letters all the time. My son is four but he knows a lot of letters. I have a lot of letter books.” Reading goes on all the time in Tiffany’s home. Tiffany explained, “I read all kinds of books. I like to read Rosa Guy, she is a Black author. I read the basic books to the children. Latonya reads to Shawn and her brother. They have a lot of children’s books. We read a lot. I tell them in a minute to sit down and read a book.”

As was shown earlier in this chapter, Latonya discussed the cookbook that is in her home as a book that she read on a regular basis. I wanted to know more about the cookbook, thus, the following conversation occurred:

Verdie Tell me more about the Family Reunion Cookbook.

Tiffany The Black Family Reunion Cookbook. I like a lot of soul food and this book was put out by the National Council of Negro Women. I read to them from it and the beginning of the book begins with the Black Family Reunion Pledge by Maya Angelou. I read from the cookbook, the legacy about the founder of the National Council of Negro Women, Mary M. Bethune, is the beginning. The book also talk about different kinds of cloth like kente and it talk about stars and actors and actresses’ childhood memories of recipes.

Tiffany takes much pride in knowing that she is exposing the children to a book that has, yes, recipes, but also historical information that is grounded in their African American heritage.
Earlier in this chapter, Latonya discussed the uses of the dictionary in her home.

Tiffany possesses a different purpose for the dictionary: "It is a children’s dictionary and I am hoping to get a regular dictionary. When the children get in trouble, I tell them to get the dictionary and pick out three words and write the words and the definition." Thus, Tiffany’s primary use of the dictionary in her home is to discipline her children for misbehavior. However, through her discipline method, Tiffany feels that her children’s time is well spent because they are learning new words. Thus, Tiffany seems to believe that through her discipline method of writing the definitions and words, her children will also strengthen their vocabularies.

Are there any differences or similarities between home and school reading and writing that Tiffany recognizes? The following dialogue helped shed light on this question:

Tiffany  No differences. She has a lot of chapter books here so that she could expand. There is really not much difference. But she has a lot more African American books here.

Verdie  Similarities?

Tiffany  She will pretty much sound out her words.

Verdie  Writing, differences?

Tiffany  I am trying to get her to be more description in her stories, use adjectives and give people a picture of how it looks. I also tell her to slow down writing and take her time more.

Overall, Tiffany sees a connection between home and school learning. Although as far as reading is concerned, Tiffany does, however, recognize that there are more African
American books present in her home. As far as writing at home is concerned, Tiffany is presently assisting Latonya in trying to be more descriptive in her writing. Additionally, Tiffany exerts much emphasis on trying to help Latonya to “slow down” during her writing. Similarly, the goals that Latonya and Tiffany set during a student-led conference, illustrate the same concerns (see Appendix F).

**Marsha (Bill’s Mother)**

In her description of reading at home for Bill, Marsha stated that Bill is an “avid” reader and he has favorite “books like Jon Scieszka’s Stupid Tales....that he will read over and over and over and I will read over and over.” Further, Marsha explains that Bill enjoys being read to at night and one goal that she has for Bill’s reading at home is to move Bill into a “turn taking thing” where he reads some and she reads. Additionally, Marsha feels that Bill is a “transitional reader” and she is trying to get Bill “to start to read books that are a little more difficult and challenging.” Earlier in this chapter, Bill stated that he enjoyed skateboarding. According to Marsha, Bill reads both snowboarding and skateboarding magazines pretty “avidly.”

Although Marsha reminded me she has “ never sat and watched the reading instruction that he (Bill) gets at school,” she has her own assumptions about Bill’s experiences at school. Marsha stated, “I assume that the kinds of things that I do with him (Bill) which is reading aloud to him, having conversations about what we read, encouraging him to do some, well in a sense he is buddy reading with me at home, and I assume he does buddy reading at school. So I assume there is a pretty close one to one,
almost one to one....” Yet, a difference that Marsha sees is that she doesn’t “require any particular amount of reading” for Bill.

As far as similarities between writing at home and school are concerned, the following dialogue took place:

Marsha: Well, as I said writing at home is much more spontaneous and has to do with their interest and hobbies, like cartooning or writing like little stories about the dog or something. Although, I have seen, because JB is the kind of teacher she is, they have lots of choice in writing so I do see a lot of similarities between what he writes at home and what he writes at school. So you know I know JB had them to write about their dogs at one point...

Verdie: Yeah, the pets...

Marsha: Bill did a Griffy kill list-charting all the things Griffy killed and that is something that Bill would do at home anyway. He loves to write—he does funny, silly things like that and JB because she lets them have that freedom. The funniest thing was when he did the biography of my husband, it was hilarious. And that was done, I mean that was clearly done, I was there when he interviewed (his dad) and I helped him write down some of the words and I saw the final product and that was a seamless process between school and home.

As far as differences between writing at school and home are concerned, Marsha replied, “You know obviously I don’t make him rewrite anything at home.”

Sara G. (Apple’s Mother)

Sara G. admitted, “I am not a mother that can say that I take every night and sit with my son and I read to him and Apple reads to me, you know, we don’t do that.”

Nevertheless, Apple reads cereal boxes in the mornings, reads directions for activities he works with at home and reads TV captions. Additionally, in church “Biblically, every Sunday he gets reading. He reads at church, and we do activities with him as far as he is
actually a part of the service at church. He does service reading.” Further, concerning reading, Sara shared the following:

You know it is really hard to as a parent to sit down and take the time to say whether it is reading a book or reading this or that, but I think reading as a whole whether it is reading or writing or whatever you are doing is conversation as a whole. It is explaining things, accepting things. There are times in our conversation that I will bring up a new word and he would say what does that mean? And I would say, first of all, close your eyes. I will say, this is how the word sounds, I want you to remember that, this is what it means. So I think in everyday life, in conversation if you take the time to know what a particular child wants...learn from either reading, doing or by being. Apple is a child that is very into all of that but he gets it from his being, and if being is the present of where ever he is at he is learning from that.

Sara presented a picture of reading that is contextualized in her and Apple’s daily home experiences. This contextualized way of viewing reading in Apple’s home is further illustrated in the following dialogue.

Verdie So do you see reading, first of all you are saying you don’t really do isolated reading activities or reading skills as far as reading is concerned? They are embedded in your everyday experiences is basically what you are saying?

Sara Sure, well sure, because if you capture every moment that you are with your child, and you capture what you can capture out of that and put into a lesson. Whether it, take for instance—he came home with some spelling words the other day. One of the words was beautiful. He could get the ending, the “tiful” out of that could not get the “b” and the three vowels that went together and the order they were in. So I said, close your eyes. We talked about and spelled it to him and he still couldn’t get it and that’s okay. There’s an opportunity—what is beautiful? He talked about things that were beautiful to him. We talked about how beautiful made him feel. When someone says you are beautiful, how does that make you feel? So we went through that and I ended up doing what my mother had done for years with me. And I captured the “b”, the “e”, the “a”, and the “u” perfectly and that was, I said Apple, many people say you need to “be” “a” beautiful person, okay. And that’s “b-e”, you know how to spell be, they are
saying you need to be “a”so a is after that and beautiful is “u”. You are beautiful. People say you need to be a beautiful person but you know you are beautiful. There is your..."b-e- a” you are already a beautiful person. So what is that? Is that writing, is that reading, is that a life’s lesson, is that philosophy, is that history, is that faith? That is everything in a whole. Okay, that’s what our family feeds off.

Reading in Sara’s home is not just one isolated event; rather, reading encompasses faith, history, everyday experiences and Apple’s individual needs. It is through these factors that Sara makes connections. Through these connections, Apple is able to make meaning of reading, or in the above instance, the spelling word, beautiful. The dialogue continued:

Sara We go as a whole, we don’t separate reading writing, math, everything else, I think what is real important to go along with that is being himself, I have already told him that God sent him here and he already has that knowledge. He has it already, it is a given, all that he needs to know is that you are that person and that you can do what you can do. And I think, you know, the life’s lesson fall into reading and writing, it is just like when there is a birthday, when there is a holiday or when there is this or that, his life’s lesson is already compassion, human feelings and being true to himself because we practice...being true to yourself, respecting yourself and then being true to others and respecting others. So when that life’s lesson comes in on reading and writing is he is true to his feelings. He sits and he would write a card out, what is that? He doesn’t know how to spell something, he comes to mom or dad. Is that a good word to use, can I use another word? Well, I do know of another word that you probably don’t, aren’t aware of. This is really neat word, I tell him the word and tell him what it means and he would say, you know what I can use that.

Verdie Hence, the learning, very contextual.

Sara Okay, so it is every day.

Verdie Every day experiences.

Sara Yeah, it is not a set time, a set schedule. It is not a separate entity, it is on a whole, it is what is and it’s how you perceive that and the time..
Okay, so I understand that contextual nature. And you have answered my question which is dealing with writing. It is not separate. So concerning reading and writing then, compare what happens in your home as far as reading and writing and the nature of reading and writing in your home to the way Apple learns it at school or the way he is exposed to reading and writing at school, as far as you know, as far as those experiences that Apple has talked to you about..

As far as school goes, yeah, they come with spelling bees, they have spelling bees, they come home with words that they have to learn and stuff like that. And it is not that I am against that in any way because a foremost discipline is good too. And that has to be kept in context also. You know—he says why do I always have to learn these words this way? And I am like, it is okay, it’s discipline and it is what you need to know, you might already know them here, but this is the way pretty much whether it is C. Public Schools or society ...says it is the best learning process and it is all good...

Even though Sara’s home ways of exposing Apple to reading are contextually grounded in faith, history and everyday experiences, she is able to embrace the school’s conflicting reading methods. Her confidence in the school’s methods is premised in Sara’s belief that they are “the best learning processes.” Combining her home reading experiences along with the school’s methods seem to compliment Apple’s multiple roads to reading. This seems to be an acceptable bridge between home and school reading for Sara.

I think that the school as a whole does a wonderful job with writing. And I think that is mainly why I picked this school is because they are so very feeling oriented, very need oriented, what is your need and how can I help kind of situation. That makes him more comfortable as a whole and then once he is more comfortable then those feelings can come out and he can write. It is just getting him to understand that not everything in life is going to be what you want it to be and I think that he is learning that here also and that we have to sometimes do things we don’t want to do, but it is all okay because all of that is
nothing but a learning process and I think here as far as they do the writing, they
do the reading, they do the spelling bees and the words every week and stuff like
that, like I said that’s pretty much discipline and that’s fine and I don’t disagree
with that and it is something that I want to help him on because that is part of
that discipline is hard for him because the discipline that he is given at home is
not a discipline. You are given choices, you may have three choices and the
choices have consequences. So the discipline is so new to him even in third
grade that it scares him. It is not hurtful discipline, but it still is discipline so
there is this Apple he is very, very centered and loving and caring and he has
always had choices and now they are saying you need to do this and let’s do it
today...

