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How Kindergartners' Talks and Drawings Inform Our Ways of Developing a Curriculum of Caring and Imagination

Lisa Audet Aliotta

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HOW KINDERGARTNERS' TALKS AND DRAWINGS
INFORM OUR WAYS OF DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM
OF CARING AND IMAGINATION

by

LISA AUDET ALIOTTA

(Under the Direction of Ming Fang He)

ABSTRACT

This study explores how kindergartners' talks and drawings inform our ways of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination. The mandates of kindergartners' curriculum tend to emphasize children's mastery of literacy skills while ignoring their natural development and imagination. There is a need for developing a curriculum that embraces children's diverse needs, releases their imagination, and cultivates their highest potential.

There are three strands for the theoretical framework of the study: John Dewey's (1963) theory of education, experience, and imagination; Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism; and Nel Noddings' (1992) ethic of care.

Through children's talks and drawings, literacy and writing skills were developed in a natural setting with age appropriate social interactions facilitated by the teacher. The exchanges between, and encounters with, the teacher researcher and participant kindergartners and their peers provided an arena in which child oriented discussions were encouraged and imagination was cultivated. The findings of this study present powerful evidence that a curriculum

of care and imagination should presuppose any standards devised for teaching literacy and writing skills.

This study was significant for children, teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers. For children, the significance of this study was a confirmation that children must be placed in the center of the educational experience. For teachers, this study helps to construct caring early childhood practices of literacy development. For parents, the study reveals the importance of creating an environment where children's imagination can flourish. For administrators, this study reveals that pre-packaged kits might not be the best way to teach children. For policy makers, this study provides an argument for creating a curriculum of care and imagination for kindergartners in the era of standardization. I sincerely hope that kindergarten teachers, educators, parents, and policy makers will work together to develop a curriculum of caring and imagination for kindergartners not only to educate kindergartners to become good citizens of the United States but also good citizens of the world.

INDEX WORDS: Kindergarten, Imagination, Caring, Reading, Writing, Curriculum Development

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OF CARING AND IMAGINATION

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Electronic Version Approved:
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DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to all the extraordinary children who have walked in to my classroom each day and allowed me the pleasure of being their kindergarten teacher.

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It is with immense appreciation that I acknowledge my committee members: Dr. Ming Fang He whose never-ending care, knowledge, imagination, and encouragement guided me through this dissertation. Dr. Wendy Chambers whose expertise in the field of early childhood development challenged me to further examine educational expectations of kindergartners'. Dr. Michael McKenna whose passion for appropriate learning strategies while teaching children literacy was contagious. Dr. Maryellen Cosgrove whose dedication to children and education guided my intense desire to teach in a caring way.

I gratefully acknowledge my family and friends who have supported me throughout my life and throughout my pursuit of this doctoral degree. My husband, Frank, who encourages, praises, loves, and comforts me every second of every day. I could not have achieved this level of success without you. I want to thank my two beautiful sons, Nick and Tony, who make my life easier because of their support and admiration. Both of you listened, advised, and gave me many necessary hugs that helped carry me through this experience. I am grateful to my awe-inspiring parents, Larry and Kaye Audet, who have always helped me believe I was special and capable of extra-ordinary goals. Your warmth, caring, love, and imagination prepared me for life.

I want to acknowledge my many co-workers at Hesse Elementary School that contributed to my passion for life and for teaching. I have been privileged to work with caring, imaginative teachers such as you, who have tried to reconceptualize the kindergarten curriculum daily. I am appreciative of my dear

friend, Dr. Evelyn Aimar, who convinced me to pursue my doctoral degree.

Together we became more impassioned about children, knowledge, learning, and teaching. We were able to share our stories, both professional and personal, as we drove together from Savannah to Georgia Southern University. I want to thank, Linda Vick, another co-worker and friend, who has been beside me with unconditional love and friendship for over twenty-eight years. Thank you to my paraprofessional and friend, Susanne Sapp, who loves children as much as I do and makes teaching enjoyable everyday. I express gratitude to Sherry Ingram, friend and co-worker, who diligently and repeatedly edited the many drafts of this dissertation. Without all of this support, I could not have finished this journey.

I want to acknowledge my students who make every day in my classroom a new beginning. The enthusiasm for life will continue to guide me to enjoy the experience of living. This study could not have been completed without the people and experiences that surrounded me daily.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this research was to explore how children's talks and drawings inform our way of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination for kindergartners. Every single day children are placed in the care of a teacher. The educator's responsibility (as caretaker) is an amazingly powerful role for a single individual. The child arrives in kindergarten with many emotions, including apprehension, anticipation, trepidation, eagerness, excitement, and feelings of isolation and containment. The teacher is the caregiver anxiously awaiting the arrival of her students and often her emotions are similar to the child's. She, too, is filled with mixed sensitivity, such as apprehension, anticipation, trepidation, excitement, and feelings of isolation and containment. The mixed emotions of the teacher and the children can be overwhelming. Often these emotions and the history of everyone involved in the classroom are not addressed. Too often teachers spend an excessive amount of time lecturing without enough time talking with the student. There are rules to be discussed and acknowledged, schedules to follow, and standards to be taught. However, lecture does not address the emotional needs of children nor does it address the prior knowledge children bring into the classroom. Educators must provide an enthusiastic child with the opportunity to express herself/himself and must encourage each child to share her/his thoughts and experiences.

Like everything in the world, then, the classroom is relational.

Understood in this way, the classroom cannot merely be seen as a place

where subject matter is mastered, where curriculum is covered, or where learning is tested. The classroom is the site of complex, interwoven relationships: between teacher and students, students and each other, teachers and text, students and texts. (Sumara, 1996, p. 5)

The theoretical framework that supports the development of a curriculum of imagination and caring includes John Dewey's (1980) theory of education, experience, and imagination, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) philosophy of social constructivism, and Nel Noddings' (1984) notion of care. Methodologically, I used Clandinin and Connelly's (1991) narrative inquiry to collect the stories of my students. This study investigated how I used my students' talks and drawings to inform the development of a curriculum of caring and imagination for kindergartners.

Context of Study

The curriculum we teach our students has reached a pinnacle of standardization. Standards are uniform, established, conforming benchmarks (Guralnik, 1976) that prescribe a quality or a basis by which others are judged. In education, standards can lead to a confining curriculum. However, my concern was not that we have objectives or that the standards are being revised. I was concerned that the standards were devised, taught, and tested with a lack of regard for individuality. William Pinar, in *Unskinning Curriculum* (1996), asserts

the school curriculum usually seeks to express what is readily available to everyday perception. Curriculum is a normalizing experience. Teachers become tour guides, showing students which sites must be noticed. As a

daily performance, teaching becomes a pointing ritual that seldom pierces underneath the skin of the everyday. I have suggested that there needs to be more poking, prodding, and piercing of the familiar during events in schooling-more curriculum unskinning. Schools must become places to know the unknown and to say the unsayable. (p. 233)

I understood the necessity of having guidelines informing educators what to teach at each grade level and to what degree each standard was to be taught. However, the standardization of the curriculum did not have to mean that we must teach every child the same thing, at the same time, and in the same way every year. Therefore, as we in education continue to look at teaching the standards, the curriculum we teach must not be a normalizing experience. “At their best, curriculum standards embody a general aim and vision for changes that must still be worked through in more specific terms in the schools. This working through is educative in itself as it stimulates inquiry into practice” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.232).

Standardization of the Kindergarten Curriculum

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001; Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2003) was a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and close gaps. With the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Congress reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965*, the principle federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. The *No Child Left Behind Act* is built on four pillars: accountability for results, an emphasis on doing what works based on

scientific research, expanded parental options, and expanded local control and flexibility. As part of the accountability guidelines set forth in the law, each state has developed benchmarks to gauge progress while trying to make sure every child is learning. The *No Child Left Behind Act* has set the objective of having every child master the state-defined education standards by the end of the 2013-14 school year. States direct teachers to monitor each child's progress by administering tests of English language proficiency, measuring oral language, listening, reading comprehension, reading and writing skills, to all English language learners as of the school year 2002-03. By the school year 2005-06, each state must measure every child's progress in reading and math in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once during the grades 10 through 12. By the school year 2007-08, states must administer science assessments. The *No Child Left Behind Act* maintains that the increased use of assessments in a classroom will ensure that teachers are aware of each student's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the teacher will be provided with data about her/his own teaching. Teachers have been mandated to cover more instructional objectives, administer more tests, and guarantee a child will attain more in the name of accountability. I uphold that this standardized teaching and testing may tell you where a child was left behind, but it does not tell you how the child specifically was left behind.

While I have witnessed the strong accountability for results pillar of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, I have not seen as much emphasis on the scientific research pillar. I can attest that along with new teaching standards always comes a barrage of kits designed to help teach the standards. These magically designed

kits contain all the information supposedly needed to teach the skills of the new standards. I use the word skills because that is exactly what they are designed to do. The kits are erroneously designed to teach skills to classes of kindergarten students and not designed with any regard to what a child brings to the arena.

I maintain that teachers must take the necessary time to talk with each student and listen to the child during the child's involvement with the material that is being taught. Simply looking at the results of a failed standardized test will help a teacher know where the child became confused about the information that the child is being asked to regurgitate. Maxine Greene (1995) writes,

there is always a danger of imposing alienating standards, of suggesting a single right way of looking at a Monet poplar painting, of discerning the mirrored king and queen behind the artist in Velazquez's always-problematic *Las Meninas*, of making sense of the madwoman in *Jane Eyre*, of interpreting the film *The Third Man*. (p.147)

I am also concerned that by issuing a group of standards to be taught, teachers will expect children to give the same standard answers, whereas in reality, there are a multitude of answers. If teachers do not provide the setting that will allow multiple answers, then many children may never get the opportunity to be heard and I fear the results could be an unimaginative, follow-the-leader, intolerant, and uncaring society.

Too many classrooms are places where the teacher is believed to be in the place of fullness or certainty, holding the answers, while the students struggle to prove themselves capable of attaining heights. Or perhaps

worse, students often simply stop caring, sinking into indifference about themselves or the world. (Martusewicz, 2001. p. 68)

Before the *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965* was revised under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Georgia implemented the *Quality Basic Education Act* (QBE) in 1986. The mission of the Georgia Department of Education was to develop a uniformly sequenced curriculum that would enable all students to develop the skills necessary to meet their full potential. The Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) (Georgia Department of education, 1995) is a statewide curriculum that includes competencies that must be mastered for a child to graduate from high school. In 1995, the state of Georgia began the process of revising the QCC. Classroom teachers, parents, and business leaders were included in the process. The writing teams were carefully chosen to reflect a multicultural and multi-gender sampling. The revised Georgia Performance Standards began with the implementation of the language arts objective in the fall of 2005. Each year new content standards will be developed and implemented systematically for mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, fine arts, health, physical education, technology/career education, agriculture, and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

There were multiple reasons for the revision of the standards at the kindergarten level. The previous Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) objectives were vague and led to misinterpretation of content with regard to the depth the objective should be taught and the assessment of those objectives. As I compared the Quality Core Curriculum Standards (QCC) to the Georgia Performance

Standards (GPS), I came to the conclusion that the kindergarten state standards for language arts are similar in content. Both are written to ensure that all children are taught emergent literacy competencies needed to secure a degree of consistency when teaching children to read and to write. The previous QCC objectives contained forty-one standards listed categorically under the headings of Listening/Speaking, Reading, Writing, Literature, and Reference/Study. The GPS consists of seven areas of literacy proficiencies: Concept of Print, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing, and Listening/Speaking/Viewing. Listed under these seven areas are forty-two descriptors. Although the standards are quite similar, it is the detailed descriptive explanation that better informs the teacher of what is expected from the child as the standards are taught. An example of this is: QCC standard 23 which states: Reads selected sight words. The revised GPS standard is now ELAKR4, which states: The student demonstrates the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and expression. The student (a.) Reads previously taught high frequency words at the rate of 30 words correct per minute and (b.) Reads previously taught grade-level text with appropriate expression.

I am excited about teaching the revised kindergarten state standards because I do see an improvement in the descriptions of the standards. The standards reflect the need to spend more time talking with and listening to children. For example the Phonological awareness standard ELAKR2- a. states: Identifies and produces rhyming words in response to an oral prompt and distinguishes rhyming and non-rhyming words. The previous QCC objective

stated: Recognizes rhyming words. Too often an assessment worksheet was given to the child to match the rhyming pictures without the teacher listening to the child as the child tried to name the pictures and find the rhyming pictures that matched. If the child made an error, the teacher did not know if the child correctly named the picture. The picture may have been a dog and the child could have called it a puppy, which would have made it impossible to accurately match the rhyming word. Therefore, I am delighted that the new standards seem to specify orally assessing children. I just hope that teachers take as much time to listen as they often take talking during the assessments given orally. If teachers do not take more time to listen, then the knowledge and experiences of the child will be lost.

Georgia Law (O.C.G.A., Section 20-20151 and 20-2-281) of the *Quality Basic Education Act* requires that any child enrolled in Georgia public school kindergarten must be assessed for first grade readiness. In 1990, the Georgia State Board of Education adopted the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment of Program (GKAP) as the assessment for all Georgia public school kindergarten children. The Georgia Department of Education (DOE) modified the original assessment in the fall of 1998 as the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program – Revised (GKAP-R). The revised GKAP was developed by classroom teachers and assessment specialists and is in alignment with the revised Georgia Quality Core Curriculum. The GKAP-R assesses each student in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and social/emotional development through performance based activities. The assessment is administered one-on-one and in small and large

groups three times a year, in the first two weeks of school, January-February, and March-April. Performance assessment rubrics specially define student progress: Not evident (NE): little to no evidence of skill; In Progress (IP): developing the skill; and Accomplished (AC): proficient skill development and application. This means of assessment records continuous growth and development throughout the year and assists in instructional planning. I have found this assessment to be a valuable tool for accurately assessing a child's strengths and weaknesses in language art and math concepts. I appreciate the variety of ways available to test each student. Selection of the testing method is guided by the teacher's knowledge of each child. This suggests that the design does utilize scientific research to devise this developmentally appropriate assessment (NAEYC/IRA, 1998). Through the classroom activities and interactions with the child, many teachers can identify if the child will perform better individually or in a group.

While the assessments reflect an authentic developmental appropriate means of analyzing a child's ability, often the curriculum being used to teach the standards is not developmentally appropriate. Learners can no longer be perceived as passive receivers of information. Learning should be viewed as the construction of knowledge built on the student's current cognitive structures. While I agree that children in kindergarten need to be taught and assessed using high-quality material developed from current research, my concern was that not enough research had been completed that reflected the vital need to know the child being taught and assessed. I am not referring to the superficial facts on registration forms or information gleaned from multiple assessments that are

given the first two weeks of school. I am referring to actually knowing the child's historical background as well as the child's present situation in life. I am suggesting the care cited by Nel Noddings. It is vital that people treat each other with respect. Is it possible that dialogue, with caring as the critical foundation, can bond people in a manner that will lead to an enhanced understanding of others? Noddings (1992) refers to relation as a basic fact of human existence because in a classroom the interaction with others cannot be avoided. I concur with Nel Noddings (1999) that "a shift away from the rule-bound accountability, and product-oriented evaluation, away from insistence on uniform competencies" (p.54) is necessary if educators are going to meet the needs of all the children in a classroom. As a caring teacher, I am impressed with what each individual child has to say as I help that child meet the required state-mandated standards.

I believe that if a teacher values the role of the child's prior experiences and the child's need to talk about herself/himself in relation to the world, growth will occur among all those involved (Vygotsky, 1978). I value each child's knowledge of life and I consciously strive to encourage and to create opportunities for children to engage in talking. In education, children are often compared to *sponges* with regard to how quickly knowledge can be absorbed. It is possible that educators should keep in mind that the *sponges* need to be squeezed often and repeatedly, squeezed in the sense of releasing each child's prior experiences and knowledge.

Children are such important human beings, especially the young and uninhibited kindergarten children. The innocence, freshness, and enthusiasm in

their talking and expressions are beyond our imagination. Dewey (1990) stipulates,

abandon the notion of subject matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. (p.189)

When children are engrossed in learning, the teacher can almost witness their attempts to construct information while blending it with their prior experiences (Dewey, 1963). An intellectual moment is initiated and knowledge is acquired. It is during this time that possibly the children's words need to be heard, noted, studied, and researched. I believe that the teacher must listen to the child, as knowledge is being transferred and stored. I question if we should reconceptualize kindergarten teaching because possibly the significant educational component may not only be what the educator says, but also what the child says. We cannot ignore the context in which knowledge is constructed (Vygotsky, 1978). I concede that the construction is a part of the application, but are we making every attempt to hear what is being said? Teachers are often viewed as the great holders of knowledge and the younger members of society are controlled in such a way as to limit education (Doll, 1993). "Their voices have remained silent under the weight of our psychological, educational, and policy constructions of and for them" (Pinar, 1998, p.174). With so much human development theory placing the child first in education, children's voices,

informing us of their everyday lives, perhaps have not been adequately included in the curriculum.

My research was designed to investigate the use of visual learning strategies that may enhance oral language development resulting in the development of emergent literacy. In kindergarten, children's emergent literacy skills, such as the gradual development of oral language, phonological awareness, and print awareness appear to be prerequisite literacy skills that contribute to later reading achievement (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). While much research has been done to investigate how various instructional strategies contribute to emergent literacy skills (Pullen & Justice, 2003), relatively little research has been done to investigate how the instructional use of visual learning strategies contributes to emergent literacy. It was my responsibility as I collected stories, to produce research that provided a clear understanding of children as they talked about their life in relation to others.

My twenty-eight years of teaching experience has shown me that others may think they know what I should do and they may even put it in detailed form for me. However, I wanted to attentively listened to children and appreciate the experiences and knowledge that children bring to the classroom. This knowledge, often beyond the state standards, is what I perceived to be missing in the kindergarten curriculum. Our present curriculum encourages the teacher to direct students to watch and the teacher will show how to do this or that and the teacher will tell you everything you need to know. The teacher gives worksheets and assessments to see if the student has memorized the standards correctly. For

example, to teach proper grammar, the teacher makes errors for the student to correct. The teacher will also require that the student use speed to master many of the standards taught. I am concerned that if it takes a student a little longer to complete a task, that student is characterized as not meeting a standard. In this “hustle-bustle, let-me-see-how-fast-I-can-do-something” society, is it a good thing to encourage speed? I suggest that we slow down and enjoy the learning. Feel it! Experience it! Live it! Do we not already drive too fast, eat too fast, and live too fast? I maintain that speed bolsters solitude and enhances the “I” in society because speed does not allow for time to talk with others. I am not comfortable with how fast something can be completed. We have heard the phrase, “slow down and smell the roses”. I contend that people need to slow down and talk about the roses.

Elements Missing in the Kindergarten Curriculum

The kindergarten curriculum the teachers in my elementary school use as a guide has been driven by the pedagogical stance that the curriculum must be a developmentally appropriate curriculum (NAEYC/IRA, 1998). Even as we were presented with Quality Core Curriculum objectives and a variety of text adoptions to employ over the years, I, along with the other kindergarten teachers at my school, have used a holistic, integrated, thematic, student-centered approach of teaching the standards set forth by the state. I acknowledge that teachers should be held accountable for each child’s educational growth. Unfortunately, the accountability described often does not reflect developmentally appropriate practices.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and International Reading Association (NAEYC /IRA, 1998) hold that it is “essential and urgent to teach children to read and write competently”. The NAEYC in alliance with the IRA disagree with the view that there is a certain stage of maturity at which a child is ready to be exposed to reading and writing. Every experience a child has had since birth contributes to the child’s reading and writing development. Through the child’s encounters with the world, in hearing, seeing, talking, and living, the child’s language is shaped. I concur with the NAEYC (1997) that the method of instruction is critical once a child enters the educational setting. Too often, the method of instruction associated with meeting the standards is worksheets and skill and drill. My research addresses the need to eliminate kits and scripts for the teacher and/or scripts for the children. I hoped to prove that these methods of instruction limit a curriculum of caring and imagination. I maintain that kindergarten children can be taught and assessed on the state’s standards without neglecting the developmentally appropriate methods. I wondered if there could be a valuable significance to the curriculum in listening to children as they talk about themselves in relation to others and the world in which they exist.

“Early childhood educators are increasingly concerned about the trend toward national standards and national testing” (Helm and Gronlund, 2000, p.1). This quote reflects my belief that if so much emphasis is placed on standards, the children will not be recognized as the most valuable part of the curriculum that is available to the teacher. While I acknowledge the need for assessment, I maintain

that the evaluations should be within the context of activities and the testing should be conducted as a child is engaged in the learning process. I support that we need to utilize the procedures of kindergarten assessments that are authentic and compatible with how young children learn. Consequently, I recognized that inquiry into a child's knowledge should take place unhindered in naturally occurring classroom activities. Research shows that so much of the testing in a kindergarten classroom should be ongoing observation (Ayers, 1989). This research also maintains that children need to represent their thinking and learning in some way before the teacher can find out what they think or know. While authentic assessment is well documented (Dickinson and Neuman, 2002), I hoped my research would establish the benefits of children talking while drawing and of the teacher using the discussion of pictures to actively assess a child while encouraging the development of imagination. This could be not only an authentic assessment but also an opportunity for social understanding of self and others in relation to self, which Nel Noddings (1992) refers to as caring for the other through interaction with the other.

I focused on individual lived experience and language as I interacted and talked with my students. I wondered if kindergarten children could benefit from enriching contextualized experiences with visual learning strategies such as verbal descriptions about their own drawings, interpreting pictures, and talking. Pictures can be an effective way of stimulating verbal expression and developing emergent literacy as the students actively engage in talking. I allowed the children the flexibility to demonstrate understanding in non-traditional ways. I agree children

do need to learn to read, write, and understand mathematical concepts, but I proposed that elements missing in the kindergarten curriculum could be the development of imagination and a caring for others.

In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), Maxine Greene cautions educators that we can no longer assume there is a consensus about what should be taught. While the federal government is trying to regulate learning, my concern is that skill and drill exercises enhance thoughtlessness. The classroom teachers perhaps should create the opportunity for imagination and caring. “That is because of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities” (Greene, 1995, p.3). If we are not attentive, standards will organize people in such a way as to stifle imagination in our society. I questioned that conventional solutions to the curriculum could stand in the way of imagination. While Greene refers to the arts such as role-playing, singing, and painting as ways of releasing imagination, I wanted to try and include drawing and talking and talking about pictures as an art form that could release imagination. I hoped that as a child was drawing, imagination could be stimulated because of the myriad of possibilities and the talk that was accompanied by the drawing could often be limitless. It was while the child was drawing that I felt I had to listen and encourage talk. Maxine Greene (1995) states that

participatory encounters with paintings, dances, stories, and all other art forms enables us to recapture a lost spontaneity. We are made aware of ourselves as questioners, as meaning makers, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities with those around us. (p.130)

I wanted to encourage young people to wonder. I wanted to be involved in actually teaching children to think about things, to think about the world in which they live.

I questioned if perhaps picture labeling could allow children to ask why and open the possibility for multiple answers. Asking “why” is a method embraced by Maxine Greene (1995), she posited that this is how learning happens as situations are created allowing all the voices to ask “why” (p.6). I have always felt the need to teach children to question. Every year, I choose to read such stories as *Henny Penny* (Galdone, 1968) to my kindergarten children. In the story *Henny Penny*, the chicken is under the tree and an acorn falls on her head. The chicken decides the sky must be falling so she goes to tell the king. Throughout the story, each of her friends asks where she is going and she tells them the sky is falling. Each friend, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Loosey, and Turkey Lurkey, believes her and joins her on her trip to tell the king. Until they met Foxy Loxy, who informs the group they are headed the wrong way. Then they come upon a dark hole (the door to Foxy Loxy’s den) and he says it is a short cut to the castle and he would go first. As each animal follows Foxy Loxy into the hole, that animal is eaten. The point of the story is that Henny Penny did not question what could have fallen on her head nor did any of her friends. They were all lead completely thoughtlessly to Foxy Loxy’s house. My concern was that if children are only taught the standards with complete disregard for stimulating imagination and caring, they may never learn there can be many voices of knowledge, not just one.

In my study, as the children looked at a picture and thought about it and shared their thoughts with me, I tried to provoke multiple dialogues. I tried to help the children develop an awareness of their world, and I wanted to demonstrate a curriculum that taught children to observe and question. I hoped to imaginatively organize their lived experiences. I questioned if the picture labeling activities and the talk while drawing could possibly open a forum to a number of voices.

I have alluded to another element missing in the curriculum because of the pressure of standards. That element is caring, the feeling of the human connection. As teachers feel pressure to teach in such a way as to ensure mastery of standards, they may not take the time to listen to something that is not immediately pertinent to the standard being taught. I suggest that human connection is required if a teacher actually listens when a child talks. Active listening requires being able to look at things differently through the eyes of the child. “This process of sensitive listening is essential to all forms of professional development, both for the learner and for the teacher” (Feuerverger, 2001, xix). I have discovered that as I care enough to embrace a child’s imagination and listen to that child talk, my imagination is stimulated.

Maxine Greene (1995) shares Noddings’ opinion, “There has to be a live, aware, reflective transaction if what presents itself to consciousness is to be realized” (p. 30). The picture labeling process provided a classroom situation that embedded caring in the curriculum as children experienced others’ opinions and others’ histories and at the same time have their own lives valued. I hoped the

picture labeling method would be a collaborative search of ideas and that through this study, the children might become conscious of their lives. Maxine Greene (1995) refers to this as cognitive adventuring by provoking or posing questions about a picture. I hoped this would help children move away from a tendency towards unquestioned acceptance of things. I wondered if it was possible that encounters with pictures could open the children to experiences that would allow the child to create the past, which would be what happened before and explore the future considering what could happen next? Maybe this course of action would awaken the children to the nature of others and themselves and verify that listening to a child talk while she/he is drawing is an authentic encounter and not just manners, whereby we are taught to listen when others talk, but actually hearing the experiences that brought a child to share her/his precious truths. Given such a range of possibilities, the connections a child makes can never be predictable. I pondered if risk free places where dialogue could begin is necessary if a teacher is to provide a curriculum of caring? “We want our classrooms to be just caring, full of various conceptions of the good. We want them to be articulate, with the dialogue involving as many persons as possible, opening to one another, opening to the world” (Greene, 1995, p.167).

Research Questions

The overarching research question is:

* How can children’s talks and drawings inform our ways of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination for kindergartners?

Specific research questions are:

- * How do children's talks and drawings inform the delivery of a kindergarten curriculum?
- * How do children's talks and drawings reflect their experiences with the world?

Autobiographical Roots of My Inquiry

My passion to investigate this phenomenon originated from the sheer joy I obtained as I listened to a child talking with me. I have taught kindergarten for twenty-eight years and only in the past five years have I realized why I never had the desire to teach another grade. Children who are four to seven years of age have such an enthusiasm for life and a natural curiosity. They are willing to share their thoughts, beliefs, and life stories. I would never have known the children's varied interests if I had not taken the opportunity to listen to them. Many times teachers read a story, discuss it, or introduce a topic for discussions in order to engage children in active learning. These activities, however, can be very limited, limited in time and space for each child to relate to the story and to share with one another. As I teach the state mandated standards, I know that I base my curriculum design on a humanistic approach. I hope that the teaching method that I use in the classroom supports my belief that children need to think critically and that method is more important than isolated subject matter. I questioned if it was feasible that our children would be more knowledgeable if they were allowed to express their need for knowledge and their inquisitiveness. If I valued each child's talk and affirmed imperatively that my children are the driving forces in my classroom, could I legitimize the learning experience for each student? I

wanted to know if this approach could allow for numerous improvisational activities in my classroom. I believed the children must grasp the value for themselves in relation to the material being presented; they must be taught to care. I wondered if possibly kindergartners' knowledge, if affirmed and honored, could become a very powerful way to release their imagination and engage them in active learning.

I have witnessed that through interactions with others and the environment, children slowly evolve a series of ways of understanding what they perceive. Understanding is never passive, but involves active construction through exploration and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978). Children internalize, remember, and use only what makes sense to them. Therefore, developing meaning from new circumstances and appropriately using new information is a slow process, which might require teachers to listen to and reflect upon the talks of the children in a classroom.

I have observed that pictures engage children, whether it is television, movies, computer images, picture storybooks, student's pictures, student's drawings, or pictures from magazines. Conceivably, I thought that if I gave children pictures from a magazine, they would talk as they associated and connected the picture to their own lives. They would speak freely, candidly, naturally, and engagingly. I wondered if this method could spark motivation and curiosity and enable the children to build a sense of confidence in questioning. I hoped that as the year progressed, the children would learn to observe more and

ground their words, sentences, and stories within the picture rather than simply in their memories or imagination.

I acted as the facilitator throughout the picture discussion process. I wanted to encourage active participation, and confirm that all of their responses were valuable. I linked the children's comments with the pictures and modeled how to listen to, question about, and respond to others' comments. To further legitimize the instincts of the young children, I opened the discussion of pictures with the question, "What is going on in this picture?" The wording gave tacit approval to the student's words and gently suggested that there were many possible answers. The image selection and viewing strategy was informed by theory and was designed to challenge the student's thinking in a productive way. As I engaged the students in the pictures, I wanted the personal to emerge. I also encouraged children to move toward greater awareness of the objective reality of the image. I asked my kindergartners to share their observations, hopefully fostering openness and a moving away from self-involvement. I invited the children to provide visual evidence to support their opinions. This method was designed to encourage deductive reasoning and observations in their work. The notion of building interpretations of meaning based on a large number of observations was a daily practice. I wanted to see if the children's natural language development through this process increased, as the complexity of language growth was evident. This kind of engagement was described by Ayers (2001), "when teachers value their children's opinions and experiences, children begin to think more openly, and we begin to see them differently" (p.42). I posit

that not only can we see the children differently but also we can see the children more clearly.

The images I selected for discussion were chosen with a particular audience in mind and my choices were guided by what was likely to intrigue the children. I knew the images must be open to interpretation, contain a number of valid readings, have several possible meanings, and enable a child to let his/her experience guide the observing. At the beginning of the year, the images I chose were quickly captivating and easy to decipher. Throughout the year, I chose images with a sequence in mind, leading from simple to complex. Simpler images included those in which there were clearer and fewer possible meanings, fewer details, and less density of context. As the children's confidence grew and interest in probing increased, pictures that are less clear were chosen, functioning to encourage speculation, questioning, and complex interpretations. Images that are more complex were those in which there was greater ambiguity of meaning; where ferreting out signifying details was more time consuming; and more meaning was communicated through interpretation.

As I chose pictures for the children to discuss, I looked for stopped action, dialogues, charged moments, and images of family, work, and play. I also looked for diversity that could build flexibility and an appreciation of humanity because I wanted to be sensitive to gender and racial representations. I hoped this variety of pictures would allow for more children to find their interests and for the diverse backgrounds to be more fully represented. I felt that beginning viewers could possibly make sense of what they encountered based on what they already knew.

One essential requirement I had for choosing pictures was to keep in mind the child's accessibility. Would the children be likely to recognize what they observed? Could they make reasonable associations with it based on what they already knew? The pictures chosen thus included identifiable and reasonably familiar people, actions, interactions, settings, and emotions. Having a human interest is the sought after factor I used to choose pictures.

Through the use of a picture rather than a story, I wanted to provide the opportunity for the children to be the authors. The stories could be created around each child as she/he used her/his own language and life experiences. There would be no right or wrong answers which is not usually the case when a child has a story read to her/him and the teacher asks, "What do you think will happen next?" Because the storybook illustrates and dictates exactly what happens next, it stifles the creativity that was established with the child.

Every week, I provided a pre-made booklet for each child, with a cover that represented the thematic unit that would be studied. The booklet consisted of construction paper front and back with five to ten blank pages in between. Every morning all the children sat on the carpet in front of the dry erase board and I read fiction and nonfiction stories that related to the thematic unit. After I read each story through one time for content, we discussed various aspects of the story. We talked about how many people wrote and illustrated the book, how they must have worked together, and how might they be related if they have the same last name. We analyzed the illustrations and considered each character's decisions throughout the story. I encouraged the children to share any similar prior

experiences. The children and I conversed about what parts of the story they may or may not have liked. We usually concluded by recounting if there was anything in the story that helped them to acquire any new knowledge.

Each day after the discussion of the book, I wrote a three to five word sentence on the board pertaining to the unit using the sight words that I introduced. To demonstrate writing, I talked to the children about how each letter was written, how sentences are comprised of words, and how words are comprised of letters. At that time, I drew a picture illustrating the sentence. The children loved to watch me draw, and it made me think about how rare it is that children are shown the process of using their imagination to create a picture. Many teachable moments arose from items that the children suggested that I added to the drawing. I was able to easily demonstrate that drawing does not always create a true representation. As I drew, I talked about my thoughts in relation to my drawing. Each child copied the sentence in her/his own book (from the sentence written on a piece of paper in front of each child), often verbalizing the experience. Sometimes we had to hold the student's hand to help with letter formation. Everyday after they had written the sentence/sentences, the children drew a picture to illustrate their sentences. While there were amazing discoveries that could be heard using a story as a springboard for dialogue, I cherished the talk as the children drew. It was during one of these listening moments that I realized how crucial it is to allow the children to talk and to listen as the children talk.

It was fall, and the stories I had been reading were about trees and the changing color of the leaves. I had previously shared stories about apple trees with the children. As I was reading a story about going to a nursery and picking out a tree to bring home to plant, the illustration depicted a shovel of dirt with three or four worms and the children's responses were "eehhh". I had to explain (as I always do) the value of nature especially the animals that are the most often disliked. I explained that plants need air just as people do and that the part below the dirt, the roots, needs air also. Fortunately for the plant, the worms bring air from the top of the dirt into the soil.

