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

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next function in our discussion—writing to occupy free time.

Despite the difficulties of diary writing, many of the other instances of writing to know oneself and others better were potent occasions for writing in Room 12. Extended and interconnected opportunities to write arose from activities in and around school and community and on the occasion of cultural events such as holidays. As the case studies of Pen Pals and the Safety Posters illustrate, these occasions were often framed as opportunities to learn about oneself, others, or one's community. This type of writing function, so amenable to the integration of skills and links to community that are benchmarks of occasions for writing, is a highly promising place to begin to construct that part of the school curriculum concerned with acquisition of both writing skills and values about literacy and its power. These possibilities will be explored further in the next chapter.

While writing to know oneself and others was a function that was largely teacher-initiated, it depended on the everyday life experiences of the students for its vitality. In the second/third grade, it occupied the peculiar status among the functions identified of being both an explicit and recognized school function and one in which students had a large measure of control over facets of the composing process. It appears, as well, to have been closely allied with the use to which children put writing when left to their own devices.

Writing to occupy free time. In a busy, crowded place like Room 12, students who isolated themselves with paper and pencil were
most likely to have a bit of quiet time and space. The teachers modeled this by instituting both Diary Time and a time called USR (Uninterrupted Silent Reading) as times when people were to be privately engaged with words. Often children chose to use their free time—which was variable but plentiful in this open-space classroom—to read or write. When children wrote during this time, they produced stories, letters, and cards that were colorful and illustrated. With full control over this function, the students chose a variety of materials on which to draw and write, they planned their own formats, they identified an audience, and they were instrumental in seeing that their documents reached their intended fate. Given such student autonomy, great diversity in writing and its use might be expected. Instead, it was surprising to see that, in general, students used this opportunity to write in intimate, transactional ways. Figure 19 illustrates this with a letter written by one student early in the year to a researcher who had been participating in the classroom. In the letter, which was written on colored paper in magic marker and hand-delivered, the student both compliments the researcher and makes a move toward a relationship with her, suggesting that the researcher is a role model. The letter is personal, spontaneous and self-revealing—and, unlike in the case of diaries, the student wrote it without seeking help with spelling or ideas for a topic.

In the lives of these second/third graders, the function of writing to occupy free time was typically realized as "keeping in touch" or "making contact" with others—often expressing in writing
what would be hard to express face-to-face. Given that half of the children lived in single-parent households, it was common for children to use their private time to make cards and write stories for their absent parents. Additionally, children wrote to one another in the classroom and exchanged letters of invitation to parties and playtimes (see Greene, Note 12, and Florio & Frank, in press, for other examples of this phenomenon).

The Functions of Writing in the Middle School Classroom

Everyday life in Mrs. Anderson's sixth grade-classroom was organized quite differently from life in Room 12. Differences in time available for writing, space within which to work, age of students, nature of the curriculum, and teacher beliefs and experience had implications for the writing that was observed there. However, despite such contextual differences between the two classroom sites, weekly meetings of fieldworkers in both sites and monthly meetings with the focal teachers and their teammates led to the discovery of important similarities between the sites as well. The four functions of writing described in this report are useful ways to categorize writing in both settings, and the occasion for writing as a unit of writing instruction was operant in both classrooms.

A closer look at the functions of writing in the middle school classroom reveals both the uniqueness of that setting and the ways in which it is similar to the elementary setting. Returning to Table 1 to consider the functions of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom, it is important to recall the overall structural difference in the school day in the two classrooms studied. The writing described in
the elementary classroom was observed throughout the day. Ms. Donovan was responsible for instruction in all school subjects except social studies. Thus researchers had the opportunity to observe her and her students engaged in writing for a wide variety of social and academic purposes. In the sixth grade, however, students had several different teachers for their school subjects. Focusing on Mrs. Anderson's teaching limited both the time and school subjects that could be observed. Mrs. Anderson was responsible for instruction in her team in the areas of communication arts and social studies. She was observed as she taught these subjects to two groups of sixth graders—her own and those of Mr. Hathaway's homeroom. This difference in organization of the classes had implications for the type and range of occasions for writing that were observed in her room.

While in Ms. Donovan's room four communicative functions were realized by means of writing, we have already seen that only one of them—writing to know oneself and others—produced extended and interrelated sets of activities we have called occasions for writing. In achieving the other functions, writing was instrumental to such activities as recreation, testing, record-keeping, and rule-setting. In these instances writing was often undertaken in isolated lessons or blocks of time and lacked continuity or integration with other parts of students' lives.

Writing in the sixth-grade communication arts/social studies block taught by Mrs. Anderson was obviously only a part of the writing undertaken in the middle school day. Thus, our data represent somewhat less than fully the range of opportunities to write extant in
the sixth grade. Our documentation is limited to only a part of the school day and curriculum, but, as the preceding case studies have shown, within that part there was extensive interweaving of social and linguistic aims as writing was undertaken in the completion of such occasions for writing as Planning A Dinner Party, the Life Books, the Magazine Project, and Researching the World. It is to that subset of writing experiences and the ways in which they serve to achieve important social and academic functions in Mrs. Anderson's class that we now turn.

Table 1 illustrates the possibility of finding all four function types of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom. Like their elementary counterparts, students initiate writing as one way to occupy free time. Although they have far less free time during their scheduled communication arts class periods, students still write stories and cartoons for their own amusement or to share with friends. In addition, and with Mrs. Anderson's leadership, they write to participate in an ever-widening circle of communities from their own class and team to their school, town, and ultimately to the more abstract community where their audience may be separate from them in time, space, and experience. They also write to demonstrate academic competence.

The middle school occasions for writing described in Table 1 and in the case studies differ from those identified in the elementary classroom in that they occur in all three of the major function areas and in that they are related to one another both in content and in time. Perhaps because Mrs. Anderson's students are older and because her time with them is more limited and more focused than
is Ms. Donovan's, Mrs. Anderson endeavors to link occasions for writing to one another across the year, gradually building the complexity of the writing tasks undertaken by the students.

While linkages are seen in the elementary school, they are frequently of the sort that join student to experience outside of school or student to intended audience. In the middle school these sorts of linkages are less prevalent. Students are sometimes asked to write to an imagined audience; often the fate of a written product is not decided upon in advance of its completion. The teacher initiates most of the writing activities, and they may not necessarily arise from or relate directly to the everyday life experience of the students. The integration that occurred in the sixth-grade occasions was far more internal to the writing curriculum—it was integration of skills necessary to complete a given writing assignment across three functions—writing to know oneself and others, writing to participate in community, and writing to demonstrate academic competence.

Early in the year when the sixth graders were new both to middle school and to peers from other East Eden elementary schools, there was both a need and an opportunity to get to know one another. At that time Mrs. Anderson initiated the Life Books. This occasion for writing not only was appropriate in terms of the social situation unfolding, but it resembled writing in the early days of elementary school in that it brought students gradually back into writing. The Life Book required relatively little actual writing and was a highly interactive occasion for writing. Students shared their ideas and
work space and were provided a model in the form of a book prepared by Mrs. Anderson to describe her own life. In addition, students were encouraged to use pictures and drawings to enrich and extend their written expression. And, much like the writing seen in the elementary school, the audience for their writing was real and immediate—the classmates whom they were coming to know.

The Magazine Project was an occasion for writing that built upon the Life Books both in terms of the writing required to complete it and in light of the growing sense of the class as a social unit. Once the students had begun to know one another, they turned their attention outward. While the actual audience for their writing continued to include their classmates, Table 1 illustrates that their intended audience in subsequent writing occasions was somewhat different. Eventually the magazines that the students wrote would be read by their friends, parents, and teacher. But when initiated, they were intended to address an imaginary audience of subscribers. The extension outward from writing that was purely instrumental to social and academic life at home or at school to writing intended for an absent and largely unknown audience was an extension of the notion of writing as community participation that was not seen in the elementary classroom. It more closely resembles some aspects of adult literacy. Perhaps the closest that students in Room 12 came to such an enterprise was in writing to pen pals—and here we saw that making one's audience real and concrete was integrally related to the success of the project.

Thus it can be seen that the Magazine Project built upon the Life Books not only in terms of the skills required to complete it
but in terms of the extension and expansion of the definition of
audience to include a community beyond the walls of Lincoln School.
In completing this writing enterprise, the students were again
offered a model, but this time it was the model of magazines of
former students. Using magazines of authors unknown to the students
reinforced the notion that magazines can be addressed to an audience
separated from the reader by time, distance, and experience.

As the case studies illustrate, the integration of skills and
building of complexity in occasions for writing continued throughout
the year and in the sixth-grade classroom. A culminating occasion
for writing—the Research Project—occurred late in the year. It
epitomized writing as academic performance and, as such, shed light
on the nature of formal evaluation of writing in Mrs. Anderson's
class.

While evaluation of writing was present in academic writing across
the year in the elementary classroom in such subjects as reading and
science, that evaluation was largely implicit. Grades explicitly for
writing were never introduced in writing in the second/third-grade
classroom. In addition, as was mentioned earlier, the writing which
engaged students most directly in the composing process (writing to
know oneself and others) was never formally evaluated by Ms. Donovan.

In the sixth grade, however, the picture was quite different.
Indeed, all writing except the recreational kind was graded by Mrs.
Anderson. The case studies point out that evaluation was an enter-
prise that Mrs. Anderson found both essential and thorny. In many
cases her evaluation was in terms of largely unstated criteria. Her
inferences about student competence in discrete writing skills was cumulative and not framed precisely. However, in early spring students undertook the longest extended occasion for writing when they prepared their Research Project. In this occasion we observed for the first time the explication of evaluative criteria by Mrs. Anderson, the negotiation of those criteria with the students, and the holding of students accountable in terms of them. Much like the explicitly academic writing in Room 12 (which was the only writing to be directly evaluated by Ms. Donovan), student composing in this evaluated activity was constrained in ways different from the previous occasion for writing. In writing to participate in community or to know oneself and others, students had the greatest autonomy to compose and format their written work. The composition and format of writing in the research project, in contrast, was largely in the hands of Mrs. Anderson—a striking parallel to the predominance of publisher-made materials shaping the writing to demonstrate academic competence in the second/third grade. In the next chapter these and other features of occasions for writing will be considered as they bear on curriculum, instruction, and future research in writing instruction.
CHAPTER 6

IN CONCLUSION: PICTURES OF A PROCESS

Introduction

This study was conceived and conducted in the spirit of discovery. Its aim was to describe the writing undertaken in two classrooms and the teaching attendant to it. The combination of anthropological, psychological, and practical perspectives was found to be a powerful and flexible way of working to craft these descriptions. This work represents only one of many useful approaches to research on writing and writing instruction. Correlational studies, surveys, and experiments can also make contributions to knowledge about the acquisition of written literacy. As the corpus of research grows and is shared and reviewed, we shall come closer to the goal of understanding writing in school.

In concluding this report, one caution is warranted. This caution applies to all educational research that is broadly descriptive, whether that research be ethnographic or correlational in nature. The caution pertains to the tendency in educational research to draw implications for teaching and policy uncritically from descriptions of current practice. The potential strength of descriptive research lies in its rendering of analytic portrayals of the complex activities of teaching and learning and of the sense-making of participants in those activities. But descriptions are not uncomplicated. They are static attempts to represent processes that change in time. They are, in addition, neither value-neutral renderings of "what is,"
nor are they facile roadmaps for "what ought to be."

When we study schooling, we describe everyday life and practice within the context of a social institution governed by shared norms and values. Thus statements of fact about life in such settings as schools and classrooms are statements meaningful in terms of the norms and values held there. Our descriptions of teaching and learning in school settings thus presuppose the institution in which the behaviors arise and the rules that regulate those behaviors and make them meaningful. It is in virtue of this state of affairs that our "mere descriptions" are already somewhat evaluative even as we render them, and that they are turned so conveniently into prescriptions for practice (Searle, 1964).

Critics of mainstream educational research have pointed out that failure to recognize the normative nature of the descriptions we devise can lead to uncritical acceptance of the underlying rules presently governing practice, and hence to their unreflective perpetuation by the very act of studying them (Cherryholmes, Note 13). From description we may be tempted to offer heavy-handed recommendations for practice. But the principles of practice documented in one educational setting may be inappropriate to the local and particular perspective of participants in another (Hymes, Note 14). If handled unreflectively, our accumulating corpus of research on instruction is unlikely ever to lead to a normative theory of education—one that stands back from research findings and asks questions ultimately about what is worth knowing (Fenstermacher, 1978).

At a time when we are just beginning extensive research on the teaching and learning of writing, it is worth asking ourselves what
we mean by literacy. What are we willing to count as writing?
What do we assume is the teacher's role in the process of acquisition of writing? What resources are available and for whom in enabling the process? Descriptive research cannot answer fundamental value questions for parents, teachers, or policy makers beyond reification of the status quo. Nor can it offer simple and direct prescriptions for practice. What it can offer are pictures of the complex processes at work in schooling and the acquisition of written literacy (Wittgenstein, 1953/1968). These pictures are, of course, limited because they are abstractions. As such they freeze ongoing action in order to describe it. In addition, to be sensible, they must be constructed like caricatures, delineating certain features and demonstrating overall patterns. Thus they must be drawn from one particular point of view and not another (Erickson, 1973). But, like pictures, they are of value despite their limitations. For the inexperienced, they share situations which may be heretofore unknown or difficult to observe at firsthand. For the experienced, they provide much food for thought; a chance to examine their own unique but related experiences.

In this study we have attempted to draw such pictures of processes. We have not focused on products. We have not, for example, regarded student writing as a product in isolation from the social and academic processes that engendered it. Nor have we regarded teaching behavior as a mere product or output. We have considered teacher actions in light of teacher thought and in the context of classroom life. We have looked at instruction as a process—
dynamic and collaborative creation of teacher and students in a particular setting. Thus our study has reflected truly local norms governing writing and its instruction. But by examining our pictures of writing and its instruction in two classrooms, the reader may learn about a process heretofore obscure or may find the opportunity to think about her/his own situation. She or he may be surprised that her/his experience is quite different, nod knowingly at a familiar episode, agree or disagree with our interpretations, find our renderings satisfying or incomplete. In short, the reader may find these descriptions the occasion for reflection upon her/his own work. And, with the gradual accumulation of such local portrayals, by means of comparison and contrast, the generic may be illuminated in the particular.

In this spirit we offer in concluding this report reflections on issues in practice, curriculum, and research as they relate to writing. These reflections are prompted by what we learned in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

**Implications for Practice**

One way to characterize curriculum is, in Eggleston's (1977) words, as "a body of learning experiences responding to a societal view of knowledge that may not always be fully expressed or even fully accepted by teachers and students" (p. 20). It was not until this study was well underway that the researchers realized that to study the processes of teaching and learning writing in the classroom was, in fact, to study the writing curriculum. Thus, it was a long time before the teachers and researchers
in dialogue with one another discovered the curricula for writing embedded in everyday activities in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

Perhaps because writing instruction in East Eden, unlike instruction in other school subjects, lacks a "received" and highly standardized system of objectives and materials, it is easy to assume that it lacks a curriculum. But as Eggleston's characterization indicates, curriculum may exist without full consensus about or full expression of the structure and contents of knowledge, the appropriate ways to impart knowledge, the persons to whom it should be taught, the means to evaluate such efforts, or the values underlying its instruction.

In large part we have found that this state of affairs characterized the writing curriculum in the two classrooms studied. While the nature of the curriculum was different in the elementary and the middle school settings, it was, in both cases, largely unarticulated. Free of the materials and precise district mandates that both supported and limited instruction in other academic subjects, writing posed both a problem and an opportunity for the teachers and students whom we observed.

It is possible that relative freedom from outside management of curriculum makes writing the last bastion of independent decision-making among school subjects. Potentially it is still an area in which teachers can make fundamental choices about the knowledge to impart, the ways to impart it, the nature of assessment, and the reasons for learning. But it is also possible for such lack of
specification of the curriculum to be a source of problems. Teachers may enact writing instruction unreflectively—filling up the time with activities that merely recapitulate their own limited experiences as former students of writing. Worse, such an unregulated part of the course of study can suffer for lack of legitimacy. Thus we sometimes see writing slighted in a busy school day or passing unremarked upon as it is used throughout the day as a means to other academic ends.

The absence of curricular materials in writing has engendered a paradoxical situation with respect to writing instruction. On one hand, research on the teaching of writing portrays teachers engaging in some of their most creative and rich proactive and interactive planning precisely because they lack the curricular and managerial props and constraints that materials would provide (Clark & Elmore, Note 11). However, much of that creative instruction is invisible—to analysts, to students, and to teachers themselves. The invisibility happens in at least two ways. First, teachers often engage students in writing that is incidental to the completion of other academic tasks and miss, in their efforts to complete those tasks, opportunities to draw student attention to the important aspects of the very writing processes they are using. The other source of the invisibility of writing instruction lies in the nature of classrooms as places in which to study and communicate with others. Writing is ubiquitous in classrooms, although explicit writing instruction may not be. Writing of papers and tests can become such a part of everyday life in classrooms that it goes unremarked upon by its
users. Thus the powerful potential of writing in use in everyday school life goes unexploited such that it is neither addressed in teacher preparation nor accounted for in curricular descriptions; it is not even counted as writing and writing instruction by educators, children, or parents. Yet it is precisely this everyday use of language that is at the heart of the process of becoming a competent communicator.

This state of affairs makes writing a strategic site for curricular research. In addition, writing is a school subject that potentially calls forth considerable professionalism in teachers. In undertaking writing instruction they may find themselves having to reflect upon their own experience as writers, the lives of their diverse students and the role of writing in them, the opportunities for becoming literate in their classrooms, the problems of standards in writing, and our societal definitions of and values about literacy.

As we considered the implications of this study for the practice of teaching writing, we realized that the occasions for writing described in this report have spoken to the question "why is school writing difficult to teach?" It is our hope that by answering this question, at least in part, teachers and other practitioners will better understand and be better equipped to rise to the challenge of teaching writing. Teaching writing will never be easy. But we believe that understanding how and why fostering the acquisition of written literacy in schools is difficult will be useful to those who seek to help the process along.
Challenging issues. In the teaching of writing, we identified a number of issues that our teachers wrestled with explicitly or implicitly. These included the question of audience, the use of models, the need for a sense of purpose in writing occasions, the setting of expectations for writing performance in school, the issue of evaluation of students' written work, and the classroom context as an influence on writing. In sum, these issues and considerations constitute an answer to the question, "Why is writing difficult to teach in school?"

Audience. The description and analysis of the Diary Time occasion for writing demonstrated how important the issue of audience can be in school writing. Audience seemed to be a particularly important factor for the primary grade writers. Ambiguity about audience seemed to cause a variety of responses to Diary Time and made a noticeable contribution to the decline of that occasion for writing. The second and third graders seemed to profit most from real, live, and visible audiences (e.g., kindergarteners and pen pals), while the sixth graders were able to visualize and write for an imaginary audience (e.g., in the Magazine Project). One trend that describes the writing curriculum in the second/third grade as it developed during the year could be called the "widening circle of audience." There, Ms. Donovan started with Diary Time, moved to Safety Posters, which involved other children in the school, and on to Pen Pals, involving an absent but visualizable audience in another school building.
Models. A second issue that our teachers dealt with in each of the occasions for writing was the use of a model. Both teachers expressed mild discomfort with showing an example of a finished product when introducing a new occasion for writing. They were concerned about students imitating a model too slavishly. However, in most cases, our teachers chose to show examples of either their own work or that of students from earlier years who had done similar projects. The teachers seemed to believe that the young writers needed to be able to visualize their finished product in order to get started in the composition process. Indeed, showing an example of a finished product was an integral part of the teachers' communication of their plans. Communication of plans had as much to do with the form and content of the finished product as it did with specifying the process of production.

A second sense in which modeling was an issue had to do with the teachers modeling the process of writing themselves. Ms. Donovan began the school year by writing in her own journal during Diary Time. She continued to use her own writing throughout the year as examples of partial and finished products and also as a way of communicating to her students that the occasions for writing were worthwhile enough for even the teacher to take seriously. Similarly, Mrs. Anderson typically did each student writing assignment herself as part of her own planning and preparation. She later used these drafts and finished work as a means of communication about herself as a writer and as a person. In short, both teachers used the examples of themselves as writers to convey the idea that writing is a
valuable, challenging, adult way to express oneself. We can also speculate that writings that the teachers actually performed themselves were likely to be infused with meaning for students.

**Purpose.** Both of our teachers acknowledged the importance of purpose felt and understood by students as a crucial part of a successful occasion for writing. By purpose, our teachers meant that the activity must have some reason for being done well beyond that of pleasing the teacher. Preferably each writing activity should have some connection with the students' lives in school or beyond. But our two teachers approached the challenge of incorporating real purpose in each occasion for writing in different ways. Ms. Donovan typically developed occasions for writing out of events that already had some meaning in her students' lives. The Safety Posters activity is a good example of her use of the unexpected experience of a school assembly to generate an elaborate occasion for writing. In contrast, Mrs. Anderson tried to achieve purpose in the sixth-grade occasions for writing by providing her students a range of choices of topic and form, within an elaborately pre-planned set of activities. In this way, the sixth graders were encouraged to express and explore their own identities, tastes, and values while at the same time working through an increasingly complex set of literary forms selected by the teacher.

**Communicating expectations.** In both classrooms, it was clear from the first day of school that every student would be expected to write. Ms. Donovan set aside a full hour of the first day of school for Diary Time. Mrs. Anderson, as a teacher of communication
arts, made it clear that writing would receive heavy emphasis during the year. The district testing program in reading, math, and spelling gave the teachers an opportunity to observe their students performing the mechanics of writing. Individual students who had difficulty thinking of what to write (e.g., in their diaries) received help and encouragement from teacher and peers. In short, very early in the school year it was clear to every student that full participation in these classrooms required and included a considerable amount of writing. Although we cannot tell from the data in this study just how important early communication of these expectations was, it was certainly the case that these two teachers strongly believed in the importance of setting high and early expectations for writing performance.

**Evaluation.** Evaluation of student performance is a thorny issue in every part of the curriculum. In addition to the discomfort that many teachers feel with evaluation in general, writing presents some special problems. Unlike mathematics and reading, there are no clear "right answers" in writing. The adequacy and completeness of a student's written work is a matter of the teacher's subjective judgment. Furthermore, the risk of discouraging a student with a negative evaluation seems high. Ms. Donovan dealt with the problem of evaluating student writing by concentrating almost exclusively on completing the assignment as criterion. The process of doing the writing assignment was seen as an end in itself. Subjective evaluation of the quality of the written product was not made, or at least not reflected in any official grading or evaluation system.
In contrast, most of the sixth-grade occasions for writing were formally evaluated. Typically, Mrs. Anderson announced the criteria that she intended to use in evaluating the quality of written products either during her introduction of an activity or at some time before the projects were complete. In one case (the Magazine Project), she also asked the students to turn in an evaluation of their own work to compare with hers. She was pleased with the degree to which the student self-evaluations corresponded with her own judgments, and felt that the self-evaluations were useful in teaching the students about the difficulty of making fair and careful judgments about written work.

The evaluation issues tends to overshadow a related and challenging problem in the teaching of writing, namely, the problem of providing constructive criticism that will help the student author improve his or her work. In Ms. Donovan's class suggestions for improvement were usually given tutorially, while the work was in progress. Especially during the first months of the school year, most of the critical attention concerned surface features of neatness, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The concept of a rough draft was introduced during the winter term, but the young writers still seemed to distinguish between their first and final drafts largely on the basis of neatness and correctness. Given that the mechanics of producing a written paragraph or letter were somewhat laborious for seven- and eight-year-old children, the improvement of surface features seems to have been the most one could accomplish in Room 12. In contrast, Mrs. Anderson made extensive comments and
suggestions about the form, content, and mode of expression of her students' work. These comments were made on the draft material that the students turned in, and the sixth graders were expected to reflect Mrs. Anderson's suggestions in their final drafts. We have not done an analysis of teacher comments and criticisms of student written work, but we have the distinct impression that the task of coming up with truly constructive criticisms was among the most difficult aspects of the teaching of writing for our two teachers.