Here, Sara describes discipline as synonymous with routines or set schedules. Sara
sees the school’s discipline and time constraints as being in conflict with Apple’s home
background experiences. Since time constraints are not common in Sara’s home, they are
therefore unfamiliar to Apple. For example, Sara stated, “You know what happens is with
school, there is a time frame and between the discipline and time frame it throws him off
because everything in his life, he is eight years old, every thing in his life has been when
you are ready you will go through that.” Sara continued:

So is that wrong or right? You know, but it is all on the whole lesson of
life and it’s okay and really right now he does get very frustrated and the
frustration comes out in tears because he feels overwhelmed. So that is
something that we need to on a whole, as a family work towards a little
more discipline as far as time frame, and what can we do to even this out
for you.

Sara seems to feel that in order to connect the bridge between home and school,
she must embrace the school’s discipline as far as time frame is concerned. In other
words, Sara sees the utilization of the school’s ways of doing reading and writing along
with her home ways will benefit Apple’s reading experiences. Yet, explaining the similarities between home and school reading and writing elicited the following comments.

Sara Very positiveness here, I mean I know when there is a frustrating moment for Apple I mean those teachers are right in there and they are like it’s okay, you are going to get this and it is going to be fine and then you are going to be proud of yourself afterwards. And I think that positiveness here is, it knocks you in the face, I mean it is so prevalent in any room you walk into. There is so much positive reinforcement and that is why I chose this alternative school...

Verdie So do you see a connection, a strong connection between home and school as far as the positiveness is concerned?

Sara Yeah. And the connection with when there are problems, the teachers coming to the parents and saying you know, I shouldn’t have said problems, but you know if there’s a situation that they need help in, they are more than willing to come and discuss it and discuss it as a whole. They work here with the parent and the child together and I think that that is a very crucial relationship especially in elementary school. So I see that, that is a greatness also here.

After the interview ended, Sara and I continued to talk about Apple’s home life. As we talked, I soon realized that I needed to turn the recorder back on. I asked Sara to stop talking just “for a minute so that I can turn the recorder back on.” She patiently held her thought until I assembled all of my recorder parts. The following excerpt is where Sara picked up the conversation. It is placed here because it further situates the nature of reading and writing in Sara’s home.

Sara ....How can I speak to this when you go in kindergarten and the teacher says read everyday with your child, you know, sit down and write with them, and write words out and do this and do that and you know get the flash cards and yeah we have don that as a game and stuff. And I said well how can I speak to this when we don’t do it. Is this something..am I supposed to come and talk to Verdie about these things because am I being put in check again. You know, sometimes parents need to be put in check and go you know, maybe you should be doing more of
this, maybe you shouldn’t be doing more of this and I sat down and I meditated and I said it has nothing to do with that. Apple is very intelligent, knows where he wants to go, has strong sense of people’s feelings and his own and obviously, he is above grade level in reading, writing he does excellent, perfectionist but that (laughs) is partly me. Math he is on almost a grade level above. So what does that tell me. That tells me that what I am doing on a whole, it maybe a different approach but doing that on a whole is working. And it depends on each individual child what is going to work. Does a person who sits down with their children every night and read a book or a parent that takes an hour out every night and makes this child read- is that a bad thing? No. Is that child happy with that? Is that child thriving with that? Is this the only time that your child is getting one on one attention? Then guess what—all of that on a whole is good for that child. That’s the right thing. So there is no wrongs or rights. It’s what your child needs as a whole.

Verdie That’s true... a terrific philosophy.

**Summary of Parents’ Interviews**

As Table 4.14 illustrates, the overarching themes from the parents’ interviews center around parents describing Happy Alternative Elementary School as a resource center and support system. Additionally, parents possessed a high level of confidence in Happy Alternative Elementary School, and they saw home reading and writing as an extension of the school’s experiences.
1. Parents see the school as a:
   a. resource center
   b. support system

2. Parents possess a high level of confidence in the school’s teaching methods

3. Parents see home reading and writing experiences as an extension of the school’s experiences

Table 4.14. Themes From the Parents’ Interviews

Schools can indeed be great resources for parents. According to the parents, Happy Alternative Elementary School is one such school that serves as a resource. For example, parents relied on Happy Alternative Elementary School to provide tutoring services to assist their children with reading and writing. This service is conveniently offered early in the mornings before school even begins. This early morning time seems to work well for the parents who use this service. Further, several of the parents indicated that their children were learning disabled. It was the resource of Happy Alternative Elementary School that provided the testing for these students.

Moreover, parents described Happy Alternative Elementary School as a support system for their children’s home learning. Parents relied on JB to suggest methods to assist with their children’s reading and writing difficulties. Methods such as suggesting certain classroom techniques that work in the classroom were welcomed by the parents. For example, through interacting with JB, Sara H. learned how to use the classroom technique of “nudge paper” with Joe at home. Nudge paper is a technique that JB uses to allow her students to write attempts with spelling unfamiliar words; in other words, this
paper is used to nudge their thinking. Sara readily stated that, similar to the results of this technique at school, at home this technique is helping Joe with trying to spell words that he would otherwise come to her for the spelling. Still other parents rely on Happy Alternative Elementary School to support their children's differences in rates of completing classroom reading and writing assignments. Parents praised JB for allowing their children to complete unfinished class work in the home setting. Similarly, the same is true for homework; as Sara H. reminded me the Joe is “very slow with everything, especially homework,” and it can take hours for him to complete just a few pages of written work. Sara H. appreciates JB’s understanding of Joe’s limitations with his completion of homework assignments. Sara H. approvingly stated that “if the homework is too much for them (the students), they (the teachers) say-you do what you can and that’s okay.”

Perhaps, the most prevalent theme from the parents’ interviews was the parents' level of confidence with Happy Alternative Elementary School’s ways of teaching reading and writing. Even though the parents admitted that they knew little about the classroom methods that JB employed in writing and reading, they, nevertheless, possessed an overwhelming level of confidence and trust in JB’s literacy teaching methods. Table 4.15 gives some of the parents’ verbal affirmations of their confidence with the teaching methods that their children are exposed to at Happy Alternative Elementary School.
"I don’t understand completely how they teach reading and writing at school here and I feel very confident in their methods, although I don’t really understand them, I mean I trust that they know what they are doing.”

“You know I am not there at school to see exactly what goes on at school, but I do see reading and writing at home as an extension of school work.”

“I have never sat and watched the reading instruction that he gets at school. I don’t, you know I have never sat and watched the reading instruction that he gets at school so I assume that the kinds of things that the kinds of things that I do with him which is reading aloud to him, having conversations about what we read, encouraging him to do some, well in a sense he is buddy reading with me at home, and I assume he does buddy reading at school, so I assume there is a pretty close one to one, almost one to one, what you need to know too is that I trained J at the undergraduate level, now she has been through the entire reading masters program without me since then but I suspect that there are some of the same or similar things…”

“This is what Cook Public Schools or society says is the best learning process and it is all good.”

Table 4.15. Citations of Parents’ Confidence with the School

Parents also see home reading and writing experiences as an extension of their children’s school experiences. Lisa reminded me of this as she stated, “I try to focus on what they are doing so he’ll feel like it is an extension and he will come back and say this is what I did at home you know and be really excited about it. So if she(JB) says he needs to read chapter books then that is what I am going to encourage him to do. So what ever they are doing, that is what I encourage at home.” Extending the school’s reading experiences to the home is a comfortable home-school connection for Lisa and other parents.
Chapter Summary

JB’s multiple strategies for teaching literacy at Happy Alternative Elementary School certainly suggest that she believes that there are also multiple roads to becoming literate. To assist her students in traveling their personal roads to literacy, JB uses six major culturally responsive teaching strategies: providing choices in terms of participation structures, learning space, and materials; bidding for student voices; embracing constructivist literacy teaching and learning; promoting critical thinking during literacy discussions; providing authentic, multicultural literature; and bridging home and school via classroom activities and written communications. These six strategies are the backbone of JB’s literacy teaching; by using them, it is evident that JB legitimizes her students’ personal and multiple roads to literacy.

Similarly, JB’s philosophy also suggests that she values her students’ diverse backgrounds in their literacy learnings. Therefore, by allowing her students to have choices in their literacy learnings, for example, JB was showing her students that she values their unique home ways of doing literacy. Literacy in JB’s classroom was not something that is only received or imposed, but rather it was a social process that includes both her students’ cultural voices and her classroom literacy experiences.

All parents desire the best education for their children; these parents have the same desires. The six parents interviewed in this study possessed an overwhelming amount of confidence and trust that Happy Alternative Elementary School will meet their children’s literacy needs. Through the parents’ eyes, Happy Alternative Elementary School is a
school that serves both their children's educational needs and their needs: needs for the school to be a resource and support system.

Parents seemed to accept that the school was the primary "teacher" of their children and they were the secondary teachers; as was evidenced by the parents seeing the home reading and writing experiences as extensions of their children's classroom experiences. For these parents, seeing their children's home literacy practices as replicates of what is taking place in school is a comfortable connection between home and school.
CHAPTER 5
THE TEACHER'S, STUDENTS' AND PARENTS' VOICES: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Overview

This chapter will review some of the overarching themes revealed by my data analysis process. First, I will take another look at the six teacher strategies that were made visible by the multiple classroom observations in which I engaged during the course of the research period. Secondly, another look will be given to the students' interviews. During this discussion, the overarching themes revealed from the students' interviews will be looked at in detail. Thirdly, the parents' interviews will be discussed in order to reveal the overarching themes made visible from their data transcripts. Lastly, discussions concerning implications, significance and further research will take place in this chapter.

Another Look

The teacher's, students' and parents' discussions mentioned in this chapter will help shed light on the continuities and discontinuities that existed in JB's classroom literacy instruction. It is through these discussions that the following questions will be
addressed; thereby, revealing how students' and parents' cultural voices are empowered in classroom literacy experiences:

1. How are students' and parents' cultural voices manifested in the school's literacy experience as viewed by the teacher and researcher?
2. How is the bridge that allows students' and parents' cultural voices to come into the school's literacy experiences co-constructed?
3. What are parents' and students' perceptions of their cultural voices in classroom literacy practices?

However, before moving on, it is important to review several definitions of culture and voice. Therefore, culture, in this study, is the sum total of ways of living (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979), a way of life that is shared by members of a population (Ogbu, 1988) and includes rites and rituals, legends and myths, artifacts and symbols, and language and history, as well as "sense-making devices that guide and shape behavior" (Davis, 1984, p. 10). Culture is what one thinks is important (values); what one thinks is true (beliefs); and how one perceives things are done (norms) (Owens, 1987).