The next day during the reading, writing, drawing exercise, the sentence we discussed and the children copied was *I see a tree*. I was enjoying listening to the talks of the children as they were copying the sentence and drawing. Following this drawing, talking session, I recalled how one of my previous students had talked about the worms. One year in my class, there was a beautiful, bubbly young boy with a great enthusiasm for life, which he expressed, minute-by-minute. He was a lively child who had an extremely difficult time being still. His home life was very busy with four siblings and he only knew the letter "X x". He could not write his name and needed assistance with any class work. However, his drawing and his talk revealed the knowledge acquisition that could not be shown on a standardized test. As he drew his picture, which to the untrained observer would have looked like a lot of colorful scribbling, he talked to me and explained his drawing. He said,

This is a great big tree. I have yellow apples on my tree 'cause <sic>that's my favorite to eat. I have orange, red, green leaves on my tree and this is a big trunk with short brown roots. My worm (the long dark line across his paper) is goin' <sic>bring air to the tree so it can grow real big and make me a lot of apples. My brother he don't <sic> like apples so much. He just likes pizza. My sister likes grapes. You know, those green kind. (A Child's Talks, Oct. 22, 2004)

I was so excited! He did know a lot, but he was not a standard child. As I listened, I knew he was learning much more than the state standards I would formally test him on. As Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) note, teachers must “furnish learners with opportunities to become their own persons, to gain control over their processes of learning, and to realize the complexity of existence” (p.285).

Later in the year we were discussing the solar system and each day I read a non-fiction story to explain the solar system. The children were so excited discussing that we live on the planet Earth and that it is one of many planets. Throughout the week, I involved the children in many activities. I brought in models to show the children the placement of Earth in relation to the other planets and how the planets revolve around the sun. We discussed that the Earth is also revolving. The book I read showed the change from day to night as the Earth rotates. After a brief discussion, the children went to the tables to copy the sentence: *The Earth rotates around the sun.* The children copied the sentence from their sentence strip and then began to illustrate the earth revolving around

the sun. As is common as a child draws in my class, I encouraged the child to describe his picture. He said, "This is the sun. It is big and yellow. This is the earth. It is going around the sun. The blue is water. The brown is dirt and the green is bushes." I said, "I can see that." Then he said, "Now I am putting black on this side because the earth on this side is spinning and turned away from the sun." I was in awe of the abstract concept that he was able to comprehend and was pleased that he could demonstrate his understanding by drawing and talking about his picture.

Therefore, I hoped my study would offer the significance of listening to the talk of many knowledgeable, beyond the standards, children. I wanted to explore the possibility that children must be provided with challenging experiences as the students acquire the skills needed for mastery. Could I push the boundaries of knowledge acquisition that is sometimes present in education as I let my students guide the acquisition of learning? From my experience, I know that it is necessary for the students to have ownership and a sense of control. I know that schools can be repressive and not responsive to evolving times. I completely disagree with the means-end approach where the more rigorous the means, the more likely the desired ends will be achieved. Ayers (2001) cautions the current standardization trend as he asserts

If young children are to have a strong experiential base for future success in math and reading, they need many opportunities to work with blocks and puzzles, to paint and play games, to explore a wide range of books, to have stories read to them and to write in journals or diaries. The problem

is that none of this will yield quick results. (p.114)

Too many classroom teachers encourage every child to regurgitate the facts presented. Consequently, we do have standardization! As a teacher-researcher, I wanted to reconceptualize the field as one in which children created their own stories and I would make every attempt to hear what was being spoken.

“Curriculum development has little chance of success unless it involves teachers in exploring the implications of the changes for their own educational values, and finding out how to make any necessary alterations to the routines of their practice” (Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh, 1993, p.201). Therefore, my research is essential.

Challenges of the Study

My study has challenges because of my role as participant-observer and teacher-researcher. I initiated many of the talks as I introduced children to a different picture to discuss daily. I provided the stimulus sentence for the children to copy each day, which supported the unit of the week. However, a child’s lack of interest in illustrating the copied sentence could have adversely affected the stories. Both of these learning strategies could have limited the child’s imagination if enough freedom was not provided to engage the child.

Another challenge of my study was the sample size. Although I taught all seventeen children in my class during the picture labeling and drawing activities, only six children were explored. In addition, it was within the constraints of one classroom and one person interpreting the data. Likewise, the study did lend itself to uncontrolled circumstances and stories. Additionally, the study was limited to

consideration of classroom context and did not address other factors, such as the role of the family, with regard to caring, imagination, and literacy development. Generalizations might not always be presumed from this study because they were generated in an exploratory qualitative inquiry and would not be feasible to replicate.

As my study methodology was grounded in narrative inquiry, I had to be very careful to embody all the children's voices in the class as each child constructed a sense of self. Because the study was interpretive, thorough analysis of the stories was required. In the process of immersing myself in the study, I also had to bracket any biases I brought to the study.

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the talks and drawings of children as they were engaged in activities that I hoped would foster learning. I affirm that a classroom ambience that encourages talks as expressed by William Doll (1993) "will allow students and their teachers in conversation and dialogue to create more complex orders and structures of subject matter and ideas than is possible in the closed curriculum structures of today" (x). Numerous teachers in classrooms within our present educational system discourage talks. As cautioned by Dewey (1963) in *The School and Society*, "if everything is on a "listening" basis, you can have uniformity of material and method"(p.33). There will be no opportunity for imagination, caring, or valued experiences. Children are told to be quiet and to pay attention to what teachers have to share so that the student can master the standards, develop a strong academic background, and do well on tests. Listen,

listen, listen is a very large component of the daily discipline. Furthermore, children at the elementary level are directed to be quiet while working, be quiet in line, be quiet in the halls, be quiet in the lunchroom, be quiet, be quiet, and be quiet.

I hold the belief that teachers must spend more time listening to the children. This study focuses on the value of listening to children, which involves truly caring about children. I hoped to find how children's talks and drawings inform us to develop a curriculum of caring and imagination. I thought this information might allow for the natural development of creativity and talent as I assessed each child's literacy development more appropriately. I felt that our current method of assessment often sabotages a child's imagination and literacy development as it constrains a child's natural development.

I had confidence that parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers would appreciate the value of a curriculum that teaches the children the required material and also allows space for the child to talk about herself/himself in relation to the world. I hoped that through the process of talking, questioning, interacting, listening to others, and realizing there are choices in life and decisions to be made, the young adult could possibly have an immense history to help guide her/him. Mary Aswell Doll (1995) sums up my concern stating, "What can be more important than encouraging a real understanding of the relationships we form in life: relating to the self, relating to others, relating to the divine, and relating to the natural world?" (p.30). My hope was that through my research, teachers and policymakers could witness the value of interaction and talk in

classrooms. I had high expectations that my research could possibly demonstrate the standards being taught and mastered as well as a curriculum of caring and imagination being developed. I respected that “a growing number of scholars now recognize that because teachers are key players in education, their voices need to be heard; they have a right to speak for and about the teaching-learning experience” (Feuerverger, 2005, p.178).

Outline of Chapters

This work consists of six chapters: An introduction, a review of the literature, the methodology, stories captured while children drew, stories as children labeled pictures, and the findings. Chapter 1 explains the context of my study, the standardization of the kindergarten curriculum, and elements missing in the kindergarten curriculum. Chapter 1 also details how I came to the realization that this study needed to be performed, the limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews curriculum reconceptualization and the kindergarten curriculum reconceptualization, as well as, the theoretical framework based on the work of John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Nel Noddings. The work of these three theorists reflects the need for a curriculum based on social constructivism, caring, imagination, and experience. Chapter 2 includes an examination of literature on emergent literacy and appropriate instructional strategies for kindergarten students. Chapter 3 describes the method of inquiry for this research. It explicates the work of Vivian Paley, Karen Gallas, and Vivian Maria Vasquez. This chapter also explains the school portraiture, class portraiture, participant selection, participant profiles, children’s talks while drawing, and children’s talks about

pictures. Chapter 4 is a chronological data presentation of participant's talks and drawings. Chapter 5 is a chronological data presentation of participant's talks about pictures. Chapter 6 is reflections and conclusions of my findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, I reviewed four bodies of literature: (a) curriculum reconceptualization; (b) theoretical framework; (c) emergent literacy; and (d) appropriate literacy instructional strategies for kindergartners. I explored the paradigm shift that reconceptualized the curriculum and I deconstructed early childhood education practices. I examined John Dewey's theory of education, experiences, and imagination (e.g., 1963, 1980, 1990), Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which holds that social interaction is a critical component to a child's understanding the world (e.g., 1978, 1986) and Nel Noddings' (1984, 1992, 1995) ethic of care, a vital component of educational foundation that guides a teacher's agenda. I connected these theories to emergent literacy and appropriate instructional strategies. I substantiated this association by examining the work of experts in the field of emergent literacy and by analyzing the works of Elizabeth Sulzby and William Teale (1991), Grover (Russ) Whitehurst and Christopher Lonigan (1998), Pamela Cunningham (2000), Don Holdaway (1979), Gregory Payne and Larry D. Isaacs (1987), Paige C. Pullen and Laura Justice (2003) (e.g., oral language development, print awareness, and phonological awareness). I reviewed relevant bodies of literature to support a theory of education that helps develop a curriculum of imagination and caring for kindergartners based on children's life experience, imagination, and learning development.

Curriculum Reconceptualization

During the 1970s, the curriculum field underwent a paradigm shift that reconceptualized the focus of curriculum. Reconceptualization evolved from a preoccupation with curriculum development, a bureaucratic function, to a concern with understanding curriculum through the realization that the curriculum as a product approach to curriculum development was very narrow and limiting. Before the reconceptualization of the curriculum, the work of Franklin Bobbitt (1924) and Ralph W. Tyler (1949) dominated theory and practice as curriculum was constructed as a product (Pinar, 1998). Objectives were set, a plan designed, the plan methodically applied, and the outcomes measured as interpretation and creation were closed down. Unfortunately, Ralph Tyler's theories were taken to extremes, resulting in a grotesque misuse of his ideologies. Yet, during the Tyler heyday, suppositions about education and curriculum were influenced by the scientific management mindset of the times. The behavioral curriculum development approach started with the idea of efficiency and the scientific theories of management and developed into a stifling curriculum. Teacher-proof programs were developed for presentation as students were told what to learn and how to learn it. Not only were the voices taken from the students, but the teachers' voices were taken as well, completely deskilling the educators. In an attempt to measure the objectives taught, skills had to be broken down into trivial competencies (Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M., 1995).

Curriculum development mirrored the turbulence in society as the Civil Rights movement gave rise to an awareness of an underrepresented culture challenging the conventional ideas in curriculum development. It was a decade of “cataclysmic, contentious, and paradigmatic change” (Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M., 1995, p.187). It seems that Joseph Schwab's philosophy was a great influence on the direction of education. He knew education needed a paradigmatic switch in curriculum with a change to a more practical form. In the 1970's Schwab wrote,

what schools need are curriculum workers who wish to know and understand what goes on in classrooms, who wish to make the teaching-learning process (and curriculum) function better, who are sophisticated enough to anticipate new problems, and who see their work as fundamentally practical.

(Schwab as cited in Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000, p. 94)

The value of education was based on what could make money (curriculum guide writers and textbook companies) or what appeared to be money well spent (high-test scores). Even though Schwab brought teachers into focus with respect to curriculum work, theorists were still too far away from understanding the curriculum. The psychology that schooling had become absurd helped realize the need to reconceptualize the curriculum (Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000).

Theorists in the reconceptualization camp hold that schools are an oppressive instrument of society and urge the reorganization of curriculum to address the social problems of society. This reflects the coercive teaching

displayed through the teacher-learner practice process. The emphasis of education had been a systematic, means-to-an-end approach. Using bureaucratic models, the schools were not sensitive to the variety of the masses or the experiences that the students brought to the classroom. The mainstream curricularists did not view all of society with regard to the school curriculum.

William Pinar (1999) maintains that the area of curriculum development is a changing paradigm. In the early 1970's, Pinar (1998) engaged in a rigorous self-exploration through a method he labeled "*currere*", that allowed him to seek the roots of his self-understanding as he gained an understanding of education. Currently, Pinar holds that the curriculum is never a finished product and that the understanding of curriculum grounds the identities of those being taught. Pinar criticizes the patriarchal stance of curriculum development as he defines the present educational setting as being driven by the goal of saving "others". According to Pinar (1999), striving to understand curriculum requires a realization that our society ignores many groups and displays an indifference to the human needs of those attending school. Other theorists concerned with reconceptualization stress broad problems and issues, social sensitivity, and political concerns. However, the view of saving the less fortunate just means controlling the marginalized, and Pinar urges early childhood educators to be the child's advocate. We must construct an environment that fosters connections and collaboration (Pinar, 1998). Children are such important human beings. Childhood is the time of life in which freshness, enthusiasm, and innocence must

be cultivated, not stolen. Teachers cannot ignore the context in which knowledge is constructed; the construction is the application of knowledge.

There are many experts in the field of curriculum that have contributed to the reconceptualization movement. As the end of the 1970's approached, William Pinar, John McNeil, Maxine Greene, Bill Reynolds, and Elliot W. Eisner were in the forefront of contemporary educational curriculum work. The movement shifted away from traditionalists, toward post-modernism "with a mission to fix what was wrong with schools through the better curricula using more sophisticated tools and measures" (Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000, p. 113). Their combined efforts enabled education to shift the emphasis to the students, the teachers, and understanding the curriculum. The curriculum theorists held that understanding curriculum required a social focus. Curriculum development focused on providing quality teachers who could equip young people with the knowledge necessary to become meaningful participants in their education (Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M., 1995).

Michael Apple (1995) maintains that schools become distributors of this culture capital as schools reflect society. Education teaches the dominant culture's knowledge, leading to the inevitable cycle of control over the other cultures. By stressing preconceived cognitive skills, the realities of life are ignored. The teacher is often construed as an agent of oppression, representing the larger coercive society as the curriculum is taught.

The reconceptualization of curriculum entailed a shift from the development of the curriculum to the understanding of the curriculum. The way

we understand and theorize the idea of curriculum has changed.

Reconceptualization focused on the study of the curriculum with regard to the interaction of political, cultural, economic, and social forces. In addition to this focus, theorists posit that the goal of the current education system is to preserve the existing order and declare that the curriculum field needs to look beyond the modes of describing and managing education in a productive form (Pinar, 1998; Pinar, 1999). A humanistic approach to teaching in the classroom with the emphasis on an effective education guides the constructivist stance. Hence, curriculum is the interaction of teachers, students, and knowledge, as attention shifts from teaching to learning.

Michael Apple (2001) stresses the rhetoric concerning excellence, accountability, and efficiency is the priorities in schools. The realities of actual students and genuine teachers in existing schools should be the focus of understanding the curriculum. Apple mistrusts the increased focus on standards, testing, and marketization that fills students with specific knowledge some have deemed necessary to compete and become successful. Success is defined by the power relations that impose their interpretations of these concepts (Apple, 1995).

Given the focus of my research endeavors, reconceptualization lends itself well to my study. The reconceptualization of curriculum has opened the door to a deeper understanding of exactly what transpires inside the classroom. As I interacted with my students in order to help them develop their very own literacy, the support of those theorists who see curriculum as understanding guided my

research as I noted and analyzed the intricate components of literacy development within the social context of my classroom.

Gaile Sloan Cannella, in *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and Revolution* (1997), systematically challenges many early childhood theories of development. She questions the construction of knowledge and the idea from developmental psychology that all children develop the same and at the same stages (p.4). She criticizes those in the field of education who think they know what is best for all children and who judge parents' involvement in their children's lives (Cannella, 1997, p.107). Cannella maintains that early childhood education begins the perpetuation of the two-tiered system of the "haves" and the "have-nots". She strives to reconceptualize the social injustices in education that begin in early childhood education. I maintain that if teachers listen to children as they are engaged in learning, teachers will develop awareness that not all children are alike. Then we will no longer be dominated by the belief system that the powers that be know all - for all.

Therefore, in reconceptualizing the early childhood curriculum, teachers and children have the voices that should guide the research since they are the individuals directly affected by the curriculum. Shirley Kessler and Beth Blue Swadener are teacher researchers who questioned the voices that were not being heard in the field of early childhood curriculum. As a result, Kessler and Swadener edited *Reconceptualizing the Early Childhood Curriculum: Beginning the Dialogue* (1992), a collection of essays reflecting issues within curriculum theory, focusing on the social construction of knowledge within early childhood

programs. “In order to reconceptualize the early childhood curriculum, we will need to honor the voices and come to better understand the lives of our potential allies in this work” (Kessler & Swadener, 1992, p. 293).

The inclusion of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs in public schools naturally lead to social and political influences affecting the early childhood curriculum. Consequently, as in grades first through twelfth, decisions, guidelines, objectives, directives, and assessments were devised for children four and five years old. Shirley Kessler (1992) asserts that we must reconsider early childhood education and

that by taking into account contextual variables, the early childhood community will be better able to recommend desired content in early childhood curriculum by becoming more sensitive to the relationship between the curriculum which is taught and the cultural context of classrooms and schools. (p.22)

In order to formulate decisions, guidelines, objectives, directives, and assessments for early childhood classrooms, research must be conducted in the early childhood settings. The kindergarten experience must be examined by listening to the children as they learn. The listeners need to be teachers who are given the time within the curriculum to listen as well as to teach.

M. Elizabeth Graue (1992) examines children’s early childhood readiness from a social perspective rather than as analytical developmental characteristics. She questions “how could we enrich our understanding of readiness if we shifted our thinking away from the view that readiness is a universal child characteristic

that can be identified and measured?” (p.66). Similar to Vygotsky, Graue highlights the importance of the social constructs in which children learn. As a participant observer, she researched children’s conversations and interactions within classroom settings. By focusing on the children themselves and not solely on the results of a readiness test, she was able to apply appropriate instructional practices with each child and observe the results.

As I read the book *Reconceptualizing the Early Childhood Curriculum: Beginning the Dialogue* that was written in 1992, I began to see how much the early childhood curriculum has changed as a result of research. The dialogue was beginning when this book was written thirteen years ago. I have observed a paradigm shift towards a developmentally appropriate curriculum because teachers have been heard. “Readiness ... focuses on understanding a child’s abilities and providing for meaningful experiences within situationally relevant contexts” (Jungck & Marshall, 1992, p.97).

William Ayers, educator, activist, and author, has written many books and articles about how essential it is for teachers to talk and to be heard. In *Reconceptualizing the Early Childhood Curriculum: Beginning the Dialogue* (1992), he emphasizes the need to hear the voices of early childhood teachers. He postulates that if policy makers hold that “knowledge itself is assumed to be fixed, finite, discreet, and immutable” (Ayers, 1992, p. 258) we will stay a stagnate society. I agree with Ayers that early childhood educator’s voices are ignored. Teachers are required to attend workshops, staff development, and innovative program seminars without ever, and I do mean ever, being asked if the teacher has

previous knowledge, needs remedial work in this area, or has any need or interest in the topic.

Teachers are patronized and infantilized in structures not of their own making, socialized into cultures that run counter to their students and even their own best interests. Teachers are silenced in their own worlds, rendered powerless and thoughtless. (Ayers, 1992, p. 265)

Ayers (2001) is concerned that teaching can be a very isolated endeavor with little time to exchange ideas, to voice concerns, or to share good practices. He writes about the roles of teachers making a difference in education and searching for authentic ways to be heard.

Through my research I hoped to demonstrate that listening to the children is just as empowering as listening to the teachers, and it makes sense for children of all ages, not just young children. William Ayers (1992) articulates, “what makes sense for young children – to be active, to explore, to feel safe and unafraid, to know that people care about them, to be understood and trusted – in fact makes sense for all children” (p. 263). Perhaps, the stories of teachers and the stories of children can effortlessly and succinctly inform a curriculum of imagination and caring and further reconceptualize the field of early childhood education.

Theoretical Framework

John Dewey’s Theory of Education, Experience, and Imagination

John Dewey is a philosopher that has contributed substantial knowledge to a variety of fields of philosophical inquiry. His numerous writings focused on

learning by doing as he sought to turn inquiry away from abstract theory and judgment toward a socially grounded consideration of education and experience. Dewey believed in the unity of theory and practice. Following much criticism of his progressive influence on education, Dewey wrote *Experience and Education* (1963), in which he analyzed the two camps in education and compared the traditional and the progressive movements. While the traditional philosophy of education focused on the core essentials of a regimented curriculum, Dewey found that the progressive philosophy could promote excessive individualism, creating a nihilistic curriculum. Dewey reformulated his ideas that acknowledge that neither the traditional nor the progressive should be taken to extremes. Dewey then demonstrated in his writings how to combine the two, revealing the strengths in both philosophies. “Neither of the set of values is sufficient unto itself. Both are essential. Sound educational experience involves, above all, continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned” (Dewey, 1963, p.10). The education question thus becomes, how do educators acquaint the young with the past knowledge while appreciating the present knowledge of the child. “Hence the central problem of an education based on experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and reactively in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, 1963, p.27).

John Dewey's (1990) notion of creating the best possible educational experience incorporated the child constructing her/his own knowledge. John Dewey (1963) held that sound educational experience involved continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned, each sustaining the other. He

emphasized the importance “of teachers to reflect upon their practices and integrate their observations into their emerging theories of teaching and learning” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p.5). I concur with this philosophy since children will be able to make sense of their world if they are allowed to talk about their understandings of that world. It was my responsibility as teacher-researcher to listen.

Through his prolific writings, Dewey (1963) expanded his beliefs that education is essentially a personal and social process since learning occurs only when the personal interacts with the social, as when an individual interacts with society. He maintained that education is life, not merely a preparation for life. He elaborated that the focus of education must be on impulses and interests of the particular individual as well as on the continuous reconstruction of experiences and the initiative of the particular individual. The role of a teacher is to encourage children to release their inner selves and to grow not only intellectually, but also physically, personally, and socially.

An important dynamic that Dewey’s writings convey is the role of imagination. Dewey (1980) postulates that to link prior knowledge with present learning (which is required if a person is to retain the knowledge), the learner must use her/his imagination. “The experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meanings and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively” (Dewey, 1980, p.272). Those of us who teach understand the value of imagination in a child’s learning process. Maxine Greene, in *Releasing Imagination* (1995), quotes John

Dewey as believing that imagination is the gateway to moving beyond the standard. I studied the children to observe how drawing and the associated talks could create a curriculum that released children's imagination.

Many theorists in the reconceptualization camp support John Dewey's (1963/1938) notion of reflective thinking. Conceding that it is critical to acknowledge the inequities or conflict concerned inherent in socio-economic relationships, roles and attitudes of society, and the consequences of political power, which often reduce the dominated individual to a powerless being. Through my research, I listened and honored the voices of my kindergartners, especially those who are silenced and marginalized by our current practices. "First is experience; language and thought follow" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 404). My research investigated the value of listening to each child as she/he developed her/his understanding of the world.

I hoped to demonstrate a value in the infinite resources children have as I used a constructivist interactional view of learning. It is possible that children learn more, develop positive attitudes, and have more control when the dialogue is driven by them and thus allows them to construct their own meaning (Lytle, 1993). Instead of presenting the children with only one correct answer for problems, I wanted to raise questions that would provoke thinking and active learning. I wanted to encourage peer dialogues to develop an understanding of others' views. My desire was to demonstrate that educators need to rethink practices with regard to ways of thinking, understanding, and doing. As the early childhood curriculum increasingly focuses on national standards, I have observed

that what children are expected to learn is narrowed down to isolated literacy skills training. These decontextualized literacy skills neglect the rich and holistic possibilities that visual learning strategies may offer. I believed that visual learning strategies could help to develop thinking patterns and concepts of viewing.

Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructivism

Another strand of the theoretical framework that drove my research was social constructivism, which is part of the larger theoretical orientation of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a form of “interpretive inquiry, which focuses on human perception and experience” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p.405). The reconceptualization of the curriculum field brought the phenomenological focus of lived experience to the field of curriculum understanding. Phenomenology has spawned versions of research and contributed to inquiries by Madeleine Grumet (1988), Janet Miller (1990), and Maxine Greene (1995), as the lived experience of teacher and students tries to cut through the layers of interpretations. Social constructivism stresses the interaction between an individual and the environment as the person integrates new experiences with old ideas and ways of viewing the world. The learner constructs the meaning through the interaction, reflection, and dialogue with others. Consequentially, the learning environment is student-centered, active, and fluid. These circumstances can spark a student’s interest and access prior experience and learning. Constructivism requires that the parts be understood in the context of the whole, not through isolation of skills. Furthermore, exploration is a large

part of the learning process as the learners make sense of their world (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1986). This theory emphasizes hands-on problem solving and making connections between facts and new understanding. Through this process, a teacher promotes extensive dialogue among the students, as well as with the teacher. Assessment becomes part of the learning process as an interactive view allows the individual to construct her/his own meaning.

One principle that underlies the interactive theory is that people can learn by observing others, talking with others, and sharing prior experiences. Lev Vygotsky's (1986) work on scaffolding is generally classified as social constructivism. This method of scaffolding holds that there are four levels of the scaffold. The first level involves observation of a skilled individual (apprentice to the master or child to the teacher or peers). In the second level, the learner shadows or mimics the master and performs the task simultaneously with the master. In the third level, the apprentice is practicing the skill under the watchful eye of the master until the fourth level, at which the master steps aside and allows the apprentice to perform unassisted (Vygotsky, 1978). The process described is closely related to learning from observing and listening to others and building on prior knowledge. Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework is social interaction as he states:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the

formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (p.57)

He believes that it is necessary to teach students that solving problems is more valuable if it is accomplished through listening to and learning from others' perspectives. Unfortunately, contrary to Vygotsky's theory, "the non-social character of the traditional school is seen in the fact that it erected silence into one of its prime virtues" (Dewey, 1963, p.63).

Multiple perspectives can develop through collaboration. The zone of proximal development will move the child into a metacognitive arena, creating room for advancement often referred to as growth. As a theorist, Vygotsky was interested in how external knowledge becomes internalized in children.

Vygotsky's theory maintains that mental development results from interaction with others that requires voicing one's perspective, weighing others' views, and expressing the view to others (Vygotsky, 1978). As individuals, we grow from creating our own meaning within the constructs of our environment.

Vygotsky has incorporated many theories and expanded the points of view of many theorists. He considered Jean Piaget's (1955) theory of development and determined that finding a child's level of development was only the beginning. Vygotsky (1978) wrote that it was not correct that learning trailed behind development and that not everyone should grow at a certain rate or at a certain age. He stressed how wrong it is to assume that an improvement in one educational area for a student would mean an improvement in general. Vygotsky maintained that, from the first day of life, learning and development are

interrelated, and he went further to show that the zone of proximal development is the goal teaches should pursue. The teacher must teach beyond where a child is so that growth occurs. As a theorist, Vygotsky was interested in how external knowledge becomes internalized in children. I concur with Vygotsky as he asserted that the tests we use today are testing yesterday's development and that if education is based on the current test, then there is no forward motion of development.

Vygotsky (1978) found value in collaboration. He defined collaboration as a mutual task in which partners are working together to produce an outcome that neither could have produced alone. The peers working together share an equal responsibility. Each student's development grows from dialogue and exposure to the other's perspectives. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of the child's interaction with the external world in the construction of meaning. His theory was based on the idea that all meaning making begins through the interaction with the primary people in his/her life most frequently parents and then teachers. Learning requires that the learner engage in facilitated interactions because Vygotsky concluded that thought is actually dependent on language as the learner talks himself or herself into understanding. In order for higher level thought processes to occur, learners need the opportunity to verbalize their thoughts, thus transforming learning that is deeply personal and intangible into socially constructed significance.

Another course of inquiry led Vygotsky to conclude that learning occurs when new data is within the range of an individual's existing capabilities and

involves the support or assistance of an adult or more capable peer. He termed this the *zone of proximal development*. As a child is attempting to understand, another person can share information that assists the learner in grasping the concept. This method of learning is included in the educational movement of cooperative learning and requires language related activities. Both significant growth and independence are stimulated by structured interactions among children who have different experiences and information to share.

Linking these two theories, scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, I developed visual learning strategies that I thought could enhance each student's ability to interact with others while connecting the different components of emergent literacy. I maintain that kindergarten children may benefit from enriching contextualized experiences with visual learning strategies such as verbal descriptions concerning their own drawings and interpretations of the pictures. I thought perhaps, talking about pictures and verbalizing while drawing would be effective ways of stimulating verbal expression and developing emergent literacy.

Vygotsky's theory convinced me to encourage the verbalization of children's thoughts. Too often in the classroom the visual is introduced through the teacher's or the author's words. I considered that my talks about pictures and children's talks while drawing could allow children to actively construct meaning from what they see. I agree that

to disregard the identity between cognition and action, not to see that knowing is doing, and not to see that every human act takes place in languaging and, as

such (as a social act), has ethical implications because it entails humanness, is not to see human beings as living entities. (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p.248)

I planned to provide the settings so that children could set about building a framework for looking at pictures, using the most logical and accessible tools: their own perceptions, their knowledge of the natural world, and the values of their social, moral, and conventional world.

Nel Noddings' Theory of Care

Another theoretical orientation to curriculum development I examined was Nel Noddings' ethic of care (1992) as applied to educational environments. Noddings' ethic of care can be placed in the larger theoretical orientation of gender text. The reconceptualization of the curriculum field brought to light the understanding of curriculum as gender text. Concerns with gender studies have influenced the research on feminism as politically focused curriculum scholars initially placed feminism studies in class analysis. In the 1970s, feminist theorists, such as Janet Miller (1990) and Madeline Grumet (1988), established feminist theory as a major discourse in the field of understanding curriculum. Feminists envision a future in which women's voices and all marginalized voices will be heard and respected.

Related to the need to reconceptualize knowledge acquisition as socially constructed is Nel Noddings' (1984) theory of care. Nel Noddings is a theorist regarded as one of the central figures in the discussion of ethics and moral education as she espouses the need for teachers to care about their students (Pinar, 1999). Noddings is the Lee L. Jacks Professor of Child Education, Emerita, at

Stanford University, professor of philosophy and education at Teachers College Columbia, and the author of numerous books *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984/2003), *Women and Evil* (1989), *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (1992), *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief* (1993), *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (2002), *Educating Moral People: A Caring Alternative to Character Education* (2002), and *Happiness and Education* (2003) offer a great wealth of wisdom concerning feminism in the educational realm.

Nel Noddings' notion of care is feminist in nature when introduced as a theory of ethics based on maternal instincts and nurturance (Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999). Noddings' epistemological view is that each must be true to herself/himself and that female and male essence does not denote "one set of traits superior to the other" (Noddings, 1995, p.181). Our human existence is to experience life and, as we reflect, make decisions defining our importance and our responsibilities. According to Noddings (1992), for women, every human encounter has the potential to be an occasion of caring because the primacy of maternal experience is evident. Therefore, Noddings' ontological approach is that each woman's reasoning points to feelings, needs, impressions, and a sense of personal ideals. Noddings asserts that it is the interaction and effective response from another that shapes our being (Noddings, 1995). According to Noddings, if we look at the traditional roles of nurturing which are nursing, teaching, childcare, and cooking, we see that caring is our essence.

Nel Noddings examines how an ethic of care can have profound and compelling implications for social and political thought. Noddings (1992) addresses vital issues that affect children of all ages, including ethnic issues, poverty, religious beliefs, gender roles, and cultural differences. Teachers must value the background knowledge students bring to the classroom in order to nurture the ideal of moral education. “Ruled by methodolatry that values standardization over individuality, and by an ideology of control that sees young people as merely an economic source, schools do not nurture students’ diverse interests, talents, and abilities” (Katz, Noddings, Strike, 1999,p.15). I chose the ethic of care because as I researched Nel Noddings, I embraced numerous factors involved in creating a learning environment where both the teacher and the student can thrive. Nel Noddings (1992) has cultivated a feminine, relational ethics between two parties, the “one-caring” and the “cared-for”. She points out that to care for another we have to “see the other’s reality” so that we care for the person and do not focus our care simply on a problem. The care Noddings refers to requires actual encounters with specific individuals. The educator is required to accept an interpersonal responsibility for feeling. This acceptance cannot be accomplished through good intentions alone. The ethic of care is a principle in which educators take responsibility for their role in educational situations. Nel Noddings (1992) posits that a teacher’s attention must be directed to all those involved and that controversial issues must be discussed. Noddings emphasizes the crucial need for dialogue, an authentic mutual engagement, which leads to compassion and understanding. The teacher-researcher must be engaged in

educational experiences that shift the power from teacher to students. I concur that it is my responsibility to be attuned to the natural processes of learning, the construction of meaning and understanding within a context, relationships, and concepts within a genuine community of learners. From my observations, educators need to recognize that the purpose of education is not to pile up facts but to cultivate direct personal engagement, inquiry, and meaningful understanding. Therefore, students must be explorers in a personal world.

Noddings' concept of interpersonal responsibility is closely examined and further illuminated by Lisa Goldstein (1997). Using the feminist ethic of care, Goldstein explores how love can be characterized in classrooms. She opted to use the term "love" because of its usefulness and powerfulness and because it is a term unexplored by academics and scholars. Goldstein's study, the ethic of care in an early education classroom, consisted of complex, non-stereotypical encounters and attitudes. She held that collaboration was an essential factor in her feminist research endeavor and a central issue in her study because of its focus on loving relationships in the classroom. Goldstein used a form of narrative inquiry as she reflected holistically about the data while focusing on complex themes. The purpose of her study was to examine the nature of love in educational settings and to develop a feminist vision of the education of young children. Goldstein sites Maxine Greene as an advocate for the emotion of passion being a necessary ingredient in a classroom, an ingredient possessing the power to transform the world. One of Goldstein's points was that, because care is, by definition, something that occurs between real people in real time; then it will always be

unique. Every example of the ethic of care will cause participants and observers to question their values and beliefs (Goldstein, 1997). In the field of early childhood education, it is impossible to try to unravel the twin strands of education and care.