**Classroom context.** Our experiences with school writing in this study convinced us that fostering written literacy in schools is a demanding enterprise. Even when writing was integrated with other school subjects, writing activities demanded a great deal of energy from the teacher to initiate, sustain, and complete. This was especially true in the mixed ability elementary classroom in which the teacher insisted that every student complete every writing activity. In the sixth grade, reading and responding to each student's first and final drafts also placed heavy time and energy demands on the teacher. Finding time in a crowded daily schedule for students to reflect on, think about, and revise what they have written in relatively undistracted peace and quiet was difficult in both settings. The typical public school classroom is not the ideal setting in which to become a writer. We attribute much of the success that Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson achieved in the teaching of writing to their continual shaping of the physical and social environments in their classrooms in ways that supported student writing.
Much of this shaping of the classroom context for writing was done by trial and error and common sense practical reasoning. Psychological theories of composition deal only with the solitary author. Yet, as we have seen in our analyses of occasions for writing, there are large and important social components in the processes of organizing and executing occasions for writing and in the settings in which the actual writing, revision, and evaluation take place. Individual-oriented theories about the composition process have value, but practitioners also need more adequate models of school writing in social context.

Implications for Further Research

In this report we have described our view of school writing as a complex social, psychological, and practical enterprise and have illustrated the methods we have used to do research on school writing. Our reflections on the data and experiences of this study of two classrooms lead us to recommend three types of studies for future research:

1. descriptive studies of school writing in settings different from those documented here;

2. more focused descriptive, correlational, or experimental studies of specific factors identified in this study as important elements in school writing; and

3. inquiry into ways of relating research on written literacy (its processes and findings) to the practice of teaching.

The first suggestion for future research is a call for more thick description of children's writing in context. Before the field can put together the beginnings of a developmental picture of the
the acquisition of written literacy, we need to document the teaching and learning of writing at grade levels other than second, third, and sixth. Other potentially important setting differences include bilingual classes, inner city schools, and special teacher training and background (e.g., the Bay Area Writing Project or one of its progeny). Furthermore, future descriptive research should attempt to observe and describe those events and experiences outside the school, at home and in the neighborhood and community, that provide opportunities for children to learn, practice, and apply writing as a means and as an end in itself.

Several of the factors identified in the present study as important in the teaching and learning of writing deserve more focused attention. These include the role of audience, the use of process and product models in writing assignments, the influence of teachers' conceptions of the writing process on their planning and teaching, form and timing of constructive criticism of students' written work, motivation for writing, and the setting of expectations for writing performance. We are reasonably convinced that these factors are important to successful school writing. Understanding precisely how and why they are important will have to await additional descriptive, correlational, or experimental research.

Our final suggestion for future study concerns the process of relating research to practice. By and large, the research on teaching of the last 15 years has not had dramatic effects on the practice of teaching. In part, this is because accumulating research findings is a slow and deliberate business, while the demands of the
classroom do not wait patiently for researchers to come up with precise answers to precise questions. Furthermore, much of research on teaching addresses questions that are of little practical interest to practitioners.

But even when research on teaching is timely and addresses questions of real interest to practicing teachers, the problem of putting research into practice is not solved. Because every classroom situation is unique, a list of prescriptions for teaching will miss the mark more often than not, or be couched in such general terms as to constitute a set of mere slogans. Furthermore, teachers are thinking professionals and not mere technicians. They deserve and need to have a sense of ownership over what, why, and how they teach. Both the processes of inquiry and the findings of research on teaching must be subjected to careful deliberation by all interested parties in order to ground recommendations for the practice of teaching in the wisdom and experience of practitioners.

In the context of applying research on the teaching of writing we have proposed the creation of a Written Literacy Forum. The purpose of this Forum is to build on our research on written literacy in schools and on our experiences in meaningful collaboration with practicing teachers to create a new and powerful way to bring research into practice. Specifically, we will organize a Written Literacy Forum comprised of researchers, practicing teachers, and teacher educators (a working group of about 12 people). Forum participants will develop and try out answers to the question, "What does research on writing mean for teachers and teacher educators?"
Forum members will have access to a rich corpus of descriptive data on the teaching and learning of writing in schools. Consultants with special expertise will be called on from time to time. Pairs or small groups of Forum members will identify issues of particular interest to them and pursue these issues, producing analytic papers, syntheses of knowledge about some aspect of written literacy, and materials useful in teacher training and development. Deliberation within the Written Literacy Forum will be documented and carefully described. In short, the Written Literacy Forum will be a serious attempt to think from research on writing in order to interpret and adapt the research in ways truly likely to make a difference in schools. Documentation of the development of the Written Literacy Forum may also produce a model for relating research to practice that can be adapted for use by other researcher-practitioner teams.
Reference Notes


References


Florio, S., & Frank, J.H. Literacy and community: The example of Betterburg. In B.K. Beyer & R. Gilstrap (Eds.), Writing in the elementary school social studies. ERIC Clearinghouse on Social Studies Education, in press.


Searle, J.R. How to derive 'ought' from 'is.' Philosophical Review, 1964, 63, 44-58.


APPENDIX A

DISSEMINATION
Dissemination

During the period of this grant the research staff has engaged in a number of dissemination activities. In addition to this technical report to NIE, the journal articles, book chapters, and other papers listed below have been produced during the course of this project. These reports focus on particular substantive and methodological issues surrounding the teaching and study of writing. Beyond these formal papers and publications we have conducted a number of colloquia at our own and other universities, in-service teacher workshops in local school districts, and consultant visits with the State of Michigan Department of Education and with researchers and practitioners interested in research on teaching.

Written Literacy Study Reports and Publications

Clark, C.M., & Florio, S. Diary time. In J. Schwartz & B. Bushing (Eds.), Integrating the language arts. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, in press-a. (This paper was presented at the Pre-Conference Session at the 32nd Annual Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics titled, Writing in the classroom: Qualitative Studies, Washington, DC, March 19, 1981.)


Florio, S., & Clark, C.M. The functions of writing in an elementary classroom. To appear in *Research in the Teaching of English.* (A version of this paper was presented at the National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School, Portland, OR, April 10, 1981.)


Maxwell, R.J. The teaching of writing: A descriptive study. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts, Portland, OR, April, 1981.
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FIELDNOTES
Fieldnotes - Grade 6

FN: HMS WK #19 day 50. Wednesday 1/23/80

Page 1

S's pass out
M collects game
M asks attendance
M tells s's leave materials
M moves to assemble
M gives directions
M requests help
M shares finding
M helps S
M rewarded by find
M monitors s's
M reprimands s's from other class
M assists individ.

9:15
9:17
9:22
9:24
9:30
9:32
9:33
9:37
9:38
9:42
9:46
9:47

MN: Requested bank of objectives from M. Obtained student copy of objectives for 2nd quarter. Large bank of objectives from first quarter M will bring to me another time.

ON: 9:15 Three girls pass out worksheets:
   Titles of WS's are
   1. Calling all numbers
   2. Guiding readers
   3. It's in the cards

M checks to see if s's are present, asks in general if any s's are absent. M asks s's if they all have all three worksheets, reads off titles.

9:17 M collects battery powered game (calculator type) from Robbie. She asks him two or three times before he finally hands it to her.
M tells s's that she will give them a quick explanation, tells them that for #1 (on WS) that s's will need to go to where tree branches are in library (M points in general direction SE) to find where fictional books end and non fiction begins, tells s's they will have to find different sections (M is standing in front center of room.)
M tells s's that they will have to write the call number, name of author and title of book they select. M tells s's that they all can't start there at once.

ON: 9:20 M tells s's that for #2 on WS, they can locate cards in card catalogue, all books listed are there, she has checked herself. M explains that s/s are to write on WS's and where they are to write.

ON: 9:22 M tells s's that on last sheet, they will do the same thing but for a different book, e.g., non fiction for subject card. Main information will be needed, such as name of author... M tells s's to leave notebooks and stuff here. We'll return at end of hour.

ON: 9:23 S's and M leave room.

MN: Room is rearranged, especially in front. Tables pushed back (same general arrangement) but lectern and table and o.p. are west of center front. (I think for purpose of student presentation of oral reports.)

ON: 9:24 S's gather in SE corner of library, (about 10 s's) where fiction ends and non-fiction begins. About four girls are at the card catalogue. Other s's are scattered.

ON: 9:25 M walks to SE corner, tells s's that they don't all have to be in one place.
9:26 Four g's at card catalogue.
9:27 Most s's in SW corner (12 or more) but spread out at various table.

MN: Gary asks me for help. I point to the call number categories above bookcases.
9:30 M tells s's to reshelving books after using them.
9:32 Eight s's at card catalog. M assists them.
9:33 Teri: "Now what do we hafta check? (to s's or 400 section).
M tells s's in SE corner that all of them don't have to copy the same book.
9:34 M joins Teri's table.
9:35 Some s's very quietly writing (about 5). Scott jumps to touch top of
bookcase...struts, pencil over ear.
9:37 Craig shares his finding (book) with two girls.
9:38 Christie approaches M. M responds: 'You'll have to hunt--right on top
of it' (laughs).

9:42 Teri approaches me excitedly. Says she found two new books to read: One
about the KKK, and the other about Black Beauty (not the horse).

9:45 M continues to circulate among groups of s's. (S's appear to work
individually on task).

9:46 Richard, are you finished?
Richard: "We're done"
M: (discovers that he is in W's class)"You should be with your group."

I move to card catalogue area. Cannot seem to find a place where everyone can be
observed at once--too many barriers (e.g., bookcases).

14 s's in card catalogue area. M assists individuals s's. S's have
card drawers pulled out. Some are kneeling, standing, sitting.
9:50 Tom: (responds to?) "I couldn't guess" (keeps drawer open).
Three girls run together toward table near card catalogue, one with drawer in
hand. (all appear to be excited).

9:51 M tells s's to put drawers back in proper order, return to room for a few
minutes.
9:52 M: "Come on, . . . No tardy slips for special area."
9:53 (In classroom) three or more boys talk noisily about basketball. M enters
says "all right, shh" . . . asks s's to be seated.
9:54 Seven s's still standing.
S: "Be quiet!" (loudly).
Gary shares his WS with M, says "I only got this far." (Shows his WS to her about
3/4 completed).
9:55 M: (to s's) "I forgot to tell you to put your name on all three papers."
M asks s's if any of them have finished all three sheets. Two s's raise hands.
M tells s's that on Friday they will have a little bit of time to finish up. She
tells them to keep their papers in their notebooks, not to lose them, says that
those who have finished may look around the library.
9:56 M tells s's that they may go. S's leave room.

At end of the morning, M comments to me on how much I have written. I get the
impression that she is happy when I have much to write about.
M tells me that the purpose of this activity is to have s's be able to work on research paper, so that s's won't be afraid to look for books. First time that I can recall that M has explicitly referred to purpose of lesson. I wonder if she picked up the idea that I would be specifically interested in "purpose" from interviews with R.

M reminds me that today s's will have classroom meeting. I had temporarily forgotten about it but can change my plan for the day and return this afternoon.

Requested samples of worksheets s's complete at future date from J. (possible Friday or Monday).

M tells me that she will introduce the Reader's Guide. (Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. and Wednesday at 2:10 p.m.).
Today is Columbus Day. It is also the day after JD has been out sick. To open the day, the s's meet on the floor in the center. They talk briefly about what they did yesterday. Also, to begin the day, s's are treated to a holiday play performed by the 5th graders. There is an apparent impromptu decision on JD's part to turn the occasion into an opportunity to write—perhaps made when it is apparent that, due to the play, there will not be enough time to start reading groups before gym.

At the board, the following schedule is written:

Today is Oct. 12, 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:20</td>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:05</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>USR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:55</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:55</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20</td>
<td>Superstars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:05</td>
<td>Clean up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the play, the group remains on the floor in the center and has a discussion about exploration of The New World. The discussion occurs from 9:30—9:45.

At 9:45, JD says, "So what can we write about this man (Christopher Columbus)? Anything we've learned?" Each time an s offers something, JD says, "Can you put that in a sentence?"

JD copies down on large white paper in front of the s's the sentences they offer—

"I learned about the different kinds of islands written in red that Christopher Columbus went to." (JD asks the s that has offered this sentence if he can read it back. He does.)

JD: "And Mike, what did you learn?"
Mi: "Nothing--"
JD: "You just learned the same things that you already know?"
Mi: "Yes."
JD calls on other s's. Finally one offers something learned. (in purple) "He died before he got to Asia."
JD: "Chaa, did you learn anything new?"
Cha: "We learned it last year."
Another s offers: (in blue) "He was first to America."

ON: S's sent back to seats to work in their folders after Columbus discussion.
ON: At 10:52, JD says, "Let's get into a circle, please." (They put folders away and join circle in center.)
JD: "We're gonna go on a trip... pretend we're going on Christopher Columbus' ship. And we're gonna take different things on a trip."

JD: "I'm gonna take apples."
S: "I'm gonna take apples and a banana etc."

("Apples, banana, cans of food, ducks, elephant, fawn, glue, hippopotamus, ice cubes, junk, kangaroo, lion, monkey" are named. At that point, JD says, "It sounds like we are on Noah's Ark almost... instead of on Columbus' ship." Then an s adds, "nuts." At that point the group stops for gym and JD says they'll finish when they return.

TN: Some of the cognitively demanding aspects of this task involve the following simultaneously memory, knowledge of the vocabulary, control of initial vowels and consonants/spelling, turn-taking, knowledge of classes of objects.

ON: During gym, JD talks to me about the work in gifted education of Rensuli. She talks about her own education stopping short of calling herself gifted. "I only know that I was very bored in school; stuck off in a corner with a book to read." In the midst of this conversation, JD says that she thinks that one boy, ER, did not want to play the game because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to do it (I don't know whether JD would consider him to be "gifted" by Rensuli's or her own definition.)

ON: After gym, the game continues. Tom, the boy who offered "duck" is now gone from the group, and I observe that the first s misses "duck."
TN: Could association of words and students also be operating in this game?

ON: Words that are added include "octopus, pig, queen, rhinoceros, snake, tomatoes." The last student in the circle has the letter S since there are fewer than 26 students. But she says "zebra." JD: "You don't have Z; you have S." After her turn, they go around again with JD having a turn. They stop at T.

ON: At 10:35, the s's are in their seats. The "passer" has given out 2nd and 3rd grade paper. The s's are to copy the Columbus sentences. There is a high level of ambient noise. JD says, "Sssh" often. She is at the horseshoe table correcting some worksheets with one s. She
has some of the perennial "disrupters" (Chri, Ti) at the table with her.

ON: I am distracted by the principal and several 4/5 girls and boys who are having a heated discussion at a table in the center of room 12. They are discussing an altercation about which all are apparently angry. GM raises her voice periodically—as do the s's.

ON: The s's in JD's room talk and move a lot. They appear restless. JD continues to say, "Ssh." There is a great deal of gum chewing today. Also, I observe that all s's are wearing pants, and most are wearing jeans. This has not been typical so far this year. There is a lot of leaning across desks and bickering ("Move over. I can't see!")

TN: I wonder whence the air of informality and restlessness. Is it because

--it is Friday? (and gum day)
--it is the day after JD has been absent and, according to JD, the substitute "couldn't handle" the room 12 arrangement? (JD says she "still can't figure out what she did.")
--there have been several consecutive days of bad weather?
--reading was interrupted by gym?
--there was a disruption of the regular reading format today because of the play? (No reading groups today.)

ON: During this time, Der and Ant (who are identified by JD as "gifted") are doing science work at Ant's desk. They do not have reading with the other 2/3 students. Early this morning JD had shown me the paper rocket they had made for a play they are planning to write and produce. (TN: Integration of science, writing and other language arts?)

ON: By 10:50, many s's are walking around the room. JD says, "I hear a lot of rudeness. Where do you belong now?" But at 10:55, Li asks me (apparently not knowing the answer to JD's question), "Susan, what do we do after we're done doing that on there?" (copying sentences). I also do not know. Some of the things s's are doing at this time include

--talking
--quarreling (several instances of tattling on each other)
--Fern is drawing a picture of her grandfather, but few other s's have elected to draw or write on their own.

ON: At 10:59, JD says, "I'd like you to close your folders and come and sit in the center. "The s's are asked to put their finished papers "in the bucket." Others are to leave their work on their desks. JD says that s's whose work is not finished may not go out for recess. JD must repeat several times, "I'd like you in a circle." She says, "I don't like how you people make a circle," and calls many individual names.

JD: "When I ask you to sit down, Carl, what should you do?" etc.
JD: "Monday, what are we going to have to practice?"
S: "Listening to directions."
S: "Being quiet."
ON: At 11:01, there is a break for recess. During recess and USR, I peruse literature that JD obtained yesterday at gifted workshop (reason for her absence). She raises the topic again. Talks about it with enthusiasm.

ON: At 11:35, there is a transition to math. S's are in the center. JD has a stack of workbooks. She says, "Will you raise your hand and tell me what you did yesterday?" There is some dispute and confusions among the s's about what was done. JD says that she will go over p.8 with the s's "together," and then "you can go back to the other pages." She calls the s's by name and gives them workbooks. They find seats.

ON: During this process, there is high ambient noise. There are disputes about who is in whose seats. S's say "I'm tellin?"
"That's my chair!"
JD still can be heard calling a lot of individual names both to reprimand and to praise s's behavior.
"Leila remembered to open to p. 8."
"Karen..." (falling intonation)
"I'm still waiting for Mark's table. They're very rude.

ON: The assignment on p. 8 involves "number sentences." Given the following "incomplete number sentence," the problem is to decide "what sign goes in the box to make the number sentence true."

\[
\begin{array}{c}
52 + 71 \\
83 + 71
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
52 \\
+71 \\
123
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{What sign} \\
83 \\
+71 \\
154
\end{array}
\]

JD: "Can you think of a way to tell without putting the answer down?"

TN: This task makes many assumptions about symbolization as well as about computation and mathematical reasoning.

ON: As the group begins to work on the problem, JD says, "We're going to have to stop again. There's an awful lot of rudeness going on... talking to yourselves. You're very impolite."

ON: S's offer strategies for completing the sentence. In addition to the one of adding the numbers and comparing the sums, Jeff...That "both 71's are the same. Look at 83 and 52 and decide which one is bigger."
JD: "Either way is alright to do." She does not do the entire p.8 with the class (although she said earlier that she would), but does two sentences. The assignment is written on the board--

S.B [student book]
8 [page]
4, 5, 6, 7, [problems]
Then 9 [page]
ON: After JD makes the assignment, she says "If anyone needs scrap paper (presumably for calculations), I'll put some up on the chair." This is the first time I have observed the use of scrap paper (and the writing functions attendant to it) officially designated by JD.

TN: This is an instance of writing that is done 'privately' and to 'work something out.' But both the process and its documentation are not saved or shown to the teacher. They are discarded. Only the outcome, represented symbolically, is saved, shown, and evaluated (presumably the teacher makes inferences about the process based on the nature of the outcome, however.) Some of the scrap paper that is officially designated as such is the backs of old dittoed worksheets. I have also seen s's write on the backs of such worksheets--before writing in the "answers" on the front because they claimed that they didn't want to "cross out" on the worksheets.

ON: At 12:10, there is clean up before lunch. JD says, "This morning what trouble did we have in math time?" S's: "Too noisy." JD: "On Monday, I'm going to give you seats that I want you to stay in. You're being too silly."

ON: At lunch, JD and I talk about the troubles that seem to have been occasioned by there being a substitute teacher yesterday. JD muses, "I wonder if she's different with the kids than I am. I'm unusual." She elaborates, pointing out that she tends to be positive, she doesn't "single out" students for reprimands, and she doesn't raise her voice. Then she adds, "It's just like you said about community. If someone comes in and changes the rules, what do you do?"

ON: After lunch there is a guest speaker from the fire department. He visits each classroom and gives a short presentation.

MN: It is interesting to note that, in the schedule, JD has combined the speaker with language arts time and deleted science. One could imagine the opposite also making sense in terms of curriculum. One possible explanation is simply that language arts normally occurs in the middle of the day and it is simpler to delete science than to drop language arts and move science. But another way to think about this decision is in terms of what JD construes as the range of activities appropriately engaged in during the time called "Language Arts."

ON: At 12:55, after lunch, JD calls s's to the center. Roll is taken and the "afternoon plans" are read. JD explains about the fact that it is Fire Prevention Mont. When JD mentions this occasion, s's suggest that the other "special" days or events coming up include Columbus Day (today) and Halloween. They also say that "it is getting colder" (maybe associating a string of important holidays with fall/winter).

ON: When JD's class is joined by another class not from room 12 (who enter with a substitute teacher) and Dz's class. JD using clapping cadence that I have heretofore heard only the principal use (at the school-wide Safety Assembly) to gain the attention of the group. She explains to the newcomers to room 12 (who come from a self-contained classroom and who
presumably were not so informed by their substitute teacher). "You have to be very quiet because there are people on the other side of the room."

TN/ A period of waiting for the fireman ensues. He is apparently delayed.

ON: There is some 'stalling' during which time s's fidget and noise increases. In what is apparently a sort of "vamping til ready," Dz then leads the group in some songs. First is a rendition of "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean" done as a "Columbus Day song in which the words have been changed to tell about Columbus' voyage. Then they sing a song called "Peanut Butter and Jelly" which is very rhythmic and dramatic and which the s's appear to enjoy.

ON: At 1:15, the fireman enters accompanied by the principal. He sets up his slide show which is called, "Sparky's Friends Learn Not to Burn." The s's watch the show and then are dismissed to their respective rooms after a brief discussion.

ON: At 1:45, JD gathers her s's in a circle on the floor. They talk about problems from yesterday. Then at 1:52, Li interjects, "Are we gonna do language arts?" JD: "We don't have time to do it today." But she adds that there is something the s's can do over the weekend to get ready for the next language arts time. They are to find leaves of all sizes and bring them to school--"as many as you can." Then, at 1:55, JD quizzes s's from a checklist about fire prevention left by the fireman.

ON: Next room 12 has "Superstars." There are not many given by the 2/3's--two per homeroom. There is much reference to behavior problems of the past week as the reason.

ON: At 2:45, having returned from the center of room 12 and "Superstars," JD puts a chair in the center. The s's take seats on the floor around it. JD says it is time for "Show and Tell," although on the board the time has been scheduled for "Superstars" and diaries.

ON: Ani tells that, "I'm going to Detroit tomorrow. Any questions?" There are none. Then Manal (it is not her day) asks JD if she may show the class her book. JD says, "You can show it, but you can't read it." Manal declines.

ON: Then the group returns to the book Ka has been reading orally. They are near the end of it. S's are free to sit and listen or to return to their seats.

ON: At 2:52, after Ka has finished the book, JD asks, "who wants to share their diary with the class?" Dani identifies herself, and JD says, "She just wants to share part of it before its time to write in your diaries." As Dani reads, about 2/3 of class are quiet and looking at her, appearing to listen intently.

At the end, JD says, "Were some of the things she wrote about real? Can you write about make believe things in your diaries?" S's: "Yes."

ON: JD asks s's to sit and take out their diaries. She says she'll "come around" if they raise their hands. The only s's I observe not doing this activity
are Der, Ant, and Er. They are working on props for their science play. The room is relatively quiet. Li asks me to spell a word, but in a definite whisper. Some s’s are making new diaries. Several girls are working on a chain letter that has been circulating among JD and Dz’s students. Mana has made an autograph book and asks me to sign it.

Dismissal
Summary of Notes from Dinner Meeting

General Observation(s)

Chris Clark initiated the conversation this evening with a question about "getting started" in the school year in general, and in the instruction of writing in particular. The teachers engaged in a lively conversation of more than an hour, and the researchers did not interject comments or questions very often. It is worthy of note that, left free to determine the course of the conversation, the teachers did not limit themselves to the issue of "getting started," nor did they address solely the 'direct instruction' of writing (language arts, communication arts activities), but talked about writing as it manifests itself in a range of classroom activities. I think in light of these two bits of evidence it is important to ask ourselves just how salient the idea of 'getting started' is to the teachers—how more interesting to the analysts than to the participants. Also, I think we have begun to accumulate strong evidence (in the interviews, in the field notes, and now in the dinner conversation) that these teachers do not think of writing and its instruction as solely the province of language arts class, but think of it both as a skill that is taught directly at some time(s) in the school day and as one that is used and can be taught about within a variety of academic contexts.