Voice in this study is defined as "the process of expressing oneself in a meaningful way through orienting utterances and actions according to the rules of the social discourse" (O'Connor, 1989, p. 59).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Heath (1983) argues that schools must lay the foundation for school-based literacy for children whose orientations to language and learning differ markedly from those assumed in schools. Teachers should learn to bridge students' cultural ways of knowing and doing literacy with the school's cultural values via
inclusion of both parents' and children's cultural voices. The power of utilizing children's voices is demonstrated in the Kamehameha Early Education Project (KEEP) in Hawaii (Au & Jordan, 1987). In this project, children set up the classroom themselves, because they were expected to be responsible for their living space at home. Since Hawaiian children are accustomed to learning from a variety of people, they frequently worked in peer groups and were allowed to use overlapping forms of speech while in reading groups. This study illustrated that Hawaiian children became successful at reading because their cultural way of doing reading (talk story) was included in the reading process. This educational practice shows the power of including children's cultural voices in classroom literacy practices.

Moreover, a study of the education of children on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation serves as yet another example of how children can be socialized to speak and interact in ways that differ from the school culture. Philips (1972) compared Native-American with non-Native-American classrooms at the first and sixth grade levels. She identified four types of participant structures. Philips found that in the fourth type, in which children themselves run the groups, Native-American children were found to become deeply involved, to work closely with others, and to compete as a group, which is valued by Native-Americans rather than to compete as an individual. Here again, this study's findings speak to the style of participation that was dominant in the community of these children. Similarly, my observations of JB's classroom have evidenced the strength
of students working collaboratively in groups. Students' cultural voices should be included in classroom literacy practices in order to make visible and utilize their cultural ways of knowing and doing literacy.

Taylor's (1983) study of six middle-class families demonstrated that children from these families grew up in literate environments where literacy was valued; they learned of reading as one way of listening, and of writing as one way of talking. Clearly, children from such literate environments have a big advantage of learning to read and write in school; therefore, they will surely possess the symbolic goods that schools today highly value. It is no secret that parents from middle-class communities transmit much of the secret codes of symbolic capital (Anyon, 1987) to their children quite implicitly as was illustrated in Taylor's study.

How can school literacy instruction utilize parents' and students' cultural voices in order to acknowledge, respect and encourage the diverse cultural knowledge and experiences that children bring to school? As Willis (1995) writes in reference to her son's school experiences, "school-based literacy, in its varying forms, fails to acknowledge explicitly the richness for the cultural ways of knowing, forms of language other than standard English, and the interwoven relationship among power, language, and literacy that silences kids..." (p. 39). Clearly, the studies presented above speak to the many ways different cultures define language and literacy. In order that these differences are mediated, students' and parents' cultural voices should be included in classroom literacy practices.
Discussion

Teachers often pay little attention to the strengths that culturally different students bring to the classroom; therefore, there is no capitalization on these strengths when they do not match the teachers' notion of the norm. In JB's classroom there is no assumption that all children possess the same learning style: JB looks at each child individually. JB's classroom consisted of varied religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. These differences were all considered as JB planned literacy experiences for her third and fourth graders: she purposefully chose teaching strategies that used her students' cultural ways of doing literacy.

JB employed six strategies that strengthened her students' literacy learning. Students were therefore presented with the option to use their cultural or home ways of doing literacy in the classroom setting. The following presents how these strategies allowed parents' and students' cultural voices to be manifested in classroom literacy practices. Additionally, these strategies will shed light on how the bridge that allows JB's students' cultural voices to come into the classroom literacy experiences was co-constructed.

Because students come to school with different background knowledge, experiences, and interests, they make different connections in building their knowledge over time. Therefore, multiple opportunities for coming to understandings should be present in our classrooms. Diverse processes and ways to build knowledge should be encouraged if all children are to learn from their classroom literacy experiences. The
following six teacher strategies show how JB provided diverse ways of teaching literacy: ways that provided students diverse opportunities as they traveled their personal road to literacy.

**Providing Choices in Terms of Participation Structures, Learning Space, and Materials**

The overarching theme that was present in JB’s literacy teaching strategies was centered around freedom to choose. In almost every aspect of literacy learning, students were given opportunities to direct their personal paths to literacy learning. Given present diverse student populations and predictions of future increase of diverse student populations, multiple ways that allow students to choose their cultural path to literacy learning is important.

JB’s allowance of her students to freely make choices during their literacy learning is one such strategy that was evident on a daily basis. Freedom to choose seemed to be the overarching class theme that drove the students’ literacy learning. For example, students were allowed to choose their preferred participant structure for completing literacy experiences. Even though educational research has demonstrated that instructional strategies such as cooperative learning provide a more appropriate cultural match between instructional styles and learning style for some minority students and result in improved learning (Little Soldier, 1989; Slavin, 1987; Philips, 1972), cooperative learning was not the only structure that was evident in JB’s classroom literacy experiences. Students had the freedom to choose the participant structure that best fit their cultural way of learning. Therefore, during literacy experiences, some students chose
to work alone, while others chose small groups or just one working partner. Even silent reading time (which is an hour long) was designed so that students had choices to mediate their interpretations of text. JB strategically designed silent reading time so that a portion of this time was dedicated to students individually constructing meaning from their selected books. Another portion of silent reading time was designed so that the students used their personal, cultural ways of mediating textual interpretations. JB reminded me that the first half hour was designated as independent reading time; a time when students were given privacy to construct their own personal meaning of their selected books. The second half hour was designated as time to “read with their buddies,” if, and only if, the students chose this option. Therefore, during the second half hour of silent reading, students were allowed to choose to read alone, with someone else or with a group of other students. This process allowed the students (who desired it) the opportunity to collaborate in making meaning of the text. Further, during the silent reading time, students also used their storytelling desires to assist with their meaning making of the story at hand. JB seemed to understand that her students’ various participating styles were assets to be expanded and acknowledged rather than interrupted or suppressed.

Similarly, students were able to choose and define their learning space. Additionally, students were able to choose what classroom materials or home materials to use for the completion of their literacy experiences and projects. Often, students brought materials from home to assist them with their writing or reading projects. On one day, a student brought a piece of material to blend in his reading project. On another day, many students brought in pictures of their pets; the pictures were mounted on their writing piece.
about their pets. As was discussed in Chapter Four, it was a common scene to walk into JB’s classroom and see students using a variety of art mediums while they completed both written and non written literacy projects. Students, therefore, learned early in JB’s classroom that they were empowered to make the choices that supported their cultural way of doing and knowing literacy as they constructed their personal paths to literacy.

**Promoting Critical Thinking During Literacy Discussions**

Shade (1997) reminds us that a typical mainstream classroom centers around the teacher talking and the students listening. Students are therefore passive recipients and are required to raise their hands and speak only when given permission. In some of our students’ homes, this type of interaction is common practice; thus, children from these homes are not confused when teachers in school continue this process. However, for many of our students, this type of interaction conflicts with the type of interaction that prevails in their homes. JB seemed to be cognizant of this fact and therefore allowed collaborative rugtime discussions to take place; not teacher dominated ones. These dialogues focused on both students and teacher together making sense of reading. JB seemed to realize that this teacher method could indeed influence how her students talk about selected readings. During these rugtime discussions, JB carefully probed her students’ thinking by using open ended questions. These questions required students to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate information; thereby, conveying to students that their opinions were valued.
Similarly, JB used higher order questions to assist her students in critically thinking about the text. Here again, higher order questions allowed JB’s students to see themselves as knowledge producers rather than knowledge consumers. Through this process, students learned early that answers are not always found in the text or with the teacher but within themselves. On the other hand, JB seemed to realize that literal level questions implicitly teach students that knowledge that is worth knowing and valuing lies outside themselves. More often than not, these sources of knowledge in U.S. schools come from a Eurocentric perspective (Jackson, 1994). This Eurocentric perspective, as has been shown over and over, might not be the perspective that best meets all children’s literacy needs (Au & Jordan, 1987; Cochran-Smith, 1993; Heath, 1983; 1983; Kantor, Miller, & Fernie, 1992; Lee, 1991b; Taylor,).

Moreover, JB seemed to realize that if she used open ended and higher order questions, her students would come to the realization that books do not always present a clear picture of reality; that often the picture is distorted with misleading information. Through her careful guidance, JB presented a classroom pedagogy that was not organized around control and shutting down or marginalizing literacy conversations, but rather around conversations: conversations that allowed her students to critique the text at hand and draw connections to their personal lives. Through this epistemic mode of engagement (Wells, 1990), JB’s students were led into a zone of interrogating the text in order to interpret and reveal its meaning; in many instances hidden meanings.

Through the strategy of teaching her students to be critical thinkers, JB made visible to her students that she does not serve as the source of knowledge-transmission;
but rather, both she and her students assumed multiple roles as they together generated knowledge, challenged thinking and assumed responsibility for learning. During these rugtime discussions, it was evident that JB’s role was not that of a dispenser of knowledge, but rather, her role was that of a nurturer of independent and critical thinkers.

**Bidding for Students’ Voices**

As my data repeatedly evidenced, JB was on a special mission during rugtime book discussion experiences to ensure that all students were given opportunities to contribute and participate fully in the discussions. Through her constant invitations/biddings for her students to join in the rugtime discussions, JB was seemingly making the implicit statement that “what you are thinking is important to me; here is a place where your thoughts are valued.” It was through these rugtime invitations/biddings that students had opportunities to verbally express varied interpretations of the reading in their personal, cultural way. JB seemed to acknowledge that her students might not use what they know about language and cultural knowledge unless there is a classroom atmosphere accepting of all cultural voices. It was through such rugtime biddings that JB empowered her students’ cultural voice as they verbally interacted during these daily rugtime book discussion experiences. This bidding process allowed JB’s students to discuss their personal ideas and make links between these ideas and their prior cultural knowledge that was brought into the classroom.
Embracing Constructivist Literacy Teaching and Learning

This study has shown that teacher scaffolding via socially co-constructed literacy interactions is rewarding to children. Cochran-Smith's (1984) study has shown that through social interactions, young children learn literacy behaviors from other children and from the adults present in the classroom environment. It is through these interactions that children learn, for instance, how to co-construct meanings from both decontextualized and contextualized print. This study, too has evidenced that JB’s classroom literacy experiences were centered around students and teacher collaboratively constructing textual meaning. Similarly, JB seemed to be aware that such social experiences must be allowed if her students were to get the most from their classroom literacy experiences and interactions. Too often our traditional early childhood classrooms are so structured that there is very little time or effort devoted to socially co-construct literacy experiences. These traditional classrooms might not be the best method of facilitating literacy experiences for our students. Through her bidding process, for example, JB seemed to realize that in order to best serve the diverse needs in her classroom, she must allow her students to socially make connections between themselves and between herself during literacy experiences.