John Dewey (1963), Lev Vygotsky (1986), and Nel Noddings (1992) emphasized that the problem with schools is not the children, it is the curriculum designed to teach the children. The general theory of cognitive development reflected in the work of the three theorists is that learning takes place as one internalizes interactions with others. As people live, engage, feel, create, and invest in their reality through the conversation with others, participant empowerment and knowledge expand. In order to develop a curriculum of imagination and caring while I taught emergent literacy, it was critical for me to understand the social and the cultural context in which the children were learning. I had to relinquish rigid application of the standards and favor a flexible, interactive approach as I listened to the children engage in talks during literacy activities. "Children develop best when they promote continuity in the learning process and when they build on real-life experiences" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p.153). My research allowed me to study each child's individual uniqueness as the child constructed and reconstructed the curriculum.

Emergent Literacy

I reviewed the literature of emergent literacy since most of early childhood education's curriculum focus is on the development of reading and writing. While there is a good deal of research on this topic, children's talk is missing from the curriculum of literacy development. My research explored the notion of talk as

pedagogy, illustrating that life's experiences are the foundation of literacy. My review of research revealed complementary definitions of emergent literacy. According to Sulzby and Teale (1991), the evolution of children's emergent literacy begins with their social interaction with others in their environment, as prerequisites are developed before the onset of formal instruction. Similarly, Grover (Russ) Whitehurst and Christopher Lonigan (1998) well-known researchers in the field of emergent literacy, define emergent literacy as it involves attitudes, knowledge, and skills. This emergent literacy is the gradual development of oral language, phonological awareness, and print awareness, which are developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing. The term "emergent" denotes the developmental process of literacy acquisition, defined as an increasing awareness of print. Emergent literacy recognizes that reading and writing develop concurrently and are interrelated in young children as the process of learning about the environment leads to the development of meaning. As young children develop language skills, they acquire the ability to think about language, talk about it, analyze its parts, and make decisions (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Therefore, language development is a constructive, meaning-oriented process in which language is viewed as natural, authentic, and purposeful, created through real world experiences. Sulzby and Teale (1991) concur that reading and writing develop at the same time and are interrelated in young children as experiences that encourage meaningful interaction provide the foundation. As disclosed in *Notes Toward a Theory of Dialogue* (Deniston-Trochta, Check, & Vanderbosch, 2005),

the teacher must not simply be the subject in the inquiry, leading the younger or the less informed to the Promised Land of Knowledge. There must be a dialogue wherein teachers and learners enter into a relationship where the process of learning itself is the singular method to achieve wisdom, the final goal. (p.2)

In contrast to these views, the vast majority of research concerning emergent literacy has focused on skills that are the pre-requisites for emergent literacy development, such as naming the letters of the alphabet and letter-sound correspondence (Adams, 1990; Behnken, Bissonnette, & Haney, 2003; Cunningham 2000; Worden & Boettcher, 1990). This research reflects previous theoretical views in which direct instruction on isolated skills was valued as the required instruction needed to render students ready for the world of reading and writing. Research regarding isolated phonics as the underlying mechanism to reading and writing supports the assertion that these are necessary skills required to read and write; however, I agree with the current emphasis on the child's contributions and the relationship between the individual's construction of oral language development, phonological awareness, and print awareness.

Inasmuch as some researchers in the field of emergent literacy focus on how each individual develops as she or he is exposed to experiences and how those experiences are interpreted and built upon, others spotlight the importance of isolated skills instruction. In order for students to develop a strong literacy foundation, phonics skill mastery would seem to be vital. Yet, instruction of these skills in isolation is much like providing a seamstress with a lot of fabric without

any thread to put the fabric together. Researchers like Sulzby and Teale (1991) and Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) realize the importance of prior experiences, interests, and variety of presentation to significant emergent literacy immersion. As children develop their literacy skills, one size does not fit all. Therefore, isolated phonics instruction is not all that is needed to help children develop literacy skills. I assert that children must be provided with a multitude of learning strategies, a balanced whole language and a skills-based approach, weaving and connecting the two so the child has all the opportunities to understand language.

Three domains of emergent literacy that are related to later reading and writing are oral language, print awareness, and phonological awareness. These three skills are the foundation of literacy and can be the predictors for how well children learn to read and write in a school situation (Cunningham, 2000). Children need to develop critical understanding of these three skills in order to learn to read and write. Literacy will emerge steadily as the child develops the expectation that language is meaningful.

Oral Language Development

The typical progression of oral language skills in young children begins when the child is an infant. At this stage, the child smiles socially, coos, cries, babbles, plays with sound, develops intonation, and imitates facial expressions. At two years of age, a child understands simple directions and questions, looks at books, points or names objects in pictures, uses two-word sentences, and responds to specific songs. At two to three years of age, a child has a high interest in language and in increasing communication, uses the word “no”, remembers

names of objects, uses words for thoughts, tells simple stories, and generalizes. At the age of three to four, the child can retell a story, has much better articulation, begins conversations, enjoys humor, is highly imaginative, asks many questions, communicates needs, and speaks in three to four word sentences. By the age of five, the child tells long tales, carries out directions well, talks with adults on an adult level in four to eight sentences, has a tremendous vocabulary, asks the meaning of words, and recounts in sequence the day's events (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

It is difficult to learn words if the knowledge of what words represent is not present; therefore, interaction with the environment plays a critical role in children's language development. Activities that encourage oral language development should include naturalistic, embedded opportunities for knowledge attainment. Looking closely at imagery and thinking about word choices sharpens the children's analytical skills (Sulzby, 1989). Children must acquire new conceptual language to organize and express their learning as the relationship among seeing, telling, drawing, and writing is intertwined.

Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of forty-two families and how their talks with their young children, ages one to three years old, affected language development. The results were recorded in the book, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. The authors were searching for the answers to basic questions about early interventions in the lives of disadvantage children. They discovered that the amount of talk that parents consistently engage in with their children is critical

because the more the parents talked to their children the faster the vocabularies developed. They also found that the richer the descriptions within the talks were, the stronger the children's language content became. The more the children interacted with varied language the better the children became as effective users of the language.

Writing Development

As in oral language development, a young child typically progresses through stages of writing development. Normally children witness millions of examples of language use (Holdaway, 1979). Holdaway maintains that through daily demonstrations of talking, questioning, requesting, arguing, singing, and explaining, a child comes to understand what talk is and what it can achieve. Therefore, language is a natural development. However, writing is not natural because direct demonstration of writing for a child can be elusive. The Beery Buktenica visual-motor integration test (1996) is a neuropsychological test that analyzes visual perception deficits, fine motor skills, and eye-hand coordination. This test can be used on young children to evaluate a child's visual construction skills.

If a child has the opportunity to observe writing, such emergent behaviors may begin with scribbling or drawing often repeating patterns over again; progressing to pretend writing with strings of lines representing letters, and then using symbols, letters, numbers, and letter-like forms in their writing attempts. At this time, the child reaches the developmental stage of recognizing his/her name in print and copying words, sometimes with frequent reversals. Children then

make the transition from letterforms to invented spelling, requiring organizing letters and words to represent the sounds a child “hears” in a word. The use of invented spellings is related to reading and writing as the child attempts to write representations of thoughts that are the foundation of reading and spelling skills in the early grades (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Children must understand that there are twenty-six letters of the alphabet and that the same letter can be written two different ways, representing upper and lower case letters of the English language. Young children must acquire the knowledge that words consist of letters of the alphabet and sentences consist of words and the writing sense of using spaces between words. At this time, a child begins to understand the use of punctuation and capitalization and can write with some conventional spelling.

Phonological Awareness

In addition to the amount of research on oral language development as a component of emergent literacy, a considerable body of research has indicated the demonstrated effectiveness of structured phonological awareness. This phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and understand the relationship between written language and spoken language (Cox, 2002; Holdaway, 1979; Salinger, 1996; Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). This body of research consistently shows that phonological awareness provides the strongest correlation with reading achievement (Neuman & Roskos, 1993; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Using the phonological processing skills, the five-year old child develops the ability to associate the phoneme (sound) with the letter, thereby facilitating the connection between letters and the sounds the letters represent in words. Further

development of phonological awareness progresses as the child understands that some letters (e.g.: a, e,i,o,u,g,c) represent multiple sounds and that the same sound can be associated with different letters (e.g.: g and j, c and k). Children who are phonologically aware can hear separate phonemes in spoken words discriminate among spoken words based on different phonemes and construct words that rhyme. Between the ages of five and six years old, the next developmental level of phonemic awareness is the ability to blend phonemes at the consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) level, followed by the ability to read words with consonant blends. Phonological awareness is the precursor to phonics, which is the method frequently used to teach children to read and often needs to be taught explicitly (Cunningham, 2000).

Print Awareness

A fourth component to emergent literacy is print awareness. Print awareness is the knowledge that words convey the message often independent of pictures. Early experiences with environmental print and storybook reading are significant factors in the development of emergent reading and writing (Dyson, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). When print awareness develops is largely dependent upon the adults' interaction with the child's development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), the typical progression of print awareness begins with associating items with highly visible print usually found in books and transferring to items in the child's environment, such as Toys "R" Us or MacDonald's. As a child is immersed in print, she or he begins to show interest in the printed word and in understanding words in context.

Children develop the important expectation that printed language is meaningful. When children are read to, the print awareness extends to understanding that pictures carry meaning, that the strings of letters are words, that there are spaces between words, and that print is a version of oral language. Children develop an awareness of how to read a book which involves holding the book right side up; starting with the first page and continuing to the end; and knowing that the left page is read first, top to bottom; and that the text is read left to right. All of these skills are requirements necessary to prepare a child to become a successful reader (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

The research I have reviewed indicates that oral language development (Cox, 2002; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Fisher, 1991), phonological awareness (Cunningham, 2000; Ericson & Juliebo, 1998; Holdaway, 1979; Pullen & Justice, 2003), and print awareness (Marr, Windsor, & Cernak, 2001; Salinger, 1996) are good predictors of a child's ability to read and write. I hypothesize that these components can be observed, documented, and analyzed as children in kindergarten are immersed in a print rich environment, nurtured with stimulating visuals and talks, and given opportunities to develop these skills in a non-threatening atmosphere.

As young children enter a structured school setting, written communication becomes paramount for school success. Whether a child is entering school as a "first time away from home" kindergartner or a seasoned day care preschooler, writing skills will become the focus of much of his or her time in school. Whether the child is four-, five-, or six-years-old, fine motor

development is a prerequisite skill for writing. This is evident as children try to control the motion of making lines on a page. Fine motor skills are movements produced by the body's small muscle groups. Students need eye-hand coordination and control to develop good handwriting skills. Most research on fine motor skills development relates to manipulation because movement precision plays an integral role. Intrinsic movements refer to the movement of fingers to manage objects already in one's hand (Payne & Isaacs, 1987). Examples of fine motor coordination are the ability to clap hands, open doors, wash hands, tie shoelaces, manipulate scissors, hold writing utensils to draw and write, trace, hold eating utensils properly, and grasp small items. Children usually draw before they attempt to write, and the manipulation of the objects used to draw can improve fine motor abilities.

As fine motor skills develop, handwriting development occurs in the following sequential stages: scribbling (ages two to three years old), writing symbols resembling letters and numbers (ages three to four years old), printing using capital letters (age four years old), printing using capital and lowercase letters (age four to five years old), printing using capital and lowercase letters appropriately (ages five to six years old) (Payne & Isaacs, 1987). Age-appropriate activities are required to ensure success in handwriting, such as creating and posting student generated stories or giving students access to a variety of materials (pens, colored pencils, markers) while encouraging a child to write notes, draw pictures, or create lists. During all of these phases, children are trying to control the motion of forming letters and arranging the letters on paper.

In conjunction with fine motor skills development, visual motor development is the term used to describe a child's ability to copy a variety of shapes, letters, or numbers. The prerequisites for handwriting are small muscle development, visual perception, eye-hand coordination, and tool manipulation (Marr, Windsor, & Cermak, 2001). When combined with increasing hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills allow a child the freedom to express thoughts and experiences. Tracing can increase tactile awareness and help a child to develop fluency and legibility. The relationship among seeing, acknowledging, drawing, telling, and writing are a significant aspect of teaching reading and writing. Children should be encouraged to use all of their senses to reach their communicative potential.

Both phonological awareness and letter recognition contribute to initial reading and writing acquisition by helping children to develop efficient word-recognition strategies. Proficient writers must understand the alphabet principle and understand the relationship between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds of the letters (Pullen & Justice, 2003). A child who is phonemically aware can blend phonemes, which involves putting the letter sounds together either to decode a word while reading or to compose a word when writing.

Sometimes a child may have difficulty forming the letters of the alphabet properly. I have observed children having difficulty copying some shapes and the letters "k", "g", and "s". However, once I have repeatedly demonstrated the letter formation, helped the child to write the letter, or used a highlighter marker for the child to trace the letter, this fine motor skill is mastered. A child's literacy

development is facilitated through adult guidance especially when learning a new task such as writing a letter (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

Memory Development

Memory development is required for a child to recall how to form a letter, to choose which letters are used to write a word, and to read. Berninger, Yates, Cartwright, Rutberg, Remy, and Abbott, (1992) define orthographic coding as the "ability to represent a printed word in memory and then to access the whole word pattern, a single letter, or letter cluster in that representation" (pg. 260). Thus, orthographic coding refers to the ability to both store in memory and retrieve from memory letters and word patterns. A young child's memory ability develops with age and exposure to experiences. Poor readers and writers have difficulty storing and processing information in short-term memory (Berninger, Yates, Cartwright, Rutberg, Remy, & Abbott, 1992).

In addition to short-term memory skills, metacognition is important in developing reading and writing cognizance. Meadows (1993) describes metacognition as the ability to reflect upon and talk about one's knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities. Young children (age's 3- 6 years) possess only the beginnings of metacognitive ability, which involves self-monitoring and correction strategies. They are able to direct their attention (the beginning of a metacognitive skill), but they lack other sophisticated skills needed to integrate higher order thought processes. Metacognitive and cognitive theory are deeply rooted in constructivism. It is only within the social and functional context of writing that children make sense of written language. I hypothesized that my

students would be able to develop metacognitive skills more effectively through the experience of being involved in talking about a picture and then by observing me writing each child's words beside the picture. Transposing each child's spoken word into written symbols through the dictation provided a concrete demonstration of the proper spelling of words. I demonstrated the formation of letters of the alphabet, correct spacing of words within a sentence, the unusual spelling of many words, and the existence of silent letters in words that cannot be heard when pronounced.

Appropriate Instructional Strategies for Kindergarten Students

I have found that inappropriate instructional strategies better suited to older children are often used in kindergarten classrooms. I know that many standards that were once taught in first grade are currently taught in kindergarten. Likewise, teaching practices that are not effective with many older children, such as whole group instruction and isolated drills, have trickled down to many early childhood classrooms as well. However, children come to school with a broad range of backgrounds of literacy development. Some children come to school with a strong foundation and know all the letters of the alphabet and many letter sounds. Some children come to school with little exposure to language. Nonetheless, all young children must actively experience learning in a meaningful social manner.

In *Issues and Trends in Literacy Education* (2000), editors Richard D. Robinson, Michael McKenna, and Judy M. Wedman identify current viewpoints of literacy instruction beginning with the discussion of a balanced reading

approach. The balanced reading approach incorporates varied techniques to teach reading and writing to children. Two techniques that were considered effective in a balanced program were whole language and traditional decoding. The whole language premise emphasizes authentic literacy development and skill instruction through immersion and interaction with quality literature. The traditional decoding method preferred by some educators, stresses direct repetitive instruction in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition. The balanced reading instruction suggested by Steven A. Stahl (1998) for an effective first-grade program is the one I use in my kindergarten program. It consists of “elements associated with whole language (teacher reading aloud, invented spelling, free-reading, extensive use of literature) as well as more direct instructional approaches (direct sound-symbol instruction, some use of decodable or even contrived texts)” (Stahl, 1998, p.55).

After reviewing a considerable amount of literature on the theories and models of literacy instruction and surveying teachers chosen as effective in promoting literacy, Michael Pressley, Joan Rankin, and Linda Yokio (2000) surmised that “effective primary literacy instruction is multifaceted rather than based on one approach or another” (p. 12). Emergent literacy instruction of such skills as letter recognition, phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition must be taught in the context of genuine reading and writing. Using multiple methods of instruction, providing opportunities for authentic talks, allowing children choices, exposing children to others’ opinions, and heightening

children's awareness of language must guide the curriculum in early childhood classes.

Firmly grounded in current child-centered, social constructivist learning theory, I explored a sampling of appropriate instructional strategies for kindergarten students. Six exemplary techniques needed to teach children to successfully read and write include (a) establishing centers, (b) creating a print-rich environment, (c) teaching phonemic awareness and writing strategies, (d) developing drawing and talking, (e) immersing children in literature, (f) promoting visual learning strategies.

Centers

Centers are areas of the classroom designated for play that are equipped with a multitude of manipulatives. Usually during an hour block of time, the children move freely about the room selecting from centers such as housekeeping, block, writing, drawing, painting, play dough, book, sand, games, listening, and computer. There are enough centers available to choose from so that the children have many opportunities to make different choices and interact with different peers. The centers are student driven with minimal guidance from the teacher because this should be a time for the children to explore, experience, and discover. Though this is often designated as a time for play, it is play that "stretches the child's language and logic beyond our experience" (Paley, 2004, p.12). Vivian Paley (2004) researches play in her book, *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*. She reiterates her concern, that play may become obsolete as early childhood educators are forced to meet developmentally

inappropriate standards. She maintains that play is the work of children, and she shares the stories of energy and commitment children tell as they interact with each other and their environment.

She describes in great detail the interaction of the children with one another.

Language becomes more vivid and spontaneous, enabling young children to connect, with greater fluency and curiosity, the words and phrases they know to new ideas. The process involves not only the flow of words and imagery but of shared myth and metaphor, of knowing where the lost babies are and whether dad can have sharp teeth like a wolf. (Paley, 2004, p.73)

I love to listen and watch my students play during center time. I move about the room and sit in different locations to hear conversations. I have many center choices for the seventeen children in my classroom. The children go to the centerboard, take a clothespin that is color coordinated with a center and place it on their shirt to choose a center. Each center will have only three to four children at a time by limiting the number of clothespins. Whenever a child wants to change centers, she/he can go to the centerboard, put her/his clothespin back, and choose another clothespin. As a result, during the hour the children transition smoothly to many centers and interact with a variety of peers.

Every morning I have a clipboard with the class list on it, and I call each child's name and ask what she/he wants for lunch because the children are given two choices of lunch each day. For example, one day the choices might be pizza or chicken fries. I write down what each child wants, and, when it is time for

lunch, I line the children up according to their entrée choice. This procedure is a part of our morning routine. One day I noticed two children walking around the room with a clipboard and marker in their hands. As I watched and listened, I was overjoyed to see them modeling my behavior. The children were going to the cubbies and copying a child's name. Then they would go ask the child what she/he wanted to order. Beside the child's name, the children wrote a string of letters to represent the food choice. It was wonderful watching the interaction and the acceptance by the other children willing to pretend. The children were actually demonstrating the concept of reading and writing as a spontaneous natural element of their life. Every day during center time, children laugh, talk, share, learn, pretend, socialize, and construct knowledge while they are engaged in play.

Print-Rich Environment

Research shows that teachers need to provide a classroom that has a print-rich environment, including but not limited to: magazines, books, charts, children's names, signs, labels, and displays of children's drawings and writings (Cox, 2002; Cunningham, 2000; Dickinson & Sprague, 2001; Dyson, 1985; Fisher, 1991; Holdaway, 1979; Neuman & Roskos, 1993; Pullen & Justice, 2003; Sulzby, & Teale, 1991). A special place for books and reading should be created in the classroom, along with many opportunities for children to engage in reading and looking at books. The names, labels, and signs should be functional, and children should be encouraged to use and read the displayed words. There should be numerous opportunities for the students to observe writing (Salinger, 1996)

and children's work should be displayed. Frequent demonstrations of proficient reading and writing by the teacher and other adults cultivate an awareness of print. As I have suggested, children learn language holistically for authentic, meaningful purposes; therefore, teachers are the role models for the development of reading and writing.

Phonemic Awareness

Children develop phonemic awareness as a result of the oral and written language to which they are exposed. Increasing children's skills in this area can improve reading and writing (Marr, Windsor, & Cermak, 2001). Phonemic awareness strategies that contribute to the development of emergent literacy are as follows: singing the alphabet song that includes the letter sound after each letter; reading alphabet books that name and have pictures of items that have the beginning sound of a letter featured; counting words in a sentence; counting letters in words; clapping syllables in words; and reading nursery rhymes, poems, and rhyming books (Ericson & Juliebo, 1998). Phonemic awareness is not a single concept and can often be difficult for some children to grasp. The English language consists of syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes. Every syllable has a rime, or the vowel and a consonant after it, and may have an onset, or the consonant before the vowel in the syllable (e.g., h-at). The psychological reality of teaching onset and rime confirms the practice of teaching word families and spelling patterns (Cox, 2002). This strategy of decoding words while reading can enhance a child's ability to break down a word and to use analogies from words they do know for words they do not know. Consider the example of the word *and*.

Once the child understands the word *and*, the child can observe an onset before the word and easily decode the word rather than sounding out each word at the phonemic level. The child can blend any onset with *and* to read words such as sand, hand, brand, land, and bland.

Writing Strategies

Reading and writing are a complementary process, supporting each other. Writing opportunities have proven to facilitate word analysis and word recognition in young children (Marr, Windsor, & Cermak, 2001). The practice called “inventive spelling” refers to the process wherein the children write words by writing the letters of words based on the letter sounds the children hear as they sound out the words (Cunningham, 2000; Ericson & Juliebo, 1998). Inventive spelling heightens phonemic awareness and develops a child’s reading and writing skills. Writing promotes fluency and children become better decoders when encouraged to use inventive spelling as they begin to write independently. As children analyze and interpret how to represent the sounds of the letters they are writing, they build the necessary skills for reading as well (Dyson, 1985). The primary emphasis of emergent literacy is on the child as an active learner. This current view of writing reflects the theory that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon. A child actively builds meaning as she/he brings background knowledge to the text recognizing that a single text, recognizing that a single text can have multiple meanings.

Drawing and Talking

“When drawing is part of literacy, it helps us know our subjects and our thinking and encourages us to dig in. Drawing slows us down and helps us notice-important skills for writers” (Ernst daSilva, 2001, p.2). I have found that children usually like to draw and talk. Quite often in kindergarten classrooms, children will draw as time allows or possibly go to the drawing center to create a picture. I appeal to educators to recognize that drawing is a critical component to literacy and should be incorporated into the curriculum everyday. Drawing is an integral part of the expansion of knowledge and allows children to own the knowledge acquisition. As children talk when they are drawing, they connect emotionally to their experience and feelings. “Pictures hold meanings and give information. When we draw them ourselves, we gain access to these layers” (Ernst daSilva, 2001, p.4). As the children spend time on the drawings and talk about the picture, the sequencing of activities is apparent. For example, a child may draw a tree and say, “It is fall”. The child will then begin drawing different colored leaves on the tree and on the ground. The child says, “The wind is blowing” and begins to use his pencil to draw large gray circles all over his paper. This will help children when they are writing to understand that writing is a process, and, if a child continues to think about a topic, ideas will expand and then words will flow. Ernst daSilva (2001) reiterates the theory of my research as she writes,

drawing is to help us think, get ideas, observe, and remember. The focus is not on appearance but on meaning. Therein lies the potential. When we link art to the process of writing, we go after the power that the

partnership holds, creating classrooms where students find their stories and all the important meanings in their lives. (p.6)

As children discover the concept of putting their thoughts on paper and construct meaningful drawings, they will lay the foundation of writing and reading. The talk associated with describing drawings provides opportunities for questioning, praising, critiquing, revising, suggesting, indicating, and rethinking. “Student’s artistic expressions can provide teachers with additional ways of determining what they understand about facts and concepts as well as how they understand them” (Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000, p174). Creative self-expression through language and drawing help children understand the meaning of words.

Immersion in Literature

Teachers of young children have recognized the importance of reading a variety of books to children. Kindergartners discover that books can be engaging, that the symbols represent the meaning as the story comes from print, and that books can be fun. Shared reading with predictable books is an instructional strategy whereby the teacher and children read a book together in which repeated patterns, refrains or pictures allow the children to engage in reading the book (Cunningham, 2000; Fisher, 1991; Holdaway, 1979). Dialogic reading is a share-reading intervention using interactive picture books designed to promote the development of oral language and literacy skills (Dickinson & Sprague, 2001). Research has established that illustrations capture a child’s attention and that a child relies on the pictures during the early stages of reading development (Salinger, 1996; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). During typical teacher reading /student

listening activities, the child is an inactive participant. In the dialogic reading strategy, the adult assumes the role of active listener as the child answers questions, adds information, and describes the material in a picture book (Dickinson & Sprague, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Shared reading and dialogical reading experiences can produce substantial gains in oral language development. The interactive process involves the child, the mature reader, and the text and allows for the child to increase expressive and receptive language. Similar to dialogical reading, my visual learning strategies will provide the opportunity for a child to construct and share her/his knowledge of a chosen picture. The use of a picture, rather than story, will encourage a child to develop her/his own “before and after”. This method will allow for more creativity and a wider variety of responses. This skill, the use of decontextualized language, appears to aid the development of reading (Dickinson & Neuman, 2002). According to Dickinson and Tabors (2001), language growth can vary widely among children from different economic and cultural backgrounds. However, a child can be exposed to language use appropriately and effectively, thereby increasing a use and understanding of language.

Young children learn best in a child-centered environment through an integrated curriculum that balances teacher-directed, peer-directed, and child-initiated activities. Talk is a social act and I had the opportunity to hear the stories each child brought to the classroom through the use of visual learning strategies. Teaching and planning for oral language experiences enabled me to provide the opportunity for children to bring their oral language traditions to each

experience. There is a need for a functional, child-orchestrated language practice within socially meaningful settings (Delpit, 1995). It is necessary to establish norms of interaction between students and the teachers and among students and their peers. As I assisted learners in making meaning in a way that functionally prepared them to continue their education, I planned lessons that I hoped were meaningful to the children. Through the use of social constructivism in my research, children listened to others discuss a picture permitting multiple interpretations and learned about others as they talked while they drew pictures. I suspected that children should be presented with the concept that there can be many interpretations and that it was important that people listen to one another. My experience in the classroom has allowed me to observe that children develop positive attitudes, learn more effectively, and have more control when the dialogue is child driven. Talking allowed students to move beyond the drill, repeat, and review instruction in many curriculums and develop high-level thinking skills, caring peer relationships, strong dialogue techniques, and good listening skills. Research has shown that children who respond aesthetically develop higher levels of understanding as they connect new information to already stored information (Bruner, 1990).

Visual Learning Strategies

“Visual art is a method of knowing, a way of looking at the world, and a language that provides both artists and audiences an opportunity to imagine, question, and reflect – a chance to see things that are or that are not there” (Richards, 2003, p. 42). Through the incorporation of visual learning strategies, I

hoped that oral language could be cultivated so that it enhanced the development of writing and reading. Visual literacy could enhance reading and writing literacy by demonstrating the connections of pictures to thoughts, thoughts to writing, and writing to reading. Phillip Yenawine (1997) cautions that

there is no instruction in visual literacy either in schools or out nor even recognition that learning to look is, like reading, a process of stages.

Visual literacy should be seen as a similarly slow-developing set of skills and understandings that progress unevenly, each step building on earlier ones, each dependent on certain kinds of exposure and instruction.

(Yenawine, 1997, p.1)

I focused my investigation on two visual learning strategies, the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) curriculum created by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine (2001) and the Picture/Word Association Model found in *Success in Kindergarten Reading and Writing: The Readiness Concept of the Future* (Adams, Johnson & Connors, 1980). The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) curriculum links two theories, peer interaction (Vygotsky, 1978) and the “advantage of teaching viewing through verbalizing, grouping peers together for discussions of works of art” (Yenawine, 1999, p.8). The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a multi-year (grades K-2 and 3-5) curriculum using art objects to teach critical thinking in schools. Abigail Housen’s research focused on guiding children through the process of observing, discovering, and making sense of art by connecting the art to concrete experiences. While using method, the teacher facilitates participation by reinforcing any comments offered about the art.

Everyone brings different experiences to the observations; therefore, multiple responses are valued. It is the teacher's responsibility to model acceptance and to link ideas. Housen begins the process just as I begin my picture labeling activity, by asking the question, "What is going on in this picture?" and "to encourage deductive reasoning and grounding of observations in the work, viewers are asked to provide the visual evidence to support their opinions" (Yenawine, 1999, p.10). During my picture labeling process, I reminded students to listen to other's opinions, not repeat a word previously given, and remember that different observations can be given about the same picture. "The notion of building interpretations of meaning based on a large number of observations becomes common practice" (Yenawine, 1999, p.11). I have noticed that the children's natural language development increases the complexity of responses. Without my direct instruction, the children began by just naming an item in the picture. After six weeks of interacting with pictures and listening to other's views, the children use phrases and sentences to describe the visual encounter.

In the same way that those teaching children to read carefully select and sequence texts to intrigue and appropriately challenge students, images should progress from the familiar, accessible and simple to more complex, keeping pace step by step with development. (Yenawine, 1999, p.11)

Initially, children see things in the picture and, after naming the item, often relate personal experiences associated with the picture. Yenawine and Housen recommend choosing art pieces that encourage narrative readings or pictures that depict actions. I followed this recommendation when I chose pictures

for my picture labeling. As I listened to the children during the activity, I was allowed access to children's thoughts, and, as a result, I learned more about each individual child and each child's history. "Through both behavior and language, researchers have a window into the range of ways people learn from interacting with their environments" (DeSantis & Housen, 2001, p.2).

The Picture/Word Association Module found in *Success in Kindergarten Reading and Writing: The Readiness Concept of the Future* (Adams, Johnson, & Connors, 1980) is one of four twenty minute modules designed to expose children to reading and writing in a natural positive manner. The other three modules are the alphabet module, the oral language module, and the story time module. The purpose of the alphabet module is to daily show the children a letter of the alphabet by writing it on the board and then drawing something that begins with that letter. For example, the children are shown how to write the letter "f" and a fan is drawn. The children are then given a plain piece of paper and instructed to write the letter or to draw the picture. The teacher assists individual children as needed. Positive comments should be given repeatedly, bearing in mind that the children will have many opportunities throughout the year to write.

The oral language/reading module of *Success in Kindergarten Reading and Writing: The Readiness Concept of the Future* (Adams, Johnson, & Connors, 1980) incorporates individual student's language and provides the chance for the children to watch as her/his word is written. For example, the child is given a topic such as toys. The teacher writes the child's name and her/his response on a small index card, i.e. doll, spelling the word aloud as the child repeats the letters.

The child then tapes the card on the wall with the other student's responses. The intent is for the words given by the children to become phrases and sentences.

The words are displayed until a new topic is discussed with the child.

The story time module involves reading stories to students while selecting words from the story written on the board. The authors provide a suggested word category for each day, such as, characters in the story, verbs in the story, names, sight words, colors, objects, and emotions. The words are written on the board, and, as the teacher reads the story, the teacher points to the word.

The picture/word association module was designed to provide children with the opportunity to see their word written, to observe the formation of letters in context, and to possibly read the word. The authors designed this activity knowing that children in Colorado would probably use different words from children in Georgia. The authors provide suggestions for one hundred and eighty days of pictures that can be chosen from newspapers, magazines, photographs, or drawings. The design is for the children to look at a picture, then one at a time, come up to the picture, name an item, and point to it. The teacher writes the word, voicing the name of each letter as the word is written. After every student gives a word, the picture is hung in the room for ten days for the children to view. "One important aspect of this module is to bring reality based pictures into the kindergarten program" (Adams, Johnson, & Connors, 1980, p. 15).

The program, *Success in Reading and Writing: The Readiness Concept of the Future* was introduced in Durham, North Carolina, in the fall of 1977 after ten years of research on content and methodologies. The series included grades

kindergarten through grade six. In the fall of 1987, it was introduced in Chatham County schools. I was one of the teachers selected to go to Durham to observe the program in practice. On returning to Savannah, I was chosen by the Chatham County Kindergarten Curriculum Director to teach workshops to train kindergarten teachers in Success in Kindergarten Reading and Writing. The program was used for about four years, until the next Language Arts/Reading series adoption. Since then, there have been numerous language arts series adoptions. However, with each text adoption I continued using the Picture/Word Association Module because I saw the value of children witnessing their own words becoming print that they could read.

Coincidentally, through my review of literature, I uncovered the Teaching Beginning Reading and Writing with the Picture Word Inductive Model developed by Emily F. Calhoun (1999). The only mention Emily Calhoun makes to Success in Reading and Writing: The Readiness Concept of the Future is as follows: “the concept of using pictures as a stimulus for language experience activities in the classroom was developed specifically for teaching young students to read and write” (Calhoun, 1990, p.3). However, the Teaching Beginning Reading and Writing with the Picture Word Inductive Model is in essence the same design; it is students interacting with pictures. However, the difference is that Emily Calhoun expects the children to be able to read. “The Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) builds on listening and speaking vocabularies of the students helping them to add reading and writing to their communications repertoire” (Calhoun, 1990, p.3). Each child locates an item in the picture and

gives the word for that item. The teacher spells the word and allows the child to draw a line from the word to the picture of the item. Each child in the class has an opportunity to give a word and draw the line. After each word is written, the entire class repeats the word as the teacher reads it. The teacher then calls on a child to read the word the class just read. This procedure is followed for each word given. The next day the class reads the list of words. The teacher prints the words from the labeled picture on index cards, making a set for each child in the class. Each child is asked to try to read the words in the set of cards. If a child cannot read the word, the teacher takes the child and the word card to the picture, has the child follow the line from the matching word to the picture, and asks the child to read the word. On the following day, the children are asked to look at the same picture and give a sentence. The teacher writes the child's name and writes the sentence the child gives on a piece of chart paper. The next day, the teacher has each child's sentence with her/his name printed on a strip of paper. The task for each child is to find her/his own sentence, try to read the sentence, and share the sentence with others to read. During the next few days activities the teacher continues with the children sorting the words by beginning letter, final letter, or by meaning and trying to put the sentences together to create a paragraph. The students are encouraged to use the words to write independently.