Three Major Themes

What follows is highly inferential and is basically an attempt to summarize and synthesize a conversation that covered a lot of ground. However, upon examination of my notes, I think it is possible to talk about the conversation in terms of three interrelated themes. The first, "getting started," was generated by us, and the teachers had no option but to deal with it. As I said above, I am not at all convinced that it is an issue that is salient to all of them. This bears testing by means of careful review of already collected field notes, interview responses, and journal entries. However, what is very interesting is the way in which the teachers chose to respond to the issue of 'getting started,' and the subsequent, related areas that they explored. I think these areas were ones not thought of in advance by the researchers, but they were ones upon which the entire informant group seized with alacrity despite the differences in grade level taught, educational philosophy, and personal style. For convenience, I have called these two themes "the landscape of the writing task" and "the question of a standard." These terms, like "getting started," are creations of the analyst that need to be supported as valid representations of the teachers' thinking by evidence from our data set.

"Getting Started"

The four teachers rose to the task of discussing "getting started" quickly and spoke with ease about it. This is, I think, a strong piece of evidence that the category is one that they have and have a language for. They did not, however, stay with the question for more than the first ten minutes of the conversation. And so I wonder whether it is one that sufficiently pre-occupies them to be considered functionally relevant in developing a grounded description of their thinking about writing instruction. Putting that analytic question aside, however, my notes suggested that there was quick consensus that writing is different from other subject areas covered in school, and that these differences have implications for both the ways in which one starts writing in the school year and for the role writing plays in the starting of school. The follow four points were made by individuals and appeared to be ratified by the group in this regard:
(1) Writing is one school activity that can be started early in the school year because (in our educational system) it is one of the few areas in which one does not have to pre-test and match children to materials by ability level. (It strikes me as I write this that this may be one very positive thing about what some have lamented as our inability properly to 'assess' writing competence and our lack of systematic writing materials and curricula. One might imagine what would happen to writing if, like reading, it because more heavily structured and evaluated. And, in like manner, one might imagine the look of reading instruction in school if it did not have to wait upon testing, the computerized test results arriving in the mail, and the grouping of students by 'ability'.)

(2) There is 'no right or wrong;' writing is something you can always say something good about to the student. Related to this comment was the consensus that writing is not particularly competitive whereas other subjects in which there are clear right and wrong answers and measures of progress tend to foster competition among students;

(3) Because writing can be combined with other kinds of symbolization to express an idea, it can be used to "ease them into" school again and so is a useful early vehicle for academic activity;

(4) Writing is a good way to mark or make note of shared, whole-class activity. (Although not stated explicitly here by the teachers, this comment suggests that writing early in the year may support the establishment of classroom community in ways that other academic activities do not.) Worthy of note here is the fact that teacher(s) mentioned not only the writing by each member of a class about a shared experience, but the enthusiasm students have for reading each other's work.

"The Landscape of the Writing Task"

Unlike the question of "getting started," in which a fair degree of consensus seemed to obtain between middle and elementary school teachers, when the conversation evolved to a consideration of aspects of the writing task that are foregrounded for teacher attention and to the actual appearance of the writing task, differences began to arise. The primary teachers talked most about the problems of and strategies for motivating and supporting the writing task. Furthermore, the writing tasks they described were short in duration (one day, one part of one day) and did not involve editing and revising either independently or in response to teacher comments. In contrast, the middle school teachers seemed to address more the shaping of a piece of writing by means of a longer term assignment (one week) and revision based on self correction and teacher comments.

One common concern of the teachers was the difficulty of inferring mastery of factual content from answers written by students. Although the problem manifests itself differently at the elementary and middle school levels, all expressed a kind of frustration with programs like SCIIS and DMP that rely on student writing as a major way to demonstrate academic competence. The upper grade teachers found that the problem centers around students' difficulties with the techniques of writing while the lower grade teachers said that it was difficult for students to separate 'fact' from 'fantasy,' and therefore they had difficulty reporting the facts in their lab booklets and workbooks. (Wayne addressed this problem when he talked
about writing descriptively about what one sees under a microscope—about the problem of criteria for adequate description being different when you were attempting to represent accurately rather than expressively what you had seen—this can also be a problem in writing up descriptive research!)

"The Question of a Standard"

This question was raised by Daisy. A lively discussion ensued in which the issues of modeling, criteria for adequacy of student written products, and the implicit expectations of the Common Writings Curriculum were raised. In large part, the question concerned the relative advantages and disadvantages of giving students a model of the written product you expect in advance of their actually beginning to write. There seemed to be a general tension between the desire, on one hand, not to constrain students' 'creativity' (a position that Wayne suggested was much more prevalent a few years ago—perhaps when at least half of the group was trained) and a sense of responsibility for and valuing of sharing the socially held conventions about writing. There was general agreement, however, that the goal was linking these two areas of commitment in the experience of the student writer. Daisy, as the newcomer in the system, raised the question of lack of explicit criteria for adequacy within the Common Writings Curriculum in terms of the teachers' responsibilities to their students. She appeared to raise it, not as a rhetorical question, but as one to which she expected the veteran teachers to have an answer or at least considerable insight. However, the other teachers did not have an answer to the question, leading me to think that the general perception of the group is that this area is vague in the curriculum. However, the teachers did express some of their values and beliefs about what some criteria for adequate writing might be. These beliefs fell along one continuum that might be labeled, using Jo Ann's terms, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
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Where a person fell along this continuum appeared to be related, at least in part, to the age group taught. I think that the teachers in the upper grades talked in most detail about specific skills, strategies for teaching them, and their importance in shaping the landscape of the writing task. On the other hand, the teachers of the lower grades emphasized the immediacy of the writing experience, the need for vivid personal experience to initiate and sustain writing. This kind of concern appeared to leave little place for revision of writing. (It may be that, for beginners so much of the writing act is new—from formation of the letters to symbolization of thoughts and feelings—that short, vivid, straightforward writing tasks make the most pedagogical sense. Later, when a good bit of the writing act is routinized, it may make more sense to stretch the act out over several days and several re-writings and to turn one's attention to the fine points of sentence construction and to the attendant nuances of expression.) Finally, where one might fall along the above continuum could be related to some of the following values that the teachers mentioned holding:

--mastery of technical skills (journalism)
--genre knowledge (what is a poem)
--ability to respond to dictates of specific tasks (descriptive writing)
--ability to reflect upon and articulate for others feelings and procedural knowledge (writing directions, writing questions, writing about feelings)
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW NOTES
October 3: Interview with Marilyn
(  Grade 6  )

Marilyn and I began our session with a discussion of our teaching career goals. Marilyn is looking into the possibility of dropping her name from the union membership. (E. L. is a closed shop so it's a decision based on a principle, not on money.) Marilyn is planning on retiring in 2 years. She is not tired of teaching but would like to have time for some other things too. She said she is tired of taking papers home every night to grade. She smiled and said she was really enjoying this (meaning the project).

I think Marilyn finds that our work and interests adds to her enjoyment of teaching. Talking over what she does and thinks with adults adds an interesting dimension.

I asked Marilyn if she had followed her plans for writing or if she had changed them as she actually presented and taught them. She answered that she had. She had the students construct graphs this week. Something she always does. But before she had asked them to write a synopsis at the bottom of the drawing of the material presented in the graph. As she was standing at the overhead she said to herself "Gee, that's dumb!", and on the spot changed the writing requirement to having the students compose and write four questions that they think other students could answer after reading their graph. She is planning on putting the graphs up around the room and giving the students an opportunity to see if they can answer the questions on each others' graphs. Marilyn went on to say that she doesn't always think of these things as writing activities. In fact, had thought Sister June wouldn't be interested because she wasn't doing writing.

Even when she had the students write their tall tales she said she did not think of that so much of a writing assignment as it was a sharing and getting to know you experience. Marilyn thought the students had a lot of fun with the tall tale assignment. She told them that they didn't have to share if they didn't want to.

This was the assignment where they wrote why they hadn't done their homework-trying to convince a teacher the reasons were legitimate.

The writing assignment for this week, or theme as Marilyn calls it, is to write about something old from the family-something they treasure. She used to have them think of an antique but with so many students coming from split homes and/or living in apartments they may not have antiques, but the object has to be at least as old as they are. One student, a girl, handed one in today about a crib, but Marilyn handed it back to her as it did not have enough detail. She asks students: "Who was the original owner? Have you always had it? Or did you get it in a garage sale? Is it functional or just pretty to look at? Was it once functional but not now? One girl wrote about a spinning wheel. How would you feel if it were lost? Or stolen?" They are working on this assignment all week. It is due Thursday; they always are. One girl wrote about some needlepoint that her grandparent had brought over from Hungary.

I asked Marilyn what kind of things she would be looking for when evaluating this assignment: Sentence structure, run on's and variety in sentences. Spelling; how they use their rough drafts. It has to be stapled to the final copy.

Here Marilyn referred to something she heard at a workshop that she attended last year. The difference between revision and proofreading. She tells students to proofread but wants them to revise also. I suggested she might use the term editing also.
October 3: Interview with Marilyn

page 2 (R. Maxwell)

Neatness counts of course. I asked if she would grade them. Marilyn will write comments on them and then keep them in the students' folders. She keeps the writing assignments in the folder to look at them when she does report cards.

Although Marilyn said she keeps all writing assignments in the folder, it is just the themes.

She also did a skill lesson this week on capitalization from Building Better English. It was on capitalizing proper nouns and they discussed the difference between common and proper nouns. Because street was used as an example in the book, Marilyn asked students what words could you use besides street (lane, avenue, circle, etc.) so students would know to capitalize these words too. Marilyn said most have had this in elementary school, but they need to know so a review is good.
The first part of the interview concerned J.D.'s response to my questions in her journal about what changes J.D. has noticed in her students' writing since the beginning of the school year. She said that the most noticeable changes took place among the "low" kids. She mentioned that G. had said at the beginning of the year that he could not write or dictate stories. Now, he seeks out J.D. to have her write down his stories. Another boy, E., is asking for fewer words to be spelled by J.D. when he writes his story. With the low kids, the reading aide, N.B., is being very helpful by having three low boys dictate experience stories several times a week.

Changes in the writing of the other students in the class since the beginning of the year are that they write longer and more elaborate stories. For example, one page was not enough for some students who wrote "pumpkin stories" last week. One of the posted stories on the bulletin board required a "double pumpkin." J.D. also judged that the children were more fluent in their story writing, compared to the beginning of the year. J.D. also pointed out that the second graders' handwriting samples were getting spontaneously more elaborate, with the use of more adverbs and adjectives than at the beginning of the year.

Now that J.D. has gotten her students to a reasonable degree of competence in story writing with positive attitudes about their competence, she wants to begin a new stage in the writing process: proof reading.

T.N.: It seems that J.D.'s implicit model of the writing process may be unfolding here. First, get the kids to do (and therefore believe that they can do) a lot of short, highly motivated, art-related writing activities. Then, as stories get longer and more elaborate, and kids become more fluent (benchmarks? vital signs?), shift the emphasis from creation of stories to reflecting on what has been produced, attentions to detail, even self-criticism and self-improvement. These changes represent a whole new psychological orientation for the students.

J.D. also talked about the importance of audience in the students' writing, mainly as a source of motivation. A related source of motivation is having the kids produce a concrete visible product (e.g., a class book, posters, etc.). She said that "if there is no audience or other real reason for writing, it just doesn't work." To illustrate the importance of producing concrete products and having an audience, J.D. told two stories. In the first, a student (Mar.) had been absent for a day or two during which the class wrote short stories and put together a class book. Upon her return the absent student asked the teacher if she could write a short story on her own time to be added to the class book. The concrete product was there, and the student wanted to be a part of it. Second story had to do with the importance of audience. When J.D. announced that the class was to make Halloween safety posters, the children grumbled and booed, and indicated that they were not enthused about this project. But when J.D. said that they were to share these posters with first graders and kindergarten children, the students reversed themselves and were instantly enthusiastic about the project.

J.D. mentioned that her students had produced a play, Billy Goats Gruff, and that it had gone very well. She said that the children had worked on the play for a period of two weeks, which is a long time to sustain attention for children of this age. She pointed out that when a lesson or activity must be extended over more than one class period or day that she must do a lot of reteaching, i.e., she can't just pick up where we left off. J.D. attributes this to the relatively short attention spans of children of this age, and anticipates that this will be one of the challenges of teaching them proof reading.
November 2, 1979 Interview with J.D.

In other writing activities J.D. reported that her third grade students are still quite enthused about learning cursive writing. She also said that she hasn't been able to get them writing in their diaries much lately, because of schedule problems, but some of the children continue to write in their diaries anyway. The problem with scheduling has to do with science and social studies periods sometimes running overtime, therefore not allowing sufficient time at the end of the day for diary writing and clean-up. J.D. said that she's thinking of changing diary time to the middle of the day, because things are too rushed at the end. She still thinks that it is worth scheduling a regular diary writing time.

J.D. talked a bit about her own writing. She said that the more writing that she does, the easier it becomes for her. She gave an example of writing a letter home to parents describing a field trip for all of the room 12 students. She said that she hates to do this kind of writing because it is very difficult to get it just right, but that she volunteered to do it so that she will get better at writing of this kind. She now has a file of examples of letters home to parents that have worked in the past, and she draws upon these. In talking about the field trip, J.D. noted how nice it is to have several adults to share the work of room 12. For the field trip, one teacher did all the calling and arranging, J.D. wrote the letters home to parents, and other teachers took other parts in the organization. She said that it really helps to spread the work around. In addition to the four regular classroom teachers, J.D. mentioned the reading helping teacher, the reading aide, plus having plenty of physical space to move around in as being special benefits of working in this setting.

I asked J.D. about her use of the Common Writings Curriculum. She said that she looks at it every couple of weeks, but that most of the requirements for second and third graders are things that already happen without special planning in her classroom (e.g., copying from the board, writing different types of sentences, etc.). In addition, J.D. pointed out that some activities that are not in the curriculum are things that her students need practice in (e.g., learning how to answer questions in science workbooks). She said that sometimes, if she runs low on ideas, she looks at the common writings curriculum to see what it might have to offer.

T.N.: It seems that the common writings curriculum is perceived as a relatively unstructured and minimal collection of activities. In a classroom like this one, in which a relatively large amount of writing takes place, the common writings curriculum activities are things that take place naturally, without special reference to that curriculum. J.D.'s task seems to be to express what she is already teaching in terms of the common writings curriculum rather than to organize her teaching according to that curriculum.

One last set of comments from J.D. was that "this year is so easy. I don't have to deal with all the problem children that I had last year. Some children still have problems, but I can still appeal to their sense of reason. Last year I had a very difficult child who brought out the worst in everyone."
APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TEACHER JOURNAL ENTRIES
Red. Oct. 31 - Most of the students did a nice job of writing last week. It's to describe a place last week. This week they are writing a description of a person and the area I have seen become tricky as good.

On Monday I asked the student a description I had written (actually, I guess I said two) and again, the seemed helpful to many of them.

Tuesday selections I illustrated how they might have their characters involved in doing something and then describe the character into an expression which involved in the activity. I sincerely believe that it is a service to our students not to press the students with a model. As I read, teachers tell students "Here, something is done this problem (model), English teachers should use the same technique. I think the gives many of the idea a better idea of direction and the confidence in turn results in better writing."

On Tuesday during class, I introduced question writing (Many students had had difficulty several weeks ago when asked to write questions regarding graphs they had constructed.) After reading several pages in the text, I asked them to write two questions that others should be able to answer. We talked about "factual" questions vs. "thought" questions and also "per book" questions. Students took turns reading questions & calling on others to answer — then we discussed both the question & their answer.

Since today was Halloween, I provided time for those who wanted to read their "place descriptions" aloud (Since many of them were spooky, they seemed appropriate!) The response was positive. I also read some excerpts revealing names for the reluctant ones. This was the last free work period where I could help students with the week's written work. I wish I could find a way to do this...
Fifth Grade: The themes that are read, which describe a person are very interesting and quite clear. The problem I have now is that about 1/3 of the students do not get their writing assignments in on time. It is not always the same people; only 3 or 4 of them are chronically late.

Because report cards need to be filled out next week, I do not think the students turn in a theme instead. I'm going to have everyone still base on writing conversation correctly so that the next week they can write a story in which they describe a place & character & have the character speak. They will be asked to think carefully about the story so it will be incorporated into a magazine they will be writing later.
Language Arts this week had to be replanned due to National Secretaries Week — we made cards for Marilyn, some children wrote poems, and others made a banner. They had a variety of ideas and could choose which activity they wanted to complete. Some chose two. Everyone loves the secretary — they instinctively know what will happen without her.

Planning for Science has become a management problem. There is no way to distribute daphnies (water fleas) to 28 children quickly and orderly — they are simply too excited watching the little creatures. We have to work on self-control — waiting to hear all the directions and not letting the excitement of the situation take over.

Marilyn enjoyed all her surprises. It does help to have an audience. One of the girls made a typewriter-shaped card — it was quite the hit and at least 15 people copied it.

Plans are being reshaped this week by a Social Studies unit on Japan. It’s been quite interesting — we
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE VIDEOTAPE LOG
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counter#</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 271      | T&CLASS      | Discussion of magazines  
T moving around in front of room - showing magazines  
SS beginning to react to magazine T showing  
She is talking about body builder |
| 312      | T&S          | One boy asks to see the picture - T shows it to him |
| 314      | T            | T shows magazine she did in contrast to last class  
She actually shows pages of the magazine  
Much less SS reaction |
| 327      | T&CLASS      | Girl has hand up - T does not acknowledge  
Begins showing another old S's magazine |
| 336      | S            | Girl put hand down - T has glanced at her but not acknowledged |
| 344      | T&CLASS      | T finishes showing magazines still in front but close to class;  
T "Okay, first of all what you need to do, pauses, says  
disruptive boy's name then goes on. Certainly hasn't been  
much class participation so far and it appears t is pre-  
venting what does occur. |
| 345      | T&CLASS      | SS quiet and watching T who is showing beautiful women's magazine explaining it is mainly for girls, not boys,  
SS react |
| 348      | T&S          | As T is talking B makes excessive noise, T says his  
name and continues |
| 349      | T&S          | T, "Just think what kind of magazine you want to write"  
Teri shoots up her hand, T: Now just think, I'm not  
answering questions yet.  
T talking to this girl but looking at class and has moved  
further to left center front of room  
C put hand down |
| 355      | T&CLASS      | T continues talking without leaving this time to think  
she has talked about and asks, "What are special topics  
magazines might have?"  
Several SS raise their hands, G who has not been  
acknowledged does not  
T calls on others |
| 360      | T&CLASS      | Boy responds "sports", Others moaning, and making noise  
B directly in front of T slams hand, ouching, etc. he and desk  
mate watching camera. T says what would be another topic, |
Videotape - Continuous Dialogue

420 T&CLASS T calls on G with raised hand, who reiterates T instructions, T says right and then goes on telling about magazine.

426 T&S B in front (T is standing right in front of, same one in #362) crumples up paper, while talking T takes if from him and throws it out, T still talking.

428 T&S B crumples up another paper, T crumpling moving around - T blocks path to basket

430 T&S B next to one discussed has been looking at camera - T catches and says he should be listening to the questions, others turn to camera.

436 T&CLASS T in front hands on hips - Called on G with question T doesn't want girl to do jokes, etc. tells to do story.

445 T&CLASS T "Let's move on and I think your questions will be answered, if not we'll get them later." T moves to overhead and begins to write asking, "2 weeks ago, what did you do?"

450 CLASS Few SS taking notes.

456 T&CLASS T moves back closer to class away from overhead asking SS what made previous stories interesting to them.

458 T&CLASS T calls on SS - T moving back and forth overhead and closer to class T writes overhead Calling on SS

474 T&CLASS T tells SS she enjoyed reading stories called out comment is accepted and T responds to it

480 T Shhh looks at side of room T at overhead, still calling on SS

490 T&CLASS T moves to class to instruct on pts. that should be in story and when it is true SS are not writing down these things

508 T T talking about dog story... SS laugh comments accepted by T
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counter #</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>514</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>T: Okay, you all need paper and a pencil SS get up to get paper, etc., lot of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>520</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>T talking to one SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>527</td>
<td>T&amp;SS</td>
<td>B (#362) up to talk to T then he leaves the room, other SS including G attempt to leave but T stops, sends back. T goes into hall closes door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>540</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>Returns to overhead and hold up object for boy to come to retrieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>545</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>G comes in walks to table, T notices, No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>T next to overhead, Begins lesson T &quot;All right - how many of you remember how to write conversation in elementary school.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>557</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>B's comes up while T talking - she stops gives him a pencil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>560</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>G walks up interrupts T - then leaves room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>562</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>T still trying to talk about quotations T next to overhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>564</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>T instructing on quotation using overhead and walking forward closer to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>567</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>Asking SS for alternative ways to write, says T moves to class away from overhead, moves back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>592</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>T tells SS was giving to dictate questions but S last hour suggested she show them on overhead so she is going to do that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>597</td>
<td>T&amp;CLASS</td>
<td>SS's are to look at sentence, copy it, put in all punctuation marks T walking into middle of class 1st time than back to front and to far left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>603</td>
<td>T&amp;S</td>
<td>Talks to individual S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

VIEWING SESSION FORMAT
INTRODUCTION TO VIEWING SESSION

April 17, 1980

Preview

We would like you to look at this part of the tape which shows when you first started talking about the magazine. We are interested in the tape because it seems to contain a lot of information. We think the magazine is interesting because so many kinds of writing activities led into it and followed from it. It is one of the longer assignments of the year, and the students seemed to enjoy it.

First we'd like you to--

1. Watch the tape with Jan straight through without stopping;

2. Share any first impressions or general comments at the end;

3. Then Rhoda and S. June will join us, and we will watch the tape together.

Viewing Session

4. This time as you watch the tape--
   a. Comment on what you see in the tape;
   b. Focus your comments on the whole group;
   c. We are especially interested in what you are doing and saying in your teaching and what the class members are doing and saying as you begin the magazine.

We'd like you to comment right along with the tape as you watch it. Don't worry about interrupting the tape. Activity goes by quickly on videotape, so if there are times when you want to comment in detail, just stop the tape or ask us to stop it so we can talk.

At the end of the viewing session, ask Marilyn if there is anything she wants to add and/or if there is anything she wants to say about the viewing session.

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

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

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

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

Required Theme Writing for the Magazine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fate and Closure

As the due date for the magazine project approached, Mrs. Anderson reviewed the contents of the magazine and more class time was devoted to completion of the project (Journal, 12/12/79). Mrs. Anderson was pleased with the eagerness students showed in trying to complete their magazines on time (Journal, 12/14/79). Because the magazine was the most complex writing project of the year to date, Mrs. Anderson was careful to remind students of all the parts they should include and she discussed her wish that the students' magazines be "representative of their best efforts at this time" (Journal, 12/18/79).

When the students finished their magazines, they shared them with other students. Mrs. Anderson discussed, with the class, the four categories she intended to use in evaluating the magazines. The four categories were:

1. The student compiled an excellent magazine of original writings.
2. The student compiled a satisfactory magazine of original writings.
3. The student compiled a magazine of original writings which were below standard.
4. The student did not complete a magazine of original writings. (Journal, 12/21/79)
Mrs. Anderson further discussed with the class the criteria that she would use to assign each magazine to one of these categories. The students were asked to evaluate their own work using the four categories listed above. Mrs. Anderson intended to compare her evaluation with each of the students' evaluations.

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

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

An interesting result of the teacher's evaluation of the students' magazines was an assessment of how the class was developing over the year. Mrs. Anderson appeared to use this project as a gauge to stop and check the year's progress. After completing the evalua-
tion she reported, "It (the evaluation process) took a great deal of time, but it was also rewarding in that I became more aware of the growth many students had made since September when they made the Life Books" (Journal, 1/9/80).

Students and the Magazine Project

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

The magazine project had several potential audiences. The primary audience for the magazine was the theoretical "subscribers" to the magazine. For instance, a sports car magazine would be written for an audience of sports car enthusiasts. Due to the constraints of the classroom, the teacher, not the project audience for the magazine, was the one who evaluated the writing, therefore the teacher was an important audience for the students' consideration. Since students knew their projects could be shared with other students in the classroom, the other students in the class were also a potential audience. Finally, the author of each individual magazine was also a potential audience, especially since the teacher required the students to evaluate their own magazines.
activities and an opportunity for students to develop feelings of
ownership, choice, and control over their own creative work. Finally,
the Magazine Project illustrates Mrs. Anderson's dual roles of curri-
culum builder as well as instructor of writing. The extra demands
of creating, maintaining, and evaluating the Magazine Project were
investments that paid off for Mrs. Anderson and her students in terms
of added meaningfulness, coherence, and integration of skills and
forms of written expression.
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner:

Sixth Graders Plan a Dinner Party

Some teachers devise occasions for their students to express aspects of their lives through creative writing and speech. The following narrative describes how Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway created such an occasion by having the combined classes of their Lincoln Middle School sixth graders plan a dinner party, during a time designated as the team weekly class meeting. The Party Planning occasion continued for five consecutive Wednesdays, beginning in the middle of January and ending in February, a time of year when the students were reorienting themselves to each other and to the school environment after returning from the holiday vacation.