In addition, the work of Vygotsky (1978) has special meaning to my discussion of JB's literacy practices. Vygotsky asserted that learning is basically a social process that takes place through the interactions between children and others who are present in their environment. Gradually, the child internalizes the skills and knowledge acquired through the social interactions. Vygotsky (1978) stated that:
any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or in two planes. First, it appears in the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First, it appears between people, as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as in intrapsychological category. (p. 163)

Within JB’s literacy instruction, learning of skills or concepts was not seen as occurring in an isolated and hierarchical manner, but rather within meaningful and integrated contexts. JB seemed to realize that learning does not occur all at once, but is built over time.

Providing Authentic, Multicultural Literature

Classroom teachers play an important role in deciding what type of literature comes into the classroom. Thus, the teacher’s assumptions about literature from diverse cultures can determine how culturally authentic and congruent the classroom literature selection will be. As was shown in Chapter Four, JB exerted much effort, both inside and outside the classroom, to assure that her students had access to rich, authentic, multicultural literature. Through her efforts, JB was able to immerse her students in a classroom of authentic, multicultural books.

The best in multicultural literature presents culturally authentic information (Sims-Bishop, 1992). Culturally authentic literature, according to McGee and Richgels (1996), portrays people and the values, customs, and beliefs of a cultural group in ways recognized by members of that group as valid and authentic. In JB’s classroom, only books that did not show stereotypes were present. Additionally, books in JB’s classroom displayed pictures that were accurate and presentations of people of color were
nonstereotypical in nature. Further, these books contained information that was factual and up to date. It was evident that JB took much time and care as she selected her classroom books and authors. Through her choice of various authors and classroom books, JB valued and considered all the cultural needs that existed in her classroom. Because JB focused on the different values, needs and beliefs that existed in her classroom, she was able to give students a wider range of relevant literature experiences. Whenever teachers are able to achieve this, students from different cultural backgrounds will be able to identify their voice in literature, and other students will be able to enhance their learnings by gaining insights into different cultures. Additionally, through multicultural literature, students discover that all cultural groups have significant contributions. These factors all seemed to be at the forefront as JB selected her classroom books. Moreover, JB exerted much effort in producing a well-balanced multicultural literature program that included literature depicting people with a variety of aspirations, from different socioeconomic levels, with different occupations and with a range of human characteristics.

It is important here to note that JB did not solely rely on her personal judgement when considering the authenticity of the literature that she selected for her students. Often, JB, as a white teacher, utilized my knowledge of African Americans to help her select appropriate books for her African American students. On one occasion, JB wanted to read Paulsen's (1997) book, *Sarny* to her students. However, because of the explicit language and descriptions of slavery, JB asked my opinion of its appropriateness. Because I had not read this book, I took it home and read it overnight. The next day, JB and I
discussed *Sarny*; after this conversation, JB decided to read it. Similarly, JB’s close relationship with her parents has afforded her an insider’s view of her students’ cultural backgrounds and communities. With this insider’s view, JB was able to use the knowledge of her students’ backgrounds in selecting authentic literature. JB seemed to understand that any given book might be authentic to one reader but might not be authentic to another.

This insider’s knowledge (close relationship with her parents) is important because often teachers think they are indeed choosing authentic literature because they have relied solely on “how to” lists or personal judgement. It is important to remember that a concept viewed as authentic by a teacher might be viewed as a stereotype by members of a particular culture. Such was the case with the New York teacher who read Herron’s (1997) book, *Nappy Hair*. Apparently, this teacher saw nothing wrong with the book and thought she might build self esteem among her African American students. After reading the book, an uproar from the African American parents ensued; mainly because in many African American communities, the word “nappy” is often used as an insult. Thus, the reading of such a book by a white teacher was viewed by these parents as disrespectful. In this case, a white teacher, not having an insider’s view of the connotations surrounding the word “nappy” in the African American community, read the book and thought it would have a positive effect on her African American students. The lack of knowing the cultural meaning of “nappy hair” unfortunately resulted in the teacher losing her job. This example presented here reiterates the importance of securing a close cultural relationship with students’ backgrounds and communities; simply, because the notion of authenticity has
various meanings and interpretations. There are intercultural and intracultural views of authenticity. Authenticity does not reside in the text itself; rather authenticity is negotiated by individuals within a given context.

**Bridging Home and School via Classroom Activities and Written Communication.**

Too often teachers communicate with parents when students are experiencing difficulty in school. Unlike these teachers, JB established positive relationships with her students’ parents early during the school year. Classroom activities, such as sharing evenings and student-led conferences, were held at the beginning of the school year and continued throughout the school year. These activities allowed the bridge between home and school to be a connected rather than a disjointed one. Other activities, such as classroom parties and parent-teacher conferences, too served as avenues to keep the bridge between home and school a connected one: one that shows parents that their voices in the classroom setting are important and valued.

Additionally, through JB’s written communication, an interactive line of communication between home and school was open. This line of communication both informed parents about classroom happenings and invited parents’ voices to be visible in JB’s classroom. As I observed the many classroom functions that occurred in JB’s classroom, I began to realize the importance of JB’s two methods (classroom activities and written communication) of communicating with her parents. I observed many instances when parents did not come to some of the classroom functions because of schedule constraints, transportation constraints, or other problems. How could their
voices be heard if they did not participate in these classroom activities? As Appendix I shows, JB’s written communications provided a second avenue for these parents to voice their concerns or questions about their children’s literacy learning and they provided a continuous line of communication for the parents who could not participate in the classroom activities.

It is evident that through JB’s utilization of these six teacher strategies, she realized that there is no single road to becoming literate in her classroom; thereby, embracing the notion that her students do indeed travel more than one road to literacy and in doing so, they become successful readers and writers.

**Students’ Perceptions**

The student interviews revealed that both continuity and discontinuity existed between home and school literacy practices. One continuity that was revealed centered around the students stating that they often read chapter books at home. This reading of chapter books at home by the students was a congruent process; as my classroom observations evidenced, students read daily many varieties of books including chapter and picture books. On a daily basis, I witnessed students reading chapter books as they sat in their favorite places in the classroom.

Some of the students described reading and writing at home as an extension of classroom activities. For example, Latonya learned how to write acrostic poems at school. She transferred this learning to her home writing and now Latonya writes acrostic poems often at home. Additionally, one road to literacy that was prevalent in Latonya’s
home is through cooking and reading recipes with her mother. Similarly, at school, recipe reading and cooking experiences are provided to the students in JB’s classroom at regular intervals. In fact, it was during one of the classroom cooking experiences that Latonya retrieved a cookie recipe from JB. After taking the recipe home, Latonya made the cookies.

Other students described reading and writing at home as a seamless process; as one student stated, reading at home is just as “easier or harder as it would be at school.” Some students simply stated that there were “no differences” between reading and writing at home and at school.

Even though there were many continuities between reading and writing at home and school, discontinuities, too existed between home and school reading. One such discontinuity centered around the amount of reading in which the students were engaged. For some students, more reading was done in the home, while others engaged in more reading in the school setting.

Time constraints, that is, students having to complete their writing within a specified time period, seemed to indicate discontinuity between writing at school and home for some of the students. Apple reminded us in Chapter Four that at home he writes “off and on” and at school he has to write “faster.” Additionally, the volume of writing differs at school and home; many students stated that they completed more writing at school than at home. Apple chooses to write less at home because most of the times he likes to play with his “friends at home,” not write. Similar to Apple, perhaps some of the other students, too choose to play more rather than write at home.

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The classroom process of rewriting drafts conflicted with some of the students' home way of writing. Rewriting drafts of their writing was simply not a process that was required in most of these students' homes. For these students, rewriting was a process that they disliked.

Concerning storytelling, many students stated that either they or a parent told stories in the home setting. However, only a few of these students elected to tell stories at school even though, as Latonya stated, they can tell stories during “silent reading.” Additionally, JB stated that students were indeed allowed to tell stories during the “second half hour of silent reading.”

**Parents’ Perceptions**

Schools can indeed be great resources for parents. According to the parents, Happy Alternative Elementary School is one such school that serves as a resource. For example, parents relied on Happy Alternative Elementary School to provide tutoring services to assist their children with reading and writing. This service is conveniently offered early in the mornings before school even begins. This early morning time seems to work well for the parents who use this service. Further, several of the parents indicated that their children were learning disabled. Parents turned to Happy Alternative Elementary School to provide the testing for their children.

Moreover, parents described Happy Alternative Elementary School as a support system for their children’s home learning. Parents relied on JB to suggest methods to assist with their children’s reading and writing difficulties. Methods such as suggesting
certain techniques that work in the classroom were welcomed by the parents. For example, through interacting with JB, Sara H. learned how to use the classroom technique of “nudge paper” with Joe at home. “Nudge paper” was used by JB to allow her students to write down their attempts with spelling unfamiliar words; in other words, this paper is used to nudge their thinking. Sara readily stated that, similar to the results of this technique at school, at home using nudge paper is helping Joe with trying to spell words that he would otherwise come to her for the spelling. Still other parents rely on Happy Alternative Elementary School to support their children’s differences in rates of completing classroom reading and writing assignments. Parents praised JB for allowing their children to complete unfinished class work in the home setting. Similarly, the same is true for homework; as Sara H. reminded me that Joe is “very slow with everything, especially homework,” and it can take hours for him to complete just a few pages of written work. Sara H. appreciates JB’s understanding of Joe’s limitations with his completion of homework assignments. Sara H. approvingly stated that “if the homework is too much for them (the students), they (the teachers) say—you do what you can and that’s okay.”

Perhaps, the most prevalent theme from the parents’ interviews was the parents’ level of confidence with Happy Alternative Elementary School’s ways of teaching reading and writing. Even though many of the parents admitted that they knew little about the classroom methods that JB employed in writing and reading, all of them, nevertheless, possessed an overwhelming level of confidence and trust in JB’s literacy teaching methods.
Parents also see home reading and writing experiences as an extension of their children’s school experiences. Lisa reminded me of this as she stated, “I try to focus on what they are doing so he’ll feel like it is an extension and he will come back and say this is what I did at home you know and be really excited about it. So if she says he needs to read chapter books, then that is what I am going to encourage him to do. So whatever they are doing, that is what I encourage at home.” Extending the school’s reading experiences to the home is a comfortable home-school connection for Lisa.

**Connecting the Interviews with JB’s Literacy Program**

Unlike many of the traditional literacy programs seen often in our schools today, JB’s literacy program (as shown in Table 5.1) can be described as a multilayered program a program that allows students to actively participate in their literacy learning.