“The curriculum was designed to facilitate growth through each of its dimensions strands—building vocabulary, classifying, creating sentences and paragraphs, reading—in an integrated fashion so that each strand will support the others” (Calhoun, 1990, p.6). I feel that this curriculum does not to take into

account the child who comes to school not knowing a single letter of the alphabet and not ready to read a list of words. While I maintain that art is a natural connection to reading and writing, we must be careful not to box in students by expecting all of the students to learn the same words at the same rate. My picture labeling activity was about exposing children to other's words and allowing children the opportunity to witness writing and as a result, witness reading. I used a different picture each day to maintain interest. I did not limit the children concerning what is said about the picture, whether it was a word, phrase, sentence, or question.

The literature review helped provide a theoretical framework for my research, foundations needed for literacy, and appropriate instructional strategies. It also helped provide a methodology for conducting my research. Even though curriculum reconceptualization began in the 1970's, we must understand that the push for standardization can be crippling and can be contrary to research that supports appropriate instructional strategies. While I acknowledge that there are a wide variety of appropriate instructional strategies, I choose six exemplary techniques to teach children in kindergarten to successfully read and write. I establish centers, create a print-rich environment, teach phonemic awareness and writing strategies, and immerse children in literature. My research studied children drawing and talking as well as children interacting with visual learning strategies. I investigated strategies that could develop a curriculum of imagination and caring for kindergarten children.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY
Narrative Inquiry

My theoretical framework for this study is John Dewey 's (1963) education, experience, and imagination, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, and Nel Nodding's (1984) theory of care. My methodology is narrative inquiry since the purpose of this study was to examine the children's social interactions while I focused on the talks among the students and with me, their teacher-researcher. The narrative approach provided me with a framework that furnished a voice to each participant, thereby offering multiple perspectives, as I developed a curriculum of imagination and caring. I deconstructed traditional early childhood practices of emergent literacy development with young children as I listened to children within the context of classroom activities. I kept the focus of my narrative inquiry research on the experiences of kindergartners, as they were involved in using their imagination through drawing, talking, and writing. As defined in *Designing Qualitative Research*, Marshall and Rossman (1999) summarize that narrative inquiry "is used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings" (p.107). The theories of Dewey, Vygotsky, and Noddings all support narrative inquiry as a process of researching education, experience, imagination, caring, and social constructivism.

As a participant-researcher, I had to be mindful of the difference between "the events as lived and the events as told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p.6). I had the advantage of being teacher-researcher, since the study took place in my

classroom with my students. Clandinin and Connelly, pioneers of narrative inquiry, (1991) further posit,

If we accept that one of the basic human forms of experience of the world is as story.....and if, further, we take the view that the storied quality of experience is both unconsciously restoried in life and consciously restoried, retold, and relived through processes of reflection, then the rudiments of method are born in the phenomenon of narrative. (p. 259)

I was the researcher listening to the children's stories during activities in the classroom. The activities comprised but were not limited to drawing and writing time, picture discussion time, and field notes taken during formal and informal classroom events. I looked to see how children felt; whether they were happy, engaged, realistically confident, eager for experience. As a qualitative researcher, I used the complexity of social interactions and meanings that could be attributed to interactions with peers. The research methodology was narrative inquiry because the emphasis on narrative inquiry is on the telling in relationship to others. In the process of the learners partaking in the talks, the narratives reflected a process of self-discovery. As the participant-observer, I listened and recorded group interactions and behaviors as I participated fully.

“Stories are the closest we can come to experience when we and others tell of our experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p.415). I hope my research using narrative inquiry allowed children the freedom and the convenience to tell their stories. I used an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and narrative analysis, which I anticipated would allow me the opportunity to manage an

interdisciplinary approach to research. I wanted to weave together my reflections and professional insights to create a personal theory of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) use narrative inquiry to pursue the complexity of curriculum, “the process of making meaning of our curriculum, that is, of the narratives of our experience, is both difficult and rewarding” (p.11). As teachers, we need to reconceptualize our field as one in which young children utilize their own voices and we must make every attempt to actually hear what is being said. I was a story recorder and my classroom was a community of stories. As I researched children’s storied lives, I also described my everyday actions through storytelling. I focused my narrative inquiry research on the experience of kindergartners in the classroom.

Influential examples of narrative inquiry research include the work of Yvonna Lincoln (1997), F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin (1988), JoAnn Phillion (2005), and Ming Fang He (2005). In *Self, Subject, Audience, Text: Living at the Edge, Writing in the Margins* (1997), Yvonna Lincoln writes “multiple stories feed into any text; but, equally important, multiple selves feed into the writing or performance of a text, and multiple audiences find themselves connecting with the stories which are told” (p.38). Lincoln writes about the use of narrative inquiry as a way to break the silence of those long silenced. She is referring to the marginalized in our society, the minorities, and the voices that never get a chance to be heard. Likewise, Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (1990) have collaborated on many articles and books addressing the need for narrative inquiry research with education focusing on the adult’s perspective.

“The educational importance of this line of work is that it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experiences as lived” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p.3). Narrative names the design of the inquiry as well as the composition and the quality. Hence, narrative researchers collect the stories of lives around them and write narratives of the experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) posit that as researcher, it is imperative to listen to the practitioner’s story and discern that it is a collaborative mutual storytelling and restorytelling as the research advances. My research enabled me to be the story listener, the storyteller, and the researcher of voices that have also been marginalized, the children.

For a period of six months, I researched my own students in my classroom during literacy activities. I had a secure caring relationship with my students allowing the freedom of thoughts in a secure place. I was aware that using narrative inquiry required a trust between the researcher, my participants, and myself. Using narrative inquiry reflected my conviction that “the inquiry should be a mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.122).

Narrative & Experience in Multicultural Education (2005), edited by JoAnn Phillion, Ming Fang He, and Michael Connelly is a collection of narratives exploring multicultural issues in education. In it (2005) Grace Feuerverger writes, “Indeed, a growing number of scholars now recognize that because

teachers are key players in education, their voices need to be heard; they have a right to speak for and about the teaching–learning experience” (p.178). As a narrative researcher, I used the complexity of social interactions and found meanings that could be attributed to the interactions.

I used narrative inquiry to explore the lived experiences of the kindergartners and their perceptions of the world. For children use their talks and drawings to construct meaning of their experience of the world. As a narrative inquirer, I tried to make sense of children’s talks and drawings from their perspectives. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), state “As we work within the three-dimensional narrative space, we learn to see ourselves as always in the midst – located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social” (p.63). I explored children’s ways of communicating their thinking about the world by looking into these dimensions. I studied “the untapped potential for expression and learning” (Gallas, 1994) that all children bring with them to my classroom. In my study, I reflected on the exemplary work of Vivian Paley, Karen Gallas, and Vivian Maria Vasquez, all teacher-researchers who seized the opportunity to listen to children in their classrooms as the children constructed and reconstructed life’s experiences.

Exemplary Work: Vivian Paley

Another innovative educator using narrative inquiry is Vivian Paley. For four decades, Vivian Paley has been a kindergarten teacher who is curious about her own thoughts as she teaches young children. In 1989, Paley began recording activities within her own classroom to listen to, transcribe, and reflect on

children's interactions. She found narrative inquiry useful as a method to deliberate about her teaching as it helped her to understand the students. The knowledge she accrued was so powerful that it launched her into years of writing about experiences in her classroom. Storying as an experience is imperative to Paley (1991). She maintains that the classroom has all the elements of theatre, and the observant, self-examining teacher will not need a drama critic to uncover the meaning, character, and plot within a classroom. She sees narrative inquiry as a method for teachers to construct meaning and rethink their art of teaching.

Her long career of teaching is celebrated in her books, including *Boys and Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner* (1986), *Wally's Stories: Conversations in Kindergarten* (1987), *Mollie Is Three: Growing Up in School* (1988), *White Teacher* (1989), *The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter* (1991), *Bad Guys Don't Have Birthdays* (1991), *You Can't Say You Can't Play* (1993), *Kwanzaa and Me: A Teacher's Story* (1996), *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* (1998), *The Kindness of Children* (2000), *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2004).

Vivian Paley's mission is to listen and record the interchange among children.

In her book *White Teacher* (1989), Paley details the vulnerability she felt as a teacher of black children during the early years of integration. Her thoughts, reflections, and growth are noted in the book as she learns from her own experiences. Vivian Paley does not presume to theorize. She is "a model of a teacher as an inquirer, engaged in a narrative teaching practice of knowing" (Lyons & Laboskey, 2002, p. 12). Her thoughts, reflections, and growth are noted in the book as she learns from her own experiences

The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter (1991) is a book that charts her understanding of the meaning of play for children. It provides the narrative to research the importance of fantasy in children's lives. *You Can't Say You Can't Play* (1993) is a look at the moral dimensions of the classroom as Paley explores how to keep students from being ignored. *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* (1998) describes Paley's journey in her final year of teaching as she explores with her students the themes of identity, race, and gender through the characters in Leo Lionni's books. Paley's latest book, *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2004) examines the unconstrained mode of learning that takes place in a kindergarten classroom as children construct meaning. Paley denounces the disappearance of creative time in classrooms as teachers strive to teach the mandated standards. She maintains that the social development of children is the critical component of all learning. Supporting Lev Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding, Paley (2004) advocates,

if, as Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, informs us, children rise above their average behavior in play, let us pursue the ways in which their teachers might follow them up the ladder, starting at the first rung, which, as every child knows, is fantasy play. (p.3)

As Vivian Paley observed the importance of fantasy in a child's psychological, intellectual, and social development, I have noticed children involved in fantasy as they draw. My research differs from Vivian Paley's because I created visual learning situations to encourage imagination and talks. Talking and drawing opened the confines of the reading and writing standards while permitting fantasy

to expose the many dimensions of a child's uniqueness. The images carried emotional meaning for the child in the process of the crayon or pencil in a child's hand moving around the paper as she/he created, observed, talked, and fantasized. I researched drawing and talking to observe if it was capable of engaging students in an open dialogue that was influenced by each child's previous experiences.

One day, I took my students outside to play and it began to rain. As other teachers went back inside, my class and I sat on the sidewalk and listened. We talked about what we heard, what we saw, what we smelled, and what we thought. We discussed the possibility of people eating clouds since we can drink rain. The children and I talked about all the things on earth that need the rain and where it went as it fell to the ground. Then we sat in different locations around the school to see if the rain sounded different in different places. We heard the raindrops on the metal roofs, on the dirt, on the sidewalk, and on the road as the cars drove past. As a result of this unplanned adventure with nature, things were discussed I could not have planned if I were just intent on teaching the standards because the discussion involved the students and their questions. The next day, the sentence the children were to copy in the booklet to ignite their imagination was "The rain _____". Every child completed the sentence differently, and each drew varied representations of the previous day's encounter with the rain.

In considering curriculum as a transformative process, we will need to view curriculum as more than a series of contingent units – to see it as a mixed and multivariate integration of rich, open-ended experiences; as a complex mosaic ever shifting its center of attraction as we shift ours. (Doll, 1993, p.38)

Consequently, the purpose of my research was to study children talking as it related to each child's learning development. I observed children as the learning was verbalized, and I recorded the children's choice of vocabulary as well as the prior experiences that the child talked about during the process of learning.

Exemplary Work: Karen Gallas

Another author that captures the voices of children within a classroom context is Karen Gallas. In the many books she has authored, *The Languages of Learning: How Children Talk, Write, Dance, Draw, and Sing Their Understanding of the World* (1994), *Talking Their Way Into Science: Hearing Children's Questions and Theories, Responding with Curriculum* (1995), *Sometimes I Can Be Anything: Power, Gender, and Identity in a Primary Classroom* (1997), and *Imagination and Literacy* (2003), Gallas uses narrative to explore young children and how they communicate their knowledge of the world. She investigates the power of imagination and the role it plays in classrooms amid the various subject areas. Gallas (2003) maintains "We need a new paradigm for education that places imagination in the center of the process, and that paradigm is limited only by the imaginations of those who care about our children and the children themselves" (p.169). I agree that imagination should be allowed to be the fuel that can inspire children to thrive in educational settings. Magnifying the voice of children will hasten our perceptiveness into childhood and could lead to phenomenological direction in the education of our youth. "Listening to children (or anyone, I suppose) requires respecting not only their experiences and

opinions, but the contexts of their lives. It requires trust between the speakers that only develop over time” (Deniston-Trochta, Check, & Vanderbosch, 2005, p. 2).

Karen Gallas, like Vivian Paley, finds value in uncovering and honoring new experiences, as well as past experiences, about which children often remain silent. The theory that drives both women is that children are frequently filled with deep thought about everyday occurrences that must be released and heard to permit the social interaction necessary for understanding. Gallas’ most recent work was written after four years of inquiry into the theory of imagination and its significance in young children’s acquisition of literacy. As I was researching literature on literacy and imagination, I found that Karen Gallas’ work confirmed that there were others in education negotiating the standardization of the curriculum while maintaining an arena that allows imagination to guide the curriculum. In *Imagination and Literacy: A Teacher’s Search for the Heart of Learning* (2003), Gallas proposes that

in establishing this open pedagogical space, we allow imagination to enter into our work as teachers and as researchers; we make room in the classroom for doubt, intuition, curiosity, wonder, risk taking, and experimentation; we challenge ourselves and our students to shift our perspectives on teaching and learning. (p. 143)

She recorded notes about her learning and the children’s learning as she attempted to chronicle instances in which imagination showed itself through the children’s actions, words, or drawings. Just as I have found from my observations, she noticed that the children’s social interaction was a part of the drawing and

learning. The talks that transpired from the drawings were as critical to the child's growth as the writing, drawing, and reading from which the children were learning. My research is similar to Karen Gallas' as we both hold that too many of the activities that our students attend to are dull, boring, rote, and repetitive. Gallas' concern is that imagination is not something that should be limited to the arts. Imagination can be the door opening that enables the children to know what they know. An entrance where the classroom ambience is one "where imagination is at the center affirming who they are as individuals, while also enabling them to recognize, identify, and form alliances with those who are different" (Gallas, 2003, p.168).

Exemplary Work: Vivian Maria Vasquez

In *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children* (2004), Vivian Maria Vasquez uses literacy strategies to critically look at the curriculum and to relate the curriculum to each child's world. She shares the approach she used for years with her pre-kindergarten students. Vasquez's book reiterates that educators must not be forced by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the standards to continue with isolated learning in our classrooms. Through example she allows children how to express thoughts and to discuss questions and concerns. Not only does she demonstrate to children to question things, but she also shows the children how to find answers to any concerns they might have with their surroundings. She takes each lesson further by encouraging the children to explore ways to bring about change by taking social action. Vasquez (2004) makes the argument that her role as teacher "was not to tell the children what to

think or how to act, but based on their inquiries, to offer alternate ways of taking action and a way of naming their world within the stance they chose to take” (p.101). Vasquez devotes pages of her book to pictures of the children’s work that served as a reminder of their experiences throughout the year. I also kept and displayed the pictures we labeled and the booklets in which the children wrote.

As researched by Vivian Paley, Karen Gallas, and Vivian Maria Vasquez, I agree that it is imperative that we show children how to examine their lives in relation to the world and in relation to others. All three researchers provide excellent examples of narrative inquiry and establish how necessary it is to listen to the students through a curriculum of imagination and caring. I used the example of their experiences to guide my research with my students. My research differs from Paley, Gallas, and Vasquez as I provided the stimulus, drawings and pictures, to instigate the talks. Rather than just facilitate a student’s acquisition of literacy skills, I wanted to actively participate in that acquisition and record the student’s use of words.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included a school portraiture, class portraiture, participant selection, participant profiles, children’s talks and drawings, children’s talks and pictures, including notes about children’s daily talks and direct quotes that revealed their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The students’ chosen attend an elementary school in Savannah, Georgia, where I am employed as a kindergarten teacher. Permission for participation was obtained before any data

were collected from the principal, the parents of six children chosen in my class, and the six children chosen. Each child's identity was confidential.

School Portraiture

The school in which I chose to conduct my study is the one where I work, Herman W. Hesse Elementary School. It is located in Savannah, Georgia at 9116 Whitfield Avenue. Built in 1917, it was considered to be the first modern school in Chatham County. In 1945, parents built a kitchen near the school so the children could eat at school instead of going home for lunch. In April of 1963, the elementary school was dedicated as the Herman W. Hesse Elementary School. To help with integration of the schools in the 1980's, Hesse housed kindergarten, fourth, and fifth grades, with children bused in from inner city schools. Hesse neighborhood children were bused to an inner city school grades first, second, and third grades. In 1985, another integration plan was implemented that allowed all the Hesse neighborhood children to attend Hesse in kindergarten through fifth grades and for parent's of children from inner city schools to complete Select applications for their children to attend Hesse. This was the first time a full-day kindergarten program was implemented in Chatham County. I began teaching at Hesse Elementary School during that particular year.

In the summer of 1998, Hesse Elementary School had extensive building renovation. The school has four wings that house the school office, the nurse's office, and the counselor's office, and pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The facility also includes a gym and fine arts wing that houses the media center, the art room, the music room, and the computer lab. There are eight portable

classrooms that are not being used at this time. The school grounds have a track and playground equipment for the different grade levels served, as well as a gazebo classroom. There is a large lunchroom that allows ten classes at a time to eat.

In 2001-2002, the county began eliminating the Select program at Hesse with the kindergarten children. If a child were in first through fifth grades, the child would be able to attend Hesse through the fifth grade. Because children are no longer bused from out of district to Hesse, the school is currently a neighborhood school, and attendance has dropped. There is discussion among the Chatham County School Board members of redistricting many of the elementary school's attendance zones.

Hesse currently has pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with twenty-three teachers, an art teacher, a music teacher, a band teacher, a physical education teacher, two and a half S.E.A.R.C.H. teachers, and four special education resource teachers. The staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, a secretary, a counselor, a nurse, a data clerk, nine paraprofessionals, four custodians, and four lunchroom workers. The personnel are all female except for the principal, the music teacher, and a lunchroom worker. There are two pre-kindergarten, five kindergarten, four first grade, three second grade, four third grade, two fourth grade, and three fifth grade classes. The male /female ratio of students is almost equal with a total of four hundred and sixty-nine students at Hesse. There are one hundred and eighteen black students, three hundred and eight white students, fifteen Asian, fourteen Hispanic, one Islander, and fourteen multiracial students.

The neighborhood school reflects varied social-economic backgrounds, ranging from low to extremely high, with an equal number of children on free or reduced lunch and children paying for lunch. These children live in trailer parks, in nearby subdivisions, and in gated communities.

At Hesse Elementary School, there are five kindergarten classes with fifteen to eighteen children in each class. We are very fortunate because each teacher has a very qualified paraprofessional. The five kindergarten teachers have an average of twenty years of experience, and some of the teachers have taught at Hesse for at least seventeen years. I have had the joyful position of teaching kindergarten at Hesse for twenty-one years.

At Hesse, the kindergarten teachers have worked diligently together to use an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to guide the curriculum and to meet Georgia State Standards. Teachers have designed units that usually run one to two weeks in length. The units include school, family, friends, fall, owls, pumpkins, Halloween, scarecrows, Thanksgiving, reindeers, trees, Christmas, winter, penguins, kindness, community helpers, plants, animals, Easter, spring, transportation, and summer. The Language Arts program teachers have created comes from years of experience and experiences with both developmentally appropriate and developmentally inappropriate strategies. Teachers have designed a curriculum that uses a variety of methods including a phonics program, a whole language program, and a sight word program on a daily basis incorporated into the unit of study.

As math is taught, teachers use a hands-on manipulative style of demonstrating the math concepts. Continually reviewing and teaching the math standards throughout the year reinforces them. For example, during the fall unit, the children sort, graph, and count leaves; write the numbers for the set; and pattern leaves. The Science, Social Studies, and Health standards are incorporated through the use of the unit approach to teaching.

Every day the children go to centers for an hour. The center choices change through the year, but include blocks, games, housekeeping, sand table, art, paint, play dough, writing, listening to a story on tape, and computers. The Physical Education teacher teaches the children one day a week in the gym and by the Art teacher one day every other week. Generally, the children visit the Media Center every two weeks to listen to a story and check out books, and the counselor teaches a lesson every month in the classroom. A wonderful assortment of playground equipment affords the children the opportunity to frolic outside daily for at least thirty minutes. In addition to the exercise program, the children enjoy a snack every afternoon, quiet time, and music time.

Class Portraiture

My class consists of five black children, eleven white children, and a child from the Philippines. There are eight boys and nine girls. In the class of seventeen students, all the children attended a preschool. I have three students with summer birthdays (June – August), two students with a fall birthday (September – November), six with winter birthdays (December – February), and six with spring birthdays (March – May). Socioeconomically, the children in my class are

primarily from middle- and upper-middle-class homes, 90% of mothers work outside of the home, and all of the fathers are employed except one. Two children are being raised by their grandparents without any contact with their parents and two of the children's parents are divorced. Two of the seventeen children in the class receive free lunch. Seven attend an after school day care programs, and ten of the children are picked-up after school.

As required by the State of Georgia, I conducted testing the first two weeks of school, using the Revised Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Procedure (GKAP-R) individually on all the children. For the first literacy assessment, seven students could write their names correctly (capitalizing the first letter and using lowercase for the remaining letters) without a prompt; nine wrote their names correctly but used capital letters within the name; and one child could write his name, but it was difficult to read. The second literacy assessment on the GKAP – R required that I observe each child's ability to hold a book correctly and follow the print with her/his finger. All the students knew how to hold a book properly and could turn the pages from left-to-right and move from top-to-bottom. For the third literacy baseline activity, I invited each child to draw a picture and to use letters to write about experiences, stories, objects, or events. Eleven students drew just a picture; four used random letters to write; one child copied words around the room; and one child scribbled across the page as if writing cursive. For the final literacy baseline, I review each child's ability to identify upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet out of sequence. Three students could name all the letters of the alphabet; eleven could name more than half; three could name less

than half; and there were no students that did not know any of the letters of the alphabet.

The GKAP-R mathematics baseline assessments require the children to count to ten, recognize numerals 0-10, out of sequence, identify six basic geometric shapes, and use relationship words. For the first assessment, all of the children were able to count by rote, 0-10. In the second math baseline assessment, thirteen students were able to recognize and select the numerals 0-10 out of sequence. For the third math baseline assessment, all of the children were able to identify the six basic shapes of circle, square, triangle, rectangle, oval, and diamond. For the final math baseline assessment, all of the children were able to use words indicating relationships of top, bottom, inside, outside, in front of, and behind while placing an object near a box. These results reflect mastery of the math kindergarten objectives by most of the children.

The social/emotional assessment investigates a child's ability to follow teacher's directions, treat others with respect, follow classroom rules, and stay on task. Most of the children have mastered these principles. Two students are very comfortable in my classroom because I had their siblings; four know each other from previous school experiences; and six are extremely shy. One child needed a lot of redirection to follow the classroom rules. Another child required a lot of confirmation that he was doing what he needed to do and a lot of interaction with adults rather than his peers. Most of my children respect one another as I have observed through the children's actions of kindness, sharing, caring, and listening.

Participant Selection

I selected six students from my class to participate in my study that investigated early childhood practices of emergent literacy development with young children as I listened to the children within the context of classroom activities. I would like to have researched the entire class, however, this was not feasible. The Revised Georgia Kindergarten Assessment (GKAP-R) provided valuable data that guided my choices for an academically heterogeneous sampling of students. The process involved examination of the results of the administered GKAP-R. I chose children with differing abilities looking at students who performed well on the objectives evaluated and students who had difficulty with the objectives evaluated. Once I ranked the children's results on the GKAP-R, I chose three boys and three girls. As I chose the six students, I made the selection ensuring that the students I chose reflect the racial balance of the students in the class. To ensure that I transcribed only the six participating student's discussions from the group discussion, I took detailed field notes and differentiate between the six participating students and the students not participating, and I used only the transcript relevant to the participants.

The parent/guardian of each participating student in the class received an explanatory letter detailing my study. I read the minor consent form to each student and gave each the opportunity to agree or to not agree to participate in my study. The consent letter gave me permission to audiotape talks in the classroom and to use the drawings and written work of the child. The informed consent forms included the statement that the participants could withdraw their

participation at any time and that the study would not negatively affect the child's grades. While names and social security numbers are available to me as the classroom teacher, I did not use this information in this study, and each child was given a pseudonym.

Participant Profiles

The profiles of the participants are concise introductions to the child and her/his family. I acquired the personal information from the registration forms that the parents completed when the child entered kindergarten. I gathered the personality observations by watching the child in many different classroom situations throughout the school day the first week of school. The following are the profiles of Andrea, Nat, Andy, Katie, James, and Debbie.

Andrea is a five year, nine month old, white girl who lives with both parents and is an only child. Her dad is unemployed and her mom is a computer technician. Andrea's eye conditions include aniridia, esotropia, nystagmus, and amblyopia. Aniridia is a rare congenital absence or partial absence of the iris, and Andrea wears tinted glasses to help with this condition. Esotropia is a term used to describe defects of the eye muscle system, which cause a deviation of one eye towards the nose. Nystagmus involves involuntary, rhythmical, repeated oscillations of one or both eyes. Although this affects both of her eyes, the teacher for the visually impaired stated that it is believed that the brain is responsible for the perceptual adjustment. Amblyopia is dimness of vision affecting one of Andrea's eyes. She favors the eye that is clear by tilting her head to see. Fortunately, not any of the eye conditions negatively affect Andrea's

academics. Her parents are supportive and involved as they try to ensure Andrea's success. She is legally blind (at distances of more than 4 feet). The teacher for the visually impaired has been observing her to see if she needs any classroom assistance. I over heard her tell a friend during center time: "The lady was in the classroom because I am blind and the lady wants to see what I can see." I have not observed that Andrea's handicap in any way limits her ability. She attended a private pre-school and she seems above average in ability. She knows thirty-nine of the fifty-two letters of the alphabet. She sits in the front row on the carpet and will tell you if there is something she cannot see. Andrea loves to draw and talk about what she is drawing with the child sitting next to her. She is full of energy and has to be reminded to walk in the classroom. Her favorite centers are play-dough and sand.

Nat is a five year, four month old, black boy who lives with both grandparents and a nine-year old sister. When his grandmother registered Nat, she indicated that she and her husband are his parents. His grandmother stays at home and his grandfather works as a mechanic. I taught his sister when she was in kindergarten four years ago. Nat attended Hesse Elementary School's pre-kindergarten. He receives speech services and wears glasses. He seems below average in ability. He knows three of the fifty-three letters of the alphabet, and his fine motor skills are extremely poor. Nat tries very hard to complete his work, and he asks for help as needed. He usually has to be given simplified directions individually. He is extremely quiet and seems uncomfortable when asked to talk

about things during circle time. He gets along well with his all of his peers, but he is a follower.

Andy is a five year, five month old white boy who lives with both parents and is an only child. Andy's father is a lawyer and his mother is a dental assistant. His mother is from Venezuela, and his maternal grandmother is teaching Andy to speak Spanish. Andy attended a private pre-school and he seems average in ability. He knows all the letters of the alphabet and enjoys drawing. Andy often seems to be in his own world. He is either talking to himself all the time or making noises. Directions have to be repeated, and then he sometimes seems as if he does not understand. When we are having carpet time, he rarely makes eye contact. He has one boy in the class with whom he interacts most the time. Rarely does he interact with other children, and, on occasion, has become physical with the other children when he is angry. He plays at many centers during the hour of center-time with his one friend.

Katie is a five year, three month old, black girl who lives with both parents and two teenage brothers. Dad is in Kuwait and mom works for the City of Savannah. Katie attended a private pre-school and she seems average in ability. She knows all the letters of the alphabet and is very friendly and verbal. Katie has to be reminded to stay on task because she likes to help (like turn off the computer, wipe the tables, wake the napping children). She is always talking to the teachers or peers. Her favorite center is housekeeping, and she usually spends everyday at that center. Katie and Andrea have developed a bond but do not play together during center time.

James is a five year, six month old white boy who lives with both parents and has a seven-year-old brother. I taught his brother when he was in kindergarten two years ago. James attended Hesse Elementary School's pre-kindergarten. His dad repairs cars and his mom is a hairdresser. James seems average in ability, but it is hard to keep him on task. Rather than completing work he tends to watch others, talk with others, or play with his pencil and crayons. Often he tries to tell me he will finish his work later in the day (I let him and he always completes the work). He knows forty-five of the fifty-two letters of the alphabet. He has many friends in the class, both boys and girls. He likes to work at the computers or play in the sand table during center time. I have noticed a slight stutter when he talks.

Debbie is a five-year, eleven-month-old female. She is from the Philippines who lives with both parents and is an only child. Her dad is an investment banker, and her mother works with computers at a hospital. She attended a private Montessori Pre- K and she seems above average in ability. In a Montessori school environment children choose developmentally appropriate work and to complete the work at their own pace (Olaf, 2006). Montessori emphasizes learning through all the five senses and learning is an exciting process of discovery. Debbie knows all the letters of the alphabet. At Open House, on the first night, I met Debbie, there was a piece of paper for her parents to complete at her seat. She quickly turned the paper over, began drawing, and was very eager to tell me about her picture. She is a very quiet little girl who completes her work neatly and quickly with directions given only one time. She

is very sociable with peers and interacts with different children throughout the day. She likes to play in the play-dough center and housekeeping center.

Children's Talks and Drawings

Six children in my class participated in this study, and I received written permission for that participation from each child's parents, from the child, and from the principal. I assessed each child periodically using the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Procedure (GKAP-R). Formal and informal observations will guided my study. Both individual talks and group talks were audio taped and later transcribed as the children drew pictures after copying a sentence. I used the children's drawings to document how the child used prior knowledge to socially construct the world. I allowed each child to talk while drawing without restricting a child from demonstrating what she/he knew. This allowed me to tape record children's learning development that would be elusive if I had only assessed children using the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Procedure. I found that children initiated talks, which are derived from her \his prior experiences that demonstrated her/his mastery of the state standards. I audiotaped and transcribed the daily discussions on the chosen pictures. Since the pictures had no prescribed beginning and ending, I documented the children's descriptions of the pictures with reference to what was happening in the picture, what could have happened before, and what could happen next, and why. As teacher-researcher, my involvement was documented as I listened and talked with the students in my class.

While I have witnessed caring teachers guide students to mastery of the required state standards, I am concerned about the sabotaging of children's natural development of imagination. In constructing this study, I hoped to provide a framework of drawing and a discussion of pictures to enhance the opportunities of talk in the classroom and the natural development of creativity and talents. I listened to children talking to other children, children talking to themselves, children talking to adults, and children talking to me, their teacher. As I began listening to the talk in my classroom, I concluded that talking and listening to others is not an independent pedagogical classroom agenda. This proposal offered me an opportunity to observe children closely, to collect their talks and drawings, and to negotiate with them in the construction of meaning. Talking and listening permeates all classroom interactions and should be recorded as an invaluable information base. Through this research, I hoped to develop a better understanding of what constitutes learning inasmuch as there will not be any pre-established standardized results. I hoped to create a curriculum of imagination and caring for kindergartners.

This is an example of Andrea copying the sentence of the day, **Bears like to eat fish**. While copying the sentence she said, "It's hard to make an "e". Oops, my "i" is as tall as my "l". The "k" used to be hard for me to make. There!" She finished copying the sentence and began her drawing. While she was drawing she said, "My bear is happy because he is by the water. He caught a fish to eat. There is a happy fish because he is swimming. He is sad because the bear is eating him. The bear is happy because he was very hungry." Andrea's drawing

was full of imagination and caring. Not only did she draw the bear eating the fish, but she also drew a fish that was still swimming in the water. The caring that Andrea grasped was evident because she expressed how the fish that was going to be eaten felt, how the fish that was not eaten felt, and how the bear felt. I also loved hearing her talk about her writing and which letters were a challenge for her. Just by listening I could assess her literacy development. This is Andrea's picture with the sentence she copied and the drawing of the bears that like to eat fish.



1. Andrea's Drawing - Bears

Children's Talks about Pictures

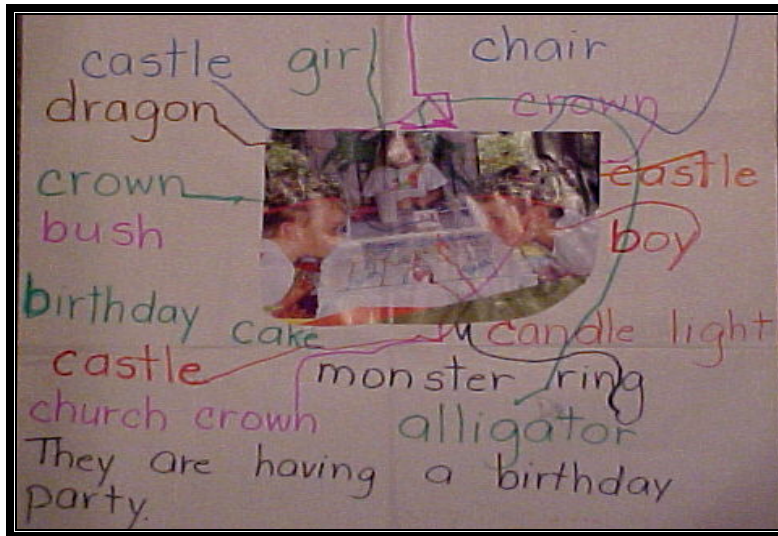
The same six children participated in this study, talking about a picture chosen by the teacher. This writing time gave me the opportunity to talk about and model the formation of letters, demonstrate the process of using letters to form words, and discuss capitalization, punctuation, and letter sounds. During

this activity, one student approached the hanging picture and told me something she/he sees in the picture. As the child gave a word, sentence, or phrase, I spelled the word and talked about the word I wrote. I used the child's language to teach reading and writing. "Forging new connections and generating new entrainments leading to canalization and eventual automatization is at the heart of the learning process, but it appears this cannot occur without linkages to previous entrainments which form the basis of pre-existing structure" (Liston, 2001, p.112). Therefore, I provided each child with the opportunity to draw from previous life experiences to describe a picture generating literacy development. I audiotaped the picture labeling process, and, while the entire class was involved in this activity, I transcribed only the conversation from the children in the study.