The dinner Party Planning occasion involved six steps: (1) individual students making party guest invitation lists of 10 real or imaginary people, (2) students meeting in groups of four to collectively decide on 10 people to invite, (3) the student groups drawing the seating arrangements for their invited guests, (4) the student groups planning a complete party menu, (5) the groups planning entertainment for their party guests, and (6) group presentations of their party plans to the class.

Genesis

Before reconstructing these stages from the field notes, it is helpful to know Mrs. Anderson's thoughts on the origin of the activity. Let's turn first to an entry in her journal:

On Wednesday, Mr. Hathaway and I started the "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" project during the team meeting. It seems to me that I got the original
basic idea from one of Simon's values clarification books—but it has been several years ago so now I've forgotten. When P.L. and I used the idea we added two ideas—the seating chart and the menu—then two years ago Mr. Hathaway and I added the planning of the entertainment idea. (Journal, 1/18/80)

Mrs. Anderson generally traces the origin of this activity to Sidney Simon's values clarification works. Importantly, she revised it over time through her team teaching experiences, making additions to round out the process of planning a complete dinner party.

With her reference to Simon we might infer that Mrs. Anderson favors those occasions that help students identify and share with others the concerns relevant to their daily lives. Some support for this inference comes from the following entry in her journal.

I consider this primarily a social studies activity and my primary interests are in observing the interactions of students and helping those who have difficulty functioning in a group activity. (Journal, 1/18/80)

Specifically, Mrs. Anderson wants her students to develop their social interaction skills through this group participation activity. The content of this interaction we will see later does indeed stem from the students' personal values as they plan their dinner party.

Mrs. Anderson considered this activity to be part of the social studies curriculum. In an interview in which she sorted student writing assignments by purpose, she identified this occasion as "strictly social studies" (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). She grouped this assignment with other activities such as "writing social survey questions," and "writing reactions to a film on slavery."

With this teacher intent in mind, let us reconstruct the stages of this occasion in detail from the field notes.
Implementation

Day 1. We begin the party planning project with Mrs. Anderson's presentation of the assignment to the combined classes. Mrs. Anderson encouraged the students to think imaginatively about 10 people they thought were important to invite to their dinner party. She told them not to be concerned about money or other limitations. Mrs. Anderson encouraged them to think beyond their immediate environment and to develop guest lists that did not include family and friends.

2:12 Mrs. Anderson explains today's project. She tells students that they will have about ten minutes to do the first thing. They are to number their papers from 1 to 10. They are to use their imaginations in working on this assignment. She tells them that they are to list names of persons, living or dead, fictional or nonfictional, whom they would most like to invite to a dinner party. She adds that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

2:15 Mrs. Anderson tells them that there are limits. They may not write down anyone from their families or from the team. They are not to worry too much about the spelling of their guests' names. If all they know is the first names of their guests then that is all they have to write, such as Heidi from the book Heidi. She tells them that they have enough money to entertain lavishly. (Field Notes, 1/16/80, p. 4)

The first stage of this assignment is consistent with Mrs. Anderson's belief that writing assignments should be non-threatening experiences and ones that students enjoy (Interview Notes, 9/10/79). Mrs. Anderson has cleverly created such an opportunity in this occasion. Surely it must have been motivating and fun for the students to freely explore their imaginations in identifying their party guests. From the observer's viewpoint this occasion provides an opportunity to gain some insight into the students' culture.
Two examples of the individual students' party lists are shown in Figure 14. Generally they invited sport stars, movie celebrities, and book characters. Some students invited deceased relatives such as grandparents.

After about 15 minutes, Mr. Hathaway described the second part of the activity, which required the students to work in groups of four to compile their lists and collectively agree on 10 names. Mrs. Anderson assigned them to their groups from a list.

2:28 Mr. Hathaway announces the next thing the students will do. He tells them that they will be assigned to a group with three other students. They must tell the others in their group the ten names of their invited guests and offer one reason for having each person. Mr. Hathaway explains that each group of students will hear about 40 names. Their job is to agree on ten names for the group party lists. He explains the task again, then asks for questions. Mrs. Anderson reads the names of persons who will work together in each group. Students move to their respective groups throughout the room to begin working on their lists. (Field Notes, 1/16/80)

This part of the activity fits with Mrs. Anderson's belief that students need opportunities for developing social interaction skills and for sharing in small groups (Interview, 9/10/79). As the students shared their lists, the other students gained some insights into their classmates' interests and tastes. Regarding social interaction skills, the students possibly gained some experience in group dynamics. They faced justifying their guest lists, subjecting them to the evaluations and the influences of the other group members. Perhaps they learned some principles of negotiation and diplomacy. It seems that all the groups learned that they needed a secretary and a system for recording their collective decisions. The observer noted
Names of Dinner guests

1. John Bartlett
2. Johnny Weissmuller
3. Steve Martin
4. Carvin Johnson
5. Sylvester Stallone
6. Frank Shorter
7. Paul Westphal
8. Kevin Smith
9. Buck Rodgers
10. Glen Head

 orchestra, fly

1. Steve Martin
2. Burt Reynolds
3. Martin Luther King
4. Meg Chalmers
5. Molly Chalmers — A Summer to Die
6. Michael Jackson
7. Judy Blume
8. Henry Winkler
9. Magic Johnson
10. Tie Babalonia

Figure 14. Samples of individual students' invitation lists.
that each group designated a recorder and that this person was re-
ponsible for recording group choices, for transferring these to a
separate sheet, and for turning in all sheets (including the ori-
ginals) to the teachers at the end of the period. Finally, the
students may have realized that writing can serve an instrumental
function, as a mode of communication that need not have a strictly
teacher-oriented, academic purpose. Examples of the group invita-
tion lists the students generated are shown in Figure 15.

Day 2. On the following Wednesday afternoon, the teachers asked
the students to return to their respective groups. While they finished
up their group lists Mrs. Anderson introduced the third part of the
assignment. She told the students to devise some type of seating
arrangement for the people in their dinner party (10 guests, four
students). Mr. Hathaway elaborated on the assignment:

2:14 Mr. Hathaway tells the students they must draw
a table and a seating chart and that they must
discuss their reasoning for the seating arrange-
ments. For example, he explains, in politics
one wouldn't seat the representative from Russia
next to the representative from Afghanistan.
(Field Notes, 1/23/80)

The student groups fashioned a variety of seating charts. The
observer noted some star-shaped, rectangular, and M-shaped seating
arrangements. Examples of their finished work are included in a
later section of this report.

As on the first day, the two teachers created a group problem-
solving situation for their students. The teachers did not prescribe
problem solving methods for the student groups, but did specify the
goals they had to achieve. The students had to develop the methods
through their own group discussions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barbora Striesand</th>
<th>Erik E. B. He's a hunk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve Martin</td>
<td>Judy B. She's a favorite author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Teigs</td>
<td>Micheal J. B. He's a good singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik Estrada</td>
<td>Jacklyn Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Blume</td>
<td>Gary Coleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micheal Jackson</td>
<td>Meryl Streep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacklyn Smith</td>
<td>Jane Fonda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Coleman</td>
<td>(pencil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meryl Streep</td>
<td>Barb: S. B. We all like her singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Fonda</td>
<td>Steve M. B. He's funny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Samples of group invitation lists.
The students may have gained some experience from this activity in managing social relations. In designing the seating arrangements they had to cognitively rehearse the relationships among their guests, to encourage their interaction and to circumvent possible relational problems. Essentially the students had to imagine themselves as guests to help them decide the appropriate seating arrangements.

The stages of this occasion for writing described thus far have an underlying continuity and progression. This observation coincides with Mrs. Anderson's belief that student writing occasions should be sequential, such that one assignment prepares students for the next occasion (Interview, 10/9/79). Her commitment to sequential assignments across writing occasions is consistent with her practice of sequential assignments within these occasions. In the present activity the students have sequentially pieced together their party plans. It follows that the students will have to plan the menu and entertainment during the next two stages of this activity.

Day 3. During the third class meeting period the student groups planned a menu and the entertainment for their dinner party, after receiving instructions from the teachers. The following field note segment describes the opening minutes of this activity.

2:14 Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway pass out materials to group representatives, calling out names. Students come to center and get them from the teachers. Noise level rises. Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway: "Everybody listen." (Room becomes quieter.)
Mr. Hathaway tells students that they must copy their seating charts on the overhead projector acetate.
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway tells students to put their things away.
Mrs. Anderson tells students to put their pencils down.
Mr. Hathaway tells students that their next step is to draw up a menu to suit a once in a lifetime opportunity.
Students whisper.
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh." She tells students that they have quite a bit of paper now and can use the back of a piece they already have to write up their menu. Tells students to discuss it, that there should be give and take there, too.
Mr. Hathaway calls out names of two or three boys whom he says are not listening.
Mrs. Anderson tells students to just list a menu, that they don't have to figure quantities.

2:17
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway tells students that they are to plan a main course, dessert, beverage.
Mrs. Anderson tells students also, a vegetable.
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway: "I can't hear Angelo because students are talking."
Mr. Hathaway (to Mrs. Anderson): "Shall we tell them about entertainment, then?"
Mrs. Anderson: "Might as well."
Mrs. Anderson: "Jenny, put your pencil down, please."
Mr. Hathaway (in answer to student query): "...extremely rude to ask them [the guests] to entertain."
Mr. Hathaway tells students that next week they will be asked to explain what they do at the dinner party, explain also the people chosen, seating chart, menus and the whys of choosing these.

2:22
Mr. Hathaway: "You've got the twenty minutes to work. Use your time wisely."
(Mrs. Anderson leaves room for supplies.)
(Mr. Hathaway stands near Mrs. Anderson's desk.)
(Field Notes, 1/30/80)

The observer noted that the children worked together smoothly as they exchanged their ideas, often nodding in unison, physically moving together, and sitting on their knees in their chairs. The
observer recorded that this part of the activity stimulated the
group members' discussion. Mrs. Anderson also noted this discussion
which she later reflected on in an interview. In comparing this
activity with other writing assignments for the year, she categorized
it with those activities that provided the most student-initiated
(non-teacher-directed) discussion (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). Two
examples of the students' party menus are shown in Figure 16. Seating
arrangement diagrams and entertainment plans are shown in Figure 17
to provide a complete picture of the dinner party plans.

After the students finished this stage of the activity they
transferred their plans onto acetate to display on the overhead
projector for their group presentations, the final stage of this
activity.

**Days 4 and 5.** On the last two days of this occasion the stu-
dent groups presented their dinner party plans to their classmates.
Each student discussed one or more parts of the plans according to
their group assignment.

The observer noted that the students listened attentively and
were generally appreciative of the presentations. They laughed at
certain things, such as corn-on-the-cob for dessert, and always
applauded at the end of each presentation. The students often asked
questions of the presenters regarding the rationale for their party
plans.

At the end of the fifth day, Mr. Hathaway told the class that
the teachers enjoyed the presentations and that the students had
THE MENU

Appetizer:
Soup, Bean-vegetable-clam chowder-caviar

Main Course:
Steak with baked potatoes-fresh fries
Spareribs
Lobster with melted butter
Spaghetti with a shish kabob

Beverages:
Champagne
Soft drinks
Beer
Wine

Dessert:
Pie, apple-cherry-pumpkin
Cake, chocolate-vanilla
Corn on the cob

Salmon on crackers
*Salad Bar
*Crab
*Lobster (melted butter)
*Steak and potatoes with gravy
*Imported champagne
*Marble Cake
*Mud Pie - Steak-a

Entertainment
Ann Murey
*Entertainment
Ann Murey

Earth, Wind and Fire
*Styx

Figure 16. Dinner party sample menus.
Figure 17. Dinner party seating arrangements.
achieved the main objectives of the activity:

--to learn to work with a small group of people,
--to learn how to come to a decision,
--to be able to disagree with a group,
--to be able to compromise, and
--to be happy with the decision-making process.

Finally, the teachers said that they observed that the students behave differently sometimes in different situations (e.g., large and small groups), suggesting that cooperation is necessary, and that students sometimes must compromise to help solve a group problem (Field Notes, 2/13/80).

Fate and Closure

The students, as the audience, provided the fate and closure to this writing occasion. They acted as both producers and consumers. The teachers set up the situations and goals for this production and its consumption to take place. The students served as evaluators through their reactions to the group products. An entry in Mrs. Anderson's journal indicated that she did not plan to evaluate the student writings: she wrote that "most of it will never go beyond the rough draft stage." Instead, she was more concerned with evaluating the group problem solving processes—"helping those who have difficulty functioning in a group activity" (Journal, 1/18/80).

Conclusions

This social studies activity provided students with several learning experiences and the opportunity to creatively express
themselves through writing and speech. Basically, the students learned to group problem solve and perhaps discover some principles of group process. In a more general sense they learned to identify and share with others parts of their lives that they find important and meaningful. Writing helped them express, record, and communicate these ideas and feelings. Writing served as an important and necessary means to the ends of group problem solving, planning, sustaining a complex set of activities over several weeks, and of communicating the results of these deliberations to the entire class.
Researching the World:
A Sixth-Grade Writing Project

Individual student research about cities of the world completed during the third marking period of the school year was a complex writing occasion that grew out of earlier writing activities. Principal forerunners were the Life Book, completed in September, and the Magazine Project, completed in December.

Description of the Project

Students enacted this culminating writing occasion during the months of January, February, and March, both within and outside of approximately 38 class sessions. Participants in this project were primarily the teacher, Mrs. Anderson, approximately 60 students (in two classes), and the school head librarian.

Mrs. Anderson identified three basic phases of the writing occasion: first, a preparatory phase in which she introduced students to the basic skills needed for searching out information in a systematic manner and for writing the content of their papers, second, a content phase, in which Mrs. Anderson guided students through steps of drafting and formulating their written reports, and third, a presentation phase in which she assisted students in creating visual aids and in preparing for oral presentations of their reports.

The preparatory phase. The preparatory phase of the Researching the World occasion consisted of nine class sessions over a period of
approximately three weeks (January 22, 1980 through February 7, 1980).

Mrs. Anderson provided an overview of this phase in her journal:

This week I have been getting materials together so they can start on their research papers soon. I plan to start with some orientations to the library, especially the card catalogue and the Reader's Guide--and the writing of a bibliography. (Journal, 1/15/80)

Mrs. Anderson did not assume that just because students have had an orientation to the library at the beginning of the school year that they acquired the necessary research skills for completing the project:

Mrs. Anderson tells me after class that students already know something about the card catalogue and use of the library, but are missing some skills. Thus she taught this lesson so that she wouldn't have to answer many questions tomorrow when students use the library. (Field Notes, 1/22/80)

During the class sessions Mrs. Anderson explained the use of the Dewey Decimal system and the card catalog. The librarian guided students through the process of using the Reader's Guide, and Mrs. Anderson described the manner of writing different types of bibliography entries. She expected students to learn to locate and record information more independently as they spent several class sessions exploring library resources. She collected, evaluated, returned and reviewed (with students) information they had recorded on their three worksheets in the process of using the card catalog and Dewey Decimal system, but only surveyed students about the progress they were making in recording information found in the Reader's Guide. Mrs. Anderson expected that only a few students would want or need to use current resources, thus the relatively cursory treatment of the students'
Reader's Guide notes. Since she would require three different types of bibliography entries in phase two, she did edit, evaluate, return, and review the practice entries students had listed.

The content phase. In the second phase of Researching the World students used many of the skills and procedures they had practiced both in earlier writing projects (e.g., Life Book, Magazine, weekly themes) and in the immediate preparatory skill development lessons. The content phase consisted of 21 class sessions over the course of about four weeks (February 8 through March 4). The students selected and developed the actual content of their research papers as Mrs. Anderson guided them through successive stages of choosing a topic, developing an outline, discovering and abstracting data from a variety of resources, writing a rough draft, and completing the various requirements for their booklet formats.

Mrs. Anderson described how she initiated this phase:

On Friday I announced the topic of the research paper would be a city someplace other than the U.S. Then we brainstormed quite a list—I put them on the overhead—just from names students knew or, finally, by looking at atlases. Each student listed three cities he/she would be willing to research—and starred any city they especially wanted to do, along with a sentence explaining why. I have managed to assign everyone one of their three choices and will give the students those assignments on Monday. (Journal, 2/8/80)

That same Friday, in the afternoon, she also recorded one class of students' ideas for outline headings and subtopics on the overhead projector. She then showed the second class of students what the first class had contributed and invited them to add to the outline
of ideas. The following week, Mrs. Anderson assigned research topics
to students, and combined the ideas of both classes into one outline
that she duplicated and distributed to each student in both classes.

At least 10 sessions of the lessons in the content phase of
Researching the World were characterized by student activity in the
library. In most class periods Mrs. Anderson gave a brief (five-
minute) introduction in the classroom to available resources, then
sent students to the library to search for information on their
respective topics and record it under the general headings and sub-
headings of the outline. In one of the earlier sessions she called
students back to the classroom and offered suggestions to them for
improving their note-taking skills:

1:30 (Library) Students are located mostly in the
central section of the library. They have outline
copies with them and are using atlases, encyclopedias,
the card catalog, geography books about one country...

1:55 (Classroom)...Mrs. Anderson tells students that
now that she has observed them working, she has sug-
gestions that would be helpful. She tells them not
to approach an article with a closed mind, e.g.,
with the sole purpose of finding the population first.
She explains that they may not find the population
for two weeks—if ever. She suggests that the stu-
dents read a couple of paragraphs, then take notes
on what they find. (Field Notes, 2/12/80)

But by the end of the week Mrs. Anderson wrote:

I did manage—on Wednesday, and Friday—to squeeze
in some time in the library to work on the research
projects. Most of the students are finding a nice
variety of materials with a minimal amount of
assistance from me or the librarian. It appears
that the outline has been helpful and is eliminating
some of the copying I've seen other years. (Journal,
2/15/80)

About midway in the note-gathering process Mrs. Anderson ex-
plained her guidelines for writing components of the final report:
9:22 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she will review what is on the sheet, explains how she will evaluate. Mrs. Anderson shows on the overhead projector: I. Cover--Title. She tells students that they can have a design on their covers, asks them: "Does the title have to be the name of the city?" She gives examples of descriptions that might fit a city and asks students if these would be acceptable...Mrs. Anderson illustrates on the overhead projector: scribbles 'Berlin' inside a rectangle (to represent a book cover). She tells students that they can go to the library and ask for stencils--"at least it shows more effort," or they can cut out letters from magazines. She suggests that they think about designing a cover, maybe a map...

9:30 On the overhead projector Mrs. Anderson writes: II. Title page. She asks students what information the title page has to have on it. Three different students respond with "title," "author," and "date" respectively. On the overhead projector next to "title page," Mrs. Anderson writes: title, author, date. She shows students the cover and title page of a library book, and illustrates ways of doing cover and title pages.

9:34 Mrs. Anderson: "Take out your outline, the one you've been taking notes on in the library." ...Noise level rises as students take out their outlines.

9:35 Mrs. Anderson draws table of contents page on the overhead projector and explains what she has written. She uses a social studies book to illustrate captions and sections.

9:40 Mrs. Anderson writes on the overhead projector: III. Table of contents--sections, page number, bibliography page. Mrs. Anderson asks students to look at the very last page of their outlines. She cautions them that everyone won't be able to fill out all of the outline sections...

9:44 Mrs. Anderson tells students that the body of the report will be like a theme and writes on the overhead projector: IV. Body of report.

9:45 Mrs. Anderson then adds more to the outline: V. Bibliography. She turns off the overhead projector...

9:46 Mrs. Anderson passes out another paper to students entitled "Evaluation for Special Written Report"...She tells students that for every day the
research report is submitted late that she will penalize the student one point...

9:58 Mrs. Anderson explains the "extras" listed on the evaluation sheets--tells students that she will talk about this later because she doesn't want them to be late for gym class. Students leave quickly--all have left the room in about 30 seconds. (Field Notes, 2/19/80)

After a few more days of note-gathering Mrs. Anderson asked her students to submit their outline notes, and when she returned them, indicated to students that either they had sufficient information and could begin their rough drafts, or that they needed to gather additional notes or complete their bibliographic entries before writing their drafts. She informed students that she would not collect their rough drafts because she intended to monitor progress as students wrote them. Mrs. Anderson explained a means of relating outline section notes to drafting of paragraphs:

9:35 Mrs. Anderson comments that the people going to the library have gone...The rest of you are going to get started. "Shh" (she waits)..."I'll say this once." She explains that students may think of each section of the outline as a paragraph, or maybe combine two sections...and that after the first two sections they could do things in any order. (Field Notes, 2/26/80)

The following figure (Figure 18) is an excerpt from one student's outline and rough draft written from the first two sections of her outline notes.

In late February, Mrs. Anderson became ill and decided to take a week at home to recuperate. To keep the momentum going on the Researching the World project, she planned a detailed schedule of activities for completing the research project and explained it to her students. She recorded an account of her planning in her
General Outline for Research on a City

A. General Information
   A. Population: sixth largest city in the world
   K. 18,750, 16,767,600
   B. Language spoken
      English, Welsh, Irish
   C. What name means
   D. Capital of Great Britain, etc.

B. Geography
   A. County/continent
      Great Britain, England
   B. Major waterways (rivers, oceans)
      English Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea
   C. Climate
      Rarely hot, cooler in the north, often
      Snowy, windy
   D. Terrain (mountains, deserts)
      Trees, mountains
   E. Neighboring countries
      Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France

London
The City

London is one of the oldest cities
in the world and the capital of Great
Britain and Northern Ireland. In
1979, it was populated by some
nearly 7,167,600 people. It is the sixth
largest city in the world. Some of
the languages spoken there are
English, Welsh, and Irish. London
bears the motto "God Direct Us."
London is located in England. The
River Thames runs through the
city. It's rarely hot, often snowy.
February 27 journal entry:

I went to school on Tuesday because I felt that if I could get the students started on their rough drafts they could proceed with a substitute teacher in the room while I stayed home to recover. I told them I wouldn't be in for a few days and to follow the guidelines I left carefully because the finished report would still be due next Tuesday, March 4. The guidelines I left for the students went something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Class Time</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues. a.m.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>Work on rough draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues. p.m.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. a.m.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. p.m.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. p.m.</td>
<td>60 min.</td>
<td>Finish rough draft; make cover, title page, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. a.m.</td>
<td>60 min.</td>
<td>Write final draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>Turn in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Mrs. Anderson returned to school the following Monday she discovered that several students had also been absent during the previous week. She then announced that they would have additional time to complete their reports:

1:56 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she was not the only one absent last week--two students were out five days last week. She says that they have an extra five days without penalty to complete their reports. She explains that students who were absent one day have until Wednesday, and if absent two days they have until Thursday, and so on. (Field Notes, 3/30/80)

Mrs. Anderson also informed students that she had received a request that they display their work during a Middle School teachers' conference to be held at the school during the following week. She suggested that they display their research reports (as well as the Life Books and Magazines they had created during the previous semester).
As students submitted their completed booklets Mrs. Anderson evaluated them using the evaluation criteria she had previously explained and reviewed with students. She then returned them so that students could prepare for their oral presentations.

The presentation phase. The presentation phase of Researching the World was both a means of sharing the content of the research papers with other students and a way of meeting Mrs. Anderson's requirement that each student give one oral report each quarter. This phase consisted of eight class sessions that took place from March 4 through March 12. During these sessions students prepared visual aids (e.g., maps) to use when they would present their research reports orally to their teacher and classmates. Mrs. Anderson demonstrated how not to read a report and how not to use a visual aid. Students evaluated her performances and Mrs. Anderson later evaluated student oral presentations of their written reports as well as the visual aids they prepared and used to illustrate their findings.