Additionally, unlike many of our schools today, JB reminded me that writing in her classroom “takes place daily across the curriculum” and not through unconnected literacy activities. The structure of JB’s literacy program is a factor in the limited amount of discontinuities and the numerous amount of continuities that the students revealed during their interviews. Thus, JB’s literacy program serves as the bridge that connects her students’ home with school literacy practices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>JB’s Comments about the Layer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read Alouds</td>
<td>“I feel students are never too old for read alouds”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Time</td>
<td>“This time is for my students to independently choose books that they want to read”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Reading Time</td>
<td>“I am doing more choosing during guided reading time because I want to make sure my students are reading books that are on their level”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Circles</td>
<td>“Third graders, too need chapter books. This is the reason that I use them during literacy circles”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
<td>“Sometimes my students are completely choosing and sometimes I give them genre guidelines; for example, the rubric that I told you about. This rubric is used to help them with their published writing. For the most part they choose their published work”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Writing</td>
<td>“This is when we write as a group”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Response</td>
<td>“This is the time that we complete projects and writing related to books”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Nonfiction Writing</td>
<td>“This is more factual writing or writing in response to their classroom learnings. For example, when they made books about the life cycle of animals”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>“The students choose what they want to share. They first share their rough drafts and as a group the students and I give constructive criticism. Then the final drafts are shared”</td>
</tr>
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Table 5.1. JB’s Multilayered Literacy Program
JB’s multilayered literacy program strengthened her ability to perform as a strong multicultural teacher. Delpit (1990) states:

If we are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders built of stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research and racism. We must work to destroy those blinders so that it is possible to really see, to really know the students we must teach. (p. 182)

JB worked overtime to successfully educate all the children in her classroom. For the parents who usually did not make regular classroom visits, JB made regular phone calls either before school began, on her lunch break or after school hours to inform them of their child’s educational progress or class concerns.

Embedded in JB’s multilayered literacy program, was a sense of positive attitude toward her student’s diverse ways of doing and knowing literacy. This positive attitude therefore supported the students’ literacy learning.

JB took special care to embrace her students’ cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural literature is a rich source of authentic reading for developing students’ multicultural awareness (Au, 1993). In addition to the wide variety of literature, JB embedded a conversational approach to literature by allowing her students to offer their personal conversations about interesting ideas; this facilitated JB’s students’ literacy learning.

Further, embedded in JB’s literacy program is a host of field trips. For example, during the study of caves and Native Americans, JB took her students to nearby caves. These caves provided the students another dimension to their class study. Yet, another
class study centered around slavery. A trip to a safe house (a house where slaves were
safely hidden during slavery) allowed students to draw connections between their class
readings and what they actually experienced in the safe house.

Additionally, JB embraced artifacts from her students’ homes; these artifacts were
visible throughout the classroom. Children were encouraged to bring books or other
informational sources to school. For example, during the students’ “pet writing
experience,” pictures of their pets were brought to school and attached to their writings
for others to see.

By embedding these experiences in her literacy program, JB continuously reflected
her students’ personal lives, rather than featuring them now and then; thereby, sending a
message to her students that their cultural background was accepted and welcomed in her
classroom. This therefore makes it possible for her students to connect their learning at
home to that which occurs at school; thereby, bridging home and school learning.

Green, Dixon, Lin Floriani, & Bradley (1992) remind us that:

...in every classroom, teachers and students are constructing particular
models of literacy and particular understandings of what is involved in
learning how to be literate. That is, as teachers and students construct the
norms and expectations and roles and relationships that frame how they
will engage in everyday life in classrooms, they are also defining what
counts as literacy and literate action in the local events of classroom life...
(pp. 119-120)

How a teacher conducts class shapes and sometimes limits the ways students learn
literacy. The effect of class culture can not be overlooked as a factor in JB’s success as a
strong multicultural teacher. JB established a class culture which embraced all her
students’ voices. The class culture represented in JB’s classroom was a whole way of being as both teacher and students co-constructed a culture which was inclusive of all class participants’ voices. Both formal and informal literacy interactions were evident daily in JB’s classroom. These everyday interactions which were co-constructed to meet individual needs therefore wove in and through the fabric of the life of JB’s classroom.

Implications

The implications for this study center around a reconceptualized view of teaching literacy to our diverse population of students. This view can not be realized unless teachers, curriculum planners, and educators in teacher education programs consider the roles that they play in culturally relevantly teaching literacy to our diverse student population.

Reconceptualized View of Literacy Education.

It is not surprising that many teachers hold a monocultural or an accultural view of literacy; this view about literacy development has been mostly a mainstream view, one that has overlooked children from diverse communities and cultures and has slighted sociocultural and cross-cultural differences in language and literacy (Dyson, 1995). Hence, this traditional view of literacy teaching is prevalent today in many of our schools. In such traditional environments, it is assumed that a quiet and orderly classroom atmosphere indicates that learning is taking place. Students are seated in individual desks facing the front of the room where the teacher, the dispenser of knowledge, sits. In such
traditional classrooms, students work individually on the same skill-based literacy activities to ensure uniformity of learning; there is little room for students' cultural voices.

Contrastingly, JB's varied student-centered strategies of literacy teaching, as seen through her description of her literacy program (Table 5.1) and through her six culturally responsive teaching strategies, represent avenues that allow students' cultural voices to come into her classroom literacy practices. Because of the benefits that I have witnessed from JB's literacy practices, I recommend a reconceptualization of how literacy is taught in our schools. That is, I propose a reconceptualized view that includes a new vision for teaching literacy, a vision that embraces diverse ways of teaching literacy and diverse ways of allowing our students' cultural voices to come into their classroom literacy learnings.

Images of literacy teaching should move beyond the school as the sole site of such teaching. Rather than seeing homes as needing to replicate what schools do, literacy teaching in our schools today should focus on incorporating and supporting the literacy events that occur daily in our students' lives. Ferdman (1990) posits:

In educating their pupils toward literacy, schools vary in the degree to which they incorporate the cultural views of the ethnic groups to which their pupils belong. To the extent that schools tend to reflect the dominant culture, pupils from the dominant ethnic group are more likely than are ethnic minority students to find consistency between the various constructs of literacy. In either case, because literacy education tends to be left primarily to the school, children become literate in the cultural image represented by their school. (p. 189)

A reconceptualized view of literacy education will have the child's needs and inclusion of the child's voice at the forefront of literacy teaching, not the school's. In
other words, teaching strategies geared toward assisting teachers and other educators to better acknowledge their students' cultural ways of doing and knowing literacy might be explored and implemented in our schools today if we are to effectively teach all of our diverse populations. The teaching strategies evidenced in JB’s classroom provide such strategies that might be implemented. As was shown in Chapter Four, these strategies involve a range of literacy experiences which are explicitly linked to the students' cultural ways of doing literacy; thereby, giving students more choice and involvement in their own roads to literacy learning. Ultimately, the choice provided by these strategies permits the bridge between the students’ home and school to be a connected one.

Neuman and Roskos (1994) recommend a culturally responsive approach to literacy teaching. First, this approach acknowledges and appreciates students’ home backgrounds and attempts to build upon the language and literacy experiences that students bring to school. Secondly, this approach promotes collaboration among and between students and the teacher as they learn through social interaction. Through this type of social interaction, our students learn other cultural perspectives and share their own. Lastly, this approach shares the same standards of achievement for children of diverse backgrounds as for those from the dominant culture. Neuman and Roskos assert that while “the goals should remain the same for all children, the means of achieving these goals may be different for children from nonmainstream cultures. These different means may be accomplished by adjusting some instructional practices and providing a range of multicultural literacy experiences” (p. 211).
Ferdman (1990) reminds "us that to the extent that schools tend to reflect the
defined literacy behaviors of the dominant culture, pupils from the dominant ethnic group
are more likely than are ethnic minority students to find consistency between the various
constructs of literacy" (p. 189). While research might indicate this, I found that in JB’s
classroom, students who belong to the dominant group possessed many diverse ways of
learning literacy. Within group diversity was evident almost daily as I observed students
during literacy experiences. Additionally, as indicated by the parents who classified
themselves as belonging to the middle-class or upper middle-class (Andrea, Marsha, Sara
H. And Sara G.), reading and writing in each home was an experience unique to each
family.

The Role of Curriculum Planners.

Through examination of this study’s findings, it is hoped that teachers and
curriculum developers or planners will recognize the need to reexamine their school’s
literacy practices. This reexamination should first focus on the purpose of the school’s
literacy instruction: whose needs are we serving, the schools’ or the child’s? Further, the
realization that there are multiple paths to literacy learning must be established if educators
are to teach the diverse population of students that is present and growing in our schools
today. Therefore, by acknowledging the multiple literacy experiences that exist in our
students’ homes, educators can allow those experiences to become visible and actively
used in our students’ literacy learnings and the teacher’s literacy teaching.
Of course, one of the first steps in empowering our students' cultural voices is to invite parents to become active and contributing participants on our school's curriculum committees. I have found that parents have much to contribute if they are given a chance to voice their concerns about their children's education. We must remember that parents are stakeholders in their children's education: they, too, desire to voice their goals for their children's literacy learnings. These desires and suggestions from the parents can be incorporated into the curriculum. Through the collaborative effort of the school curriculum planners and parents, our students can achieve literacy education that will be more culturally meaningful to them.

According to Goodman (1997), many of the roads to literacy are taken for granted by our educators. Only when the range of literacy events that occur in our students' homes and communities are recognized and utilized as important contributors to classroom literacy experiences will our students be able to gain the most from their school literacy experiences. It is hoped that we, as educators, reach out and use our students' cultural experiences as assets to their literacy learnings.

The Role of Teacher Education Programs.

Moreover, this study's findings are important not only to teachers and school curriculum planners, but also to teacher education programs. If one looks deeper into why and how students' and parents' voices are or are not adequately utilized in classroom literacy practices, one will find that teacher preparation programs play a major role in helping teachers transform their thinking about the role of parents' and students' voices in
classroom literacy practices. As Barnitz (1994) states, "Teachers must recognize difference as manifestations of cultural discourse which can be expanded rather than interrupted or suppressed" (p. 587). Teacher education programs can disseminate this message and they should concentrate their efforts on disseminating the value of culturally relevant teaching—a term Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) uses to describe the kind of teaching that "is designed not simply to fit the school culture to the student's culture but also to use students' culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge" (p. 314). Teacher education programs have the power to disseminate this message to our future teachers, and they have to do more to assist teachers in affirming the value and need of including students' and parents' voices in their classroom literacy practices; thereby, recognizing culturally relevant teaching requires the recognition of all cultures as important assets upon which to build schooling experiences of our students.