In the example that follows, each child in my class was given the opportunity to come up to the picture, look at the picture, and name something in the picture. I chose this picture because it depicted a birthday party and I was hoping the children could relate previous experiences. In the following text, I wrote the word the child told me in capital letters. After the child told me a word or a sentence, I spelled the word or words in the sentence aloud and asked the children to repeat the letters after me. Often I take the time to talk about the strokes used to write the letter. After having spelled the word, I said the word, and the child drew a line from the word to the picture using different colored markers.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

August 30, 2005



2. Children's Birthday Party

Teacher: I want you to look at the picture. I am going to let one of you at a time come up to the picture and tell me something you see.

Debbie: CASTLE

James: DRAGON

Andy: ALLIGATOR I think it is an alligator

Debbie: Well, a dragon is like an alligator. It is just bigger. And dragons are always with castles.

Katie: CROWN

Andrea: CAKE

Nat: BIRTHDAY CAKE. Only one candle has fire.

Katie: They have on crowns because it is their birthday.

James: They all have on crowns.

Teacher: Whose birthday do you think it is?

Andrea: It is the boys' birthday.

Andy: Yea and the girl is singing happy birthday to them.

Teacher: What makes you say that?

Nat: Her mouth is open.

Andy: It is both boys birthday. They are both blowing out the candles. See?

Teacher: Oh, yes I do see. Both boys are leaning over the cake blowing out the candles.

How old do you think they are?

Andrea: I will count the candles, I will, I will.

Teacher: O.K. Count the candles for us.

James: One, two, three. There is three. They are three. I am five.

Katie: Me, too.

Andrea: I'm five. I had dinosaurs on my cake.

Teacher: If there are two boys blowing out the candles, do you think they are brothers?

Debbie: Yeah and that makes them twins.

James: I know some twins. One is a boy and one is a girl. They live across the street from me.

The children began to get restless, and I knew it was time to end. As the children went to play in centers, I sat by the picture in case a child wanted to talk about the picture. Through the interaction of talking and listening to the opinions of others, the children pondered whose birthday it was, how old the birthday child was, and if the boys could have been twins. The children had the opportunity to count and to talk about their own ages. The picture labeling process created a multitude of learning possibilities that were enhanced by the children themselves, possibly empowering the students.

My Role as Researcher

Sumara (1996) reassures us that “the teacher must not only guide learners through effective learning programs; the teacher must invest herself or himself into the complex set of relations that comprise the school curriculum” (p.223). I hold that each teacher must weave caring and imagination into the curriculum. I contend, that, too often in our political consumerism hegemony of education, the students are not even considered with regard to the curriculum. My role as researcher was to explore the lived experiences of the kindergartners and their perceptions of the world. There was a vulnerability issue because I was the teacher of the children studied. My challenge was to let the children's talks guide the research. I provided the surroundings that I hoped would engage the students

in talk as they drew and shared what they knew while they looked at pictures. It was my role to listen and ask leading questions, enticing talk. Through my actions, I hoped to show the children that I cared and encouraged the children to care for one another. I also trusted, in allowing the children to talk as they drew and explored pictures, that the children's imagination would be ignited. I agree with Mary Aswell Doll (1995), "what can be more important than encouraging a real understanding of the relationships we form in life; relating to the self, relating to the divine, and relating to the natural world" (p.33-31).

Data Management

All data gathered were kept in my possession both at school and at home. At school, it was kept in a locked file cabinet in my classroom. The data were entered into my personal computer and stored on a hard-drive. To secure the information, a disk was updated each time data was entered on my computer. A hard copy of the data was stored in a secure location. The only individuals allowed access to the information were my dissertation chair and myself. Daily writing journals were analyzed consistently and were stored in a locked file cabinet and the taped talks were transcribed daily. The journals, drawings, transcriptions, and other written material were kept on file until the completion of my study.

As my study methodology is grounded in narrative inquiry, I was very prudent to embody all the children's voices in the study as each child constructed a sense of self. Because the study is interpretive, a thorough analysis of the stories was required. I kept the focus of my narrative inquiry research on the

experiences of kindergartners, as they were involved in drawing, observing, and writing. I listened to children during activities in the classroom. As a qualitative researcher, I used the complexity of social interactions and meanings that could be attributed to interactions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION: CHILDREN'S TALKS DURING DRAWING ACTIVITIES

This research examines children's talks as they copied sentences and as they drew pictures. The activity allowed me the opportunity to listen to children as they talked about what they knew, what they liked, what they did not like, and many other things they had experienced. I listened as children used their imaginations to create representations of their writing. I hoped that the picture drawing activity would create situations that would allow the children to relax and share information I might not otherwise have had the opportunity to hear. The goal of my research was to expand our understanding of children.

This is the first of two chapters in which I present collected stories. This chapter includes a summary of four months of children's talks as they copied sentences and drew pictures. Every week I made a booklet for each child in the class with the cover representing the thematic unit to be studied. The booklet consisted of a construction paper front and back and five pages of white paper with one to three lines horizontally drawn across the bottom of the page. Each morning all the children sat on the carpet in front of the dry erase board. After morning exercises, I read fiction and nonfiction stories relating to the thematic unit. Throughout the week after I read each story, we discussed various aspects of the story. We talked about how many people wrote and illustrated the book; we discussed how the author and illustrator must have worked together; and we looked at the cover and title to uncover any clues to the content of the book. After I read the story, we considered whether or not the character in the book should

have done or not have done something and how the children felt about it. We reflected on whether any of my students had ever experienced something like the characters in the book. We conversed about what part they liked or did not like and why. I gave the children the opportunity to share anything in the stories that helped them to learn something they had not known. Sometimes after talking, I drew a Venn diagram and we compared and contrasted stories.

Each day after the discussion of the book, I wrote a sentence on the board pertaining to the unit being studied using the sight words that I had introduced. I talked to the children about the letters of the alphabet, words, sentences, and unusual spellings of words. The second week of school, I told my children that I had a very special gift for each one of them and that I would continue to add to the gift throughout the year. The gift I gave them on this first day of sentence writing was their own two-inch book ring with ten sight words, which they were to keep at school. I told the children at the end of the year, I would wrap the sight words in a box with a bow for each child to take home. The sight words were written on hole-punched three by five inch index cards. Each child was given a three by five inch card with her/his name written on it to decorate and put on the ring. I made a big presentation of giving each child her/his sight word ring, and I told her/him how happy I was to have her/him in my class. I usually introduced one to three words each week. However, each child progressed at her/his own pace because I would let the children tell me when they thought they knew all the sight words on their ring. When a child told me she/he was ready to be checked, the child would stand close to me and recite her/his sight words. If the child knew

all the sight words, I added three new words to the ring for the child to learn. Also, I usually introduced one to three words each week during the writing process. The children kept these rings at their seat at all times and were encouraged to practice saying the sight words to their peers throughout the day.

From my past experience with the sight word rings, I have found that even if a kindergarten child does not know all the letters of the alphabet she/he can learn the sight words. The children are able to observe the words being written and perhaps the words are learned in the context of sentences. By the end of the year, some children may have twenty sight words and others may have two hundred.

As I wrote the sentence of the day for the children to copy, I would stress left to right and top to bottom progression. I spelled each word and I talked about the space between words and the proper formation of the letters. I wrote the sentence on sentence strips for pairs of children to copy at their seat, hoping to encourage sharing and peer discussion about the writing. After I wrote the sentence, I illustrated the topic sentence. The children loved to watch the process of my drawing. Many teachable moments arose from items that students suggested I add to the drawing. I demonstrated that sometimes a drawing did not always create a complete representation. I enjoyed the encouragement the children would give me. I reminded the children that some things we do are easier to do than other things, and I taught them that we all have to try, especially when something seems hard. I told the children that they would have had to be carried into school if they had never tried to walk and that I would not know what

they wanted if they had never tried to talk. I repeated this notion many times to the children during the year.

When the children returned to their seats to copy the sentence, my paraprofessional and I each sat at a table with the students to encourage discussions. The students copied the sentence in their own book, often verbalizing the experience. Sometimes we had to hold the student's hand to help with letter formation. I asked the children to read the sentence to me when they completed copying it. I never acted as though a child might not be able to read the sentence, hoping that this reinforced my expectations that reading was a natural process of practice. I did not give the children the opportunity to think they could not read the sentence they had just copied. Everyday after they wrote the sentence/sentences, the children drew a picture to illustrate their sentence. As the year progressed, the sentences become more involved, and the children were encouraged to use their sight words and to phonetically spell their own sentences. The children came to read and write their own sentences and were thrilled with how well they could draw just about anything.

I embraced the learner-centered classroom curriculum, which emphasized power sharing, negotiations, and joint responsibility. I chose to emphasize the integration of thinking, feeling, and acting, centering on the relevance of subject matter in light of the students' needs and lives. I believed this approach could lead to reaffirming, reassuring, and validating a child's worth. I hoped the approach I used to teach reading, writing, and drawing would bring awareness to the child by encouraging thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity. Through

this method, I wanted to be able to integrate many subjects, create a place of caring, and foster imagination, while giving consideration to each individual child.

This chapter includes the sentences copied, pictures drawn, and the talks of six children in my classroom. On each page, I listed the week of the activity, the unit studied, and in a childlike print, the sentence the child was copying for the day. Then I presented the page from the child's book and the transcript of the subsequent talks. At the conclusion of the presentation of each child's work, I reflected on the child's sentence copying, drawings, and stories shared. My thoughts are in italics. Each child's talks and drawings are organized in this manner.

1. Units of Study

<u>Week</u>	<u>Unit of Study</u>
1. August 22	Hesse School
2. August 29	Bears
3. September 5	Me, Myself, and I
4. September 12	Family, Friends, and Fall
5. September 19	Autumn and Apples
6. September 26	Leaf, Like, and Love
7. October 3	Scarecrows
8. October 10	Ghost
9. October 17	Pumpkins
10. October 23	Jack-o-lanterns

11. October 31	Owls and Night
12. November 7	Indians
13. November 14	Turkey and Thanksgiving
14. November 28	December and Deer
15. December 5	Christmas
16. December 12	Reindeer

Andrea's Story

Andrea is a bubbly, energetic petite girl who is visually impaired. She uses a lot of facial expression when she talks and has a vivid imagination. Her vocabulary is extensive and she has a strong memory. If there is a message from her mom or dad, Andrea always remembers what to tell me or what she needs to ask me. As I watched her draw, I was amazed that she paid so much attention to detail especially when she was drawing.

Andrea has many friends in the classroom and is very sweet to the other children. She seems to be able to have a conversation with any child in the room. She is very kind and generous often sharing her crayons, coloring book, or snack. She enjoys playing in all the centers and her favorite centers to play in are the computer center and the block center. Since she loves animals, she likes to build elaborate zoos and farms to place her animals in at the block center. I have watched her sort the animals and build different areas for the different kinds of animals. She groups like animals together and places the smaller animals around

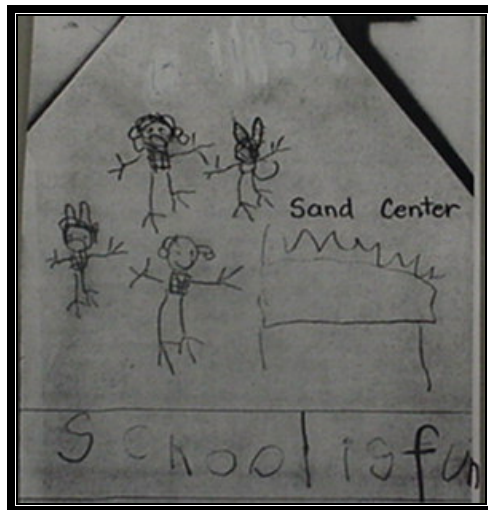
the parent animals. I have watched her encourage other children to help her build her a farm or zoo.

Problems with her home situation became evident in October and it affected her behavior and her attendance. She began staying with her grandmother on a regular basis in November and she seems happier. She sees her parents often and talks about how much she would like to be living with them, but she says they have to get some things together before she can move back home. I have only seen her parents twice since she moved in with her grandmother.

Andrea's Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse School

School is fun.



3. Andrea – School is fun.

Andrea loves to draw and she loves to cut paper. Her visual impairment does not seem to restrict her ability to complete her work. I have not witnessed a fine motor weakness nor a difficulty seeing what she is copying, drawing, or writing. She is very pleasantly assertive; she tells you if there is anything she needs, if she cannot see the board, or if she needs to sit closer to something. She simply states, "I'm blind, you know."

Andrea works very close to her paper and picks up the sentence strip to hold it close to her face as she copies it. She copied the sentence, **School is fun.** She said, "Ooh, 's' is so hard to make." Then she began drawing, "My dog, Tiny, is dressed up silly by the sand table," she said. I said, "Some of the faces look sad." "Yeah," she said "They are sad because they want to go in the sand center and they have to wait." "That is true. How many can go to the sand center at one time?" I asked. "Two" she said, "You know there are only two sand clips." I told her we were going to read the sentence together. I pointed to each word and read the word as Andrea repeated after me. "Wonderful", I said.

All this week she drew many animals and people in her drawings. I have noticed her pictures are very animated. Some of the people have sad faces and some have happy faces. The same is true of the animals she draws. She has many kites in her pictures and adds lines across most the things she draws. Andrea seems very happy and is very kind to the other children in the class. She does not rush to complete her work and does not interact with others at her table. She seems very engrossed in what she is writing and drawing. I know she likes to go play in the sand center and in blocks.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

I like bears.

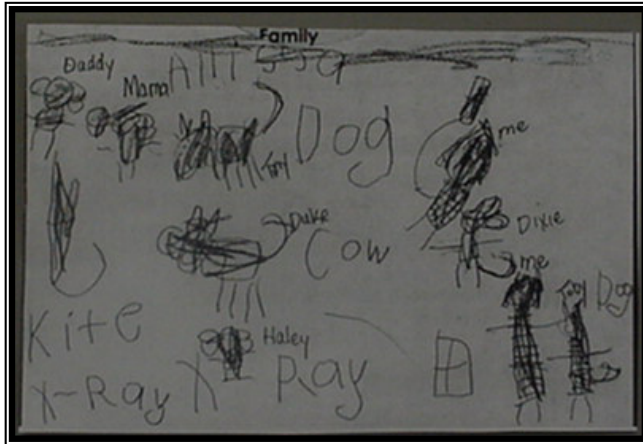


4. Andrea – I like bears.

Andrea copied the sentence, **I like bears**. Then she began talking as she drew, “I like bears because they are so fuzzy and cute. The Goldilocks and the Three Bears was so silly because the bears could talk. That is when you imagine stuff. In my picture the bear is chasing the dog. They are standing on towers. This is me with a puppy, Dixie. This is Duke. Someone stole him.” I said, “Andrea, can you read what you wrote?” She said, “I can’t read.” I said, “Then I will help you. I bet you can read the first word.” She said, “Yeah, I.” “Very good, now the next word is like,” I said. She said, “Yeah like, I like.” I pointed to the drawing and she said, “Bears. I like bears.” “See, you can read. You just needed a little help and that is why I am here.”

Andrea enjoys drawing. She would draw longer than any other child in the classroom. She filled up the pages adding many lines to many things. When other children finished and began playing, Andrea continued to draw.

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall



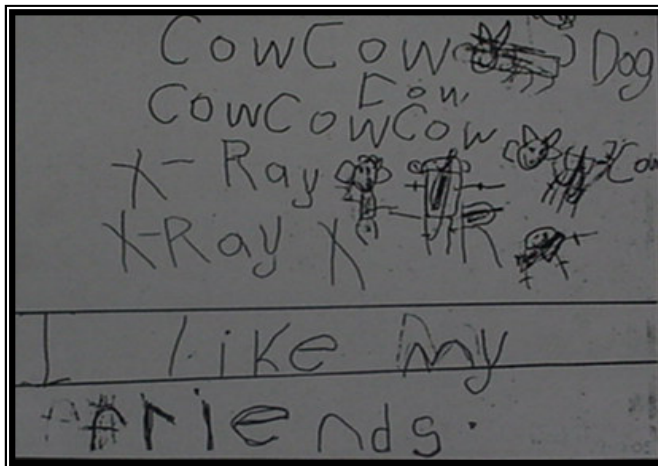
5. Andrea – Family, Friends, and Fall

On the cover of the book each child drew her/his family. Andrea seemed to be concentrating very hard as she was drawing. She drew her dad, mom, and dog, Tiny. Then she drew a cow, wrote cow, and saw me watching her and said, “That is supposed to be a cow. Pretend only. We don’t keep cows. Ooh, I really wanted a horse. A baby horse. I can ride them. Mommy said that maybe my dream will come true when I grow up. Then I can get on the horse without any help.” “That sounds like a good idea” I said. She continued to draw, talking softly as she drew. “This is Dixie. Dixie’s a puppy. This is my granny and granny’s

dog, Toby. She gave him to us because she don't need him any more." She drew another dog and said, "Haley is my other puppy. We used to have Duke but Duke ran away. Somebody stole him." "My, you have a lot of dogs," I said. "Yeah, four, well three, because Duke's gone." "Who feeds them?" I asked. She said, "Daddy, but Mommy should." The child sitting next to her said, "I don't have a pet." Andrea said, Ooh, I love my dogs. I am going to be a vet when I grow up and take good care of animals."

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

I like my friends.



6. Andrea – I like my friends.

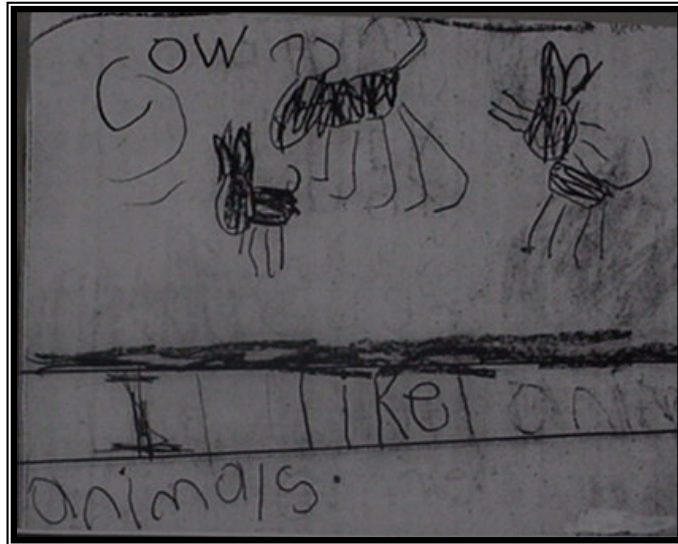
Andrea copied the sentence, **I like my**, and said, "Ooh, I made my 'm' too big. I gotta erase that and do better. Ooh, look at that cute 'y'." Then she finished the sentence, **friends**, and began to draw. She said, "Ooh, the word **friends** is as

long as the first three words I wrote. I have people friends and animal friends. I really like my animal friends. They are so sweet. My mommy said, I need to write my sight words.” Andrea wrote cow six times, dog, and x-ray twice. Then she said, “My mommy says I have to keep practicing to be smart!” I said, “I like your writing and your drawing, Andrea. Let’s look at the sentence and read it.” She said, “I can read some of it, I think. I like my friends. Ooh I read it!” “You sure did and look at all the words you wrote, Andrea. I like to watch you write,” I said. “Yeah,” she said. “Drawing is my favorite. I like to draw animals. I am going to have a whole bunch of animals when I grow up.”

Andrea’s mom and dad sent me a note stating that they have been working on helping Andrea learn sight words. The words they were teaching her were cat, dog, and cow. This week they were teaching her to spell kite and x-ray. I met with them and showed them the list of sight words I previously sent home that we are working on in the classroom. The sight word list was I, a, in, have, like, to, see, the, am, and go. I explained to her parents that I begin with these sight words and that sight words are not usually the names of objects. I told them that I loved that they were teaching her to spell words and that I thought it would help her become better at writing independently. They explained that they were concerned about her visual problems and did not want her to get behind the other children academically.

Week of 9-19-05 Autumn and Animals

I like animals.

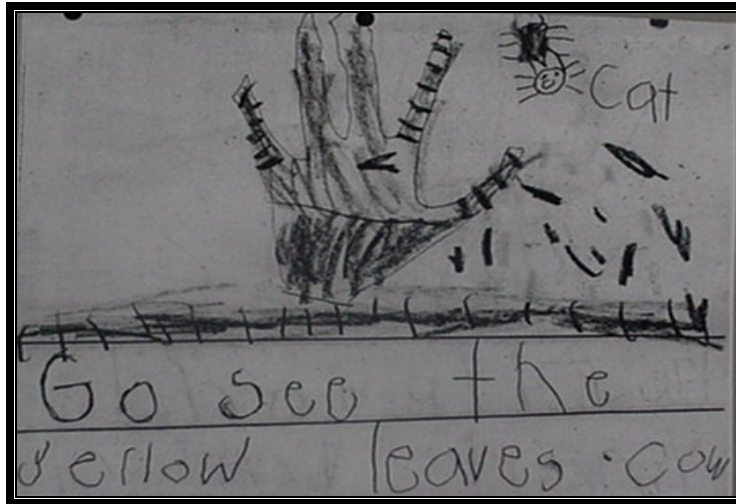


7. Andrea – I like animals.

Andrea started copying the sentence, **I like anim**, and said, “Ooh, I don’t have enough room for the rest of the word. Now I have to erase it.” She erased it and rewrote **animals** on the line below. She drew three animals and said, “I really do like animals you know.” She drew a cat and said, “It has lots of whiskers.” Then she drew a dog. When she drew the ant, she said, “I have to draw a lot of leg.” I knew her parents had been teaching her to write the word cow but I asked, “Why did you write cow?” She said, “It is a cow ant.” “Can you read this sentence to me, Andrea?” “No,” she said. “Well, let’s try,” I said to her. “Aaaaw. All right. I like animals. There.” “Nice job,” I said. Andrea’s drawings were so creative. She added so many more features than was written in the sentence she copied.

Week of 9-26-05 Leaf, Like, and Love

Go see the yellow leaves.



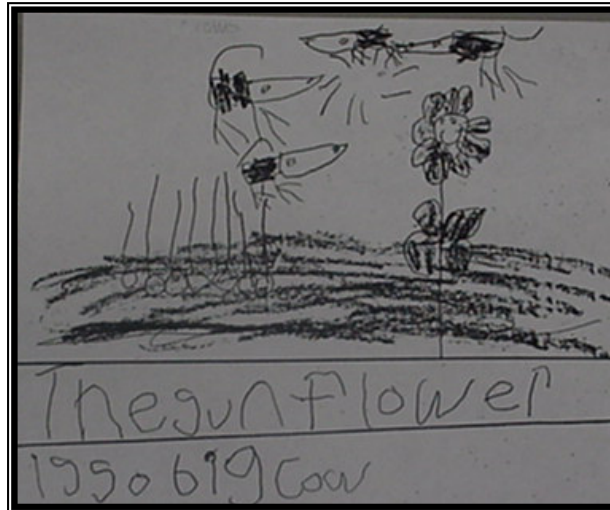
8. Andrea – Go see the yellow leaves.

Andrea copied the sentence, **Go see the yellow leaves.** She said, “The yellow leaves are falling off the tree. Fall, leaves, fall.” She drew some more, and I could hear softly saying, “They went all the way from Africa to America. The cat is in the air because he wants to jump in the pile of leaves. Weeeee.” “Are you ready to read to me?” I asked. “I don’t know.” “Sure you are,” I said. “I need help with the first word,” she said. “I will help. Go.” I said. She read the rest of the sentence hesitating only at the last word until I pointed to her picture, and she read, “Leaves.”

I am concerned because she was only present three days this week. I have called and left messages at the three phone numbers I have, hoping to talk with someone about her absences. I talked about my concern with Andrea’s tardiness and absences with the counselor at our school. It was decided that I needed to complete a school social worker referral, which I did.

Week of 10-03-05 Scarecrows

The sunflower is so big.



9. Andrea – The sunflower is so big.

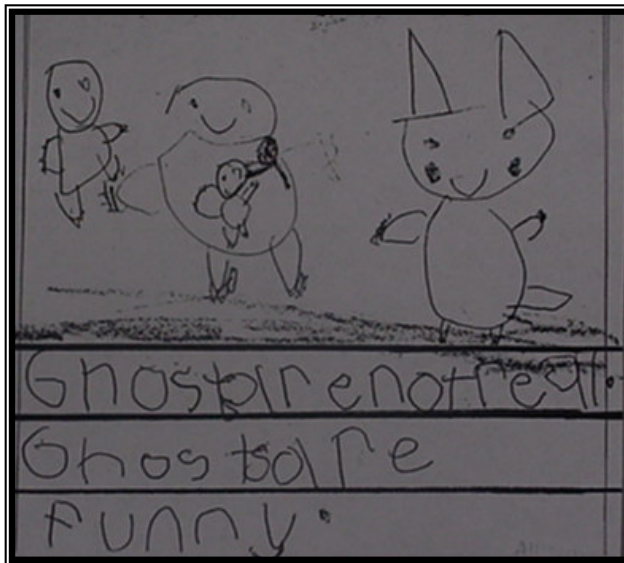
Andrea copied the sentence, **The sunflower is so big.** As she was drawing I heard her say, “The sunflowers are growing, but the crows got these. I am just drawing the roots underground and the stems coming up. The crows are afraid of the sunflower because it is so big. Fly, crows, fly. Now the sunflower is smiling because he didn’t get eaten.” “Andrea, read what you wrote,” I said. She read the sentence needing help only with the word sunflower.

The Social Worker talked with me about the referral I made and my concern about Andrea’s repeated absences. She told me she would make a visit to Andrea’s home and that she would explain how important it is that she attends school. When Andrea is at school, she appears tired and her clothing does not

look as if she is clean. She is irritable and does not like to do what she is asked to do.

Week of 10-10-05 Ghost

Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.



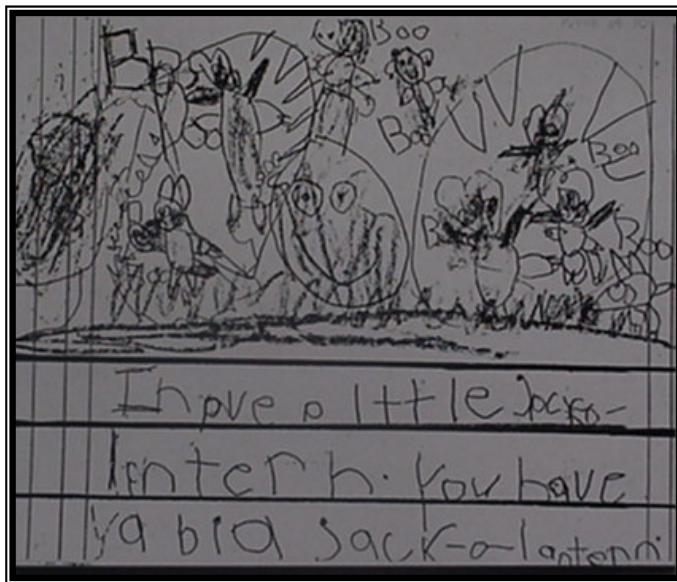
10. Andrea – Ghosts are not real . Ghosts are funny.

She copied the sentences, **Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.** As she drew she said, “This is a friendly ghost going to get me berries. Two Peek-a-choos are attacking us. They came to take me away. The ghost won’t let them. They are trying to thunderbolt me. It’s a magic ghost. He fell down on the ground and died.” She talks the entire time she is drawing. I asked her to read the sentence to me and she moaned. I said, “You did such a wonderful job of copying the sentence and drawing. I just like to hear your voice as you read.” She looked

at me and said, "O.K." I had to help her read **not real**, but she was able to read the rest of the sentence without any help from me. She looked at me and smiled and said, "I sure can read." I said, "I know and I am so proud of you. I like to listen when you read and I like to watch as you draw."

Week of 10-17-05 Pumpkins

I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern.



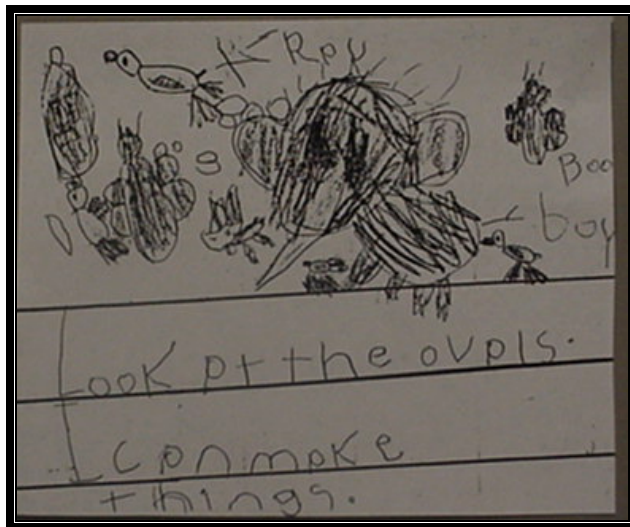
11. Andrea - I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern.

She copied the sentences, **I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern**, and said, "I am going to draw Peekachoo eating a little jack-o-lantern. This big one is mine. I am going to draw a big spider web. The spider caught Lyos and Lieos in his big web. Ooooooh, they are going to be for dinner. I

am going to write Boo 'cause they are all saying Boo." Earlier in the week I had shown the children how the word "Boo" was written around the ghosts that were in a story I was reading. After she showed me her work, she said, "I know you want to hear me read my sentence". "I sure do. You are very smart Andrea. Read for me," I said. She read both sentences without any assistance. "See I knew you could do it, Andrea." I said.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.



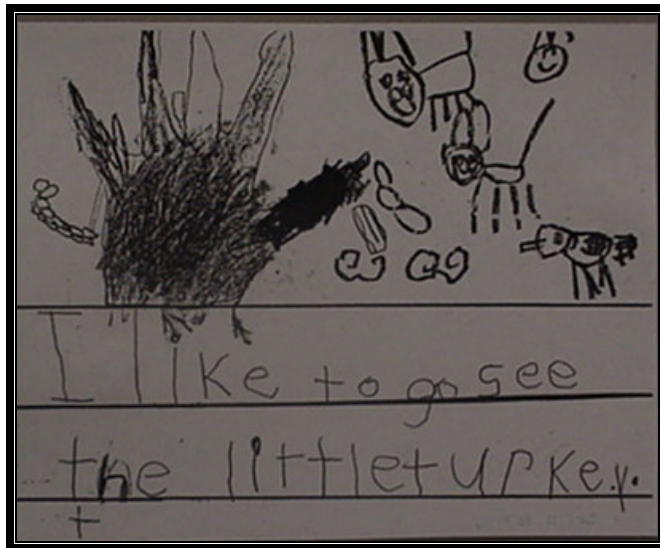
12. Andrea - Look at the ovals. I can make things.

Once again, Andrea has been out three days this week. When I was able to talk with someone, her Mom said that she was at home because she was sick. She was very quiet today. She looked as though she had not bathed in days, and her hair was not washed.

She copied the sentences, **Look at the ovals. I can make things.** She said, “I wrote boy. See here’s an oval thing. A duck. Aaaah, I made a bunny out of an oval. Isn’t he cute?” She looked at me and said, “Do I create good or what?” I said, “You sure do!” Then she said, “Look at the ducks. They are trying to fly.” I asked her to read the sentence she wrote, and she said, “Geez, I can’t read it.” I said, “I will help you.” As I read a word and pointed to it, she repeated after me. She was able to read the second sentence by herself. I complimented her on how many things she draws in her pictures and told her I love to watch her draw. She told me, “I like to draw.”

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to go see the little turkey.



13. Andrea - I like to go see the little turkey.

She was copying the sentence, **I like to go see the little turkey**, and talking. She wrote, **I like to**, and said to the little girl sitting next to her, “I don’t like this pencil. I don’t think this is my pencil. Mrs. Aliotta, I need my other pencil; it was sharper.” Her other pencil was in the large basket that holds all the children’s cups, containing their crayons, pencils, scissors, and glue. I gave her the other pencil and she said, “Thank you, Mrs. Aliotta.” She started to write **go** and said, “Oooh, I put the ‘g’ right on the line.” She wrote **the** but wrote an “m” instead of “h” and said, “Aaah, I wrote the wrong letter. Let me erase that.” She wrote, **little turkey**, and began to draw. I am not sure why but she said, “Follow your heart.” Then she drew a turkey and colored it in quickly with many colors. She began drawing dogs and talking, “The dog is freaking out. He is saying, hey, I have a mustache! Look,” she said to the little girl sitting next to her, “My dog has a mustache. I am going to make an invisible dog. I am going to use my white crayon. See, you can’t see him. I am going to make an invisible duck, too. Now I am going to use a black crayon to make a mustache on both of them so that is all you can see of them.” She giggled, “For Thanksgiving my grandmother has a big juicy chicken. I mean turkey. Look at that French fry. It is for the chicken: I mean turkey. I keep saying chicken. Look, the chicken’s tail is made of butterflies. They’re finished,” she said. When I asked her to read the sentence, she was able to without any help.