Teacher and Student Roles

Teacher role. Mrs. Anderson had customarily done a research project with her sixth-grade students at this time of year. This time she modified her planning and implementation of the occasion in several ways. She changed the topic area from the usual one of "myths" to one of "cities." She decided on this change in order to rekindle her own interest in the project and because sufficient resources for all (60) students could be made available--mainly from
the school library:

Mrs. Anderson tells students: "I had to choose a research topic broad enough so that there would be something for everyone on the topic in the library...it is devastating to go to the library and find nothing on the topic. I have seen this happen." (Field Notes, 2/8/80)

Mrs. Anderson also experimented with an outline format for note gathering, leaving space for note-taking, and with means for encouraging students to edit their rough drafts using wide-lined paper:

Over the weekend as I thought about putting the students' outline on a ditto, I had another idea that might make that outline more meaningful for them. I will have the secretary triple space the outline and then students can use that paper for the recording of their notes. Perhaps this will also cut down on copying of sentences word for word and encourage "notes." Another plus might be that it could help students organize their own papers into paragraphs or sections. I've never provided such a structured guide before so it will be interesting to see what happens. (Journal, 2/11/80)

On the way to school this a.m. I was rethinking the outline the secretary was going to type when it hit me that an extra sheet stapled on with the label "Bibliography Info" might help the students remember to jot down that info as they finished using each source. In other years a common problem has been the kids would lose—or never write down in the first place--info on the sources they used. And, so often they couldn't relocate the material to get the information. I also have decided to have them turn in their outlines, or at least present them in class, several times during the course of the project so I can keep tabs on their note taking. (Journal, 2/12/80)

Her intention was to shorten the data gathering and writing processes to two weeks, but unforeseen circumstances such as limited availability of the library facilities, changes in school scheduling, and illness (her own and that of students) served to extend the duration of the
activities or phases of the project, and changed the nature of phase three. Originally Mrs. Anderson intended that oral reports be given from notes in the manner of an earlier speech-giving occasion, but due to the length of reports and time constraints, she encouraged students to develop skill in oral reading of their reports.

**Student role.** Students had many choices within the framework of the project as Mrs. Anderson outlined it for them. However, she made no significant changes in her original plans because of unforeseen student problems. Perhaps this is because Mrs. Anderson had already enacted similar plans with students in previous years and had already taken most of the bugs out of it. Furthermore, this project was done in mid-year, after much preparatory work in writing, and thus the teacher was familiar with student writing abilities and dispositions. Consequently, she could anticipate many of their needs and patterns of response. By this time students were also familiar with Mrs. Anderson's expectations.

**Personal Meaning of the Project**

Both students and teacher related aspects of the Researching the World occasion to their lives outside the classroom. Students chose topics according to current outside interests and/or according to anticipated future events (e.g., one student chose Jerusalem because his father had promised him a trip to Israel on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah; another student wrote about Teheran, an area of current national interest because of the oil embargoes and hostage crisis).
Both places of work and types of resources used to gather information brought students and teacher to familiar environs outside the classroom. Mrs. Anderson obtained research materials she selected to suit individual student needs from her home, from a neighboring elementary school, and from the social studies office of the middle school in which she was teaching. She also called upon the school librarian to assist her in preparatory phases of the project, and she made arrangements for students to use the school library on several occasions. The students not only used resources in their school library but explored possible opportunities to use local public libraries, and resources available at their homes (e.g., almanac, tourist guidebooks, assistance from parents).

Mrs. Anderson expected that the experience and skills gained by students as they learned the fundamentals of compiling a research paper would serve them well in completing research activities and projects required in future school years. Researching the World was both the culmination of the sixth-grade writing curriculum and the beginning of a form of academic writing that the students would encounter again and again in middle school, high school, and college.
CHAPTER 5
THE FUNCTIONS OF WRITING IN TWO CLASSROOMS

Introduction

The preceding case studies offer a taste of the ways in which writing manifests itself in the everyday life of Ms. Donovan's elementary and Mrs. Anderson's middle school classrooms. Occasions for writing are sufficiently complex units of both instruction and communication that it is not surprising to find that they are the means to realize broad social and academic functions. In this chapter the functions of writing that were realized in the two classrooms will be described.

The study was instituted with an interest in the social situations in which students' written products arise and in which their beliefs and values about writing and its use are shaped. Toward these ends, guiding questions raised in the processes of collecting and analyzing data included the following: What opportunities for writing do students find in school? How is writing used by students to meet those opportunities? How do teachers and students differentiate among the functions of writing and the forms appropriate to them? What contextual forces are operant in this process?

Our approach to the study of writing in classrooms was strongly influenced by sociolinguistics and ethnography. As such it views writing holistically— not as a series of discrete skills to be
mastered, but as a cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978). Viewed in this light, writing is studied as it is used by members of a community. This focus on function stands in sharp contrast to other ways of studying language that have typically emphasized mastery of form (Shuy, 1981). To study the process of acquisition of written literacy in this way, the researcher does not measure written linguistic output, but, instead, in Basso's (1977) words,

focuses upon writing as a form of communicative activity and takes as a major objective the analysis of the structure and function of this activity in a broad range of human societies. (p. 426)

In our own society, this sort of study is particularly appropriate in schools and classrooms where, despite intensive efforts in the area of reading instruction, writing has been generally neglected in both curriculum and instruction.

Scholars of language and culture have expressed concern about the adequacy of the classroom as an environment for learning to write. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1978), for example, have argued that schools in our culture too narrowly define both literacy's functions and the skills necessary to realize them. Shuy (Note 9), echoes this concern. He points out that while children have mastered a broad range of oral language functions by the time they enter school, most have not had much experience in writing. School, a public and institutional place, is typified by a formal language register and activities that are teacher-generated, monologic, and not functional in children's other social lives. Such a learning environment limits children's opportunities to acquire a rich range of language forms and functions.
For writing, which is generally not acquired to the degree that speech is in the home, the consequence is that children may never practice parts of the written communication repertoire that are self-generated, transactional, and useful in everyday life (Shuy, Note 9). If such is the case, children's competence in writing may never be fully realized, not despite their formal education, but as a consequence of it.

These are disturbing and powerful suggestions about the classroom as an environment for writing. They prompt closer examination of occasions for writing in our two classrooms asking, in Basso's (1977) words, "what position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is the range of its cultural meanings?" (p. 432). The remainder of this chapter addresses these questions by examining the functions served by writing in the two classrooms studied.

**Overview of the Four Functions**

As the case studies show, life in these two classrooms is varied. In each classroom there are both scheduled and impromptu opportunities to learn. There are group and individual activities, teacher-led and free times. Communication in the classrooms reflects this social and academic diversity, and although each classroom has its own unique flavor, writing in both classrooms arises out of particular intellectual and social needs and opportunities presented by the school in general and the classroom in particular.

Before offering a detailed discussion of the functions of writing in the two classrooms, some discussion of the process by which those
functions and their distinctive features were inferred is provided. Since the research project was oriented to discovery, fieldworkers did not limit their sights to activities explicitly involving writing and its instruction. Instead, pains were taken to spend considerable time in the two schools and classrooms observing and sharing in the round of daily activities and gradually noting patterns in the use of writing by the teachers and students. Similarly, when teachers and students were asked questions about writing in both formal and informal interviews, the questions came at first in terms of the larger context of their classroom life. Finally, in the same spirit, student writings and drawings were collected widely and in large quantity. Gradually, the documents were classified, but with an eye toward how they related to classroom activity and with the help of students and teachers.

In both sites, it quickly became evident that writing and its instruction were meaningfully organized not into discrete units such as lessons, but into broader units of related activities that integrated a range of skills and served broad social and academic functions. To learn more about how these units, called occasions for writing, fit into the social and academic fabric of the classrooms under study, we framed and tested working hypotheses about the types of functions the occasions for writing were performing in the classroom. As we generated these hypotheses about how teachers and students might be using writing, we tested them against subsequent instances of classroom activity. In this enterprise we sought meaningful contrasts in the use of writing, and those aspects of writing,
activities that appeared to make a difference to participants were noted.

Four broad functions were thus identified, first in the second/third-grade classroom and later in the sixth. These functions appeared to be integrally related to classroom life and were the following:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time, and
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

These four functions are sufficiently broad to characterize the writing done in both classroom settings. However, because of contextual differences including student age, grade, school, and teacher, their realization differs in many interesting ways in the two classes studied. Table 1 shows the four functions of writing identified in the two classrooms and illustrates them with sample occasions for writing. The table is derived from field notes, teacher journals, interviews, and work samples collected during the 1979-80 academic year. It illustrates that writing is used to serve multiple purposes including, but not limited to, skill assessment and practice in the language arts. Writing also functions in setting the social climate of the classroom, in getting to know others, in reflecting upon one's experiences during the day, in recreation, and in the service of academic activities not explicitly related to language arts. Table 1 also shows that occasions for writing differ along particular dimensions of the writing act in these two classrooms. Some of these dimensions apply in most writing
Table 1

The Functions of Writing and their Distinctive Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION TYPE</th>
<th>SAMPLE ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DISTINCTIVE FEATURES</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TYPE I: WRITING TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY</td>
<td>(2/3) classroom rules</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: teacher &amp; students; speaker: teacher; audience: classmates; format: posted; referred to when broken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) magazines</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: teacher &amp; students; speaker: student; audience: magazine subscribers; format: read by teacher; may be displayed for reading by classmates; taken home</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE II: WRITING TO KNOW ONESELF AND OTHERS</td>
<td>(2/3) diaries</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: student; speaker: student; audience: self; format: kept in teacher's file cabinet or in student desks; occasionally shared with teacher, other students, or family</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) life books</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: teacher &amp; students; speaker: student; audience: classmates; format: read by teacher, classmates, parents, other students</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE III: WRITING TO OCCUPY FREE TIME</td>
<td>(2/3) stories, letters, and cards</td>
<td>initiator: student; composer: student; speaker: student; audience: other (parents, friends, family); format: kept; may be given as gift to parent or friend</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) cartoons &amp; stories</td>
<td>initiator: student; composer: student; speaker: self or others (parents, friends, family); format: kept; may be shared or not be shared; when shared, it is usually with a friend</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE IV: WRITING TO DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC COMPETENCE</td>
<td>(2/3) science lab booklet</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: publisher and student; speaker: teacher; audience: students; format: checked by teacher; filed for later use; pages sent home to parents by teacher</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) research project</td>
<td>initiator: teacher; composer: teacher &amp; students; speaker: teacher &amp; classmates; format: read by teacher; presented orally to classmates; displayed at teacher conference</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activities and have been singled out for attention by other theorists of writing. Others, however, appear to arise uniquely in the institutional setting of the school. The dimensions identified in this study included the initiator of the occasion for writing, the composer of the written product, the person(s) who actually write(s) the document, the intended audience for the writing, the format of the document (and the person(s) who plan that format), the ultimate fate of the written product, and the presence or absence of evaluation of the writing.

With Table 1 it is possible to take a closer look at the functions of writing, first in the elementary classroom and then in the middle school classroom. In so doing, comparisons and contrasts will be drawn both among functions within each setting and between the functions as realized in the two settings.

A Closer Look at the Four Functions in the Elementary Classroom

Implicit in Table 1 is the insight that literacy resides not entirely in the production of documents, but also in a complex of social roles, expressive purposes, and resources for writing. Different configurations of these features occur with different expressive purposes and, as Figure 19 illustrates, different documents result.

Writing to participate in community. Writing as participation in community is exemplified by the efforts of Ms. Donovan and her students to set and enforce rules of social conduct in their corner of Room Twelve. The composing of rules was undertaken collectively, with children framing and negotiating rules orally in interaction
Figure 19. Documents reflecting the functions of writing in room 12.
with one another and with guidance from the teacher. Ms. Donovan was the scribe in this activity. At first she worked at the chalkboard, revising the rules as the children discuss them. Then, overnight, she carefully printed the rules in colored marking pen on a large sheet of white butcher paper. She mounted them near the chalkboard. This procedure gave the teacher ultimate control of the format of the written rules that had been jointly composed. This way of writing classroom rules is consistent with the spirit of open education shared among the teachers of Room 12. The teachers encouraged students to devise classroom rules and to arrive at understandings of social relations inductively. However, in keeping with the need for order and coordination in a room containing so many children and a wide variety of social arrangements for teaching and learning, Ms. Donovan reported that the teachers reached consensus in advance on what the "discovered" classroom rules would be (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

Rule-setting enabled a particular kind of writing in which many of the processes usually undertaken by the individual author are shared by all of the students in interactions with their teacher. The process of deliberation worked toward consensus before the rules were in place. The act of writing them down at the board, where they could be easily erased, negotiated, and modified, was akin to producing a working draft. The final step of recording on paper what has been agreed to conveyed one potent function of writing: to specify and render binding social compacts. Public display of the rules rendered the other students in Room 12 accountable to observe them.
The collective creation of a written document has powerful pedagogical implications. The teacher reported that this sort of activity enabled the participation of all—even second graders who may have forgotten how to write their alphabet letters over the summer (Interview, 8/6/80). In addition, two key aspects of the writing process—composition and revision—are undertaken by the children in an oral rather than a written mode, thus moving them gradually into writing. Finally, the collective effort at composition may, in fact, result in moving each individual cognitively beyond the place s/he might have been if left to generate rule ideas in isolation or if confronted with a teacher-made list.

In Ms. Donovan's corner of Room 12, the rules for class conduct that were generated and written down were invoked as they were broken. In fact, long into the year, written rules were periodically referred to when Ms. Donovan sanctioned behavior. A formal social and written mechanism existed wherein students could engage in reflection both upon the rules that had been recorded and upon the consequences of breaking them. It was the writing of a behavior contract (See Figure 19). Like the rules themselves, the behavior contract was a collaboration between teacher and student. Ms. Donovan printed the contract and constrained the topic of student writing, but within those limits the student expressed her/his account of the offense and framed in writing a way to prevent its recurrence. Ms. Donovan and the student then signed the contract. Again, by means of a jointly composed and public document, an air of the official nature of the activity was created. In addition, contracts were kept on
record and, upon the third offense, a parent signature was added to the already-present signatures of teacher and student. This type of writing, in both rule-generation and enforcement, codified the social norms of the group and helped the group to regulate social behavior.

**Writing to demonstrate academic competence.** Another type of writing that is both public and collaborative but in quite different ways occurred when students wrote as part of academic performance. Here the purpose was not explication of social relations in the classroom, but the performance of academic tasks. A page from a SCIIS science lab booklet is shown in Figure 19 to exemplify the documents produced when this function was undertaken. Like rule-setting, this is a teacher-initiated activity and it is the only type of writing that received formal evaluation from the teacher (see star on the lab booklet page). This time writers worked in privacy, but they still collaborated on the documents produced.

Academic writing is the only type of writing that was typically both composed and formatted by an outside third party—the publisher. This fact, so commonplace in classrooms in our culture, was at first taken for granted by the researchers. However, when students were asked to sort and talk about their written work, they consistently grouped worksheets and workbook pages together because they were produced "by machine" (Interview Notes, 6/6/80).

Some writing as academic performance was intended for practice and assessment of writing skills themselves, but much of it was writing in the service of other academic ends. Writing could serve
in these cases as an aid to memory, as description resulting in insights about phenomena (as in the experiment report), and as explanation to the teacher-audience that the student had learned a concept. Both the rule-setting and behavior contract activities and the academic performance activities called upon students to engage in a variety of discourse functions including explanation and description. However, they were not activities that were generated or ultimately controlled by the students—the topic was constrained, the format of the writing was limited, and the function of the writing was predetermined by others. These two functions of writing were observed throughout the year and are those most typically associated with formal school writing.

Writing was not limited to rule-setting and academic performance. Two major functions of writing were undertaken in Room 12 in which students had considerably more control over the features of the activity and that were closer to students' everyday experience outside school. These function types, writing to know oneself and others and writing to occupy free time, are the least formal types of classroom writing. They are not shared publicly nor are they evaluated. Although in the case of writing to know oneself and others the writing activity was typically initiated and formatted by the teacher, the students generated and wrote the text, and their efforts were acknowledged by the teacher while not being formally evaluated. In writing to occupy free time, the teacher enabled the process by providing room for it in the school day, but, as can be seen in Table 1, the students controlled all other facets of the activity.
Writing to know oneself and others. As is evident in the case studies of Diary Time, Pen Pals, and the Safety Posters, students wrote to get to know themselves and others better. In an ever-widening circle that began with knowing their classmates in Room 12 and grew to knowing the community in which they lived, students produced a variety of documents. They wrote in diaries (see Figure 19) that recorded their experiences and feelings and were private unless voluntarily shared, they wrote around the holidays (everything from Thanksgiving menus and recipes for a class dinner to New Year's resolutions), and they wrote class books recounting field trips.

Writing to know oneself and others better was an interesting function of written literacy in Room 12 in large part because it is at the cusp of purely private and personal writing (e.g., writing to occupy free time) and the more formal and public school-oriented writings previously discussed. It is perhaps the only function of writing in the elementary classroom that fully realized the concept of an occasion for writing. This type of writing relied on the teacher often to seize the moment—perceiving an experience that had happened spontaneously and captured the students' imaginations, and turning it into an occasion for writing. It relied on her as well to free the children to design and control as much of the writing process as necessary to reach fruition. Sometimes this strategy leads to success, sometimes to disappointment.

An example of such an occasion for writing that had all of these elements was the diary-writing that is documented in Table 1 and
described as a case study. Diary-writing was Ms. Donovan's idea, and she would have liked to institutionalize it as a quiet, reflective writing time in the school day of each child in her class. However, her plans were never fully realized. Detailed study of this occasion revealed that it was the very marginality of the writing function that made the activity both attractive and difficult to institutionalize. Diaries were supposed to be private. Students were to be free of concern about issues of form and audience; they were to write their own thoughts, and Ms. Donovan would write hers. But Table 1 shows us that Diary Time had some distinctive features that greatly resembled other, more formal types of school writing.

Diary Time was scheduled into the school day by the teacher—it was initiated by her. Diaries were kept locked in the teacher's file cabinet to ensure that they would be private, but only official schoolwork was kept in this manner. Diaries were written inside student-made booklets, but the diaries were to be written on official lined paper. While diaries were to be private, they could be shared—and that implied that an audience beyond oneself was at least of some concern. In short, diaries were both a school writing activity and a personal one as they were realized in Room 12. This caused confusion on students' part about both audience and purpose—and that confusion was manifest in student concern for correctness of form and spelling in their diaries and in their lamenting the lack of topics about which to write. Diary Time was not successful for most of the students in that by mid-year it was deleted from the daily schedule and continued by only six or seven students. By that time, however, for those few students, it had been renegotiated to resemble the
that are so important in fieldwork. Held in a congenial location in the workplace of neither the teachers nor the researchers, the dinners provided a context in which open discourse was more likely to transpire. These meetings were audiotaped and transcribed. The researchers also documented them in field notes. They were the catalyst for some major insights in the study and citations from the transcripts and notes from those meetings appear throughout the report in testament of this fact.

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

Data Reduction and Analysis

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

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

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

For the most part, categories for analysis were arrived at inductively, as participants sifted the naturalistic data for patterns of meaningful activity in writing and writing instruction. In addition, insights from previous research, literature on both the writing and teaching processes, and the experience of participating teachers provided potential "conceptual levers" that the researchers used to make sense of the data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 117).

The study's interdisciplinary research staff worked together in the development of a series of descriptions of the acquisition of written literacy in the two classrooms studied. The collaborative working relationship was important for two reasons. First, because of ongoing contact among participating teachers and the interdisciplinary team, it was possible collaboratively to engage in a cyclic process involving the formation of working hypotheses about what was happening in planning and instruction, the testing of those hypotheses in subsequent data collected, and the refinement of the working hypotheses. Such a design made it possible for the project staff to test and refine descriptive models of the process of writing instruction.
in the two classrooms that were grounded in the observed phenomena.

In short, the goal was to render descriptions that were able, in
Geer's (1969) words,

> based on an accumulation of data, [to] predict an
> event or state that people will behave in special
> ways under certain conditions. (p. 152)

The ability to build such a predictive model is one of the strongest
tests of the adequacy of a descriptive case study (Erickson, Note 7).

The second advantage of such a research design for the processes
of data reduction and analysis was that it fostered the process of
triangulation. The researchers recognized that the social and cogni-
tive phenomena of interest in the study were very complex, and ac-
knowledge, in Gorden's (1975) terms, that

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

By examining written, oral, and observational data with varying
degrees of structure and from the perspectives of various investi-
gators, it was possible to accomplish such triangulation. The
researchers intended that the study reflect as validly as possible
the perspectives of the participating teachers. By means of multiple
methods and opportunities for the researchers and teachers to cross-
check their inferences about the data both as they were collected
and retrospectively, the researchers hoped to maximize coverage and
understanding of writing and its instruction in the two classrooms
of interest.
The processes described here yielded the following three-step procedure for reporting the research:

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

2. Identify a manageably small number of such occasions for writing that are of theoretical importance and of significance to the classroom participants.

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

The case studies of occasions for writing that follow in this report illustrate the diversity of the data collected and one way that data can be interwoven in the presentation of a descriptive analysis.
CHAPTER 4

LOCATING WRITTEN LITERACY IN TWO CLASSROOMS

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

Schools and Community

This report focuses on a second/third-grade class located in Room 12 of the Conley School and a sixth-grade class in Lincoln Middle School. Both schools are in the East Eden School District. This school district serves approximately 4,600 students. The city of East Eden is the home of a large land-grant university and abuts the capitol of a midwestern state. Its population contains a mix of families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The parents of some of the students are employed in state government or the professions; others are working class. The East Eden School District over the past few years has been revising its K-12 writing curriculum, and therefore teachers have been reminded of the high priority placed on writing and its instruction.
Room 12 is the only room of its kind in the Conley Elementary School. Its special nature has important implications for the uses of writing that can be observed there. In order to locate written literacy meaningfully in its social context, it is useful briefly to consider Room 12 as an environment for learning.

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

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

A controversial place since the wing was built, Room 12 receives mixed reviews from teachers and parents. Some teachers
Figure 4. Floor plan of Ms. Donovan's corner of room 12. (Field Notes, 9/5/79)
consider it a challenge and a professional opportunity to work there, while others shun the room's potential disorder and lack of privacy in which to teach and plan. Similarly, some parents prefer less open environments for their children. However, it is not uncommon for parents from all backgrounds to inquire of the principal how their child can be assigned to Room 12. In fact, the Room 12 teachers assert that many parents think that only the most able children are assigned there, and that assignment to Room 12 is a status symbol of sorts.

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

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

Lincoln Middle School is organized for team teaching. There are three sixth-grade teams, each having two teachers, usually one male and one female. Four academic subjects are taught in teams: English, social studies, science, and math.
The school day is divided into blocks of time for team subjects and time for special area classes, which are physical education, music, art, and foreign languages. The blocks of team time can be arranged in any fashion that the team teachers prefer, since there is not a specified amount of time for a class and no class bells.

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

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

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

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

In Mrs. Anderson's classroom, students' tables are close together because of the crowded conditions. The tables are moved into various configurations depending on the teaching situation. Mrs. Anderson
Figure 5. Floor plan of Mrs. Anderson's sixth-grade classroom.
often mentioned the crowded conditions of the room and felt it affected
the students. One wall of the classroom is windows; a chalkboard
covers the front wall. An overhead projector is located in front
of the chalkboard. Mrs. Anderson uses this projector, rather than
the chalkboard, because of her allergy to chalk dust. Mrs. Anderson
has her desk at the back of the room and does not use this area as a
teaching station.

The Occasion for Writing

In descriptive classroom research one of the most challenging
parts of the data reduction process is to discover a unit of descrip-
tion and analysis that is useful in organizing the voluminous amount
of information usually generated in such studies. In addition to its
power as an organizer and condenser of data, the unit must be meaning-
ful to the participants in the inquiry (teachers, students, and
researchers), and must be robust enough to capture the complexity
of the phenomena under study without oversimplification. In this
study the unit of description and analysis that meets these criteria
is the "occasion for writing." It is typified by the following features:

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

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

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

4. Activities constituting an occasion are expressive in
nature and may involve multiple modes on the continuum
of oral-written expression (e.g., writing, drawing,
speaking before an audience, reading, etc.).
Occasions for writing frequently involve skill integration both among the language arts of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and across subject areas. In addition they often integrate school and non-school life experiences of the student writers.

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

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

After the occasion for writing was defined conceptually, one occasion (the Safety Posters) was written up as a test of the construct. After considerable feedback and editing by the research
team, the Safety Posters description was elevated to the status of a model, and guidelines for describing other occasions for writing were drawn up (Figure 6). These guidelines were followed by the authors of this report in writing descriptions of the occasions for reported here.