As an effort to transform teacher education programs, Dillard (1997) recommends a program that is centered in the language and culture of diverse students. This framework "for a more transformative teacher preparation program encourages preservice teachers to examine the moral, ethical, political, and educational issues embedded in their everyday thinking and practice as teachers. This includes fostering a deep regard for and recognition of the ways that their own personal language, literacy and culture influence—and possibly even limit—multicultural learning, teaching and classroom practice" (p. 96). Such a program will surely help our future teachers understand themselves and others; thereby, recognizing that:
...the learning process lies instead in the hands of the real authorities: the students. Only then can preservice teachers and teacher educators begin to learn how realities are shaped and personal lives created. Further, such centering reinforces the idea that individuals are only authorities of their own experiences and understandings. (Dillard, 1997, p. 93)

**Significance of the Study**

Research shows that teachers tend to build more readily on the experiences of those who come to school with the dominant cultural capital (King, 1994; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). A major determinant of children's literacy attainment therefore will be based on teachers valuing and utilizing various cultural voices by making all cultures the foundation from which teaching is based. In other words, teachers should legitimize all cultural ways of doing literacy by making them the frame of reference of their literacy teaching. Because teachers have direct contact with students, they should be interested in this study's findings as praxis to improve all students' literacy learnings. Consequently, this study made visible how one teacher's literacy practices supported her students' cultural voices in her classroom literacy instruction.

The study's findings are important because they highlighted the inclusion of parents' and students' cultural voices in classroom literacy practices. Oftentimes teachers truly believe that they do include their students' and parents' cultural voices in their literacy practices. These teachers possess such a belief because they follow their school's literacy programs which, when examined closely, one will find are based solely on middle-class European American culture. Students must be allowed to manipulate and reference
learned material by utilizing the information, strategies, or symbols relevant to and established within their own cultures or they will suffer academic handicaps (Gordon & Thomas, 1990). Willis (1995) argues:

While the rhetoric of school literacy programs suggests that culture is part of the theoretical framework, 'culture' has been narrowly defined to mean middle-class European American culture. The tacit assumption is then, that all children are being well served by the new literacy programs that are built on the 'natural' language acquisition of middle-class European American children. However, natural language acquisition is mediated through the particular culture in which the child lives. The reality, then is that theoreticians, researchers, teacher educators, practitioners, and publishers of literacy approaches and programs are frequently unaware of their assumptions. (p. 44)

Most importantly, the findings of this study are significant because America is a culturally pluralistic society, and this is increasingly reflected in our classrooms. Given current immigration patterns and birthrates of minority groups, it has been estimated that by the year 2000, both Hispanic-American and Asian-American populations will have grown by more than 20%. The African-American population is estimated to grow by 12%. These changing demographic statistics will have a significant impact on our classrooms, as more students come from culturally diverse backgrounds while teachers remain overwhelmingly white (Tompkins, 1997). Therefore, the future make-up of our classrooms demands that teachers include all voices in the literacy process. School literacy must be reflective of the language and culture of our children: a bridge between the school and home ways of doing literacy must be built. If school practices are not reflective of our students' cultures, it is evidenced through our literacy practices today that
some children will be put at a disadvantage while giving an advantage to others. These educational implications speak to the reason why this study is important for our teachers and future teachers.

**Further Research**

This research used interviewees who were from various religious, ethnic, and economic orientations. However, research that includes students from more diverse populations should be considered. Perhaps, a more diverse population, might shed further light on the parents’ and students’ views of how they see their cultural voices included and/or excluded in classroom literacy teaching.

Too often, research on families excludes the father. More research that includes fathers’ perspectives is needed. The inclusion of fathers’ voices along with those of mothers and children will give researchers a clearer picture of how the family views the utilization of its cultural background in classroom literacy practices.

**Final Comments**

Students’ cultural experiences shape their interpretation of all school experiences, especially literacy learning. Because of our growing diverse student population in our schools today, our students’ interpretations, too will be diverse. Teachers will have to acknowledge and use these various interpretations and ways of literacy learning if all students are to be successful in learning to read and write. In order to effectively serve
our diverse population of students, the role of the teacher from controller of knowledge to facilitator of literacy learning should be considered; thereby, making our classrooms more student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

As indicated in this study, an increased use of a variety of teaching strategies which accommodated the students’ various ways of doing literacy increased congruence between the home and school’s ways of doing literacy. A multiplicity of literacy teaching strategies in our schools today will allow students to choose approaches or strategies that are more congruent with their cultural ways of doing and knowing literacy. We must remember, the greater the difference between the school’s and the students’ ways of doing literacy, the more likely the student will be forced to adjust. Those students who can not make the adjustment to the school’s ways of doing literacy will be the ones who will not be successful with literacy learning in the school setting; hence, these will be the students who will be wrongly labeled as illiterate.

In sum, if the view of the roles of the student and the teacher is to change, a reconceptualized view of literacy teaching and learning should be considered. The change should begin with our teacher preparation programs. Additionally, curriculum planners should consider involving our students’ parents in curriculum matters if we are to meet current and future demands of our diverse student population. With these changes, we can begin the process of providing relevant literacy experiences for all of our students.
INFORMATION AND CONSENT SHEET FOR STUDENTS

Dear Parents:

My name is Verdie Samuels and I am a doctoral student in the Integrated Teaching and Learning program at The Ohio State University. I am about to begin my dissertation research and Dr. Evelyn B. Freeman is my advisor. Dr. Freeman will supervise my dissertation research and is therefore the principal researcher.

The purpose of the study entitled: Cultural Voices: Where are they in Classroom Literacy Practices? is to collect information to provide an understanding of how your child's home backgrounds are utilized in literacy practices. I will not interfere with the teaching/learning process in the classroom, and the duration of this research will be about ten weeks.

During the ten week period, I will observe what the teacher says and does to allow your child's home backgrounds to be used in classroom literacy learning. The study will involve recording classroom observations with the use of a tape recorder as well as writing field notes. The purpose of the taping is so that I can have an accurate record of what is going on in the classroom. Please know that if the teacher's verbal interaction includes your child, your child's name will not be included. Your child's class work or writings may be included in this study; however, your child's name will not be used. Additionally, I will interview some of the students about their classroom literacy experiences.

Your child's participation in this research is a voluntary one. The results of this research will be used for academic and instructional purposes. Any published documents will not reveal your child's name. Additionally, audio tapes will be destroyed within one year after completion of the research.

Your support for this research will be appreciated. If you grant permission for your child's participation in this research, please complete the "Parental Consent for Participation" form and have your child return it. If you choose not to allow your child to participate, your child's class work will not be affected in any way.

If you have any questions, you may call me at (614) 688-9045 or Dr. Freeman at (614) 292-0859.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Evelyn B. Freeman, Professor
School of Teaching and Learning
The Ohio State University

Verdie D. Samuels
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University
PARENTAL CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I consent to my child's participation in the research entitled: Cultural Voices: Where are they in Classroom Literacy Practices? I understand that the principal researcher is Dr. Evelyn B. Freeman, professor at The Ohio State University and that Dr. Freeman is supervising the research of Verdie Samuels.

The purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected time and length of the study have all been explained to me. Possible benefits of the research have also been described.

I know that any questions I have before, during, or after the research is done will be answered by either or both of the researchers. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time and that my child can discontinue his/her participation in the study without any consequences to him/her.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date___________________________________________

Signed__________________________________________

(Parent's or guardian's signature)

Parent or Guardian of _______________________________________

(Child's name)

Signed__________________________________________

(Principal investigator or representative)

Witness___________________________________________

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PARENT CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I consent to participating in the research entitled: **Cultural Voices: Where are they in Classroom Literacy Practices?** I understand that the principal researcher is Dr. Evelyn B. Freeman, professor at The Ohio State University and that Dr. Freeman is supervising the research of Verdie Samuels.

The purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected time and length of the study have all been explained to me. Possible benefits of the research have also been described.

I know that any questions I have before, during, or after the research is done will be answered by either or both of the researchers. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date________________________________________

Signed_______________________________________

(Parent's signature)

Signed_______________________________________

(Principal investigator or representative)

Witness_______________________________________

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CONSENT FOR TEACHER PARTICIPATION

I consent to participating in the research project entitled: Cultural Voices: Where are they in Classroom Literacy Practices?

The purpose of this project is to collect information to provide an understanding of how students' cultural/home backgrounds are utilized in literacy practices. I realize that my participation in this research will entail two one-hour interviews which will be tape recorded. Additionally, I realize that you will observe classroom interactions and will record these interactions via field notes and audio recordings.

I understand that any published documents will not reveal my name in order to protect my anonymity. Additionally, audio tapes will be destroyed within one year after completion of the research.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Evelyn B. Freeman, Professor
School of Teaching and Learning
The Ohio State University

Verdie D. Samuels
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University

DATE: ____________________________  SIGNED: __________________________

SIGNED: ____________________________  WITNESS ____________________________

(Principal Investigator of his/her authorized representative)
APPENDIX B
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SAMPLE BIOGRAPHIES
As we begin to study Ohio History, it is important to look at our own family history. Choose one family member (parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle) to interview. I've listed some questions for you to use. You may decide to add more questions on your own.

Full Name of the Person you are interviewing

When and where were you born?

What different places have you lived in throughout your life? (state, city)

Were you named after anyone? If so who?

What are your parents full names? Do you know where the last name came from?
What schools did you go to as a kid?

Do you remember a favorite teacher? Tell me about him/her?

What books did you enjoy as a kid?

Tell me about a special holiday memory from your childhood.

When you were my age, what did you want to be when you grew up?
In 1947, I was born in Sydney, Australia. His dad was his mom was. He started school in 1952. When he was 8, his dad died. His favorite books were myrstenes. In 1960 he started high school and he played rugby and cricket in high school. In 1971 he came to America. He missed the beach. In 1974 he got his Ph.D.
In 1981 he met ____________.

In 1985 ____________ was born.

In 1986 ____________ got married to ____________ a year later.

They moved to Columbus, Wa.

In 1990 ____________ was born.

From this day still go to Australia.
She was born in February 24th, 1971. She has been in Columbus, Ohio. She went to Alpaca, Edwin, Franklin, and Brookhaven high.

Her favorite teacher was Mr. Smith. Her art teacher always listened to her. She was connected to books. They used to have Easter egg hunts. Once she found the golden egg; it was worth five dollars.

When she was a kid, she always wanted to be rich and buy her mother a big house. She was married to... He is now thirty years old.
Homework

Next week, you will be writing a biography on a family member. You have already gathered some information in the interviews you did last week for homework. This week, you will be gathering more information. You have two different things to do for homework.

1.) Ask the person you interviewed last week at least 5 more questions. Think about the biography questions we discussed. Be sure to write the question and answer down.

2.) Make a timeline of the life of the person you interviewed. This timeline is just for gathering information. It does not need to be in a final draft form.