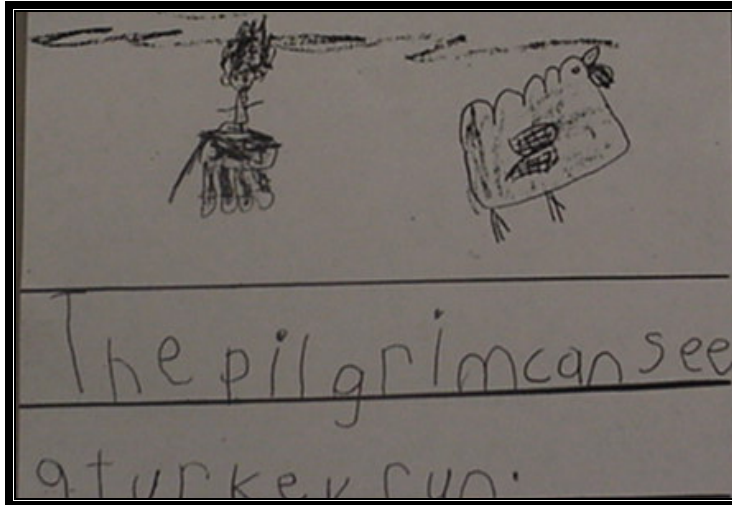
When Andrea is at school, she seems very irritable and tired. Often she is very argumentative with the other children. As she was drawing and after the other children at the table had left, I talked with her. I told her that I was very

worried about her. I explained that she did not seem to be acting like the happy kind Andrea that is usually in my class. I mentioned that she seemed very sad and fussy with the other children. She said, "I don't want to be at school." I said, "Oh my. Why not? You used to love being here. You have even told me that before." She hesitated and said, "I know. Well, can you keep a secret?" I said, "Of course Andrea. I am here for you. You can tell me anything."

"Well, my mommy and daddy are getting divorced. My mommy wants my dad to leave. I don't want him to leave. They do a lot of yelling." I said, "I bet that is hard for you, isn't it?" "Yeah, I love my daddy a lot. The police say my daddy is bad, but he is not. He is a good daddy," she said. "I think your daddy is a good daddy, too. I can tell when he brings you to school that he loves you very much. It can be very scary when mommy and daddy argue. I care about you, Andrea, and, as hard as it is to leave daddy, you need to come to school everyday. I want you here at school with us where things are happy", I said. "O.K., Mrs. Aliotta" she said.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

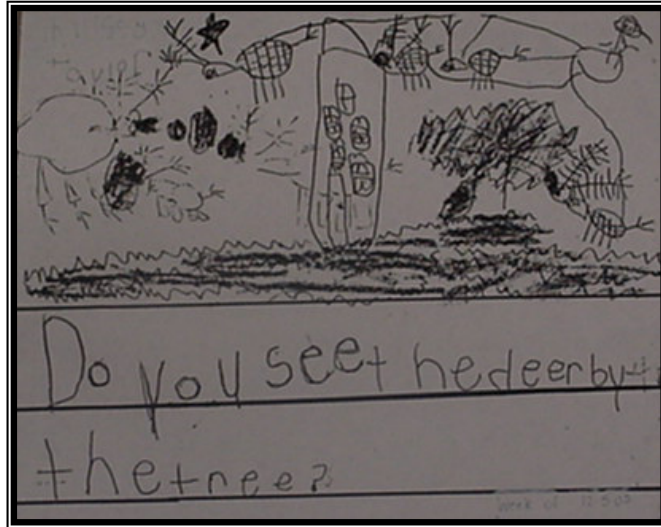


14. Andrea - The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

She copied the sentence, **The pilgrim can see a turkey run.** She drew the picture of an Indian and a horse. Then she said, “The Indian is on a horse to chase the turkey. He can go faster that way.” The boy sitting across from Andrea asked her to show him how to draw a horse, and she did. He thanked her and tried to draw a horse on his picture. “Very good,” she said to him. “I like your horse.” Then she used red, yellow, and purple and colored across the top of her picture saying, “This is the sky the Indian made”. The day before I had read the book *Indian Paint Brush* to the children. It was a story about an Indian trying to find just the right colors to draw his picture of the beautiful sky as the sunset. Then she drew the turkey and the sun shining on the turkey

Week of 11-28-05 Deer

Do you see the deer by the tree?

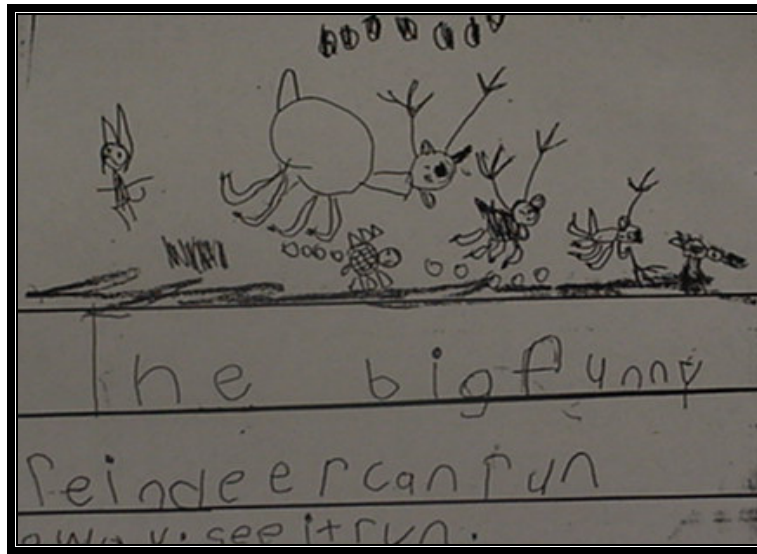


15. Andrea - Do you see the deer by the tree?

She copied the sentence, **Do you see the deer by the tree?** She said, "Ooh, I am asking a question. Yes, I do see the reindeer." She laughed and began drawing her picture and said, "Santa has a lot of reindeers. He is flying over the house. Uh-oh, Rudolph is running into the house with all the presents. It is a really tall house. It has a lot of windows. Watch out Rudolph." She drew a tree and a reindeer by the tree. "Look," she said. "The reindeer is eating the tree. Lots of grass, lots of grass." When I asked her to read the sentence to me, she only needed help with reading the word **Do**.

Week of 12-05-05 Christmas

The big funny reindeer can run away. See it run.

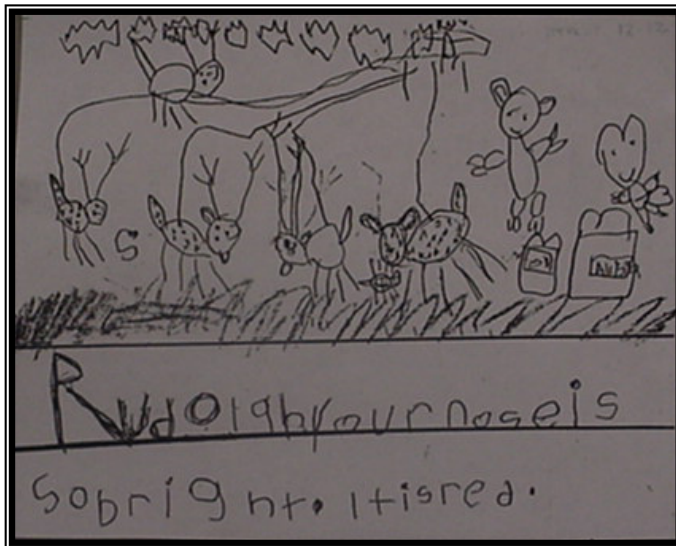


16. Andrea - The big funny reindeer can run away. See it run.

She copied the sentences, **The big funny reindeer can run away. See it run.** She said, “Ooh, that is a lot of words to write. I can do that.” I asked her to read the sentence to me. She was able to read both sentences. Then she began to draw. “I am going to make the reindeer jumping over the water.” Then she said, “Here’s a turtle. I am making a duck leading the reindeer across the water. He knows which way to go. Quack, quack, he says to the reindeer, follow me.” I said, “Andrea, I love your reindeer! It really looks like they are running away by the way you drew the legs.” “Thank you, Mrs. Aliotta”.

Week of 12-12-05 Reindeer

Rudolph your nose is so bright. It is red.



17. Andrea - Rudolph your nose is so bright. It is red.

Quietly, Andrea copied the sentences, **Rudolph your nose is so bright. It is red.** She looked at me and said, “Do I make Rudolph with all the other reindeer?” I said, “If you would like to.” “Look I made his dad. I can make spots,” she said. A child sitting next to her asked what happened to his mommy. She said, “I know. I know.” Then she drew a mommy deer. She said, “This is a mommy deer. She don’t have no antlers. Look a mommy, daddy, Rudolph. Ooh, I have to erase his antlers.” The child sitting next to her told her that he has to drink the water to have antlers. I looked over and asked her why she erased the antlers. She said, “Because he has to drink the water to get antlers. I am drawing the water now.” She drew some more and said, “I am drawing the abominable

snowman. How do you like my abominable snowman? He is chasing Rudolph. I am erasing his mom because the abominable snowman ate her.” She drew more reindeer as she talked. “This is Prancer in the sky. This is going to be Comet with a chain.”

Before Andrea walked into my class, I was apprehensive about her ability to complete regular classroom work and negotiate in and around the classroom because of her many visual impairments. However, the first week of school I observed how quickly she adapted to any situation and how secure she was with informing me if there was anything she couldn't see.

The first six weeks of school, her parents were very involved in Andrea's education. We met often and exchanged notes about Andrea weekly. She seemed to really enjoy every aspect of school. Her handwriting was very impressive considering her limitations. She would draw and talk about her pictures longer than anyone in the class. Her letter formations have improved through the process of daily writing and the descriptions of her pictures have become more elaborate and detailed.

Beginning the end of September through the middle of November, her home situation was in a crisis and Andrea was very distraught. Both parents were unemployed and they were discussing divorce. Fortunately, her grandmother stepped in and took Andrea into her home. Since that time Andrea's behavior and appearance have improved. Even though I sent notes and left messages, I did not have any contact with the parents during this time. Andrea still sees her parents, and about once a week she spends the night with them. I have seen her mom bring

her to school a couple of times, and her dad brought cupcakes for our Christmas party. Andrea seems happy.

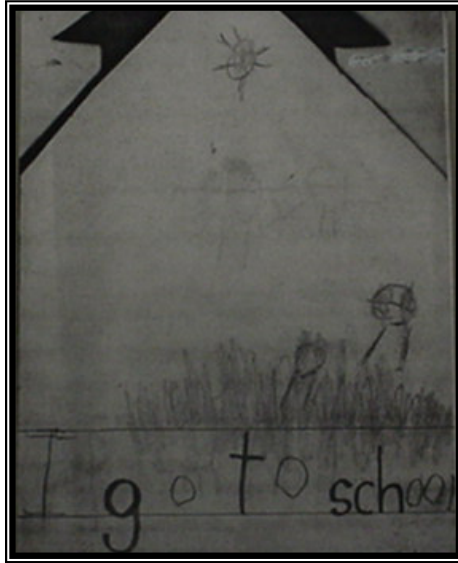
Nat's Story

Nat was very quiet. He rarely talked to any of his classmates or to me. He seemed to be observing other children; he was very interested in what they were saying or doing. He has a speech impediment and very poor fine motor skills. As Nat completed his work during the first week of school, I observed that he might need assistance with his writing. I spend a lot of time talking about things that may be easy for some people and harder for others. I hoped that through this process many of the children would feel comfortable to try new things in my classroom, especially forming letters of the alphabet.

Nat's Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse School

I go to school.



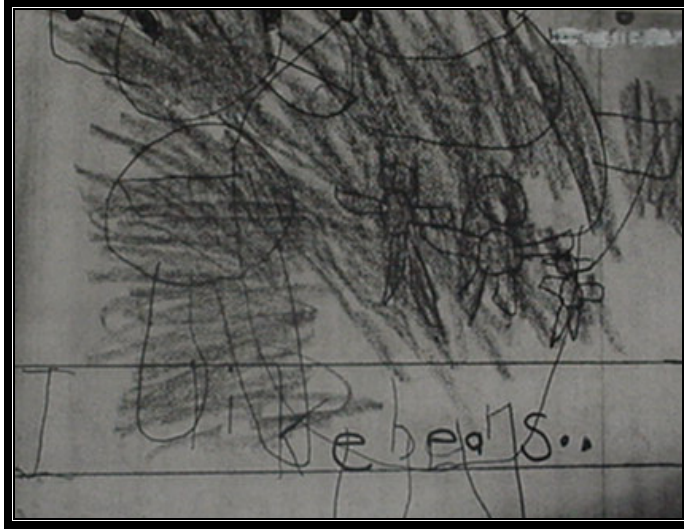
18. Nat - I go to school.

He was trying to copy the sentence, **I go to school**. He wrote the letter **I** and then he looked up and I caught his eye. I said, "Let me show you how to write the letter "g"; it can be kind of hard to write." I used an orange marker, stood behind him, and let him watch the formation of the letter. Then I told him to hold his pencil in his hand and I would help him trace the letter. This way I could insure that, as he traced, he did the letter formation properly. He said, "I can write that, the o." I helped him write the letter **t** using the same procedure. He wrote the **o** and I helped him write the **sch**. He said, "That's more o's" and wrote them. I said, "I bet you can write the letter **I**", as I pointed to the letter on the sentence strip he was copying. He wrote the letter and then began drawing. His picture consisted of two people both with a head, legs, and eyes. He drew without saying a word. When I said, "I like that Nat." He said, "This is me and my sister,

Briana.” I touched each word and read it and asked Nat to say the word after me so he could read the sentence.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

I like bears.



19. Nat – I like bears.

Nat watched the little boy sitting next to him before he began writing. Then he started copying the sentence, **I like**. I was amazed to see that he left a space between the words **I** and **like**. He asked me to help him with the letter **k** by pointing to the letter because he does not yet know the letter “k”. Once he drew the straight line down as I instructed him, I held his hand with the pencil and showed him how to write the line from the middle straight line at an angle upward and to the right. Then I placed his pencil back in the middle of the straight line

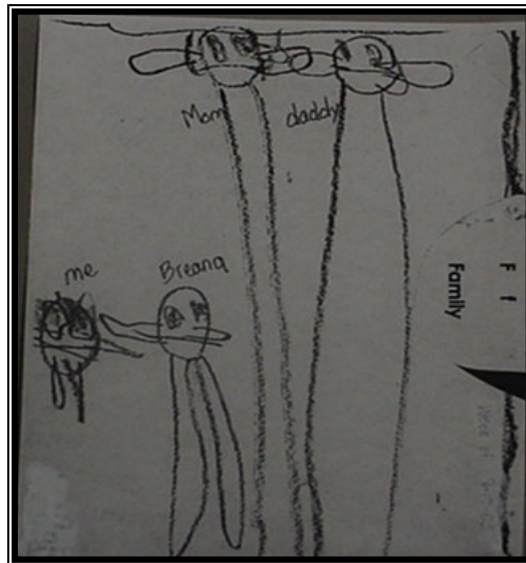
and drew it at an angle downward to the right. I smiled at Nat and said, “Look we made the letter **k** together.” He just smiled. He was able to write the letter **b** for bears. I helped him with the **ea**; he wrote the **r**; and I helped him with the letter **s**. Nat did not seem to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable that I helped him write some of the letters. He watched the boy sitting next to him draw for a few minutes before he began drawing. He drew two huge bears and three little bears, coloring all of them green. I said, “Those are some really green bears, Nat.” He said, “Yeah, like Hesse bears.” I told Nat I would like to help him read the sentence. He said, “I know, I” and I said, “like” and he said, “I know, I know, bears.” “Very good, Nat you are quite the reader,” I said. He smiled at me and then smiled at the boy sitting next to him who was watching him read. The boy smiled back and said it was his turn to read.

Nat quit drawing in his book and listened as each child at the table read the sentence to me. He really seemed interested in the other children and enjoyed hearing what they had to say about the pictures as they drew. He asked the boy sitting next to him about the bears in the picture he was drawing and Nat showed him his five bears. Nat explained that the reason his bears were green was because they were Hesse bears.

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

On the cover of his book, Nat drew his dad, his mom, his sister, and himself. All the people had a head, eyes, straight mouths, arms coming off the head, and very long legs. Nat told me that his family was all outside. He said that they liked to be outside and his dad liked to wash the car.

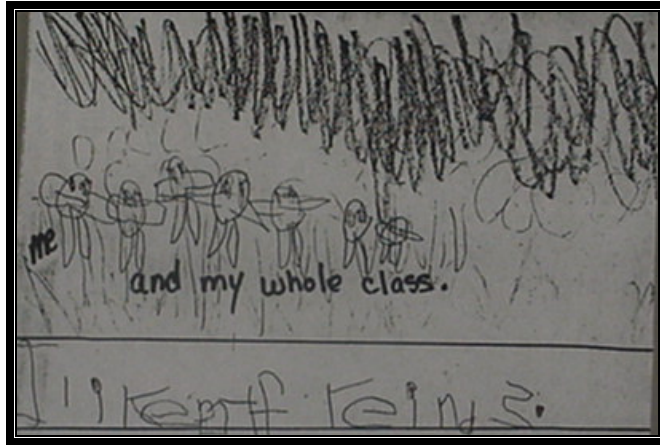
Nat lives with his sister, grandmother, and grandfather. I taught Nat's sister five years ago and although I have met Nat's mom, I have never met Nat's dad. I have had many opportunities to talk with Nat's grandmother and she seems to take care of Nat in every way. He is well dressed, always has his lunch money, and turns in his homework each week completed. Whenever it is time to have a parent conference, I always meet with Nat's grandmother. She seems very concerned about Nat doing well in school.



20. Nat – Family, Friends, and Fall

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

I like my friends.

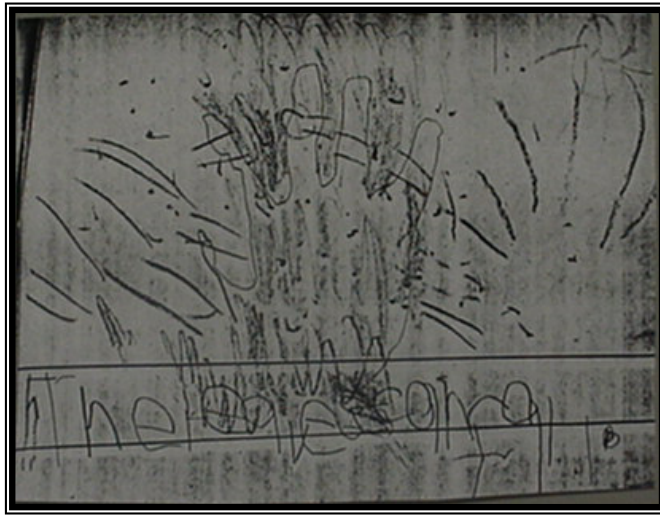


21. Nat - I like my friends.

As I was helping another child, I looked at Nat, and he had written the entire sentence, **I like my friends**, without any help. I was so excited at his independence after only two weeks of this daily writing/drawing activity! He had followed left to right progression, copying from the sentence strip that was at his seat. Though he did not leave spaces between the words, I could read the sentence. The only letter he had any trouble with was the letter **s**. I quietly gave him a hug and told him I was so proud of his writing. I didn't want to draw too much attention to the fact that he had needed so much help in previous weeks. He smiled at me and began drawing silently. He drew many children in the picture. I asked him to tell me about the picture, and he said, "I am at school. This is me and the whole class. Playing outside." The boy sitting next to Nat asked where he was in the picture. Nat pointed to the drawing and said, "Right here next to me," and smiled. Nat read the word **I** and I helped him with **like my friends**.

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

The leaves can fall.



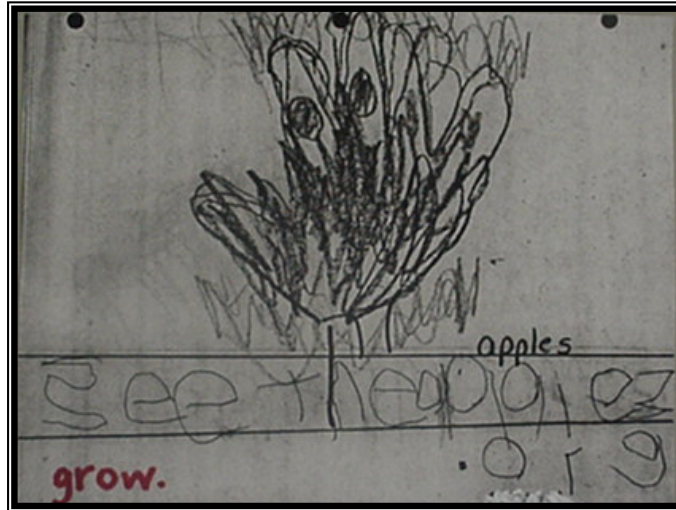
22. Nat – The leaves can fall.

The following day, Nat copied the sentence independently, **The leaves can fall.** The girl sitting next to Nat said, “I am going to trace my hand for the tree like Mrs. Aliotta.” “Me, too.” said Nat. He traced his own hand and then began adding leaves, represented by lines to the tree. He used the colors orange, brown, green, and yellow. He saw me looking at him and said, “The leaves are falling.” I said, “I love all the colors you used for the leaves orange, yellow, green, and brown. That is a lot of leaves.” He smiled at me and I helped Nat read the sentence but asked him to point to each word instead of me. He was able to point, even though there were not spaces between the words and he waited for me

to read the word before he pointed to the next word. He repeated the words after me. I said, “Nice job, Nat.” Then we smiled at each other.

Week of 9-19-05 Autumn and Apples

See the apples grow.



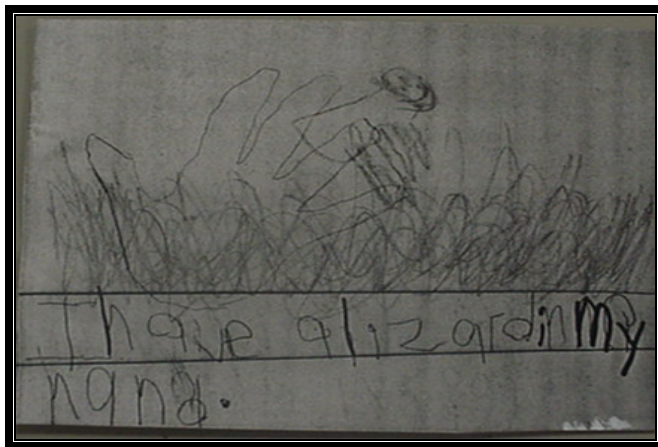
23. Nat – See the apples grow.

When I looked at Nat, he had already copied the sentence, **See the apples grow**, but did not begin the second line of the sentence on the left side of the paper. The sentence strip he was copying was written in a straight line from left to right. Developmentally, he did not have the understanding that if he ran out of room on the line, he had to continue the sentence on the next line on the left side of the paper. I explained to him that I should have shown the children where to continue the sentence if they did not have enough room on the first line of their

paper. I apologized, told him that teachers make mistakes, and showed him where to write the word **grow**. “That’s O.K.,” he told me. I said, “Thank you for understanding, Nat.” He started drawing his picture and said to the girl sitting next to him, “I am making my tree with yellow apples. I like yellow apples.” She said, “I like red apples.” We had been talking about and reading books about apples. I brought red, yellow, and green apples to class, and we had discussed the colors of the apples inside and outside. I gave each child a slice from each apple, and we discussed the flavors. Each child told me the color of their favorite apple, and we created a graph using colored paper apples. Nat was able to read the word **see**, I helped with **the**, and he read **apples**, and the child sitting next to Nat said, “grow”. I could tell by Nat’s expression that Nat wasn’t sure if he liked the boy helping, and Nat just looked at him. I said, “Thank you” to the child and smiled. Then I said, “We can all use a little help sometimes.” Nat smiled at me.

Week of 9-26-05 Leaf, Like, and Love

I have a lizard in my hand.

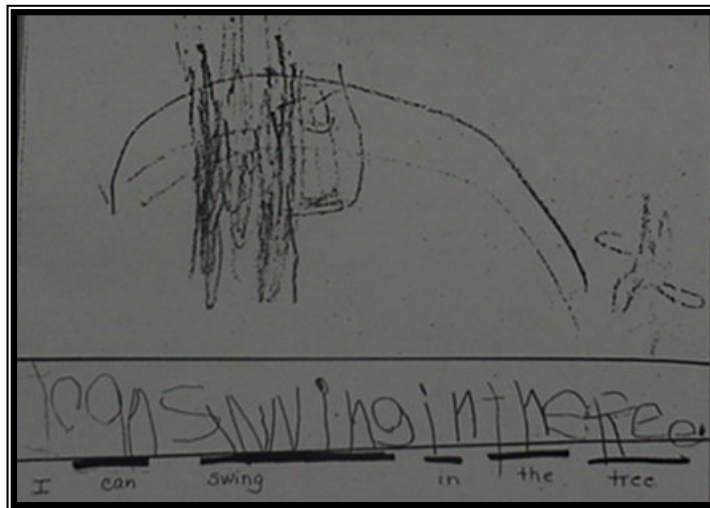


24. Nat – I have a lizard in my hand.

I watched Nat writing the sentence, **I have a lizard in my hand.** The sentence had more words and it was a little harder for Nat to keep track of where he was as he copied the sentence from the sentence strip. His handwriting and letter formations are getting better with consistent copying. He has already learned to continue the sentence on the left side of the paper for the second line. He learns very quickly through observation. I added the letter **i** to the word **in** and wrote the word **my** with an orange marker. While he drew he said, “Look, I have a lizard in my hand. I can trace my hand and there is a lizard.” “You are a very good artist,” I said.

Week of 10-03-05 Scarecrows

I can swing in the tree.

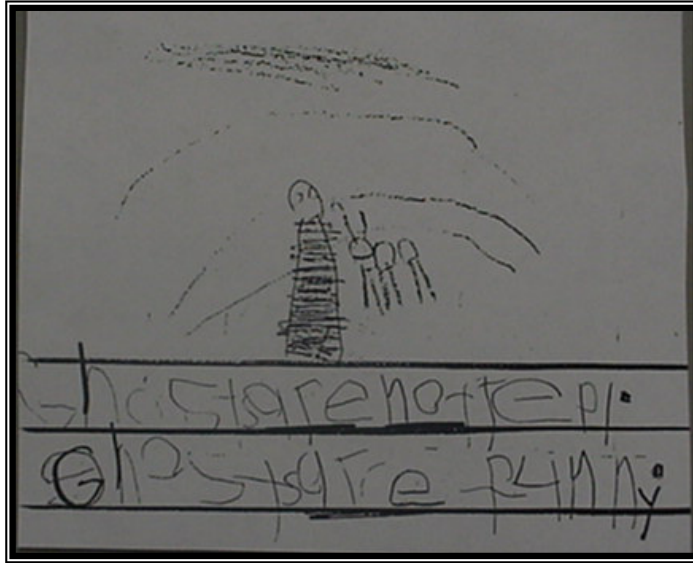


25. Nat – I can swing in the tree.

After Nat wrote the sentence, **I can swing in the tree**, I said “Nat you are doing such a great job copying the sentences everyday. I am going to draw a line under each word you wrote so I can see where the space between the words should be.” “O.K. ma’am,” he said. He had been saying ma’am to me whenever he talked to me. I complimented his nice manners. He has mastered copying the letter “s”. In every picture he drew this week Nat drew a rainbow. He looked at the child sitting next to him and said, “Look, here’s the tree.” He drew some more and said, “I am swinging in the tree.” The child sitting next to Nat is James and he commented that he liked the swing Nat drew. Then Nat uttered, “My mom. She is looking at the sky.” I said, “Maybe she sees you swinging in the tree.” Nat said, “Yeah, she does”.

Week of 10-10-05 Ghost

Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.



26. Nat – Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.

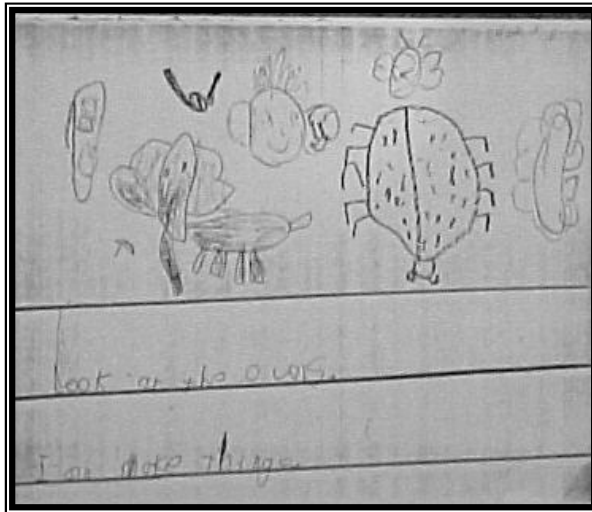
I spent a lot of time during the month of October discussing what is real and not real, trying to take some of the frightening aspects out of Halloween. I read many books to the children and we talked about the stories. Nat did not have his glasses most of this week, and his Grandmother said they were trying to find them. Nat seemed to be able to do his work in spite of not having his glasses.

Nat copied the sentences **Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.** He talked constantly now with the little boy who sits beside him. I had to encourage them to keep writing as they talked. As Nat drew he said, “This is a ghost.” He drew an ant. The child sitting next to him asked about his drawing. Nat said, “The ant is going to bite the ghost. This is going to be a rainbow in the sun.” The child beside him asked if a ghost would be out in the day. Nat replied, “Sure”. Nat was

quite content with what he drew and didn't feel the need to explain why his ghost was out during the day.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.



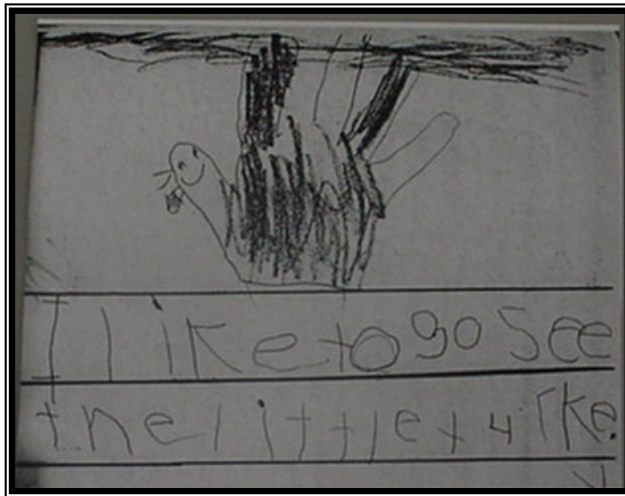
27. Nat – Look at the ovals. I can make things.

Nat watched the little boy sitting next to him for a minute, and then he began writing. He copied, **Look at the ova**, and said, “**I**, I need to write an **I**, **s**, and then a little dot”. I asked Nat, “What is that dot?” He said, “I don’t know.” I explained, “The dot is called a period. The period means it is the end of that sentence.” He took off his glasses and looked at them. “See my new glasses,” he said. The boy sitting beside Nat looked at him. “I am so glad you have new glasses. Do they help you to see better?” I asked. “Yeah, ma’am,” he stated as he

smiled at me, “I need to keep writing.” He copied the sentence, **I can make things**, and began to draw. Nat told the child beside him that he was going to draw a really big alligator with his ovals, and he was going to draw a ladybug, a flower, and apples. The child beside him asked Nat, “Where is the alligator?” “Right there, see,” Nat said as he pointed to the large ovals drawn. Nat asked the child what he is drawing and they begin to compare pictures.

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to go see the little turkey.



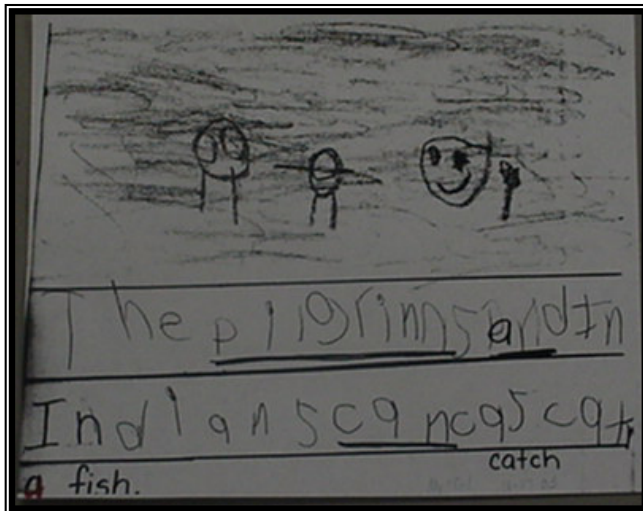
28. Nat – I like to go see the little turkey.

Very quietly Nat wrote the sentence, **I like to go see the little turkey**. He looked at me and said, “Finished ma’am.” I said, “O.K., lets read the sentence together.” I put my pencil under each word and moved left to right as I read each word, and Nat repeated the word after me. Then he said, “Now I need to draw a

turkey, ma'am." He traced his own hand and colored the turkey brown and yellow. He looked at the girl beside him and said, "See my yellow and brown turkey." She acknowledged his turkey and began talking about her drawing with Nat. James, sitting on the other side of Nat, said, "That is a very good t", and pointed to Nat's writing. "Thank you" he said and grinned.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrims and Indians can catch a fish.



29. Nat – The pilgrims and Indians can catch fish.

Nat did not have his glasses again today. I copied the sentence larger for him to copy. I have asked grandmother if it would be possible to get Nat two pair of glasses and leave one pair at school. She told me she would look into it. I am concerned that Nat has not had his glasses. I do not want him to get further behind

the children academically just because he does not have the glasses to help him see. Nat worked quietly and quickly completing the sentence before I could guide him.

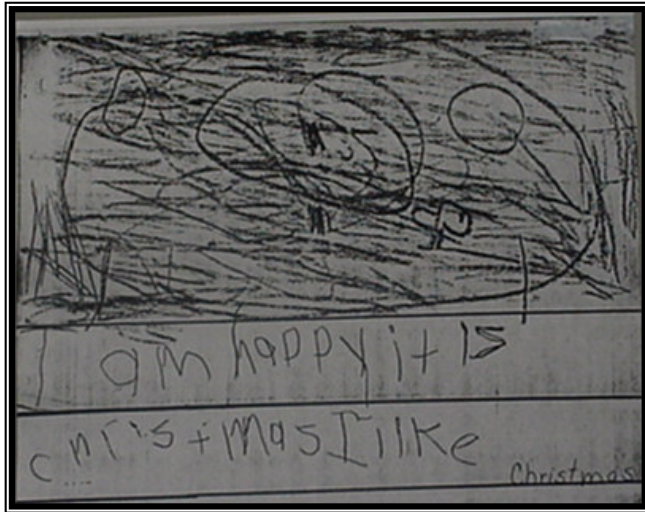
He copied the sentence, **The pilgrims and Indians can catch**, and began drawing. I said, "Let me see what you wrote, Nat. Let's read the sentence together." To help with spacing between the already written words, I underlined the words as I read them, and he repeated them to me. I explained that we needed to correct the letter **a**. I helped him spell **catch a fish** because the sentence had a lot of words which were probably difficult to see and difficult to copy without his glasses. He drew his picture and said, "Mrs. Aliotta, I am done." I asked him to tell me what he had drawn. He said he drew the Indian and pilgrim in the water trying to catch the fish. He looked at James sitting beside him and asked, "Why you copy me?" James said, "'Cause I like to copy people's stuff." I explained that he could say, "Because I like how you draw; you gave me ideas. You know, Nat, I usually give you ideas about what you could draw when I write the sentence on the board. It is a compliment that he likes your drawing enough to draw something that is the same as you." Nat said, "O.K. ma'am."