The final section of this chapter consists of descriptions and analyses of six occasions for writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second/Third Grade</th>
<th>Sixth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diary Time</td>
<td>Life Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen Pals</td>
<td>The Magazine Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning a Dinner Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researching the World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the reader is reminded of the Safety Posters occasion for writing from the second/third-grade data described at the beginning of Chapter 1. The seven occasions for writing offered here were not the only occasions that took place in the two classrooms during the year of study. But they do constitute an important part of the writing curriculum in each classroom and depict a representatively wide range of complexity, problems, partial failures, and partial successes in the fostering of written literacy in schools. The presentation of these particular occasions reflects the judgments of the participating teachers and researchers about which classroom events most significantly influenced students' school experiences with writing. These occasions were also selected to depict the evolution of writing activity across the entire school year.
**Page Limit:** 15-20 pages

**Minimum Contents:**

- Dates and Time of Year
- Duration
- Participants
- List of Parts or Phases of the Occasion
  - Thematic Link Among Parts
- Teacher Role(s) in Shaping the Occasion
  - Genesis
  - Implementation and Modification
  - Fate and Closure
- Student Role(s) in Shaping the Occasion
- Relation of the Occasion to Other Parts of Participants' Lives
- Purpose(s) of the Occasion
- Function(s) of the Occasion
- Audience
- Examples of Written Products
- Relationship Between Teacher Thinking and Classroom Interaction

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**Figure 6. Guidelines for descriptions of occasions for writing.**
Diary Time

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

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

\(^3\) An example is the diary of the late Bostonian, Arthur Crew Inman. Compiled between the years 1919 and 1963, Inman's diary presents his view on life and politics and contains more than ten million words. The diary is currently being edited for publication by Harvard professor of literature, Daniel Aaron. It is reported that in this enterprise Aaron has been helped by the fact that the diary itself contains detailed instructions to the future editor, dictating how the manuscript was to be treated, from questions of style to punctuation. Inman's strictest editorial fiat was that nothing shocking be removed on account of squeamishness (Cott, Harvard Magazine, May-June, 1981, p. 50).

\(^4\) Diary writing can be used to deal constructively with personal problems. Among the diary writing techniques recommended in this
settings such as the classroom, their "theoretical perfection" is clouded still further by the realities of school life. Most obviously, diaries written in school are not written in privacy. They are often initiated, not by the diarist, but by the teacher. And since most writing done in school has an audience, the issue of audience in classroom diaries is, at best, uncertain.

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

Genesis

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

regard are some potentially social ones including the writing of dialogues and "unsent letters" (Rainer, 1978). In addition, such techniques have been adapted for classroom use. In the "dialogue journal," the student makes regular diary entries that are responded to in writing by the teacher. In the course of these written dialogues, thoughts and feelings are explored interactively, and there is opportunity for development of written language skills (Staton, Note 8; Shuy, Note 9).
minutes of each school day, and that she planned to use that time herself to write in the journal that she was keeping as part of the research project. She said she expected to write in a "stream of consciousness" fashion. Field notes written on the same day indicate that as Ms. Donovan drafted a model daily schedule she allotted the final 10 minutes of the day to diary time. Ms. Donovan commented to the fieldworker that having her students write in diaries was something she had wanted to do for a long time and that her participation in the research project would "give added impetus" to it (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

**Getting Started**

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

Looking up at the chalkboard where the schedule had been written, one child said, "It's almost time for diary." Another child said, "What's that?" Ms. Donovan said, "That's what we have to discuss. Some kids don't know what it is yet."

Proceeding, Ms. Donovan asked, "Does anyone know what a diary is?"

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

Dani asked, "How do you correct them?"

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

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

1. The diary covers were to be decorated with crayon or magic marker. Children who finished decorating ahead of time were not to begin writing in the diaries but were to take a worksheet and complete it. The worksheets were mazes and the children were told they could color them. They were told the mazes would be "corrected."

2. Children were to decorate their diaries with picture(s) of favorite things. Then the diaries were filled with five sheets of lined paper.

3. The third-grade paper was distinguished from the second-grade paper (they are essentially the same except that third grade paper has narrower spaces between the lines). Ms. Donovan asked the fieldworker to help distribute paper, and she found the distinction by grade disconcerting. It was noted by the children, but not accompanied with an explanation, and each time the fieldworker/helper gave someone paper she had to ask her/him their grade--somewhat of a non sequitur to some of the children.

4. When the children asked what would happen when they finished using the five pages, they were told that they could "make a new one."

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

Once the covers were underway, Ms. Donovan passed out the "third grade paper" and asked the researcher/helper to pass out the "second-grade paper." Then
the children began to write in their diaries, as Ms. Donovan circulated stapling the booklets together. There were several procedural directives as the writing began.

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

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

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

At 3:01, Ms. Donovan asked the children to stop. She asked, "How many people had a hard time thinking of things to write about?" She suggested that anyone who didn't should give them some ideas. (She
was apparently aware of Chet, the boy who had the most trouble thinking of something to write. He had come to the fieldworker for help in decorating his cover. When she suggested that he might want to write something inside, he said he did not know what to write. Attempting to get him started, she discovered that he is new in town, has yet to make many friends, and therefore felt he did not have much to recount. Ms. Donovan addressed much of the post-writing discussion to Chet, looking at him a lot.) Ms. Donovan asked the class, "How did you think of things to write?" She called on two boys who seemed to have no trouble making entries—

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

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

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

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

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

Discussion

Diary Time was clearly a planned occasion for writing that originated with the teacher. By allocating a regular daily slot for diary writing even before she met her students and by discussing her intentions with the researchers, Ms. Donovan made a commitment to establish this activity as a routine. On September 5, we had no detailed evidence of her plan or mental picture of what Diary Time would be like, or of what purposes she thought it might serve for
her students. But Ms. Donovan's scheduling of Diary Time as the very last activity of the day and her expressed desire to write in her own journal at that time suggest a picture of a quiet period of private reflection on and writing about the major events of the day, during which each child would be in his or her own little world for a while. As we shall see, the realities of the classroom transformed this idyllic picture in many unforeseen ways. As we reflect on the first Diary Time, a number of interesting features of this occasion bear mention. We address them under the headings of planning, implementation, audience, and function.

Planning. As mentioned above, Diary Time was clearly a teacher-originated and teacher-planned activity (as distinguished from student-initiated activities, mandated curricular activities, or unexpected, serendipitous events). Ms. Donovan told us of her intention to have the students write daily diary entries on the day before school began. She allocated a full hour of the important first day of school to Diary Time, and built in a 10-minute time slot at the end of each daily schedule for diary writing. Her comments on the day before school began, and her actions during the first Diary Time indicate that she had wanted to have students keep diaries for some years, that she had never done so before, that her participation in a study of written literacy (including her own keeping of a journal) provided added impetus to institute Diary Time, and that she was convinced that Diary Time would be a valuable activity for her students. In short, it was important to Ms. Donovan that Diary Time succeed.
Much of Ms. Donovan's planning for Diary Time must be inferred from indirect evidence. Like other experienced elementary teachers whose planning has been studied (Clark & Yinger, Note 1), she did not write out an elaborate, step-by-step plan book entry for Diary Time. The only visible record of planning for the first Diary Time is the written schedule for that day. Yet her comments recorded in the September 5 interview and field notes, her relatively elaborate communication of the Diary Time plan to the students, and the fact that materials for making the diary covers were ready when needed all indicate that Ms. Donovan had an elaborate plan worked out in her mind—she was not simply "playing it by ear." Although her planning was a necessary preparation for Diary Time, it was invisible to outside observers.

Implementation. It is usually the case in the unpredictable world of the elementary school classroom that activities are not implemented exactly as planned. This discrepancy between plan and action is especially likely to be visible in the early days and weeks of school, when teacher and students are first getting to know one another, and also in the case of activities that a teacher is implementing for the first time. The first Diary Time met both of these conditions, and Ms. Donovan adjusted her plan to accommodate the unpredictable. In the orienting discussion of what diaries are, she built on student contributions of ideas about the purposes and contents of diary entries. The discussion of the privacy issue was triggered by a student reporting that he owned a diary with a lock and key. Ms. Donovan incorporated the fieldworker as an aide in this
activity, who handed out paper and helped the children spell words. Implementation of Ms. Donovan's advance plan depended very much on her interactive decision making and flexibility in building on student contributions. The plan was tailored to fit the moment rather than the moment forced to fit the structure of the plan.

Another feature of plan implementation worth mentioning is Ms. Donovan's use of modeling. She modeled both the decoration of a diary cover and the diary writing process itself. Further, she shared one part of her own diary entry with the class, but told them that the remainder of the entry was private ("just for me"), showing that each writer was to be the judge of what to share and what to keep secret. Ms. Donovan's use of modeling shows up in various ways in other occasions for writing throughout the year.

The first Diary Time is the earliest example of a pattern of modeling in which the emphasis is on making explicit how the teacher is thinking about and doing the writing task herself rather than telling the students what the "right way" to do the task is. Implicit in this approach to modeling a task are the teacher's concern that students learn and attend to the processes (of thought and action) as well as to the products (a diary cover or entry), sufficient respect for the importance and meaningfulness of the task that the teacher herself will enter into it as a full participant, and an openness to accept decisions by individual students to approach the task in a way that is different from that modeled by the teacher (as long as they do participate).

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

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

Discussed writing a diary; emphasized idea of personal thoughts and importance of privacy. Most caught on quickly...some kept their own diaries at home.
I had planned to keep my journal while the class works in theirs, but for the first few weeks it will be difficult to accomplish with their interruptions for spelling and ideas.

Tomorrow I'll read short selections from logs and journals kept by such people as Anne Frank and Washington Irving and have the children figure out how they have become useful for us and possibly give them some ideas. I'll have some share their entries from yesterday if they wish, then pull a small group to work out some strategies to help them think of what to write. (Journal, 9/6/79)

So we see that, especially in a continuing activity like Diary Time, the teacher played the roles of observant and reflective critic of her own teaching, problem solver and formative evaluator of classroom processes, as well as leader, instructor, and facilitator of those activities.

Audience. Who was the audience for the student diary entries? At one level the teacher intended that the young diarist himself or herself would be the primary audience. The discussion of privacy reflected in the field notes quoted above, and the seriousness with which teacher and students guarded their own privacy lend support to the hypothesis of "self as audience." But, at the same time, there is evidence to suggest that both teacher and students saw teacher and peers as a potential audience for diary entries. The facts that Diary Time was a teacher-imposed task, that the teacher knew and taught about "the rules" of diary keeping, that the teacher read aloud a part of her own first journal entry, and that the teacher collected and stored the diaries in her filing cabinet all supported the idea of "teacher as audience." Student concerns about accurate spelling, questions about how the teacher "will correct them" (Field
Notes, 9/6/79), and teacher assistance for those who could not think of what to write constitute additional evidence of teacher as audience. Peers were introduced as a potential audience by Ms. Donovan's comment that "I don't want to read them [the diaries] unless you want to share them with me or the class" (Field Notes, 9/6/79).

According to the fieldworker, the children appeared to be a bit confused by the mixed message of privacy, on the one hand, and teacher/peers as audience on the other (Field Notes, 9/6/79). The diary writing activity could be seen as an invitation to engage in two incompatible tasks: (1) private, freewheeling writing intended for the author's eyes only, in which description and reflection were of paramount importance, and "errors" of form, spelling, or grammar were of no consequence, and (2) "correct" writing about one's daily experiences and feelings, that fit the conventions of diary entries as a literary form and the conventions of neatness, spelling, punctuation, coherence, and length of school writing tasks that please the teacher. Taking the perspective of a seven- or eight-year-old child on the first day of school, one can imagine a number of ways that he or she might respond to this dilemma:

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

It is interesting to speculate about how this internal tension in the diary writing occasion relates to Doyle's (Note 10) research on classroom task structure in which he points out that even children relatively new to school are caught up on the "performance for grade" exchange. Indeed, it is reasonable to claim that all school writing occasions initiated by the teacher include the teacher as one important audience.
2. Treat Diary Time as a reflective writing task which the usual "rules" of school wiring are mercifully suspended; maintain privacy;

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

These three alternatives characterize the observed range of student responses to the first Diary Time. The central point of this interpretation is that ambiguity about the audience of a student writing activity can affect both the interpretation of the task and the students' performance of the writing in diverse ways.

**Function.** Initially, the primary function of Diary Time intended by Ms. Donovan was to provide her students with an opportunity to reflect on the events of the day and to become aware of their own feelings and thoughts about school life. As mentioned above, the evidence for this intended function includes Ms. Donovan's scheduling of Diary Time as the last activity of the school day and her expressed desire to write reflectively in her own journal while the children wrote in their diaries.

Ms. Donovan saw her own journal writing in connection with the research project and the students' daily diary writing as potentially serving similar ends. In an early journal entry she speculates about this parallel:

Sharing this journal and my thoughts during the week with another [the researcher] on a scheduled basis is helping me to reflect in a less nebulous manner on planning and assessment of lessons. By articulating my conceptions and beliefs, it has become easier for me to present ideas in a more logical manner with fewer inconsistencies. I
wonder if the children will develop greater oral ease through writing and reflecting on their ideas? (Journal, 9/11/79)

The first Diary Time also served as an opportunity for every student to succeed at constructing and decorating a diary—a visible product of the first day of school. Furthermore, the decorations on the diary covers constituted information about each student's "favorite things" that was useful to the teacher, the individual young artist, and his or her peers. In this way, the first Diary Time contributed to the process of building a social system in the classroom—getting the year off to a good start by getting to know one another.

The investment of a full hour of the first day of school to Diary Time also served to communicate to the students that writing was to be an important part of life in this classroom, and that Ms. Donovan would do whatever was necessary to insure that everyone would write. Providing the correct spelling of words and her plan to work with small groups who "could not think of anything to write" are examples of Ms. Donovan's determination to have every student participate, even at the expense of journal writing time for herself.

Beyond communicating teacher expectations about writing in Room 12, the first Diary Time also served as a diagnostic or writing assessment opportunity for Ms. Donovan. She learned, somewhat to her surprise, which students had the most difficulty writing. She learned that all of her students were concerned about correct spelling of words, even though the teacher-intended audience for the diary was oneself alone. She also learned that the concept of a diary and the personal and historical functions that a diary can serve were not
well understood by her students, and she formed a plan to fill this gap of knowledge and motivation. And finally, Ms. Donovan began to learn about the amount and kind of teacher energy it would take to introduce, implement, and maintain a complex and long-term occasion for writing with this particular group of students.

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

The Complexity of Diary Writing in School

Diary Time was an occasion for writing that did not live up to all of Ms. Donovan's hopes and expectations, yet it was one from which the students, the teacher, and the researchers derived substantial benefit. In the year that we observed Ms. Donovan's class, Diary Time was undertaken for the first time. We have learned from research on teacher planning and from the reports of experienced teachers that teaching something for the first time can amount to a pilot test (Clark & Elmore, Note 11). The pilot test of Diary Time
in Ms. Donovan's room, while only partially successful, yielded many insights about writing, instruction, and the classroom learning environment. In a sense, the life history of Diary Time is offered as an opportunity for the reader to experience that pilot test vicariously and think about its implications for his or her own teaching.

For all of the instructional soundness of Diary Time, the seeds of its ultimate difficulties were present from the outset. Despite teacher planning and support, Diary Time, like many classroom activities, took on a life of its own as the year progressed. By year's end, about six children were still keeping diaries in school, but they were doing so as independent activity during their free time. The field notes show that, not far into October, the regular ten-minute slot intended for Diary Time was at first shifted to various parts of the day. By January it had been removed entirely from the daily calendar.

What were the difficulties in sustaining a daily Diary Time? Ms. Donovan had some ideas on the subject when she was interviewed almost a full year later:

Originally I had hoped to write in a diary at the same time the children did, but it didn't work out too well. Because even though there was the idea of the diaries being private and no one had to read them except them and that they were just for their own use, they still wanted to spell the words correctly and have it so it had some form to it. And they would have to come up and ask me to spell a lot of the words. I couldn't write in my diary very much. And then...we tried to set a special time aside every day and that just got to be almost impossible because of the way the schedule of the day goes...So from wanting to write everyday it went to three times a week and then it sort of just died out after a while because it was one of those activities that was real difficult to fit in. Another problem with it was that
the children had a real difficult time reflecting back on what they had done... Even if you gave them topics to write about. They wanted to write about what happened in their lives but they didn't think their lives were very interesting... Most of the kids at the end of the year weren't writing in diaries. (Interview 9/8/80; Italics inserted by the authors)

It is notable that in making sense of the decline and fall of Diary Time Ms. Donovan cites factors that are related both to the private mental lives of her students and to the situational context of Diary Time. Her inferences that the children had difficulty reflecting and did not think their lives were very interesting derive from the student behaviors she observed. Diary Time was plagued with both the concern on children's part that their spelling would be correct and the common lament by the children that they did not know what to write. This state of affairs seems paradoxical when we think of the diary as a private and personal written form. Yet when we locate diary writing in the classroom context, it becomes apparent that the children's concerns make sense given the expectations about writing in general in school and the status of Diary Time as a part of the day's scheduled activities. Living with this paradox, student writers became stalled—and so did Ms. Donovan. It comes as no surprise, then, that Diary Time lost its priority in a daily schedule filled with a myriad of other instructional activities. A re-examination of some of the contextual features of Diary Time can help us to understand its problems.

From the outset, Diary Time contained a number of conflicting messages regarding issues of privacy, correctness, and audience. Different students approached the task of diary keeping in different
ways that ultimately related to whether the diary functioned for them as private written reflection or as public sharing of thoughts in written form. Some of Ms. Donovan's efforts to communicate her plan for Diary Time and to support its undertaking contributed to the ambiguous nature of classroom diary writing. Ms. Donovan hints at these problems in the interview quoted above.

**The Use of a Model**

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

Much writing done in the course of a day in Room 12 was done as academic performance. As such, that writing had Ms. Donovan as its primary audience and was evaluated by her. There are contextual features marking writing as academic performance in Room 12. They include the instigation of the writing by the teacher, the scheduling of the writing as part of the day's work, the collection of the writing, and the production of the writing on special paper different for the second graders than for the third graders. Diary Time was to be a writing time that was private and personal. It was intended to stimulate student writing unconstrained by worries about correctness or audience. It was to be an opportunity to practice thinking on paper. Yet a second look at Diary Time shows us that it had many of the situational trappings of writing as academic performance.

First, Diary Time was given regularly-scheduled status and was initiated by the teacher. Second, diaries were collected and kept in the teacher's locked file cabinet. While this move was intended to ensure privacy, it is worth noting that only tests and workbooks and other official written materials were kept in that cabinet, and additionally that the children did not have access to their diaries without Ms. Donovan's unlocking the cabinet. Diaries were, as reported in the field notes, written on official school paper that varied by grade. Although not required, spelling correctness was reinforced by the adults in the room by the very fact that they were willing to interrupt their own writing to help students achieve correctness of surface features of their writing.
A sample from the first five diary entries of Jane, one of the third-grade students, provides evidence that many features of Diary Time may have resembled formal academic writing rather than private written reflection (see Figure 7). Jane was a prolific writer who eventually offered to share her diary with the fieldworker. At first, Jane wrote at some length about things that had happened to her outside school and classroom. She experimented with audience by initially personifying the diary and addressing it directly ("Dear Diary"). Her second entry had no such direct address, but her third again resembles the "letter to diary" format by containing a closing ("I better go! By!"). It is interesting to note, however, that by the fourth day of school, while keeping the closing, Jane begins her entry as the students are requested to begin all their written work in Ms. Donovan's room—with her name just opposite the date.

Another notable change in Jane's diary entries occurs on the fourth day of school. Many children had been having difficulty deciding what to write during the first few days of school. In general, Ms. Donovan's suggestions limited the scope of the writing to what was happening in school, as was reported in the field notes (What you liked about today; what you didn't like about today; how you felt). While this strategy was intended for children not writing as fluently as Jane (and, presumably offered to ease the burden of recall), it is worthy of conjecture that Jane had begun to learn by day four that school-related topics were the most appropriate for classroom diaries. Her entries change in their subject matter and
September 6, 1979
Dear Diary,
A week ago, when I was up north, my stepfather had a dream of bees. I was scared! A friend fed a bear a black berry. It is hard to strip logs, but I don't like to. North, we picked blueberries, and once I saw a little muskrat too! This week...

September 7, 1979
Today and last night I broke my finger. Not least that is what I thought mom thinks I spread it. I have a cast on it right now. Everyone keep asking me what happened to my finger. And one day, my finger looks better!

September 13, 1979
This weekend I went up north. And a little boy named David is six years old. He has three kittens, one of them are gray and two of them are white. One is a cat. She is what too! And all weekend I played with David. He is six and he can fly. Pretty soon we have to go to school. I better go.

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

My friend Jenny and her will play in the paper. Jenny brought her mice to school and we threw them up and down. And we had fun today. I have to go.
length after the first three days and become decidedly more school-related.

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

For Ms. Donovan's class, Mrs. Leslie identified the second grade of Mr. D (short for "Donizetti," a name the children found difficult to pronounce). Mr. D's class was in the Stone Elementary School. While the Stone and Conley schools were both located on the east side of town and were only about two miles apart, the neighborhoods they served were separated by a four-lane state highway (see Figure 8). Because it was not possible for the children to cross the highway alone, Mrs. Leslie assumed that they were not likely to have already had social contacts with one another. Thus, as they became pen pals, letters would carry the burden of introduction and evolving relationships
between them. It was also assumed that, should friendships develop between pen pals, the proximity of the two neighborhoods would make it possible for children to visit one another with the cooperation of their teachers or parents. This arrangement also provided the opportunity for pen pals to encounter one another at church, when neighborhood scout dens met in monthly pack meetings, and in community intermural sports. Later the children would also know one another as students in the same middle school. Before beginning the project, however, only two pen pals knew each other.

![Diagram of pen pal schools and their neighborhoods.](image)

Figure 8. Location of the pen pal schools and their neighborhoods.

Ms. Donovan and Mr. D assigned pen pals randomly within sex groups. After as many students as possible were paired with same sex pen pals, the remaining few were assigned pen pals of the other sex. Mr. D's students were all second graders, while Ms. Donovan
had both second and third graders, but the difference in grade was not commented upon by Ms. Donovan's students when they learned of their pen pals. A more serious difference was the fact that Mr. D's class had fewer boys than did Ms. Donovan's. Ms. Donovan reports the following in her journal:

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

This early concern about the sex of their pen pals suggests that from the outset Ms. Donovan's students may have approached the Pen Pals activity as a form of social transaction with Mr. D's students. As we shall see, the problem of sex of the pen pal was resolved by some of the students once the writing was underway.

The students received the names of their pen pals early in February. They corresponded until the end of the school year. The first letters were sent by Mr. D's class. Most of them were descriptions of their authors and were three or four sentences in length. All were printed and included dates, the return address, and the full names of their authors. Figure 9 illustrates with two of the letters.

All of the letters from Mr. D's class arrived by U.S. Mail in a packet addressed to Ms. Donovan. She distributed the letters, and her students wrote replies. In an interview in the last week of February, Ms. Donovan described the process:
Stone School
E. Eden, Mich
Feb. 8, 1980

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

Stone School
East Eden, Mich
Feb. 8, 1980

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

Figure 9. The first pen pal letters.
Ms. Donovan reported that the Pen Pals project is now in its second round. She showed the interviewer letters that her students had written including drawings and school photos of some of the authors. She said that the girls are much more enthused about this project than the boys---Derek is still very put out because he has a girl for a pen pal. Ms. Donovan sees the pen pals' letter writing as a good exercise that gives kids lots of practice in basics like punctuation and capitalization. She said that her children are already good at "sentence sense." (Interview Notes, 2/29/80)

In responding to the letters from Mr. D's class, Ms. Donovan's students described themselves in word and picture. However, they found it difficult to expand their letters beyond such descriptions because, while Mr. D's students had described themselves, they had not written anything in their letters explicitly requiring a reply.

To help get the transaction started, therefore, Ms. Donovan required that each student include at least one personal question in the letter to her/his pen pal. Most often the question took the form of either a request such as "Will you send me a picture of yourself?" or a question such as "What is your favorite TV show?"

**The Pen Pals Meet**

While Ms. Donovan and Mr. D had mentioned in passing that someday their students might get together, it was not until Mr. D's class was invited to sing at Colonial House, the nursing home across the street from Conley School (see Figure 8), that the idea became a reality. Mr. D offered to bring his class first to Room 12 where they could present the musical program to their pen pals.