   Example
   
   *this is not complete but serves as an example*

   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Park High School</td>
<td>Edward Brown</td>
<td>from D.I.T.</td>
<td>from O.S.U.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

240
Look when I was born.

- Me
- Started high school
- Married
- #7
- #4
- #1
- #5
- Married
- #3
- #6
- Married
- me
- On yen
- Columbus
- me
- Columbia
- me
- me
- me
- me
- me
APPENDIX C
BOOKS FOR CLASSROOM LIBRARY
# New Books for Class Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Classroom Event</th>
<th>Title/Author</th>
<th>Verdie’s Notes About Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19, 1998-- 9:50</td>
<td><strong>Bonesy and Isabel</strong> By: Michael Rosen</td>
<td>Tells of an el Salvador girl and her love for her dog, Bonesy who dies later in the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB introduces new books for class library</td>
<td><strong>Aurora Means Dawn</strong> By: Scott Russell Sanders</td>
<td>Tells about pioneer life in Aurora, Ohio in the early 1800's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Floating House</strong> By: Scott Russell Sanders</td>
<td>Tells of one family's pioneer journey down the Ohio river to settle in Jeffersonville, Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Discovery of the Americas</strong> By: Betsy and Giulio Maestro</td>
<td>Tells other versions of the discovery of America. Chinese Seafarers, stone age explorers from Asia, Vikings from Greenland gives different perspectives of how America was discovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pioneer Girl: The Story of Laura Ingalls Wilder</strong> By: William Anderson</td>
<td>Tells of Laura's pioneer experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Ballot Box Battle</strong> By: Emily Arnold McCully</td>
<td>Tells one woman's tale of how she overcame obstacles to carry on the fight for equality and women's voting rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dear Benjamin Banneker</strong> By: Brian Pickney</td>
<td>A biography of Benjamin Banneker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I Can't Accept Not Trying: Michael Jordan on the Pursuit of Excellence</strong> By: Michael Jordan</td>
<td>A biography of Michael Jordan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# New Books for Class Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Classroom Event</th>
<th>Title/Author</th>
<th>Verdie’s Notes About Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nov 6, 1998--10:00  | *Miracle in a Show Box-A Christmas Gift of Wonder*  
                      By: Franklin Graham | About how people from other countries helped send items to the children of war-torn country of Bosnia |
|                     | *Singing Down the Rain*  
                      By: Joy Cowley | About a story of a town's citizens striving and succeeding in their efforts to endure a test of both their faith and their ties to each other. |
|                     | *Aunt Nancy and Old Man Trouble*  
                      By: Phyllis Root | About a storyteller magic in this plucky twister tale |
|                     | *Musk rat will be Swimming*  
                      By: Cheryl Savageau | About a tale of a native American girl who with gently guidance from her grandfather, learns to find strength, not fear, in her identity as a native person living in an Anglo society. |
|                     | *La mariposa*  
                      By: Francisco Jimenez | About a schoolchild’s struggle to learn language in an American class. Addresses the many transformation in the life of a young bicultural, bilingual child |
|                     | *Dinorella*  
                      By: Pamela Duncan | About a prehistoric fairy tale |
|                     | *A walk to the great mystery*  
                      By: Virginia A. Stroud | About our interconnectedness with nature |
|                     | *Nothing Here but Trees*  
                      By: Sean Van Leeuwen | About a family struggles with the Ohio wilderness |
|                     | *Totally Fun Things to Do with Your Cat*  
                      By: Maxine Rock | Fun activities that you can do with cats |
# New Books for Class Library—Chapter Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Classroom Event</th>
<th>Title/Author</th>
<th>Verdie's Notes About Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 6, 1998—10:00</td>
<td>Chapter books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB introduces new books for the class library</td>
<td>The Cabin Faced West By: Ean Fritz</td>
<td>Tells a story about early American life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Castle in the Attic By: Elizabeth Winthrop</td>
<td>This is a magical story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mermaid Summer By: Mallie Hunter</td>
<td>Is a story about a mermaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sign of the Beaver By: Elizabeth George Speare</td>
<td>Tells of the heritage of an Indian boy and the problems he faced in adapting to the white man on the changing frontier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hide and Seek By: Ida Vos</td>
<td>Story of a Jewish family under German rule; based on the author's life during the German occupation years of World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weasel By: Cynthia Defelice</td>
<td>Tells how the government ordered hunters to hunt down Shawnees and kill them or run them off the land in Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encounter By: Jane Yolen</td>
<td>Tells a different perspective of Columbus discovering the new world. Story is told through the eyes of a Taíno boy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents,

Believe it or not, the first grading period is coming to an end and it is time to schedule parent teacher conferences. Conferences will be held on the evening of Thursday, November 19 from 4:00-7:00 and the morning of Friday, November 20 from 8:00-12:00. You may notice that K.I.S.S. Day is this same week. This was done intentionally so that the children would have a chance to share their portfolios and goals prior to the parent-teacher conference. These first conferences are not student-led. At the parent-teacher conferences, you and I will have a chance to discuss your child's progress, strengths, weaknesses, interests and how you can help at home. It will also be a great opportunity for you to ask questions and look at your child's work if you did not see it on K.I.S.S. Day. This year, instead of you scheduling parent-teacher conferences through the office, I am asking that you schedule directly with me. Below is a list of the possible conference times. Please list your first, second and third choice. If I am unable to give you one of these choices, I will call you on the phone to work something out. Please return this letter by Thursday of this week. I will send you letters confirming your conference time in your child's Friday Folder at the end of this week. If you return the letter later than Thursday of this week, I will schedule you and send you a confirmation letter immediately. Please be sure to ask your child for these confirmation letters. I will be scheduling on a first come, first serve basis so if you have restricting schedules, return this letter as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please call me at between 12:00 and 1:00 through the week. This is the lunch hour so I will be available to take your call. I look forward to seeing all of you! Have a great week!

MARK YOUR FIRST SECOND AND THIRD CHOICE!

**Thursday Evening (11/19)**

- 4:00-4:20
- 4:20-4:40
- 4:40-5:00
- 5:00-5:20
- 5:20-5:40
- 5:40-6:00
- 6:00-6:20
- 6:20-6:40
- 6:40-7:00

**Friday Morning (11/20)**

- 8:00-8:20  11:00-11:20
- 8:20-8:40
- 8:40-9:00
- 9:00-9:20
- 9:20-9:40
- 9:40-10:00
- 10:00-10:20
- 10:20-10:40
- 10:40-11:00

NAME__________________________
PHONE________________________
Conference Confirmation

Your parent-teacher conference is scheduled for _________ at _________. Please call as soon as possible if you need to reschedule. I will send you a reminder note one week prior to the conference.

Please help me prepare for our parent-teacher conference by filling out and returning this form.

1. What questions or concerns do you have concerning your child's time in school?

2. What are some goals you would like to see your child reach this year?

Child's Name ____________________________  Your Name ____________________________
Room 20's Conferences!

*Please note that conferences will not be held on Thursday evening and Friday morning as they have in the past. Instead, they will be held on two consecutive evenings: Wednesday, Feb. 17 and Thursday, Feb. 18. There will still be no school on Friday, Feb. 19!

Room 20 Parents,

As you know, February conferences are student-led. Room 20 will be holding student-led conferences on the evening of Wednesday February 17. During student-led conferences, your child will share his/her portfolio and work in progress, read you a book or part of a book they are reading, and explain what they are learning in the different subject areas. At the end of the conference, you help your child set goals for extended academic progress. It is a unique chance for your child to share his/her perspective on learning. By helping your child set and reach goals, you demonstrate to your child your support in their education. As in the past, three to five conferences take place at once. Your child is truly in charge. My role is to spend a few minutes at each conference adding my input without taking the spotlight from your child. The conference focuses only on the positive things happening in the classroom! Since I will have helped your child prepare, I will have suggested some goals for them. They can share these suggestions with you. I hope that each of you can attend student-led conferences. It is quite a learning experience for your child. Throughout the conference they are reflecting on their learning and their effort. This is invaluable. There is a sign up sheet attached. Please return these no later than Wednesday of next week. I will send confirmations right away. I will fill the spaces on a first come, first serve basis so please return them immediately if you have a specific time in mind.

For those of you who have questions or concerns that you feel can not be addressed in a student-led conference and wish to set up an individual twenty minute parent-teacher conference, (without your child) I will be holding those on the evening of Thursday February 18 from 4:00-7:00. There is a place on the conference form for you to request that I call you to set this up. I will be making these phone calls as the requests come in so, again, if you have a specific time in mind, send your form back immediately.

I ask that you please return your forms no later than Wednesday Feb. 3. So that I can make a schedule and return confirmation notes. It is extremely difficult for me to schedule last minute conferences. I make all arrangements around the forms I get back by the due date. When late requests are made, it usually results in me squeezing someone in. I don't like to feel rushed on such an important evening and I also don't like the schedule to get backed up and keep people waiting. I know you have schedules to attend to as well. Please help me out and return this for as soon as possible but no later than Wednesday, Feb. 3. Thank you!
APPENDIX E
CONFERENCE AGENDA FOR STUDENTS
Student-Led Conferences
February 18, 1999

*Share your work on the walls and in the hall.

Name and describe some of the books you are reading or have enjoyed during quiet reading.

*Share a book (or part of a book) that you enjoy by reading it to your guests.

*Tell your guests about one of the chapter books I have read out loud in 1999. What book are you going to talk about? _________________

Share a word that you have learned while reading or listening to me read aloud.

What is the word? _________________

What does it mean? ____________________________

What book did it come from?

What do you like best about reading?

What would you like to get better at in reading?
How can your family help you with this?

*Share at least one piece of writing you have been working on. What piece are you sharing?

What do you want your guests to notice about this piece of writing?

What are you proud of in your writing?

What would you like to improve in your writing?

How can your family help you with this at home?

*Share at least one math piece with your guests
*Share where you are in your mad math folder

What do you like best about math?

What are you proud of in math?

What would you like to improve in math? _____________________________
How can your family help you with this at home? __________________________

*Share at least one morning work job (problem of the day or science packet)

*Tell your parents about the energy cycle and some of the experiments we have done while studying energy.

What are some of the things you have learned in our Energy Unit so far?

Describe how your family can conserve energy

Explain how conserving energy helps protect our environment

*Tell your guests about the different energy sources we have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. You may want to share your energy folder.

*Share any other pieces that you would like to share at this time.
APPENDIX F
TIFFANY’S AND LATONYA’S GOAL SHEET
Student-Led Conferences
February 1, 1999

Share your work on the walls and in the hall.

Name and describe some of the books you are reading or have enjoyed during quiet reading.

1. *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
2. *Fairy Poems* by L. T. Meade Evans

*Share a book (or part of a book) that you enjoy by reading it to your guests.*

*Tell your guests about one of the chapter books I have read out loud in 1999. What book are you going to talk about?*

Tell your guests about one of the chapter books I have read out loud in 1999. What book are you going to talk about?