Week of 12-05-05 Christmas

I am happy it is Christmas. I like _____.

Nat did not have his glasses again today. I quickly made him a larger copy of the sentence strip. After today, I will make a larger sentence strip for him to copy from every day, just as I do for Andrea. He was very happy and playful at

the table during the writing/drawing activity. He seemed to have a hard time staying on task. However, many of the children are filled with excitement about Christmas.



30. Nat – I am happy it is Christmas. I like ____.

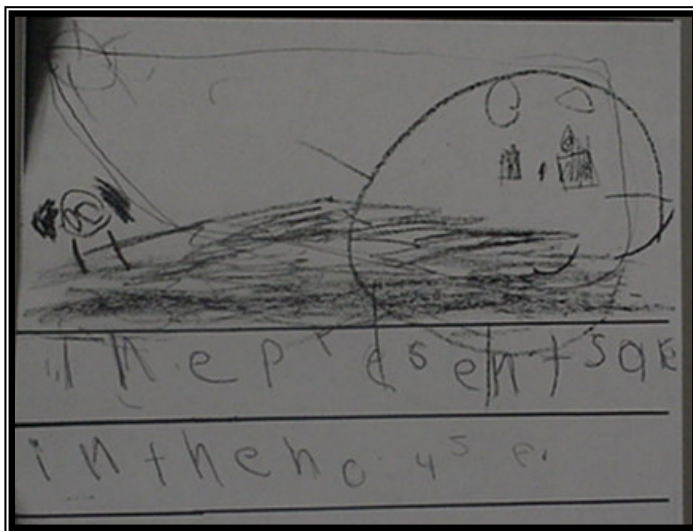
He copied the sentence, **I am happy**, while he and James talked. He said, “I like all the presents and candy.” He grabbed the eraser off his pencil and said, “I had a little eraser, and it disappeared. I’m a magician.” The girl sitting next to him smiled at him and then returned to her work. James said, “Where’d it go?” and Nat excitedly revealed the eraser in his hand and said, “Here it is!” I reminded James and Nat to keep writing as they talked. Nat said, “I eat hair,” and everyone at the table looked at him. He looked at me and finished copying the sentence, **it is Christmas. I like**. I asked him what he liked so that I could finish

writing the sentence for him, and he said, "Christmas." He began drawing frantically. I looked at him and he said, "My dad is eating fish. I like fish, too. Here's his belly button and cheeks." The picture was very hard to discern because Nat used a blue crayon to draw all over the picture, stating he was doing the water. James asked him, "Is that Christmas?" and Nat said, "I don't know." He closed his book and said he was finished.

It was very interesting watching Nat today. He said things that did not relate to the sentence, and his drawing was scribbled over with blue crayon even though he said it was water. I have no idea why he would say he ate hair. Once I looked at him, he continued writing his sentence. His grandmother came by the school and said she had legal custody and that Nat's mom was not to pick him up.

Week of 12-12-05 Reindeer

The presents are in the house.



31. Nat – The presents are in the house.

Fortunately, Nat had his glasses this week. He copied the sentence, **The presents are**, and began watching and talking with James. He said, “I am going to get a lot of presents. I been real good.” James said, “Me, too. No coal for me in my stocking.” Nat said, “My sister should get coal; she’s mean to me.” James said, “My brother can be mean, too. My mother punishes him. He goes to time-out.” “Yeah, my grandma does that, too.” Nat finished writing, **in the house**, as he said, “I am making a big house and a really big Santa. This is me; I am outside the house.” James asked him if he is going to see Santa, and Nat gets very excited and says, “Yes, I am going to walk in and surprise him.” I read the sentence, and Nat repeated each word after me as he pointed to the words.

After I completed the first week’s assessment on the children, I knew Nat would need assistance with his writing and letter formation. Nat had very weak fine motor skills and he knew only three letters of the alphabet. I was prepared to help him as much as he needed.

During the first week of school, I spent a lot of time reading books about children or animals trying things that were not easy. I talked about how each child had to learn to walk, talk, ride bicycles, and other things. I explained that there are many things in life that will seem hard, but we have to try. So when it was time to copy the sentence, Nat never voiced any concern about not being able to copy it or not knowing most of the letters.

I helped Nat copy the sentence the first week of school and then he would try to copy as much as he could by himself. Unlike most of the children in the

class, Nat could not tell me the name of the letter he could not write, so he would point to the letter he could not form. However, Nat was copying the sentence unassisted by the middle of September, and, by the middle of December, Nat knew twenty-seven letters of the alphabet. His drawings have remained simple stick figures, but he uses a lot of color and draws a lot of scenery.

Unlike Andrea, the first month of school Nat was very quiet and seemed to take a lot of time watching and studying other children. His drawings were very simple because his fine motor was weak. Nonetheless, the more he wrote and drew his pictures the better his writing became.

Similar to Andrea, Nat has developed many friendships and enjoys talking about his picture. All the children in the classroom seem to enjoy being with Nat. He has a beautiful warm capturing smile. He has a slight speech impediment and talks in a babyish manner and the other children seem to find him delightful.

Andy's Story

Andy is unusually quiet most of the time. He rarely talks with me or the other children. When it is time to play in the different centers, he likes to play on the computers. I try to limit the amount of time I let him play on the computer to twenty minutes each day. At which time he usually plays in the block center. There is one little friend that he gravitates towards both inside and outside the classroom. I have never seen Andy interact with any of the girls in the classroom, even when I sat him at a table with two very talkative girls.

Andy is very meticulous with his writing. He takes his time and quietly forms each letter of the words in the sentence. It was intriguing watching Andy

draw his pictures. He seemed to actually become involved in his drawings. When he drew a picture to illustrate the sentence he copied, he added a lot of scenery. He added sky, clouds, ground, road, and birds. He mumbled under his breath as he drew. He was hard to understand because he did not speak up. When he drew people or bears, they were complete with head, body, arms, hands, feet, ears, noses, eyes, mouths, and hair.

Andy's Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse

I go to school.



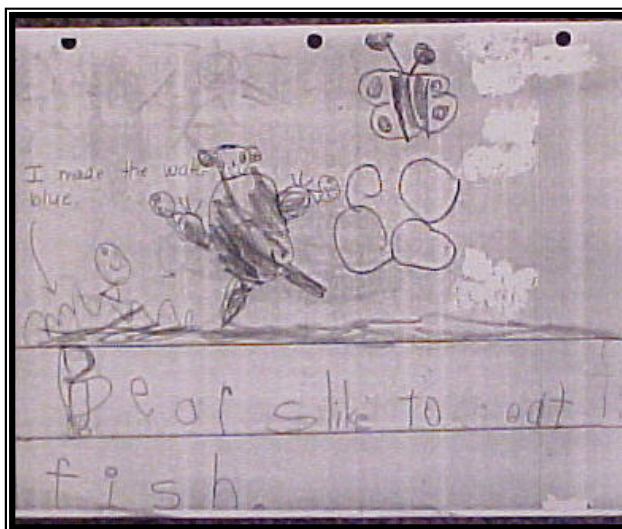
32. Andy – I go to school.

Andy quickly copied the sentence, **I go to school**. His handwriting was very neat and legible. He did not have any trouble copying the letters of each word in the sentence. The bus that Andy drew had windows and a door. All week he drew birds flying in the air. When Andy had finished writing his sentence, he mumbled, "I like Evan. Evan is my friend. I would like to sit by him." He meant that he wanted to sit at the table beside Evan because that is where the children have assigned seats.

His handwriting was very nice. The formation of the letters was very good, but he did not always leave a space between words. Andy did not talk much to the children sitting with him. Later in the day I changed his seat and sat him beside Evan. The boys seemed to have bonded quickly on the playground and play together during center time. I changed the children's seating regularly because I wanted to encourage friendships with everyone in the class. I hoped my strategy would discourage children from ostracizing one another.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

Bears like to eat fish.



33. Andy – Bears like to eat fish.

Andy worked very quietly making unusual noises occasionally, almost like video game sounds. He copied the sentence, **Bears like to eat fish.** He left out the word “like”, but, when he read the sentence to me, he read, “Bears like to eat fish.” I said, “Let’s look at the sentence you wrote. Bears to eat fish. You are missing a word in your sentence.” He said, “Like”. I said, “Yes. I am going to write it for you with a blue marker. Now read it for me.” He read the sentence correctly and began drawing. He drew the bear first and colored it brown. As he drew very quietly he said, “The bear has a fish in his paw. Here is another fish in the water. He is happy because the bear did not get him.” He looked at me and said, “I made the water blue.” Then he drew a very colorful butterfly and wrote his name, first with a crayon and then with a pencil.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

See the bears play.

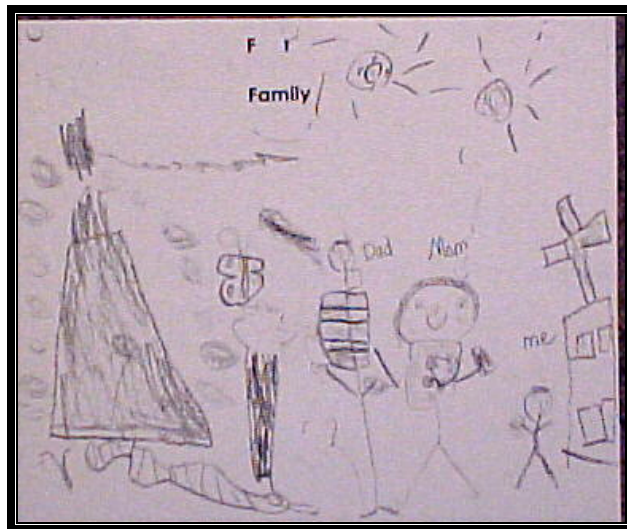


34. Andy – See the bears play.

When he copied the sentence, **See the bears play**, he drew the three bears going back to the house after their walk to let the porridge cool. When he drew the chimney, he said, “There is smoke coming out of the chimney. See? That’s because they were cooking the porridge in there.”

Andy seemed to enjoy drawing. He talked while he drew but it was almost a whisper. He wasn’t actually talking to anyone he was talking to himself, but verbalizing everything that he was putting on paper with his pencil, similar to Katie as she drew pictures. The children sitting near Andy did not acknowledge anything Andy was saying as he drew.

Week of 9-12-05 Friends, Family, and Fall

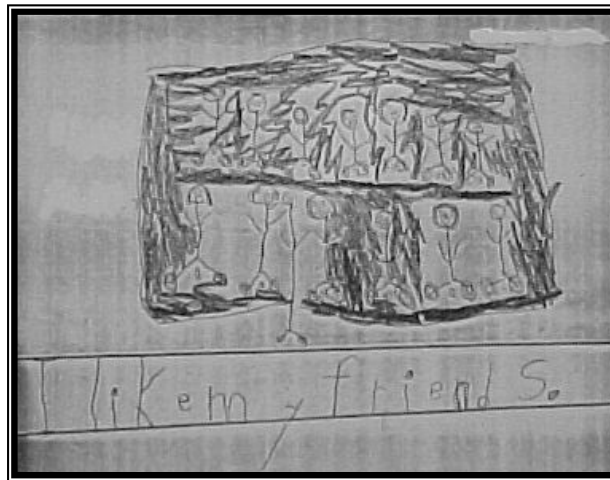


33. Andy – Friends, Family, and Fall

Andy drew a picture of his family. His pictures are full of creativity! He drew his dad, mom, and himself. When he drew himself, he said, "I am standing by the church. See the building has a cross on the top of it. We go to church." Then he drew some more. Sometimes he didn't talk much as he drew, and he rarely talked to any of the children sitting at the table with him. If he did talk, he talked with the little boy sitting next to him that he played with all the time. "That is very nice, Andy." I said. He said, "Now I am drawing a butterfly over the tree." "Oh, Andy tell me more," I said. "The snake is going by the mountain," he said, "See it is wiggling along the ground by the mountain. He wants to get the butterfly but it is too high up. Daddy is standing by the tree. He is so tall. Mommy is standing by him. She is holding a drink because it is hot and she knows I am thirsty."

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

I like my friends.



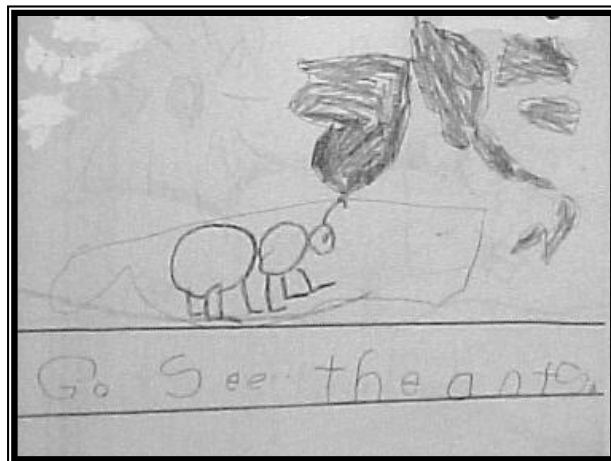
36. Andy - I like my friends.

When he copied the sentence, **I like my friends**, it was hard to tell each word because there was no spacing between the words. His handwriting was very legible, though. When he drew his picture, it was in pencil and black crayon. He drew fourteen friends. The friends were not drawn with as much elaboration as usual, and it was not possible to tell boys from girls. It seemed that he was more interested in drawing a lot of friends than in drawing a lot of detail. Pointing to a tall person, I said, "This one is tall." He said, "Yeah" and looked around the room. "I guess it is the teacher."

On every page in his booklet, he wrote his first name and then his last name above it. The children are not asked to write their names on each page because their names are on the cover of the booklets. However, Andy was the only child in the class to write his name on each page.

Week of 9-19-05 Autumn and Apples

Go see the ants.

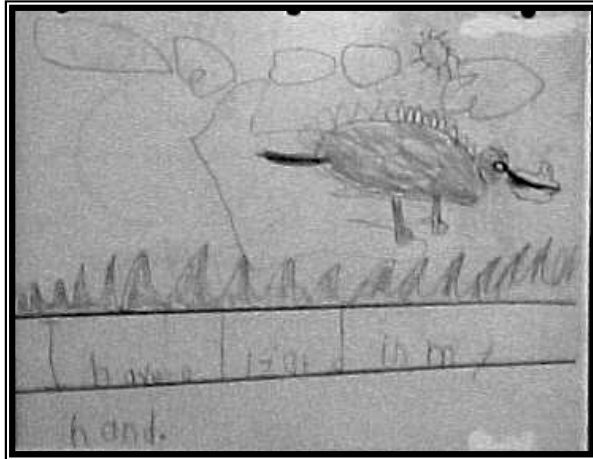


37. Andy – Go see the ants.

Andy has been talking more as he worked. Andy copied the sentence, **Go see the ants**, and occasionally would look over at his friend's picture. It seemed that Andy loves to draw. He drew a very large ant and drew a line around the ant saying, "The ant is in his hole. Dark clouds are goin' to rain." Later in the week, Andy copied the sentence, **I like animals**. He drew a very detailed picture. However, I did not get a copy of the picture before the booklet was taken home. He was very talkative as he drew and talked mainly with the boy sitting next to him. He said, "The alligator ate the fish. This ugly water is making the flower die. He ate three fish. See, he is standing in the water with his toenails. Now he is drinking a cup of milk. I didn't draw any fish in the water because he ate them all. The alligator is sweating from the sun. He is going to swim down in the water. Here is a water tornado. It flew everyone away."

Week of 9-26-05 Leaves, Like, and Love

I have lizard in my hand.

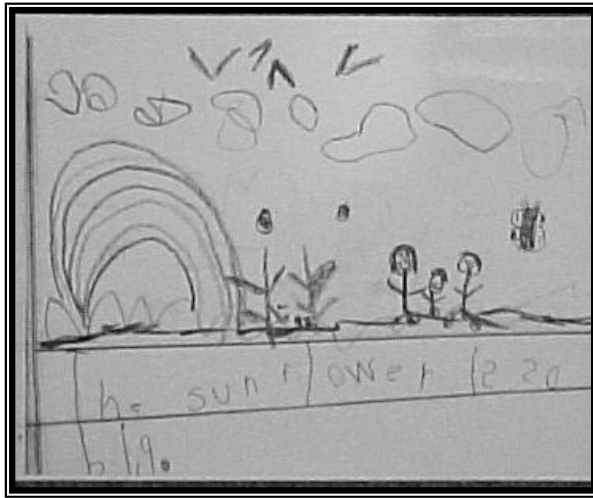


38. Andy – I have a lizard in my hand.

Andy wrote the sentence, **I have a lizard in my hand.** His handwriting is beautiful, and he leaves spaces between each word. He wrote without saying a word. He was very quiet. Then he began drawing the picture. He traced his hand and began to draw the lizard in his hand. When he drew the lizard, he said, “The lizard’s tongue is catching a butterfly. He likes to eat bugs. He has to be quick. In the morning time he is hungry. When he is on the grass he cannot catch the bug because his tongue is not long. He almost jumped out of my hand.” “I love the lizard and butterfly that you drew, Andy. Have you every held a lizard?” I asked. “No, I don’t want to hold a lizard.” He said. “I wouldn’t either. I just like to watch them in the bushes and in the grass.” I said. I asked Andy to read the sentence to me and he needed help with the word **lizard** so I pointed to his picture and he finished reading his sentence.

Week of 10-03-05 Scarecrows

The sunflower is so big.

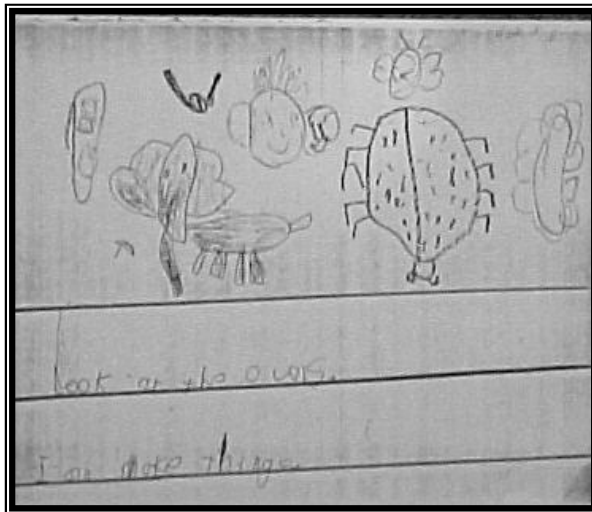


39. Andy – The sunflower is so big.

He copied the sentence, **The sunflower is so big.** His handwriting was not as good as it had been, but he was interacting more with his peers. A few times he reversed the letter “s”. As he drew a butterfly and two sunflowers, he said, “A butterfly is going up, up, up. Two flowers growing seeds.” “Oh” I said, “Those must be sunflowers.” “Yes”, he said. Then I heard him talking softly to himself. “If the birds land on the clouds, they fall. Ooooh, maybe that cloud popped.” Sometimes what he is saying does not make sense to me. Perhaps he is thinking more than he is saying. “If someone shot them, it would fall better than a dead leaf.” Andy read the sentence to me and put his book away.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.



40. Andy – Look at the ovals. I can make things.

Andy copied the sentences, **Look at the ovals. I can make things.** He read the sentences when I asked him to without any help. Then he looked at the picture of the boy who was sitting next to him. He said, “Oh, a butterfly.” Then he started talking about his picture, “The elephant is trying to get water to spray. The man cracked his ear. He fell. The ladybug is checking something in the man’s ear. The bat is trying to catch the ladybug.”

I have noticed that Andy is extremely creative and imaginative with his drawings and talks. When I am able to listen to him talking as he is drawing, he says so much more than his illustrations do. This is the only time Andy talks very much, most the time he is silent.

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to go see the little turkey.

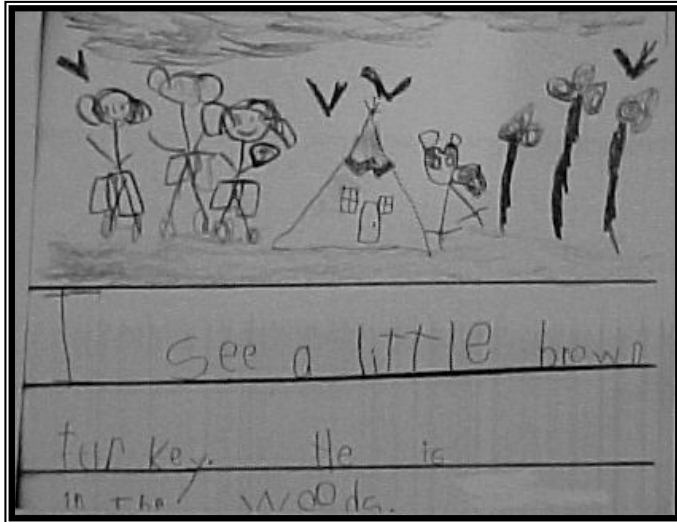


41. Andy – I like to go see the little turkey.

Andy was unusually quiet as he copied the sentence, **I like to go see the little turkey.** I asked him to read it to me, and he read it easily and smiled a crooked smile. He said, “My turkey has a lot of colors on his feathers. The turkey liked to get painted. Oops, I need to draw his feet. His beak may get poked in the tree.” I asked him to tell me about the colors on the turkey’s feathers. He said, “The turkey has orange, red, yellow, green, purple, blue, but no black or brown.” I said, “Well, that is one gorgeous turkey you drew, Andy. Where is the tree that he may poke his beak into?” He said, “He hasn’t walked up to it yet.” I asked Andy to read the sentence to me and he was able to without any help. He was finished, closed his book cover, and put his book away.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

I see a little brown turkey. He is in the woods.



42. Andy – I see a little brown turkey. He is in the woods.

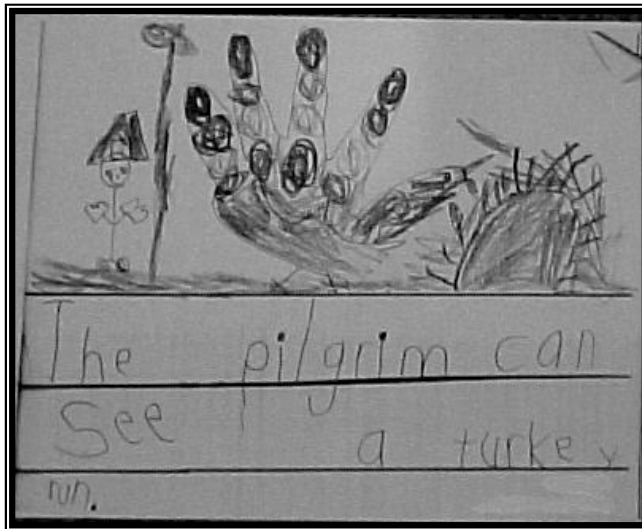
Andy copied the sentences, **I see a little brown turkey. He is in the woods.** Then he said, “He has a chocolate chip cookie for the birds, but the birds are trying to eat the tent.” I said, “Why?” “Because they think it is chicken, ham, or steak. The turkey is hiding because he doesn’t want to get eaten. When his face is red it means the turkey is sick”, he said. I asked Andy why the bird was sick. He said, “He just ate bird.” I asked, “What are the black things here?” “Birdies”, he said. He closed the book to place it on the shelf, saw the word happy on the cover of the book, and said, “h-a-p-p-y, happy!” He looked at me and I said, “You spelled happy.” “I did and I am happy with you.” I said.

Teachers have different methods of getting the attention of the entire class at different times during the school day. The method I used was to say, “Is

everybody happy, h-a-p-p-y?” When I finish spelling the word ‘ happy’, the children know they should stop talking and look at me.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrim can see a turkey run.



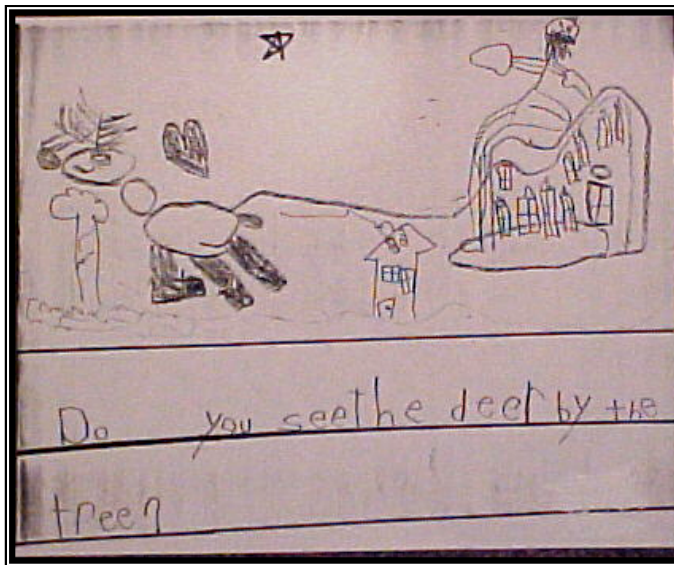
43. Andy – The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

Quickly and quietly Andy copied the sentence, **The pilgrim can see a turkey run.** He looked at the little girl sitting next to him, and he said, “ Look at the turkey. The turkey is cute. Cack,cack,cack, mmm, mmm.” Then he smiled at the girl sitting next to him. She smiled back and said, “I really like your turkey.” Andy said, “The turkey wanted to jump over the sun. Ooooo, he is going to get sunburned.” Andy drew some more and said to the little girl, “The pilgrim wants to eat his turkey, but he can’t find his fork.” I asked Andy to read the sentence and

he was able to without any help from me. Andy seemed to get totally absorbed in his drawings. Most of the time, Andy completes his work and watches other children as they complete their work. He watches other children converse, but rarely is a part of the conversation.

Week of 11-28-05 Deer

Do you see the deer by the tree?



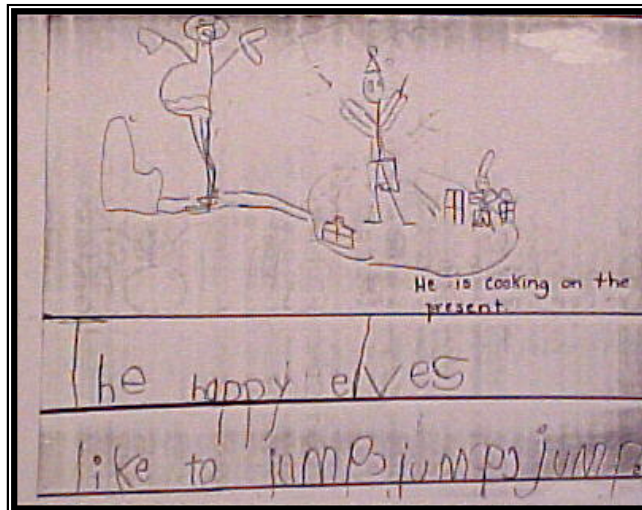
44. Andy – Do you see the deer by the tree?

Andy copied the sentence, **Do you see the deer by the tree?** “Rudolph the red-nose reindeer loves that tree, but the tree is breaking.” he said. I asked, “Why is the tree cracking?” He said, “Because the storm just went past. Santa Claus keeps saying keep moving, keep moving. He wants to get in that house and

get presents. He is going super fast. The people inside think it is an airplane.” I asked, “The people inside think it is a plane?” “Yeah, they don’t know Santa is already delivering his presents because they have not gone to bed yet.” he explained. I said, “Your sleigh is full of presents, Andy.” He said, “Yeah, for all the children. He has a lot of presents for a lot of children.” I asked Andy to read the sentence to me and I had to help him with the word **Do** and then he read the sentence to me.

Week of 12-05-05 Christmas

The happy elves like to jump, jump, jump.



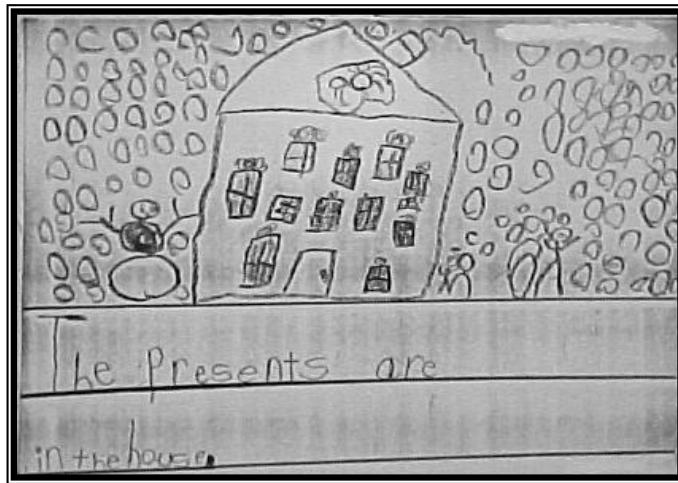
45. Andy – The elves like to jump, jump, jump.

Andy copied the sentence, **The happy elves like to jump, jump, jump.**

“Santa is big because he ate all the cookies. The big elf is trying to make Santa go; he wants to quit because it is so cold. He doesn’t wear a jacket, just a suit and gloves.” I said, You are so right, Andy. He should have on a very warm jacket. What is the elf doing?” He said, “The elf is cooking on the present. The present is a little stove. See, he is cooking dinner.” I asked, “Who do you think the elf is cooking for?” He said, “Probably Santa. He is always eating. The elf knows he can stay warm if he stays close to the cooker.” “That is true, but he must be careful because the cooker can be hot.” I said. “He is careful, he has the heat on low, he just wants to be warm.” Andy said.

Week of 12-12-05 Reindeers

The presents are in the house.



46. Andy – The presents are in the house.

Andy copied the sentence, **The presents are in the house.** He said, “I am making a lot of snow. Look at the presents. The spider is still in the attic. He is not getting down. Yesterday my attic was hot. It was sweaty.” I asked Andy, “Were you in the attic at your house yesterday?” “Yes, we were taking down the Christmas stuff. We are going to put up our Christmas tree. We are going to get the tree today if Daddy can get off work early enough. We don’t have any presents at the house, yet.” I asked, “Were there any spiders in your attic yesterday?” “Yes”, he said, “But it was far away and Daddy said I did not need to be afraid of it.” I asked Andy, “What did your daddy do?” He said, “He wasn’t worried. He got all the Christmas stuff down and then we had to see if all the lights worked. Mommy likes the white lights. So that is what we have. I like the colored lights.” Then Andy read the sentence to me without any help.

Andy was extremely quiet in the class. When he did talk it was hard to hear him and understand what he was saying. He followed directions well without needing any help from me. I saw Andy interact with only one other little boy in the class during the first month of school. When he mentioned softly, under his breath, that he would like to sit next to that boy, I moved him beside the boy to encourage him to talk. The boy he wanted to sit next to is also very quiet, so I was anxious to see how much talk would develop.

Unlike many of Nat and James, his handwriting was beautiful as his letter formations were accurate. From the beginning, Andy was able to leave spaces between the words, and he was able to read the sentences without much help from me. He was very meticulous with his writing and his drawing.

Unlike Katie, who talks most of the time, Andy usually drew silently, if he saw me sitting near and watching, he would begin to talk. He rarely began conversations with the children sitting near him. Just like Andrea, the explanations Andy talked about as he drew were always very detailed and became more elaborate as the semester progressed. Even if I had not been there to listen to Andy talk, his creativity and imagination were evident in his drawings.

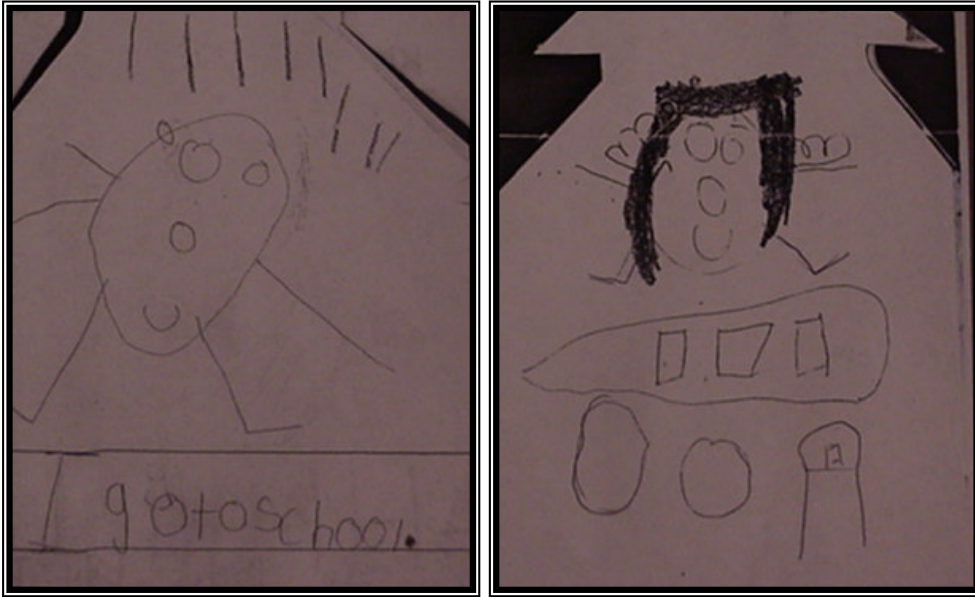
Katie's Story

Katie is a petite little girl that is full of energy. She is a social butterfly in the classroom and she is either talking or moving. She seems to get along well with most of the children but occasionally she is not kind to the other children. Frequently, her talking keeps her from getting her work finished and quite often she has to be redirected to complete her work and I have to repeat directions or her.