Thus, early in March, after having exchanged two letters, the Room 12 pen pals began to prepare for the visit of Mr. D's class.
This preparation was the occasion for quite a bit more planning and writing on the part of Ms. Donovan and her students. She comments in her journal:

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

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

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

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

As each pair of children met and greeted one another, they immediately left the center rug area and went to the round blue table at the back of the room. Then Ms. Donovan's students offered their pen pals animal crackers or the Rice Krispie treats they had made. (This use of food seemed like a terrific ice breaker. It gave the students something
Welcome to V.H. Conley School.
We are glad to have you here.
After writing to you two or three times
we are glad to see you in person.
We have planned some special activities for you.

and we hope you enjoy your visit.
and now we are going to introduce are selves.

Mark part.
interdising. Thomas Pieters
That will say spech to welcom you to our class room.
and remember only smoking in the lobby.
and us guys will give you a trip around the school.
and drinks are over by the blue table.
and you are more then welcom to play games
and do art things.
and all that stuff now lets here the spech.

Figure 10. The welcome speech and the spoof.
to do with their mouths and hands while adjusting to a new social situation. The room resembled a cocktail party for a while.)

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

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

"You don't look the way I thought you would look."

"What grade are you in?"

"We never get Smelly Stickers" (to one of Ms. Donovan's students showing off the stickers on his notebook).

"They aren't Smelly Stickers, they're Scratch 'n' Sniffs. We get them for cursive writing."

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

Because many of the nursing home residents were sick with the flu, that part of Mr. D's class trip had been cancelled. To the
chagrin of Ms. Donovan, the music teacher who had accompanied Mr. D's class took that state of affairs as an opportunity to extend her musical presentation. With disappointment in her voice, Ms. Donovan later confided that the music had taken twice as long as she had expected. The result was that opportunities for pen pal interaction in the activity centers had been truncated. After much preparation and planning, it was not clear when Mr. D's class departed on their bus at 1:55 how the meeting had gone (Field Notes, 3/10/80). A few days later, Ms. Donovan's assessment was more positive, but it is notable that she did not have particular long range plans for the Pen Pal activity beyond a visit to Stone School:

Ms. Donovan: The Pen Pals visit went well, because our Room Twelve kids planned what they wanted to do. The visiting teacher from the other school thought our kids were wonderful. Most kids got along with their pen pals or ignored them (except Lisa, because she's so bossy). Some exchanged telephone numbers, but I'm not sure whether any will continue writing--maybe just those who really like each other will continue. The visit was enjoyable--it really didn't seem like there were fifty kids in the room. We talked about a reciprocal visit to Stone School in April and lamented the fact that we can't walk there because of the dangerous intersection en route.

Interviewer: Is the pen pals activity finished now for you?

Ms. Donovan: No, I'm still going to continue to have them write. It's real important to learn how to get to know someone else through letter correspondence. We'll continue at least until we visit Stone School.

Interviewer: Then will it be over?

Ms. Donovan: Who knows? I can't say when it will be over for some kids. (Interview Notes, 3/11/80)

While the writing helper may have planted the seed and Ms. Donovan and Mr. D were the purveyors of an environment supportive
of the pen pals, Ms. Donovan's comments above highlight the fact that to a great extent the fate of the pen pal relationships would be in the hands of the students. Yet the pen pal visit to Conley School was an event replete with opportunities for enrichment of the correspondence. As we shall see, the children exploited that event in their subsequent correspondence.

The pen pal visit had all of the trappings of a major school/community event. In addition to the large number of students gathered in one place, five staff members, one of whom was the principal of Conley School, were involved in its undertaking. Many school resources were made available for the occasion—the reading aid was free to help, the school was opened to groups of touring pen pals, a school bus was provided for Mr. D's class, and time was made in the regular school day not only for this event, but for the planning and preparation that preceded it. Such a commitment of resources, combined with the participation of important adults, highlighted both the event and the pen pal relationships as very special.

The pen pal visit resembled other special occasions and celebrations that occur both at home and at school in the lives of the East Eden children. There was sharing of food and music specially prepared for the occasion. The Conley children marked the event with a formal welcoming speech as well as with tours and games. The children from Stone School performed music for their hosts and also provided an opportunity for both groups of children to sing together by their addition of several familiar rounds to the performance.
The sharing of food, the playing of games, and the singing were occasions both for the meeting of individual pairs of pen pals and for the coming together of the classes as a large group. The pen pal visit was sufficiently important to warrant its sharing in the monthly letter to families written by Ms. Donovan:

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

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

**Getting to Know Your Audience**

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

Writing is going well. The kids received pen pal letters and wrote back right away. The kids are moving beyond basic informational questions like "What is your telephone number?" and "Do you have any pets?" to other topics. All the students are
getting the idea about the letter heading and other format features of a friendly letter.

(Interview, 3/31/80)

All of the pen pals were writing now, and social relations were being worked out. The changes in relationship between pen pals that were stimulated by their visit had implications for the nature and complexity of the letters they wrote. Derek, for example, who had balked at the writing when assigned to a girl pen pal, resolved his problem during the visit. He met the pen pal of his best friend and decided to share him (see Figure 11). To enable this, Jane, another member of Ms. Donovan's class and a prolific writer, agreed to have two pen pals. And so she began to write to the girl who had formerly been assigned to Derek.

Further evidence of the students' concern for the fledgling writing relationships—that each person have one and that they grow—were manifest in two letters that followed the pen pal visit. In one letter, a student from Mr. D's class who arrived at Conley School to find that her pen pal was absent writes to affirm their relationship and expresses hope that they will meet in the future (see Figure 11). In the second, a student new to Ms. Donovan's class who arrived after the visit writes an open letter to Mr. D's class soliciting a pen pal (see Figure 11).

Letter writing proliferated after the pen pals' visit. The corpus of letters exchanged in April and May was large. It included at least two letters from each student. The letters differed from the earliest ones in a number of ways. Most obviously, the letters became longer. In addition, students generally began to delete the
Dear Neil,
I sent some football cards for you and thanks for the wish. What's your favorite baseball player? Denny and Willie Stargell, Dave Parker, Gaylord Perry, Pete Rose are my favorites. I hope you forgot to send two things if you send anything.

Sincerely,
Tony

---

Stone School
March 25, 1980

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

From Harriett B

---

Canley School
E. 95th Eden MI

April 29, 1980

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

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Richard

Figure 11. Working out social relationships in letters.
formality of last names when signing the letters after the meeting. There were notable changes in the materials used to construct the letters. While earlier letters were written on lined school paper--wide lines for the second graders, narrower for the third--students were now using their own looseleaf notebook paper or unlined paper on which they wrote and drew pictures. In the earliest letters there had been some exchange of photographs. This continued for many students (although one student wrote after the visit, "You didn’t have to give me your picher because I know what you look like."). After the pen pal visit there was the additional exchange of gifts. Some students now closed their letters with "Love" or "Your friend."

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

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

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

Dear Jeremy,

I like to watch Bugs Bunny. What do you like to watch? I like other shows besides Bugs Bunny. Can you please send me another scratch a' sniff?

Your penpal,
Mark

Comments on the Visit:

Dear Jane,

I did give you my address. I'll give you my phone number too. Next year you can come to our school. We have a teacher his name is Mr. D. I bet you met him. What's your teacher's name?

My Address
1331 Blueberry Hill
Phone number: 446-0986

Love,
Tiki

Describing School Life:

Dear Lli,

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

Love,
Jane

Describing Life Outside School:

Dear Chad,

I have a dental appointment tomorrow. I'm going to ask if I can go to the beach next weekend. I hope I see you again.

Your friend,
David

Dear Rachel,

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

From,
Anish

Dear Lee Ann

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

Your penpal,
Shelly

Exchanging Home Addresses and Phone Numbers:

Dear Lynn,

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

Jokes and Flattery:

Dear Machelle,

You are weird because you tell funny jokes. But I do like you. I will tell you my phone number. It is 452-7096. I like you a lot.

from, Sarah

Dear Lynn,

I want roller skating yesterday. Don't write back anymore know just kidding. as you know

Love Lynn Smith

Figure 12. The letters to pen pals serve multiple purposes.
To achieve some of these purposes requires only one letter. Others require one letter and a reply. Still others are worked out in several rounds of letters where the children appear to chain topics. In some of the letters children share information about themselves that would ordinarily not be shared in face-to-face communication. In many we can see the effort to establish shared experience and understandings.

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

The flexing of literary muscles in the pen pal letters followed a somewhat stiff beginning that was warmed by the visit to Conley School. Eventually, for some of the students, the correspondence ventured into the area of problems and feelings. Perhaps not surprisingly it is in this domain that the only extension of topics over more than two letters was observed. It is also in these letters that pen pals worked to find things in common. In the first example in Figure 13 the boys exchanged comments on something that was a great problem for Reggie—fighting on the playground and the punishment of having to stand against the wall. Related to that issue was
Dear Jim
Do you care if I call Jim Jimmy? All we have is mud! I hate school! It's boring. Once I had to stand against the wall.

HAVE A HAPPY EASTER
REGGIE

Dear Reggie, I like school because I do not have to stand against the wall. On Friday I played basketball and I got to come out to your school with my mom. When my mom saw me playing basketball she was paroud of me.

your pen pal
Jimmy

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

I'm giving you 3 baseball cards & 3 football cards & 3 hockey cards. Look in the back-

Your penpal
Reggie

Dear Kathy,
I don't want to move at all, but I have to. I will miss you.

"I WILL MISS YOU"!

Danielle

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

so long

Love,
Kathy S.

Figure 13. Sharing problems and feelings in the letters.
the subject of basketball—a popular game in both playgrounds. Neatly, Jim raised both that topic and the fact of his mother's pride in his playing. Jim's mother was one of the other teachers in Reggie's classroom. Thus, when Reggie replied, the pen pals had now commiserated about Reggie's problem, raised the common interest of basketball, and acknowledged that Reggie knew Jim's mother and saw her every day.

In the second example, Danielle wrote about her feelings related to moving. Briefly and emphatically she stated the situation and her feelings about both the move and her pen pal. She used capital letters and an exaggerated exclamation point for emphasis. Kathy replied directly. She linked all of her assertions in one long sentence that gives the sense of a rush of feelings. In her letter she not only asserted her affection for her friend and assured her that New Jersey would be a nice place to live, but she took her friend's role, saying that she, too, would like New Jersey. Like her pen pal, she modified her exclamation point—this time with two hearts.

Across the unique pen pal relationships we can see the gradual coming to know another in large part by means of writing. In the Pen Pal project students gradually built upon their encounters with their audience. At first the pen pal visit was the primary, literal encounter on which they built. But, in time, previous letters became encounters as well. They were resources upon which the students could draw in framing their next letters.

Looking back in June, Ms. Donovan elaborated on this idea when she reported that as students came to know their pen pals, they not
only wrote more, but they wrote more easily as well. The letters became an integral part of a real and growing association.

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

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

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

Planning

An important aspect of Mrs. Anderson's year-long plan for writing was sequencing tasks so that each activity teaches or reviews a skill needed for the next. For the Life Book, the skill
she was concerned with was writing complete sentences. The planning
for the Life Book began with activities for sentence writing.

During an interview early in the school year, Mrs. Anderson
talked about how she planned writing activities in sequence:

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

For the sentence writing activity, the teacher first talked
about the concept of a sentence. Then, she encouraged students to
give examples of sentences, writing them on an overhead projector
slide. She explained how to add variety and length to kernel sen-
tences. The homework assignment was to expand three kernel sentences
into complex ones.

In planning for writing activities, Mrs. Anderson thought
about what skills the children would need to be successful at doing
the assignment. She spoke about it being "unfair" to expect children
to do something they hadn't been prepared for.

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

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

Mrs. Anderson's concern with the differing ability levels of
her students is apparent in her planning. She did not plan alternate
writing for those with less developed writing skills, but presented
the task in a way that, while helping those who needed it, wouldn't
get in the way of those who didn't.

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

***Implementation***

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

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

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

She passed out magazines, specified that the assign-
ment must be neat, well organized, and written in
complete sentences that make sense. She asked them
to look in the magazines for pictures that show
something about their lives. She showed students a
booklet she had done about her life. There are
about two or three pictures per page and next to
each of the pictures is written at least one sen-
tence. Mrs. Anderson read these sentences to the
class, which tell about, e.g., her graduation from
college, marriage, church, sons, hobbies, travel,
vacations, teacher in grade six. She showed stu-
dents another one that Mrs. Lambert had done.
(Field Notes, 9/14/79)
This modeling of an assignment goes far beyond simply showing the students how the teacher wants it done. Mrs. Anderson used this opportunity to tell the students about herself— to share her life with them. She wanted to create an environment of trust and acceptance in which children feel comfortable and willing to share their writing. This example of sharing and community building was as important as the model of a finished product that the actual Life Book itself provided.

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

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

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

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

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

Excerpts from the field notes describe the class activity when students were working on the Life Books:
Mrs. Anderson says that next week she will have paper for covers and materials for pasting.
Student: "What about scissors?"
Mrs. Anderson: "There are scissors on the window sill."
Mrs. Anderson continues to pass out magazines...
"I'm trying to give a little variety."

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

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

Mrs. Anderson continues to help students find pictures that they can use in their project.
Mrs. Anderson: "...show things that you want to do or like to do?..."

Christa shows a picture of tall buildings near water: "It's New York, but I'm going to put 'Baltimore.'"

Mrs. Anderson: "Anybody want this?" (flashes picture at students)

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

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

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

Mrs. Anderson asks students for return of scissors, pens, and glue.
Mrs. Anderson: "Will those of you who are ready to go please be quiet?"
Mrs. Anderson explains that some people got into shenanigans...corrects Micki..."would it help you to have until Friday?" (for completing the Life Book); says students will work on it Thursday; gives ideas for where else to look for pictures.

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

Mrs. Anderson dismisses Class B.

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

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

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

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

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

When Mrs. Anderson introduced this activity, she first explained the assignment to each class. But everyone did not begin at the same time. The uneven beginning of this occasion for writing is an example of how Mrs. Anderson adjusted task demands for the different student ability levels represented in the class.
Mrs. Anderson explained the Life Book assignment on a Friday, telling the students it was due the following Thursday. By the next Thursday she had decided that they needed more time and changed the due day to Friday. Because of unexpected interruptions and because this early in the year she did not know exactly how well the students would work when in a group setting, she was willing to change the due date to assure that all students would finish.

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

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

**Evaluation**

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

The Life Books were turned in on Friday—after spending most of Thursday's class time on them. Generally, they were neatly done and I really enjoyed reading them. I wrote a personal note to each student and stapled it to the last page. If the student had made one type of error frequently, I mentioned it in the note. I hope this
type of feedback to the student is more meaningful than a grade (ABC) or a mark (+,+,--) . I'm anxious to see if any of the kids have any comments when they are returned to them tomorrow. (Journal, 9/23/79)

The evaluation was based on the information given to students when the assignment was introduced. Mrs. Anderson had asked them to write in complete sentences, have the pictures well spaced, and to be neat (Field Notes, 9/14/79, p. 9). She talked about the Life Books the following week.

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

In the Life Book, as well as in assignments later in the year, Mrs. Anderson allowed for individual differences, not in the requirements of the assignment, but in the evaluation. In an interview on September 17, she said she would accept phrases rather than sentences from the "slower kids." Evaluation was not based on one standard for the whole class, but rather on a comparison between what the teacher thought each student was capable of doing and what he or she actually did. Mrs. Anderson's often-repeated reminder to the students was, "remember to do your best."

**Audience**

From the beginning of her plan for this occasion for writing, Mrs. Anderson wanted the students to share their Life Books with each other. After she had shown them her own Life Book and that of
another teacher, she kept these examples available so that students could read them. In her September 18 journal entry she wrote that the completed books would be put on a table for all to read and enjoy.

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

Function

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

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

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

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

The Life Books served as a transition activity between the early non-graded assignments and the more academically-oriented activities that were to follow.
Yesterday afternoon I talked with the classes about the magazines I am going to ask them to "publish." This week’s writing assignment is to begin the rough drafts of a story which they will eventually incorporate into their individual magazines. For this reason, they had to decide what types of magazines they wanted to make—general interest, sport, beauty, comic, etc.—so they would write a story which would be appropriate to include in their particular magazine. (Journal, 11/7/79)

This quote is excerpted from the planning journal kept by Mrs. Anderson, the sixth-grade teacher in our study. In this entry, Mrs. Anderson alluded to the introduction of an occasion for writing called the Magazine Project. Although she had not used this project for two or three years, Mrs. Anderson had assigned the magazine project in previous years. She recalled that "students enjoyed making the magazine, it was kind of fun for them" (Interview, 11/30/79).

Mrs. Anderson liked this project because students of all abilities were able to participate and the students were pleased with their products.

Mrs. Anderson’s introduction of the Magazine Project focused on the short story that the students had two weeks to complete. But the Magazine Project encompassed much more than a short story.

Each student’s magazine was to include:

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

In addition, Mrs. Anderson encouraged students to add their own creative touches, including comics and ads or even recipes. The
magazines were to be completed before the winter vacation. This due
date allowed the students approximately six weeks to complete their
magazines.

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

Mrs. Anderson's extensive plans for the magazine project included
lessons and sublessons directly and indirectly related to the maga-
zine. The major lessons on how to write an interview, a short story,
and a feature article were directly related to the magazine project.
Other sublessons on punctuation, quotations, and other skills, al-
though necessary for proper completion of the magazine, were not
directly related to the components of the magazine. In one sense the
very first skill lesson at the beginning of the year on capitalization
was related to the magazine project. Mrs. Anderson planned the shorter sublessons on skills so that they were related to the magazine project. For instance, the lesson on quotation marks emphasized the need for this skill to aid students in writing their interviews for the magazine. While teaching new skills needed for the magazine, Mrs. Anderson would recall, with the class, skills they had learned earlier in the year (Videotape 550, 11/6/79). The students were also prepared for the magazine project through an earlier project called the Life Book. Although the Life Book Project required fewer skills and less time than the magazine, it was also an individual project which foreshadowed many of the rules and requirements seen in the magazine.

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

Mrs. Anderson's enthusiasm for organizing the Magazine Project grew out of previous experience with the project and from her impression that the students liked it very much and that it was a project that could be shared with other members of the class. The magazine was attractive to the teacher because many shorter lessons could be integrated into the instruction for the required article included in the magazine. In this sense, the magazine project was
a stepping stone for later larger projects just as previous lessons such as the Life Book were preparation for the magazine.

The Process of Instruction

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

Skill Lessons

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

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY
- The Safety Posters: An Occasion for Writing. 1

## CHAPTER 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING WRITING AND ITS INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY
- Literacy and Community. 17
- Teacher Thought and Action. 21
- Summary. 24

## CHAPTER 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY
- Research Questions. 27
- Theoretical Assumptions and Working Hypotheses. 31
- Data Collection. 36
- Data Reduction and Analysis. 41

## CHAPTER 4. LOCATING WRITTEN LITERACY IN TWO CLASSROOMS
- Schools and Community. 45
- The Occasion for Writing. 51
- Diary Time.
  - Genesis. 56
  - Getting Started. 57
  - Discussion. 60
  - The Complexity of Diary Writing in School. 69
  - The Use of a Model. 72
  - Audience and the Concern for Correctness. 73
- Pen Pals.
  - Introduction. 79
  - How It Began. 80
  - The Pen Pals Meet. 84
  - Getting to Know Your Audience. 91
- The Life Book.
  - Planning. 101
  - Implementation. 103
  - Evaluation. 107
  - Audience. 108
  - Function. 109
The Magazine of Your Choice: A Sixth-Grade Writing Project ........................................ 111
The Process of Instruction ........................................ 114
Skill Lessons ........................................ 114
Required Theme Writing for the Magazine ........................................ 115
Fate and Closure ........................................ 118
Students and The Magazine Project ........................................ 120
Transforming Teacher Thought and Beliefs Into Action ........................................ 121
Summary ........................................ 126

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Sixth Graders Plan
A Dinner Party ........................................ 129
Genesis ........................................ 129
Implementation ........................................ 131
Fate and Closure ........................................ 141
Conclusions ........................................ 141

Researching the World: A Sixth-Grade Writing Project ........................................ 143
Description of the Project ........................................ 143
Teacher and Student Roles ........................................ 151
Personal Meaning of the Project ........................................ 153

CHAPTER 5. THE FUNCTIONS OF WRITING IN TWO CLASSROOMS ........................................ 155
Introduction ........................................ 155
Overview of the Four Functions ........................................ 157
A Closer Look at the Four Functions in the Elementary Classroom ........................................ 161
The Functions of Writing in the Middle School Classroom ........................................ 171

CHAPTER 6. IN CONCLUSION: PICTURES OF A PROCESS ........................................ 179
Introduction ........................................ 179
Implications for Practice ........................................ 182
Implications for Further Research ........................................ 192

Reference Notes ........................................ 197
References ........................................ 199

Appendices
A. Dissemination ........................................ A-1
B. Sample Fieldnotes ........................................ B-1
C. Sample Interview Notes ........................................ C-1
D. Sample Journal Entries ........................................ D-1
E. Sample Videotape Log ........................................ E-1
F. Viewing Session Format ........................................ F-1
List of Figures and Tables

Figures

1. Sample Safety Posters ........................................... 9
2. A Model of Teacher Thought and Action ........................ 22
3. Written Literacy Project Research Questions and Data Sources ........................................ 29
4. Floor Plan of Ms. Donovan's Corner of Room 12 .............. 47
5. Floor Plan of Mrs. Anderson's Sixth Grade Classroom ....... 50
6. Guidelines for Descriptions of Occasions for Writing ...... 54
7. Jane's Diary ............................................................ 75
8. Location of the Pen Pal Schools and Their Neighborhoods .. 81
9. The First Pen Pal Letters ............................................ 83
10. The Welcome Speech and the Spoof ................................ 87
11. Working Out Social Relationships in the Letters ............ 93
12. The Letters to Pen Pals Serve Multiple Purposes .......... 95
13. Sharing Problems and Feelings in the Letters ................ 97
14. Samples of Individual Students' Invitation Lists .......... 133
15. Samples of Group Invitation Lists ............................... 135
16. Dinner Party Sample Menus ........................................ 139
17. Dinner Party Seating Arrangements ............................. 140
18. Student Outline and Rough Draft for Research Project ........ 149
19. Documents Reflecting the Functions of Writing in Room Twelve ........................................... 162

Tables

1. The Functions of Writing and their Distinctive Features ... 160
Abstract

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

Christopher M. Clark and Susan Florio¹

¹Christopher M. Clark is an associate professor of educational psychology. Susan Florio is an associate professor of teacher education. Together, Clark and Florio coordinated the Written Literacy Project, on which this report is based, and they will coordinate the follow-up project, a Written Literacy Forum. Their names are listed alphabetically here. Both contributed equally to the project and this report.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

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

The Safety Posters: An Occasion for Writing

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

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

2. that it helps to know about teacher plans, intentions, and beliefs to make sense of the writing that is observed in classrooms; and
3. that occasions for writing in classrooms are negotiated and multi-faceted.

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

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

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

\(^2\)The names of the teachers, children, schools, and school district used in this report are pseudonyms.
question, it is useful to "unpack" the above paragraph from the interview notes of September 17:

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

Commentary: This assembly was a school-wide event presented in the gym by two uniformed young women employed by the local police department. The young women were known by some of the children as their summer jobs had involved monitoring bicycle safety. The assembly is a clear example of formal contact between the larger community and the school population. Bicycle and pedestrian safety are topics that are very relevant to elementary school children, and responsibility for the safety of school children is shared by school personnel, parents, public safety officers, and the community at large. Safety is a fundamental issue, and, in this case, a safety assembly took priority over classroom and academic issues. The fact that the assembly was unexpected, yet easily incorporated into the morning was, in part, a function of the flexibility of the early weeks of school, when the daily and weekly schedules are not yet fully developed into relatively fixed routines. Ms. Donovan learned about the safety assembly before the children arrived and included it as the first entry on the daily schedule written on the chalkboard (Field Notes, 9/17/79):

On the board, Ms. Donovan has written the "plans for today." The safety assembly is included and starred as a special occasion. The plans are as follows:
Today is Sept. 17, 1979

9:20--10:05   11:30--12:15   2:15--2:45
Assembly*     Language Arts   Science (2)
10:05--10:30  12:15--12:50   Soc. St. (3)
Gym          Lunch           Clean up
10:30--11:00  12:55--1:15   2:45--3:00
Reading       Centers         Diaries
11:00--11:15  1:15--1:55
Recess        Math
11:15--11:30  1:55--2:10
USR          Recess

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

Commentary: The 9/17/79 field notes describe the assembly as follows: "the young women talked about and showed several film strips about safety in walking or bicycling to school." The field worker who attended the assembly also remembered that this was the first school-wide assembly of the year, that some students were loud and disorderly and were brought back to order by the school principal, and that the safety presentation was not smooth and spellbinding.