*Share a word that you have learned while reading or listening to me read aloud.*

What is the word?

What does it mean?

What book did it come from?

What do you like best about reading?

What would you like to get better at in reading?

How can your family help you with this?
Share at least one piece of writing you have been working on. What piece are you sharing? ________________

What do you want your guests to notice about this piece of writing? I work hard on it.

What are you proud of in your writing? Punctuation periods...

What would you like to improve in your writing? Capital letters

How can your family help you with this at home? Practice capital letters and cursive

*Share at least one math piece with your guests
*Share where you are in your math folder

What do you like best about math? The problem

What are you proud of in math? Graduated

What would you like to improve in math? Twelves

How can your family help you with this at home? I do my twelves when I get home from school

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*Share at least one morning work job (problem of the day or science packet)*

*Tell your parents about the energy cycle and some of the experiments we have done while studying energy.*

What are some of the things you have learned in our Energy Unit so far?

**We can store energy**

**We get energy from food**

Energy never gets destroyed but it can changed.

Describe how your family can conserve energy.

- Light less
- Heat less
- Wash less
- Drying

Explain how conserving energy helps protect our environment.

*Tell your guests about the different energy sources we have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. You may want to share your energy folder.*

*Share any other pieces that you would like to share at this time.*

*Be sure to give your guests time to ask questions.*

*Move on to goal setting. Please set at least one reading or writing goal.*

*Please leave your goal sheets here so that I can copy them. You will take the original copy home on Monday.*

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Goals!

Goal 1: Better handwriting.

Strategies for reaching this goal
At Home
- Practice
- Handwriting

At School
- Writing
- Slower

Goal 2: Learn to read harder words.

Strategies for reaching this goal
At Home
- Look words up in the dictionary
- Sound it out

At School
- Read harder chapter books

Goal 3: Become a better speller.

Strategies for reaching this goal
At Home
- Man can tell me what word to spell and write
- Then down

At School
- Practice spelling
- Test
APPENDIX G
K.I.S.S. DAY LETTER
As we were talking on the rug last week, the kids and I decided that it was time that we schedule our first K.I.S.S. day for the year. I’m sure you remember from last year that K.I.S.S. means Kids Invite Someone Special. This event will take place on Wednesday, November 18 from 11:00-12:00. Like last year, the children will share their portfolio with their someone special. In addition, they will share some goals they have set for themselves. The someone special can even help make plans for reaching the goals. Like last year, the children will be preparing a snack for their guests. I backed this celebration up to lunch in case you would like to take your child out to lunch afterwards. You may also wish to pack lunches and eat in the room. It is up to you! I am letting you know so early because it is important that every child have someone special attend. Please talk to your child about who they would like to invite. If your work schedule does not allow you to take a long lunch, think about a grandparent, aunt or uncle. After you have talked this over with your child and made arrangements for someone special to attend on November 18 at 11:00, please send in the bottom portion of this sheet so we know who all is coming and how many snacks to prepare. If your child invites someone other than a parent and will be leaving the building for lunch, please write a permission slip giving the guest permission to take your child out of the building.

________________________ will be attending K.I.S.S. Day as a guest of
________________________
on November 18.
(guest’s name)

Special Notes

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Parents,

I'm writing to remind you that room 20 will be holding an evening sharing on December 15. It will begin at 6:15 in the classroom where the children will share some of their projects related to History and Michael Rosen with you. We would also like to have a few family favorite desserts to snack on at this time. Many of you that sent in your favorite family recipes sent in dessert items. The children and I thought it would be neat if we could try a few of these. If you have a dessert that is a family favorite, and would like to help your child prepare the dessert for the sharing, please sign up below. You may send the dessert in Tuesday with your child and I will have it out when the sharing begins. You can just take your dish after the sharing. There is also an R.S.V.P. form below so that I can have a count of who is coming. Please fill this out even if you are not sending in a dessert. This will help me be certain there are enough plates and drinks for our event.

After the children have shared and you have snacked, we will be moving down to the gym. This will take place at about 6:45. In the gym, the children will be sharing some songs that they have been working on in music that are related to History. They will also be sharing a dance about the selkies that we have been working on as an extension of A Stranger Came Ashore. It is very impressive. The sharing will end around 7:30. It would mean so much to me if every child could come to our sharing and bring their family (or a family member) with them. If you cannot come, please call me at and I will see if I can arrange a ride for your child with other parents that live near you. I really would like all of the children to attend. They have worked hard and are deserving of this celebration.

Please fill out the R.S.V.P. form below. Be sure to fill it out even if you are not bringing a dessert. Please return it by Wednesday.

R.S.V.P. Form

_________people will be attending the December 15 sharing as guests of _____________

(number) (child's name)

Parent Signature __________________________________

_____Yes, we will be bringing a favorite family dessert to share.
APPENDIX I
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOME
Room 20's Conferences!

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Room 20 February Newsletter

As always, room 20 has been very busy and I have a great deal to tell you about!

Valentines Day Party and Homework
No, this isn't a typo! I actually meant to put our Valentines Day Party and homework under the same heading. For homework this week, please allow your child to decorate a bag or box to hold all of their cards. Amanda wrote all of the students in room 20 on the attached sheet. As your child prepares Valentine cards, remind him/her that they must have a card for each person in the room or for no one at all. I'm sure you all agree that this is the kind thing to do. We don't want some to get more cards than others. We all know this leads to hurt feelings. Anyway, I'm asking that the children write the names on the envelopes in cursive. This gives the children a real purpose to practice their cursive writing. Once the cards are finished, please remind your child to put them in alphabetical order by first name. We will set the card boxes out in alphabetical order and passing out Valentines will not take as long as it did last year. There is no other homework except to continue studying multiplication and division facts for mad math.

Energy Unit
We have been having a blast learning about energy and electricity! The children have been working on experiments with magnets, electromagnets, static electricity and more. They are learning about how switches work by setting up circuits and lighting bulbs. Be sure to ask them about the different things on the Ask Me About sheet. In addition, we now have the energy cycle that I told you about earlier in the year. By peddling a bike, the children are actually able to light bulbs, play a radio, and turn on a hair dryer and much more! Be sure to ask them about this. We have the energy cycle until Thursday of next week. Feel free to stop in and take a look!

Conferences
It is not too late to schedule a student-led conference. If you have not yet scheduled and would like to, please send a note and I will call you to arrange a time. Again, student-led conferences will be held on Wednesday, February 18.

Have a great weekend!
Room 20 Update!
Student-Led Conferences

Just a reminder that student-led conferences are Wednesday evening from 3:45-7:30. You have all signed up for a 45 minute block! If you need to change your time or have forgotten your time, please call or send a note. You should be receiving a reminder written by your child sometime early this week! I look forward to seeing all of you! The children are excited to share!

Field Trip
As I've shared before, room 20 will continue to research Ohio History throughout the school year. Right now, we are looking at the Civil War. The chapter book we are reading, *Samney*, takes place during the Civil War Era. In dance, the children are creating Underground Railroad dances. As part of this study, room 20 and room 10 will be visiting The Kelton House. The Kelton House was one of several safe houses along East Town Street in this tour of the Kelton House is Tuesday February 23. We will be leaving around 9:15 and will take a school bus to our destination. The tour is from 10:00-11:00. Afterwards, we may try to visit the State House or Library depending on what our bus driver will allow. We will return no later than 1:30. I am using classroom funds to pay for this trip for the students. The cost for adults is $2.00. You may want to meet us there as bus space will be limited. The Kelton House is located at 586 E. Town Street. If you would like to join us, please send a note along with your $2.00 admission. I have never been on this trip but have heard wonderful things! I am also asking that your child bring a packed lunch with a drink for this trip. Depending on our bus driver and the weather, we may eat downtown. If you need me to order a school packed lunch, you need to write me a note and turn it in tomorrow (Tuesday). I need to give them one week's notice!

Homework
Because of the party on Friday, we forgot to send homework folders. Because of student-led conferences, I am not sending homework other than to continue practicing for mad math. Congratulations to the following people who have graduated all of their mad math facts and passed both exit tests:

Several others are very close and I imagine the majority of the class will be done in the next two weeks! Please continue working with your child on these so that we can move on in March!
Thanks!
Parents,

I'm just writing to remind you of some upcoming events. First this week is Red Ribbon Week. We wear red ribbons each day to remind us to stay drug free. Be sure not to wash them! The red might bleed.

Also, our trip to the Clentancy Caverns is this Friday. If you have not paid yet, please do so. It is $3.50 per child. Also, we will be eating at the Caverns so please help your child remember a packed lunch. I ordered school packed lunches for those of you who requested.

Our Halloween party is also Friday. Please send your child's costume in their book bag or a plastic bag with a name. Also, if you have the game Twister, we would love to borrow it. We have plenty of snack food coming in. We could use more parents to help set up at 2:00. Let me know if you can do this.

Thanks!

"
Parents,

Hello! I hope all is well with all of you! We have been busy as usual in room 20!

We are currently working on a Consumer Reports Unit. In this, we are going through the scientific process to test and compare products. So far we have tested two brands of diapers for absorbency, three brands of paper towels for absorbency, and three types of soil to see which will grow the healthiest plants. We have been focusing on setting up fair experiments. We have also done a taste test to compare Milky Ways to Milky Way Lites. Be sure to ask your children about the results of all of these tests.

In this unit, we are also covering the economics portions of both the 3rd and 4th grade courses of study. This week’s homework will help review key terms and concepts of economics.

We are also working on money. We are focusing on counting change back to buyers and figuring out how much money to give back. We are also comparing prices. For example, we compared buying half gallons of milk to whole gallons. Next, we will investigate value meals at fast food restaurants.

In addition to all of this, we are still working on studying changes in Ohio. Related to this, we are reading an interesting chapter book called Wease. I am in the process of setting up a trip to the Historical Society before Winter break.

Please remember that K.I.S.S. Day is Wednesday from 11:00-12:00. We are looking forward to this! I also wanted to let you know that I am totally booked on the conference days. For this reason, it is _
Very important that you arrive on time for your conference. I don't want to get backed up or it will make everybody late. I will place portfolios in the hall. You may want to come early to look at your child's work. When you time arrives, I am asking that you knock on the door or peek in. This will help me stay on schedule.

You should have received a confirmation with some questions for you. If you have specific questions or concerns you would like to discuss at the conference, fill out that paper and return it Monday. This will help me prepare.

Our year is going great! I look forward to seeing you at K.K.S.S. Day or conferences.

[Signature]
LIST OF REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in researching teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), The handbook of research in teaching (3rd ed.) (pp. 119-161). New York: MacMillan.


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LIST OF REFERENCES OF CHILDREN’S BOOKS