One of the filmstrips actually burned up as it was being projected. In short, this assembly had as much to do with learning how to behave at an assembly as it did with safety rules.

It was during the assembly that Ms. Donovan had the idea of using this experience as the basis for a writing activity later in the morning. While the data do not reveal what triggered the idea, earlier interviews and observations suggest that Ms. Donovan was predisposed to make the most of the unexpected. She valued writing and believed that school writing activities must have a clear purpose if they are to be successful. On the second day of school, Ms.
Donovan and her students did another writing activity that began with the common experience of a film. She describes this activity in her journal entry of September 9:

I was pleased with Friday's writing lesson. Motivation was movie on word families, then students wrote and illustrated sentences utilizing a word family (e.g., Jim Rice slid on ice and landed in lice.) This type of open-ended lesson seems to be the most effective. Children with differing abilities can be as simplistic or sophisticated [as they want to] depending upon their creativity. Instruction is to the group, but the results are individualized without isolation from the total group. (Teacher Journal, 9/9/79)

As will become apparent as the Safety Posters Activity unfolds, the structure of this occasion for writing includes an initial shared experience (the safety assembly), a clear purpose and audience, and the kind of open-ended opportunity for children to produce something that reflects their ability, creativity, and sophistication. The most advanced students are not held back, and the least advanced students can still achieve a measure of success. In short, the safety assembly probably triggered the plan for the Safety Posters Activity because the assembly fit Ms. Donovan's pattern or set of criteria for a good writing activity. It seems that this "spontaneous planning" that Ms. Donovan engaged in is more frequently seen in curriculum areas like language arts, where there are few published series or kits, than in subjects like math, reading, and science, which are largely structured by published materials.

After Ms. Donovan and her students returned to Room 12, she asked them to recall the safety rules that they had just heard about. Ms. Donovan said that she was very surprised at the terrific difficulty that the children had in remembering the safety rules.
Commentary: Again, the field notes give a clearer picture of what actually happened on that Monday morning. Ms. Donovan's students stayed in the gym after the safety assembly for physical education (10:05 - 10:30 a.m.). When the children returned to Room 12, they worked on reading worksheets, went to recess, then did 15 minutes of silent reading. It was not until 11:35 a.m. (language arts time) that the children were asked to recall the safety rules taught in the assembly. Given so many interpolated activities, that the assembly itself was full of interruptions and distractions, and that the children did not know in advance that they would be expected to remember the specific wording of the safety rules, it is not surprising that they had difficulty. The safety assembly was an experience removed in time and space from the classroom. The children had no props or memory aids to stimulate their recall.

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

Commentary: In attempting to bring her plan into action, Ms. Donovan had to take on the roles of "class memory" and "memory coach." She had assumed that the safety assembly experience would be sufficiently recent and vivid to serve as the common experience basis for the language arts activity. When Ms. Donovan discovered (to her surprise) that the children did not remember the specific safety rules, she changed her plan on the spot. The teacher's task now became to re-create the common experience in a form, place, and time such that all the students had it available to them for use in the next part of the activity. The field notes (9/17/79, p. 3) show how this was done:
As part of language arts, Ms. Donovan asks students to "re-run" this morning's safety program and recall what they learned. On a piece of large white paper up front, Ms. Donovan prints what they recall. The format is that an individual raises her/his hand. Ms. Donovan writes down what (s)he says. Another student is asked to read it back.

Ms. Donovan writes down what students say in multicolor magic markers:

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

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

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

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

This process continues until 10 safety rules are recorded. Notice that Ms. Donovan goes to some length to see that every student has a chance to be actively involved in the rule generation part of this process. Oral editing, friendly amendments, and reading aloud are all used to produce a document that every child has had a hand in and understands. Mechanics such as spelling and penmanship are taken care of by the teacher acting as scribe. The use of a rough draft is foreshadowed by Ms. Donovan's statement that "Sometimes does it take a couple of minutes to get out what you want to say? That's
OK." In short, this part of the Safety Posters Activity constitutes a collective and largely oral preparation for writing that makes visible how the solitary, silent author could prepare to write (and is an activity in which even kids who have "forgotten how to write" can compose).

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

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

Next Ms. Donovan asks students to think of ways to help remind the rest of the school of these rules. The students suggest the following:

"take them around"
"put them up on the hallway"
"tell them not to do it"
Keep your hands on the handlebars when you ride your bike.

RIDE YOUR BIKE CLOSE TO THE CURB WITH TRAFFIC WHEN THERE ARE NO SIDEWALKS.

Don't run into the street without looking.

Figure 1. Sample safety posters.
This is response to Ms. Donovan's question:
"How could each one of you help remind them of one rule?

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

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

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

Before getting started, an additional rule is generated:

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

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

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

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

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

Notice that both the purpose of the posters and the audience for the posters are specified before crayon touches paper. The students were guided by their teacher to participate in "coming up with the idea" of drawing safety posters. All of the necessary elements were now in place: the list of rules on "experience paper," crayons, poster
paper, an opportunity for choice and originality, a sense of shared ownership of the project, and the dual motivation of having one's work displayed in the hallway (a place of honor) and of doing good (perhaps even saving a life) by reminding other schoolmates of the safety rules. Ms. Donovan took a further step to minimize threat by offering to write the rule herself on the bottom of the posters of those students who wanted or needed that help.

The time allowed for drawing and safety rule writing was about 45 minutes (11:30 - 12:15). As the field notes indicate, there were wide individual differences in task completion. This is an issue that Ms. Donovan returns to again and again during the course of the year. For example, the issue was first raised in the September 17 interview:

In discussing planning and diagnostic testing, Ms. Donovan raised a perennial problem for teachers: how to deal with the relatively large differences in the speed at which children work when they are working independently. "What should I do with the kids who finish fast? When I give them fun and extension activities to do I feel that the children who finish more slowly are being gypped. I like closure--everyone must finish. I don't want the slower kids to get farther and farther behind."

(It is interesting to note that this problem of individual differences in working speed has shown up so early in the year. We should take care to note the ways in which Ms. Donovan deals with this issue as she tries to resolve an apparent conflict between her personal philosophy and value on equal opportunity and the practical realities of a mixed ability class. She seems to recognize that faster is not always better. This might be especially true in writing.) (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

Epilogue: The Safety Posters Activity continued to develop, as though it had a life of its own. By Wednesday, September 19 (two
days after the safety assembly) all of the posters were finished. That day, in a conversation at lunch with the kindergarten teacher, Ms. Donovan had the idea that her students should make small group presentations of their posters to the kindergarten children as a prelude to displaying the posters in the school hallways. Arrangements were made to do this on Thursday, September 20. During the morning and afternoon that day, groups of three or four of Ms. Donovan's students were sent to the kindergarten room to show their posters and teach the younger children the safety rules. The field notes for September 20 and 21 show how this process developed:

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

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

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

(9/20/79, p. 4): At 12:55 the students reconvene in the center. Ms. Donovan, who has had a chance to talk to Mr. Brown (the kindergarten teacher) at lunch, says, "Mr. Brown said that you guys did a good job this morning, even if you were nervous."
Then five students leave with their posters to talk to Mr. Brown's afternoon class, saying they are nervous. (Lea has a stomach ache.)

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

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

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

Oral presentation of the safety posters to the kindergarten children added a number of things to the Safety Posters Activity. The second and third grade authors' sense of audience was undoubtedly heightened. They saw very clearly that it was useful to re-examine, edit, and rehearse what they had written if an audience is expected to understand their messages. They learned that writing and drawing can be used to focus oral communication (in this case, teaching), and that a graphic product can serve the author as a reminder and illustration of his or her teaching. Mrs. Donovan's students also learned from one another's experience and served as a constructively critical audience for the dress rehearsals. And finally, this phase of the project served as a meaningful connection between two groups of children within the school, showing on a small scale how writing can contribute to the building of a social system when members are separated in space and time.

This has been a lengthy description and analysis of the Safety Posters Activity, one of dozens of occasions for writing
that took place in the two classrooms under study during a full school year. The analysis of and commentary on the Safety Posters Activity have raised a number of issues about how, why, and under what circumstances written literacy is acquired in schools, and what roles the teacher and students play in this process. Like many other occasions for writing noted in the earliest weeks of school, the Safety Posters Activity began with a shared experience not originally planned by Ms. Donovan. Also, like many other early writing occasions, this one had importance in both the school and non-school lives of the students. It was an expressive enterprise that moved the students beyond the boundaries of Room 12. Ms. Donovan seized the opportunity to turn an unexpected event into an occasion for writing. Her engagement of students in a series of related expressive activities, both written and oral, involved her in a special sort of pedagogical role. Ms. Donovan extended her planning and teaching beyond the bounds of prepared instructional materials and district mandates for the language arts. She created writing curriculum with her students as the class jointly produced a situation that would both support the practice of writing and be supported by that writing. Ms. Donovan and her students participated in an extended communicative enterprise that involved the practice of written literacy as they prepared and shared documents they called "The Safety Posters." Before returning to these and other issues illuminated by occasions for writing in schools, the rationale, purposes, research questions, and methods of the inquiry will be discussed.
CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING WRITING AND ITS INSTRUCTION
IN THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

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

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

Finally, in educational research, contemporary studies of classroom organization and teacher decision-making highlight the classroom
as a special place that both constitutes a small community in its own right and is linked in important ways to the larger socio-cultural milieu. The classroom community is special because it is one in which one individual is empowered to think and plan self-consciously for the structuring of many interactional activities that take place within it. This structuring is thought to be important in light of the community's valuing of growth and beneficial change over time for each individual member. Such insights derived from naturalistic study of classroom life have fueled interest in the investigation of writing in school not as the "outcome" of teaching behavior per se, but as an integral activity in the establishment and maintenance of the classroom as a learning community and as one measure of that community's power as a socializing force (Florio, 1979; Clark & Yinger, Note 1).

Thus the interests of psychologists, anthropologists, and educators have converged on questions of writing in use—on its expressive functions, on the ways in which literacy is acquired in the course of social life, and on the range of cognitive skills that ought to be considered when documenting or planning for instruction in writing. Questions about the acquisition of skilled performance and its relation to social context lend themselves particularly well to investigation by naturalistic means. One of the best ways to learn about writing is to watch people navigating their daily lives, noting occasions in which writing is the chosen mode of expression, listening to the language people have about writing, considering the nature of the writings they produce, and observing the ways in which
writing works for people as functional communication. This strategy seems useful not only to the ethnographer hoping to locate writing meaningfully in her/his portrayal of a society or to the psychologist observing the repertoire of skilled performances in a group of literate but unschooled people, but also to practitioners interested in the current state of the art in the teaching of writing and seeking ways to support and nurture the process of becoming literate.

**Literacy and Community**

When researchers investigate the acquisition of written literacy by children both in and out of school, they are asking fundamental questions about the individual psychological development of those children and about their membership in a community. Although children acquire many skills as a part of development, writing is one skilled performance that epitomizes the profound connections between personal development and the development of the community. The learning of systems of signs and symbols in speaking, reading and writing is a stunning example of the interconnection between the growth of the individual and that of the society. In this spirit, Vygotsky (1978) cites writing as a particular system of symbols and signs whose mastery heralds a critical turning point in the entire cultural development of the child.

(p. 106)

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

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

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

The problem with studying the acquisition of any such communicative system in a society is that, for the most part, the process happens gradually, informally, and without much explicit instruction. This phenomenon has been documented in speech where, according to Cook-Gumperz (1975), "the appearance of competence in daily life is given more by the activities that are not singled out for attention by the actors" (p. 138) than by those activities that are singled out. The process of acquisition of literacy even in school where such acquisition is an explicit and valued aim is equally opaque. Although educators can develop curricula and organize classroom activities around the practice of reading or writing, they are, finally, not able to render a full account of the process of becoming a reader or becoming a writer simply by listing requisite skills to be acquired (cf. Wittgenstein, 1953/1968, I, pp. 155-182). Evidence of this problem is the great difficulty with which educators make decisions about how to assess student performance in such areas
as expressive writing or the appreciation of literature (Elmore, Note 2).

In the pilot research in the classroom that preceded the study reported here, we observed that the acquisition of written literacy in one second-grade classroom resembled the acquisition of speech in some important ways. It is well-known that as children acquire a first language they are welcomed into the family as communicators even before their first words are uttered. Early on, children find that moves and sounds are expressive in that they elicit action from other people. Children in effect practice the use of language not as preparation for social life, but as social life itself. In that process, grammatical skills are seldom taught directly to children by the adults who are expert in their use. Rather, by means of the practice that comes from use, children gradually approximate the matured forms of speech in stages that appear to be developmental (see, for example, Cazden, 1972; Brown, 1973). Similarly, in the classroom previously studied, children did not receive much direct instruction in the process of writing unless or until there was a breach in the normal order of things. Considerable practice of writing and gradual approximation of the matured forms was observed, but only occasional remediation (Florio, 1979). If all went well, the process of becoming a writer, although a remarkable one in the life of the child, went unremarked in the classroom. We observed the developing writer coming, in Garfinkel's (1975) words, "to know a world in common with others and in common with others to be taken for granted" (p. 139).
In attempting to account for these classroom observations, the researcher can assume with Goody, Cole, and Scribner (1977) that the occasion for mastery of written symbols, like the occasion for mastery of speech, arises in the course of social life and is supported by the community in which it occurs. People begin to write because within their communities they need to be able to perform the operations that literacy makes possible. They need to engage in commerce or to keep records, they need to remind themselves of the thoughts they have had (Brooks, Note 3). Again, in pilot work it was found that children in one second grade classroom in which a small community was created in microcosm during the course of the school year wrote in the greatest volume and complexity when working on the correspondence and record keeping required to maintain their classroom town. All other writing of worksheets, test papers, compositions, and the like was considered to be merely work "for school" (Florio, 1979; Florio & Frank, in press).

Like so many other forms of tacit cultural knowledge, writing, its uses, and the process of its acquisition are difficult for participants fully to describe or reflect upon. Rather, considerable insight into the writing process can be gained, in Basso's (1977) words, by "investigating the activity of writing as a dynamic component in the conduct and organization of social relations" (p. 431). The insight that mastery of communicative systems arises in the midst of social life is not a new one. In language arts, the point of view has been argued, for example, by Moffett (1968). We see evidence of this point of view in the writings of Dewey (1956),
Friere (Note 4), and Bettelheim (1967) as well. The implications of this insight for research and practice are straightforward. In coming to understand individual development, it is necessary to consider that development in the context of community. Educators need to know more about such development, not because it would fail to arise without direct instruction and schooling, but because, in schools, they have a potential opportunity to enhance the process. Furthermore, in schools many children from diverse communities come to be taught and evaluated by us. Educators are responsible to approach the individual stylistic preferences in communication arising from the differences in community membership with understanding and respect (Philips, 1972; Shultz, Florio, & Erickson, in press).

**Teacher Thought and Action**

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

The left-most section of Figure 2 represents the professional memory of a teacher, which includes a teacher's implicit theories...
Figure 2. A model of teacher thought and action.
about the commonplaces of education (subject matter, learner, teacher, and context) and his or her expectations and commitments concerning the particular class and task of interest. In this model, the teacher's implicit theories about each of the commonplaces of education interact with his or her hopes, expectations, and commitments for writing instruction at a particular time to produce and rationalize a set of principles of practice. These principles of practice may be explicit or implicit. Taken together, they constitute a teacher's set of criteria for effective writing instruction. That is, if a teacher can be faithful to the set of principles of practice, he or she has every reason to believe that the teaching of writing will succeed. Particular successes and failures are explained largely in terms of maintenance of or violation of these principles of practice. It has been argued elsewhere (Clark & Yinger, Note 6) that the essence of what is professional about teaching is the translation of principles of practice into action.

Teacher planning, the next step in Figure 2, is the process of combining constraints and opportunities with principles of practice to produce a plan for action. The plan consists of particular writing activities that have been created, adopted or modified to be consistent with a teacher's principles of practice and, at the same time, practical within the limits of constraints and opportunities as the teacher sees them.

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

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

**Summary**

There are important theoretical reasons why we have chosen to analyze both the functions that writing can be observed to perform in the classroom and teachers' implicit theories about writing in the same study. Previous research in both the ethnographic/sociolinguistic tradition and in the tradition of
cognitive psychology have been incomplete and have left us with questions requiring the merging of perspectives. First, by documenting classroom interaction without attention to the intentionality of teacher (and students), little insight into the rationales for the observed social structuring can be gained. Classrooms are not like any other community. They exist for purposeful change in their members. They are organized by teachers whose responsibility it is to articulate the plans for activity and to structure the environments in which that activity occurs. However, to consider only the planning that underlies social life in the classroom is to miss both the spontaneity of the plans enacted and to encounter serious problems of interpreting the self-reports of teachers about their plans.

In an effort to increase understanding on the one hand of how teacher beliefs and values about writing (implicit or explicit) manifest themselves in the classroom and simultaneously to make better sense of those beliefs and values, research perspectives are combined in this study. The combination of a cognitive psychological approach to research on teaching with an ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to the study of classroom life is a particularly powerful and appropriate way to achieve the stated research aims. Cognitive psychological research can explore the thoughts, intentions, and decisions of the teacher as s/he conceives, initiates, and maintains writing activities. Ethnographic and sociolinguistic description of the classroom as an environment for learning to write can illuminate the social organization of expressive activities.
CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

During 1979-80, a naturalistic study of schooling and the acquisition of written literacy was undertaken by the authors. The study had the following four purposes:

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

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

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

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

Research Questions

The research was pursued in two schools in a mid-Michigan suburban community. Researchers recorded, described, and analyzed classroom activities and teacher planning as they relate to writing in one second/third grade classroom and one sixth grade classroom. The first 10 months of the study therefore consisted of extensive participant observation, interviewing, teacher journal keeping, sampling of student writing, and videotaping of occasions for writing in these classrooms. Data reduction and analysis were ongoing parts of this phase. The final nine months of the project were devoted to
continuation of data analysis, writing of reports, and dissemination of findings to researchers and practitioners.

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

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

2. How does the acquisition process work in classrooms?

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

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

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

Thus, to understand the acquisition of written literacy in school, the particulars of classroom life and the thoughts and plans of teachers were broadly sampled at the outset. The aim was gradually to discover which among these pieces of data would best tell the
Figure 3. Written Literacy Project research questions and data sources.
story of writing and its instruction in the terms of the teachers and children studied and in ways that would add to the body of knowledge about the process of writing and its instruction.

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

1. field notes of classroom participant observation;
2. periodic videotapes of classroom activity,
3. viewing sessions in which focal teachers discussed and analyzed videotapes made in their classrooms,
4. interviews with both teachers and students about the writing done in their classrooms,
5. weekly journals kept by focal teachers recording their thoughts about the process of writing in their classrooms, and
6. naturally collected samples of student writing.

Pilot work in both the planning and enactment of writing instruction in classrooms and review of literature on written communication provided a set of potential middle range questions that were asked as the data began to accumulate. These questions concerned
participants' implicit theories about writing—its content, the activities that motivate it, the roles played by teachers and students in its production. In addition, these questions concerned the ways in which such implicit theories might be reflected in teacher planning, classroom interaction, and student writing. The questions at this level were continuously evolving ones that were structured by and helped to structure subsequent data collection.

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

Theoretical Assumptions and Working Hypotheses

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

Because no observation is unbiased, it is important to mention at the outset several kinds of information that contributed to the sense made of what was seen, read, and heard in the classrooms.
Information about theoretical presuppositions, methodological decisions, and the frames for interpretation that were applied to the data should help the reader to locate the descriptions and analyses offered here in an intellectual context and should stimulate discussion and criticism of the findings.

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

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

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

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\text{to understand human action we must not take the}
\text{position of an outside observer who "sees" only}
\text{the physical manifestation of these acts; rather}
\text{we must develop categories for understanding what}
\text{the actor--from his point of view--"means" in his}
\text{actions (p. 139).}
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There are many ways to move beyond mere observation of pheno-
mena to an understanding of their meanings to participants. Some-
times people can give words to the meanings they hold; sometimes
they reveal their meaning systems in patterns of action. The design
of this study contains the eclecticism and methodological pragmatism
of fieldwork research in order to obtain and validate information
about the meanings held by the teachers with respect to writing, its
functions, and its pedagogy (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Thus the
researchers asked the teachers participating in the study to share
in both writing and conversation "what they thought" about writing in their classrooms. In addition, by means of participant observation, the researchers lived some part of the teachers' lives with them. This primary experience of their world informed the researchers' questioning of them and aided in the interpretation of the self-reports of the teachers. Finally, the teachers were engaged directly in the deliberative process at monthly meetings where they joined the researchers in thinking from data by generating hypotheses and relating variables in meaningful ways in order to explain classroom observations. In short, the teachers joined the researchers in generating theory about practice.

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

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

1. There is an important relation between the acquisition of written literacy and membership in a community,
2. The classroom constitutes a community for learning in its own right and it is part of the wider community.

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

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

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

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

Four methods were used to collect data about writing and its instruction in the two classrooms of interest:

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

2. elicitation of teacher thinking about writing in the classroom of four types:
   a. weekly journals in which the teachers recorded their plans for and reflections upon teaching in general and writing instruction in particular,
   b. weekly interviews in which each teacher discussed her journal entries with a researcher,
   c. monthly meetings in which the teachers and the research staff discussed patterns emerging in the data and other research-related issues,
   d. viewing sessions in which teachers viewed videotapes made occasionally in their rooms and discussed their content;

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

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

Data were collected throughout the entire 1979-80 school year. For purposes of both collection and preliminary analysis, the year was divided into four periods: September, October-December, January-March, and April-June. Previous classroom research indicated that this demarcation might be consistent with teachers’ views of the
functionally different parts of the school year (Clark & Yinger, Note 6; Shultz & Florio, 1979).

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

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

The first month of the school year was a particularly important time in the study. The researchers anticipated that much of the interactional work needed to establish the classroom community would go on during that time (Shultz & Florio, 1979). For this reason, participant observation took place five days per week during the first month of school. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, these early ethnographic observations of the classrooms and schools were useful in characterizing the social contexts of the occasions for writing observed throughout the year.
For the remainder of the school year, participant observers spent from one to three whole days in each classroom every week. Because of the discovery-oriented nature of this study, it was decided not to limit observation to times of the day explicitly set aside for reading or language arts or to limit fieldworkers' presence in the classroom to particular days, weeks, or terms. Again, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the nature of classroom writing and its instruction mandated the extensive presence of fieldworkers in the classroom and required flexibility about the kinds and amounts of researcher participation.

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

Expansion and clarification of the journal entries was made possible by the addition of weekly interviews of the focal teachers. Once each week a researcher visited the school and talked with the
focal teacher about the contents of her journal. These interviews not only provided the researchers with yet another source of information, but also provided encouragement and support to the teachers for their journal keeping efforts and alerted the researchers to forthcoming classroom activities that might be appropriate for special notice.

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

Originally the researchers intended further to supplement fieldwork and journal keeping with one day of videotaping in each of the four segments of the year. These tapes would be analyzed by both the researchers and the teachers in periodic viewing sessions. Deviating from the original plan, videotaping was undertaken for only three days in each classroom and one viewing session was held with each teacher. As will become clearer as the analysis of data unfolds, periodic videotaping of isolated classroom writing activities was a
decision made a priori. Once the research was underway, it became evident that the meaningful unit of analysis for writing instruction and planning might not be the isolated lesson but rather a series of socially and thematically-linked writing activities separated from one another in time and space. This realization made periodically collected videotape data and their analysis less prominent parts of the study than originally anticipated. This methodological insight should be taken into account when other studies of the enactment of writing are contemplated. There appears to be a relationship between the research questions and the specific level(s) of analysis that they imply and the data collection strategies used to greatest advantage by the researchers.

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