Katie's Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse School

I go to school.



47. Katie – I go to school.

Katie seemed very anxious to begin copying. She copied **I g** and then said, “Uh-oh, I wrote my ‘g’ too high. I have to erase that.” She erased the **g** and finished writing, **go to school**. She did not write any spaces between the words. Yet, she seemed very comfortable writing and must have enjoyed drawing because she used the adjacent page. Her drawings on every page that week were very simple. Each drawing consisted of a large circle with stick arms, eyes, nose, and a mouth. After she drew the picture to go with the sentence, she drew on the adjacent page. She drew a large yellow bus with two wheels and her with a lot of black hair on top of the bus. She did often watch other children drawing but did talk with the child sitting beside her. She said, “This is me. I go to school here at Hesse. I don’t ride to school on the bus, but I am going to draw one with me on it

anyway.” The child sitting next to her said that she did not ride the bus either because her dad brought her to school. I asked Katie to read the sentence to me, and I only had to help her read **school**. Furthermore, when she drew her pictures throughout the week, whatever crayon she picked to draw was the only color used on the page.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

Bears like to eat fish.



48. Katie – Bears like to eat fish.

She copied, **Be** and wrote **n** and said, “Oops, I don’t need that letter.” She erased it and copied, **ars like to eat fish**. Usually as she wrote, she spelled each letter in the words out loud. She quickly learned to leave spaces between each word. As she drew the bear, she said, “My momma has a lot of grass in her backyard.” Then she drew green grass across the page. “He is going to scratch the

fish to eat it. My bear is so brown,” she said as she colored the bear. Her handwriting was legible, and her letters well formed. When I asked her to read the sentence, I asked her to point to each word as she read. When she hesitated at the first word, I pointed to the picture she had drawn and she said, **bear**. I said, “Very good.” She read **like to**, I helped her read **eat**, and she read **fish**. Then she said, “See the fish here.” I said, “You are right. Sometimes when we can not remember words, we can use the picture to help.” Every picture she has drawn this week was colored brown.

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall



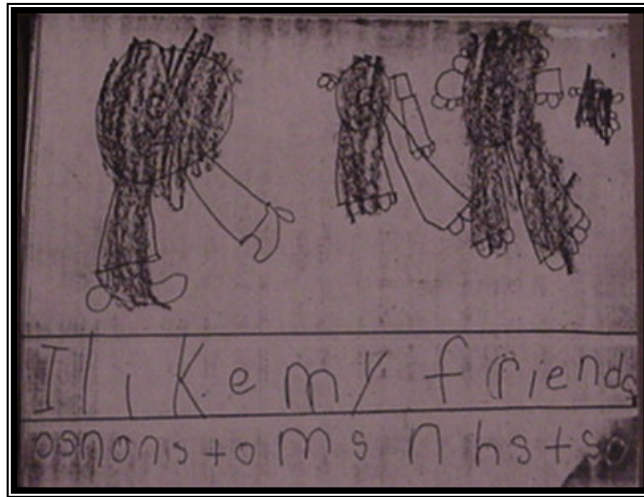
49. Katie – Family, Friends, and Fall

She drew a picture of her family on the cover of the book as she talked continually. She announced, “We are all going to the park to swing. This is my mom with her high heel shoes on. This is my friend, Tyler; she’s a girl. This is my friend Dwayne. He is little. This is me, I am a baby.” After she finished copying the sentence in her book, I asked her to tell me again who was on the cover of the

book. She said, “This is my mom with high heel shoes on. This is my dad; he is in Kuwait, though. My brother, Alexis, and my other brother Brandon. They are big. My daddy says we all better be good while he is gone. This is me, right here. We have a big family.” Katie was very excited as she drew her family. She changed her description of the people in her picture when I asked her about it from the explanation I listened to as she drew the picture.

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

I like my friends.



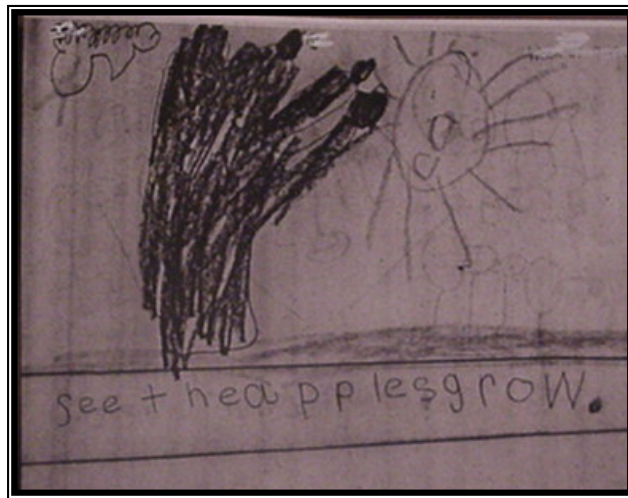
50. Katie – I like my friends.

Katie copied the sentence, **I like my friends**. She said each letter as she wrote it. She almost wrote an **e** instead of the **r**, but she corrected herself and said, “I don’t know why I would be writing that.” She talks all the time. It is a real struggle for her to listen as I teach because she likes to talk so much. She wrote a

string of letters across the bottom of the page. I complimented her and told her “I am so proud of you. You are writing your own sentence.” She said, “Yeah, I like to play with my friends. I have a lot of friends at school, too.” I said. “Yes, you do. I have watched you playing with others. You are very kind. I have watched you share with others and talk nicely to the other children.” I asked her to read the sentence for me. She was able to read the entire sentence without any help. As I pointed to the string of letters she wrote, I asked her to tell me about what she wrote. She pointed to the letters and said, “My friends and me like to play at school.”

Week of 9-19-05 Autumn and Apples

See the apples grow.

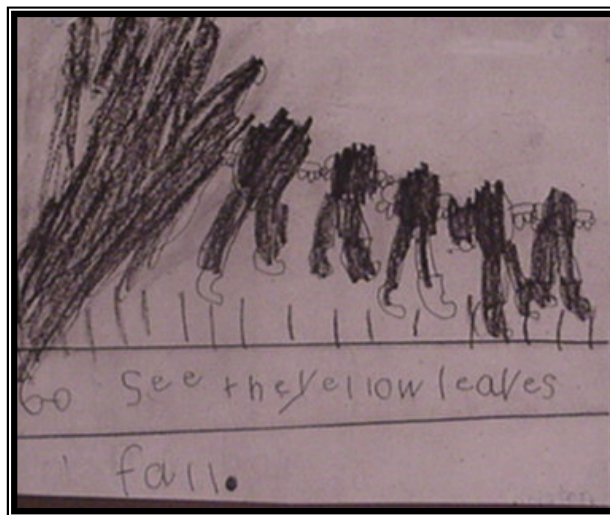


51. Katie – See the apples grow.

Katie copied the sentence, **See the apples grow**, quickly, without talking. I told her, “I like how you sat down and wrote your sentence. Your letters seem to be floating in the air. I would like for you to slow down and write on the line.” I demonstrated on another piece of paper how to write the sentence, and I talked with her as I wrote each letter. I talked about the formation and placement of each letter on the line. She said, “I will do better tomorrow,” and began drawing her picture. She talked as she drew, “The apples are growing because it is fall. Sometimes they grow green, sometimes they grow red, and sometimes they grow yellow.” I asked, “What flavor did you like the best?” She said, “I like yellow.” I said, “I remember you did. That is the color of the apple you picked as your favorite to place on our graph. Do you remember my favorite apple?” “Yes”, she said, “I do. It was green.” “That’s right, Katie, my favorite apple was green. It was fun tasting different apples and talking about the differences”, I said.

Week of 9-26-05 Leaf, Like, and Love

Go see the yellow leaves fall.

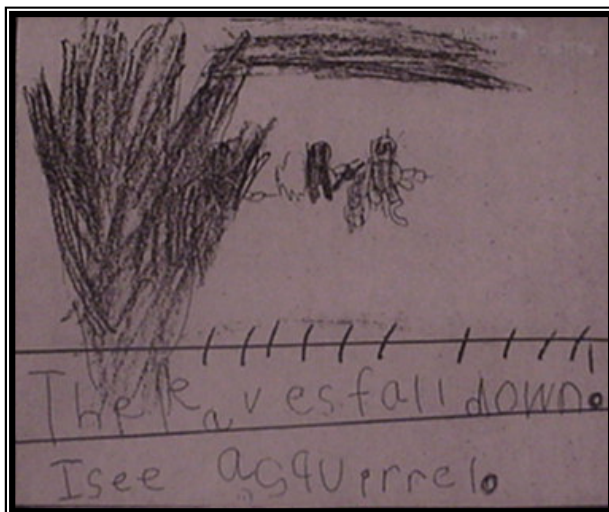


52. Katie – Go see the yellow leaves fall.

Katie quickly copied the sentence, **Go see the yellow leaves fall.** I reminded her again that she was writing too fast and that the letters needed to sit on the line. I observed that she talked the whole time she was writing and not watching what she wrote. She spelled each word as she wrote it and then she would say the word she wrote. She drew her picture, and the girl beside her asked her what she was drawing. She said, “Those are my friends playing Ring-a-Round the Rosy. I play with my big brother. I play basketball, and I shoot the ball in the hoop. That is Brandon; that’s me; that’s Alexis; that’s my dad. He is in Kuwait.” Katie went from drawing her friends to drawing her family as she talked about her picture. She read the sentence to me, and then I asked her to read it again and to point to the words as she read it. I wanted to see if she knew each word or had just memorized what she heard me say as I wrote it. She has started to use many colors to draw her pictures.

Week of 10-03-05 Scarecrows

The leaves fall down. I see a squirrel.

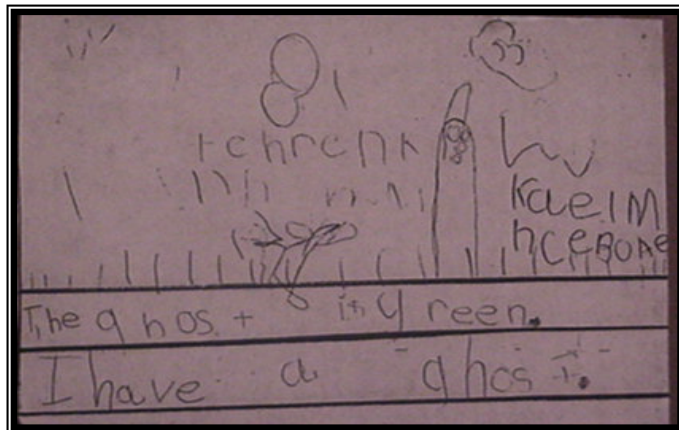


53. Katie – The leaves fall down. I see a squirrel.

Katie was doing a better job of watching what she wrote. She really liked to talk with everyone who was sitting at the table with her. Though she tried hard to concentrate on writing, while she talked, she wrote, **The leaves fall**, and then began talking with the children about the movie that she watched at her day care that morning. Other children had seen the movie, and they discussed different scenes. She finished writing the sentence, spelling each letter of each word and then stating the word. She began to draw and said, “The squirrels had to go to the owl. The squirrels are holding acorns. They are going to go home to their family and bring it to them. The owl is already in the tree. He is hard to see. I am going to color him red.” She colored the tree brown, the owl red, one squirrel blue, and the other the squirrel orange. It was a very colorful picture. When I asked her to read the sentence, she needed help with the word **leaves** but looked at the picture for a clue to remember the word **squirrel**.

Week of 10-10-05 Ghost

The ghost is green. I have a ghost.



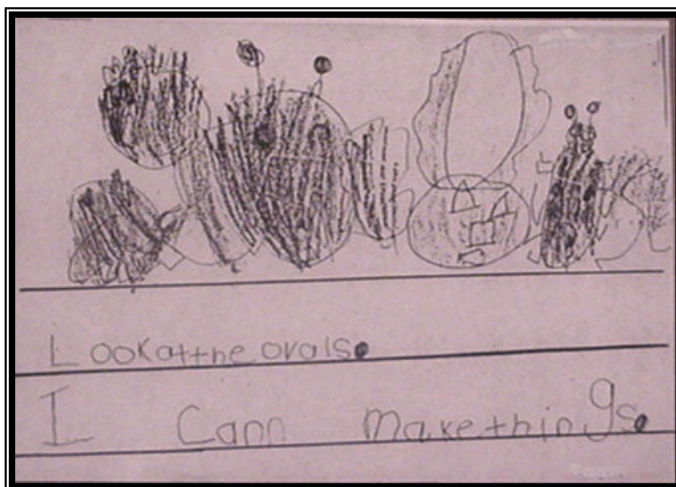
54. Katie – The ghost is green. I have a ghost.

Katie copied the sentences, **The ghost is green. I have a ghost**, spelling each letter of each word and saying the word after it was spelled. When she wrote the word **have**, she looked at me questioningly, and I said, “Have.” She repeated the word and finished reading what she had written. At that time, she began drawing and talking, “The ghost needs to go scare people. The ghost had to go eat an owl and take them to his friends. The cloud is outside by himself with the moon.”

She added letters as she drew and talked. I wondered if she had written what she had said, but I did not want to interrupt to ask. I did not want to stop the creative process to verify my speculation. I enjoyed listening and watching her read her sentence.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.

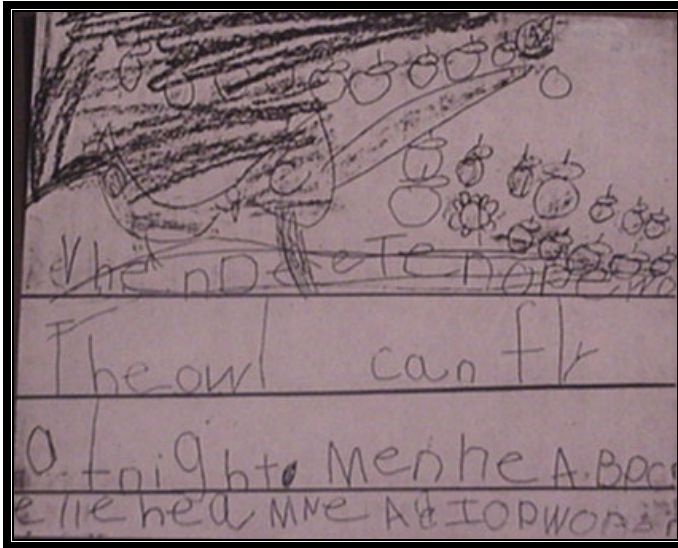


55. Katie – Look at the ovals. I can make things.

When Katie sat down she began talking about Halloween. I let her talk with her friends for a bit and then encouraged the children to write as they talked. She wrote, **Look at the ovals. I can make things**, quickly because she wanted to talk more. When she finished copying the sentence, I asked her to read the sentences to me. She needed help with the words **ovals** and **make things**. She began drawing quietly at first as if she were thinking about what to make. Then she said, “The ladybug had to stand up to crawl on the leaf. So he could stand up and look in the mirror that is on top of the pumpkin. He wants to see how dark his antennae are. The butterfly is looking at the little girl. This little tweezer is going to pinch the butterfly wings.”

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

The owl can fly at night.



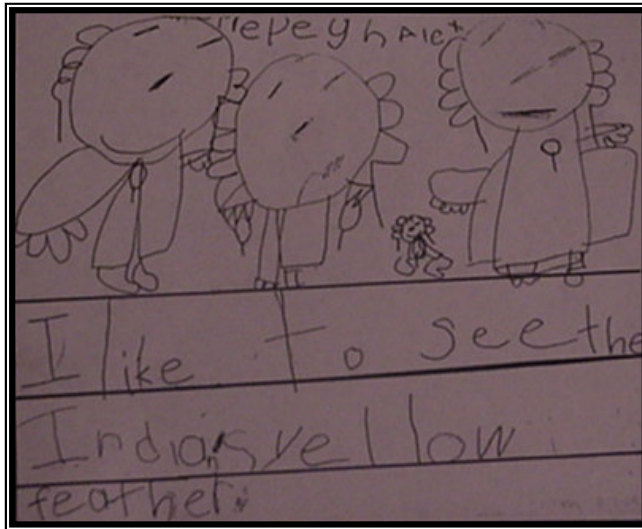
56. Katie – The owl can fly at night.

Later in the week, she copied the sentence, **The owl can fly at night.** She drew the owl and then began drawing circular things all over the page. I asked, “What are those?” She said matter-of-factly, “Acorns.” I asked, “Why are you drawing acorns?” She said, “For the owl. He likes green acorns.” She wrote a string of letters very quickly. I asked her what that was about, and she said, “He is going to take the acorns to his family. He has a big family and they all like to eat acorns. The acorns are falling from the trees.” I told her, “I love to listen to you talk, watch you draw, and watch you write.”

Katie is one of only five children in my class of eighteen who has tried to write on her own. The string of letters she writes does not have any letter/sound association. However, it is exciting to see her so excited about writing.

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to see the Indian's yellow feather.



57. Katie – I like to see the Indian's yellow feather.

Katie copied the sentence, **I like to see the Indian's yellow feather.**

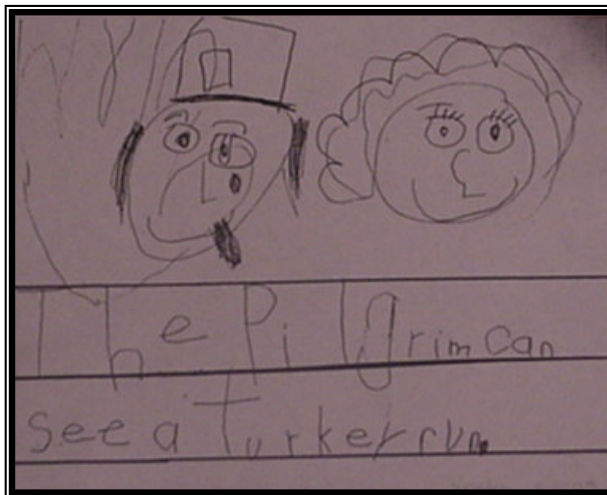
While she was writing she said each letter. “I l-i-k-e, like. Do I write the “t” big?” I said, “Yes. The letter needs to touch the top and the bottom line.” She said, “Oooh, that’s a good “t” s-e-e, see.” Then she finished writing the sentence quietly. She wrote f-e-a and said, “Oops, I do not have enough room.” She meant for the rest of the word, so she erased it. She finished the sentence on the last line. I looked at her work and said, “O.K. now draw your picture.” She said, “I didn’t read my sentence to you yet.” She read, **I like to see** and hesitated because she realized she didn’t have the word **like** written. She wrote it and read the sentence again. Then she began to draw. She wrote letters across the top of the page. I said, “Tell me about this” as I pointed to the letters. She said, “I wrote, I like the

Indians to have a baby, to have a family, to have dinner.” She said, “I am finished, I don’t want to color the Indians, just their feathers.”

Even though Katie could read the words she wrote and knew when a word was missing from her sentence, she still has not realized that if she independently writes her own sentence and it begins like the sentence she copied, that her sentence should be written, **I like**, not just a string of letters. I am thrilled that she wants to write. I hope that through my continued modeling of how to spell words she will begin phonetically spelling the words in the sentences she writes. I do not want to discourage her from trying to write her own sentences.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrim can see a turkey run.



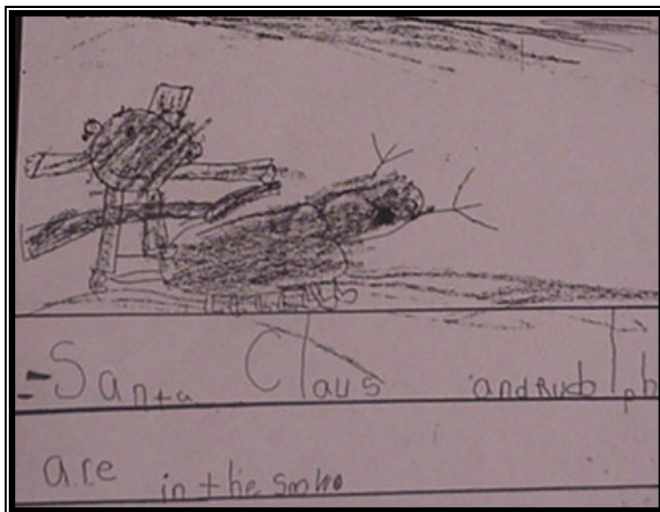
58. Katie – The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

Katie worked very quietly and wrote the complete sentence, **The pilgrim can see a turkey run**, and looked at me. I asked her to read the sentence, and she needed help with the words pilgrim, turkey, and run. Then she drew two very large pilgrim heads, one of a boy and one of a girl. She traced her hand for the turkey. As she was drawing the turkey's waddle, she said, "My mom didn't know how to put that thing on the turkey under his neck." I said, "Your mom was drawing?" She said, "Yeah, my homework. Oops, I'm sorry." I said, "Your mom is not supposed to be doing your homework. Your homework is to show your mom what you can do." Then she began talking about her drawing, she said, "The turkey is trying to hug and kiss him. The turkey wants him to be his dad. The turkey wants her to be her mom."

Katie's dad has come home from Kuwait and he has been bringing her to school every morning.

Week of 12-05-05 Christmas

Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow.



59. Katie – Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow.

Katie's handwriting was much neater all this week. There seemed to be a bit of calmness to her. She was very quiet as she wrote, **Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow**. She quickly began drawing and talking, "Rudolph, the little reindeer, is a baby. Look. Look at Santa Claus. He is a girl because he is wearing earrings. Santa is stepping on Rudolph." I asked, "Why?" She said, "Santa wants to get him and beat him. The boy next to her says, "Santa doesn't beat his reindeers." "Oh, yeah", Katie says, "His belt is sticking off. Santa is a different color. His belt is getting big like an eagle and an owl. You know the owl that the boy saw flying high in the sky." I had read the story *Owl Moon* to the children, and there was the shadow of a large owl in the night sky. Then she said, "I love the baby Rudolph's red nose. It is precious."

Katie loves to talk. She talks with everyone around her, including me. She talks in a soft voice and seems to be able to get along with everyone in the class. She talks about what she is drawing, what she did, what is happening at home, where she has been, what she is going to do, and any show she may have watched. Unlike Nat and Andy who both write and draw very quietly, Katie is never silent.

Katie as the first child in the class to begin writing her own sentences independently. The words she wrote in her sentences were not spelled correctly nor did they have any letter/sound association. Her letters in the words were better formed at the beginning of the year when she was not talking as much.

When I asked her to read the sentences, she was able to read without any help from me. She always seemed very happy engaged in any activity in the room. Her enthusiasm spills over into her drawings. Unlike Andrea and Andy whose pictures were very detailed, Katie's talks revealed more about her drawings than was evident in her pictures. Her drawings are very large and expressive without a lot of detail.

James' Story

When James first came into my classroom, he was not very comfortable drawing or writing. He really didn't want to do any of his class work. He often suggested to me that maybe he could do it later or possibly take it home. I always assured him that he could finish his work. I sat with him until he was finished each day. He was easily distracted watching others, playing with his pencil or scissors, or talking to me. When he drew pictures of people, he drew a head, arms, legs, eyes, nose, and mouth. He didn't draw a body, but sometimes he would put hair on the people. All week, when he drew a picture of himself, he also drew his older brother, Justin, who is seven. His fine motor skills are not very strong. His handwriting is legible and his letter formation is correct most of the time.

When it is time to play in centers, he likes to play with one friend. James tends to follow this friend and play at the sand table center or the art center. If his friend is busy with another child, James likes to play on the computers. I find this a bit surprising because two children were in James' pre-kindergarten class and another child was in James' three to four year old program at a private daycare. As I do with Andy, I have to limit James' computer time to twenty minutes.

James' Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse School

I go to school.



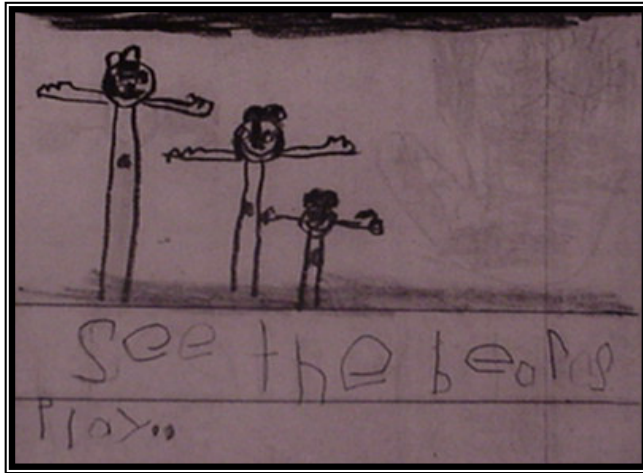
60. James – I go to school.

James started copying the sentence. He wrote the letter “g” correctly, which can be a difficult letter to write. He did not place spaces between the words, which made the sentence difficult to read. He copied the sentence, **I go to school**, without talking. Then he said, “I went here last year, too.” (He was in Pre-Kindergarten at Hesse). I said, “Looks like you are smiling in your drawing.” He said, “Yeah, I like school.” I asked him, “Who is in the picture with you?” He said, “You know, my brother, Justin. You taught him the other year.” “I sure did and that is why I knew you before you were in my class. You came to all of Justin’s class parties. I was very excited when I knew you were going to be in my class this year,” I said. When I asked him to read, I had to say the word first, and

then he repeated after me. He was very anxious to finish his work and go play with the manipulatives that the children play with before we go to lunch.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

See the bears play.

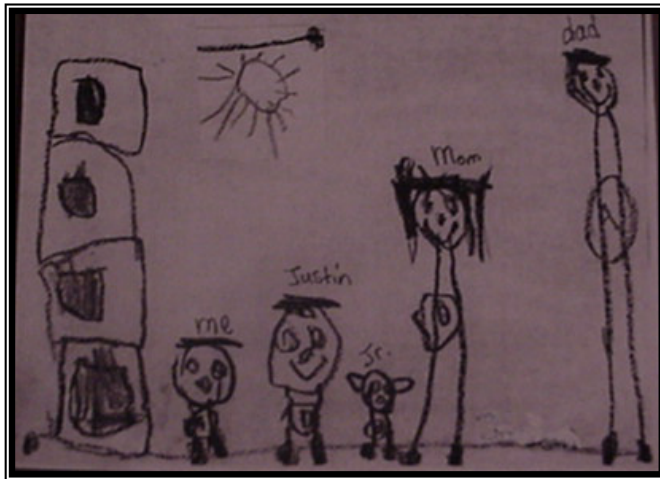


61. James – See the bears play.

James' handwriting was very large and his letters tended to float off the line. He worked very slowly as he would copy a few letters and then watch other children or talk to me. Sometimes he stuttered just a bit when he is in a hurry to say something. He copied the sentence, **See the bears play.** He laughed and said, "I put two periods" to the child sitting next to him. The child looked at his paper but did not respond. Then James said, "I am going to draw three bears like in the story. A daddy (he drew the tall bear), a mommy (he drew a middle sized bear), and a baby bear (he drew a little bear)." Each bear was drawn like he drew people, but today they had ears and a belly button. I asked James to read the sentence to

me. He just looked at me. I smiled and said, “Come on, we can do it together. You point to the word, I will read it, and you can repeat after me.” He pointed to each word and read the sentence with me.

Week of 9-12-05 Friends, Family, and Fall



62. James – Friends, family, and Fall

On the cover of his book, James drew his dad very tall, his mom, his brother Justin, himself, and Junior. His drawings of people now include a stomach with a belly button. He talked as he drew, “My dad is real tall. My mom has long hair when she has it down. This is me and Justin is taller than me. I am going to draw Junior here by my mom and Justin.” When I asked him, “Who is Junior?” He said, “Junior is my cat.” I smiled as I said, “Well that is an interesting name for a cat. Who named the cat, James?” Well, it was my dad’s cat for a long time. Junior is real old. So I guess my dad named him,” said James as he chuckled. I

asked James, “Do you have any other pets?” He said, “No, my mom says one cat is all we need.”

Week of 9-12-05 Family, Friends, and Fall

I like my friends.



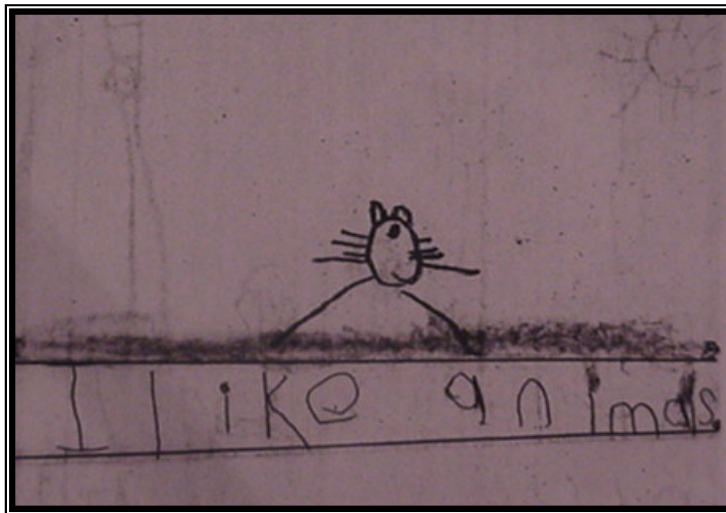
63. James – I like my friends.

He copied the sentence, **I like my friends**. His letter formation was very large. He could have thought that he needed to fill the space. He drew himself and three friends. As he drew he said, “This Dominique and he is holding Nat’s hand. Nat is holding my hand. I am holding Tonya’s hand. We are outside playing together. Here is a sun.” I said, “I like the drawing of you and our friends, James.” He said, “Yeah, we have fun outside together.” I said, “So this drawing must be here at school because those are children in the class.” “Yes” he said, “I have a lot of friends at school. I really just play with my brother at home. You know my

brother, Mrs. Aliotta.” “Yes, I do.” I said and I asked him to read the sentence to me. He smiled at me and was able to read the entire sentence.

Week of 9-19-05 Autumn and Apples

I like animals.



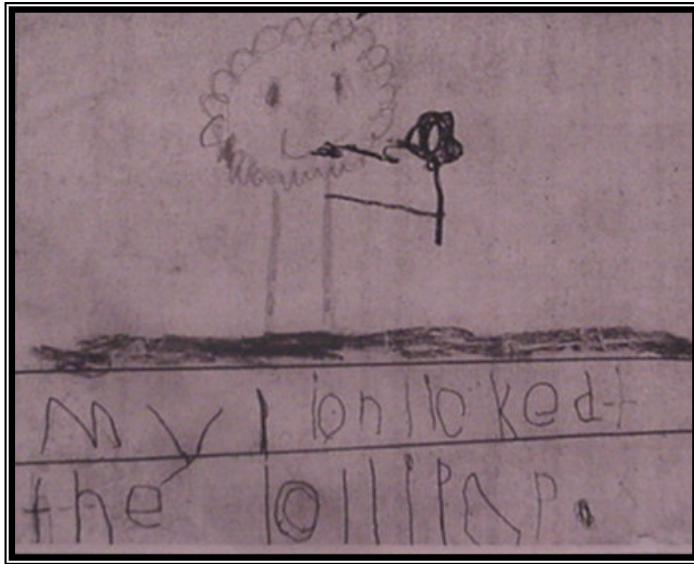
64. James – I like animals.

He copied the sentence, **I like animals**, and said, “That was easy. It was a short sentence”. I said, “It sure was. How many words are in the sentence?” He said, “Three.” I told him to read the sentence to me, and he did without any problems. “That is an interesting drawing”, I said. “Yeah, it is a cat doing splits”. He said. “See how long his legs are out. You know we have three cats at my house”. I asked, “Have you ever seen them do splits?” He laughed and said, “No”. The child sitting next to him said, “I have two cats at my house”. James just

looked at him and smiled. I asked James to read the sentence, and he did. He hesitated at the word “animals” but when I pointed to his drawing he said animals. Then James asked if he could put his book away.

Week of 9-26-05 Leaves, Like, and Love

My lion licked the lollipop.



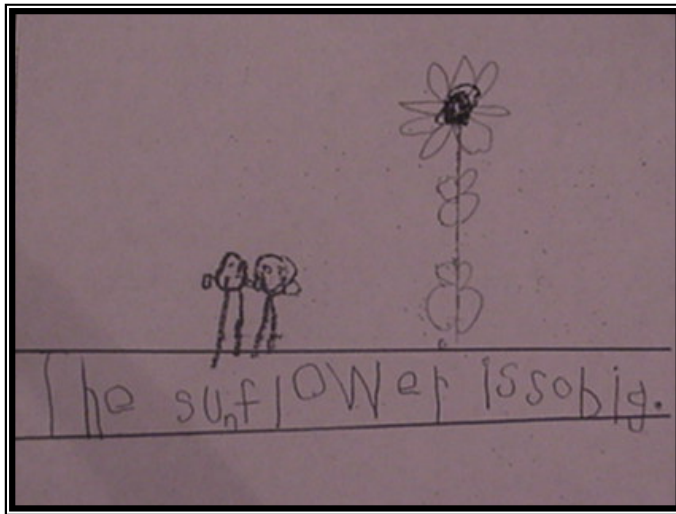
65. James- My lion licked the lollipop.

James started copying the sentence, **My lion licked the lollipop.** He wrote **My lion.** He stopped to watch the child sitting next to him and started talking to him about his pencil. I watched and after a few minutes he wrote, **licked.** He started to write, **the,** and realized that he did not have enough room for the entire word, so he began to write on the next line. He finished, **the,** and started telling the boy next to him that his favorite flavor of lollipop is grape. The boy

sitting beside him said, “Me, too. I like the kind with the chocolate in the middle.” James finished his sentence and began drawing the lion. He drew a squiggle line of red and said, “That is his tongue reaching for the lollipop.” I asked him to read his sentence to me, and he hesitated at the words lion, licked, and lollipop. I started to read the words but decided to point to the picture to show him clues. Using the pictures as clues, he was able to read the sentence.

Week of 10-03-05

The sunflower is so big.



66. James – The sunflower is so big.

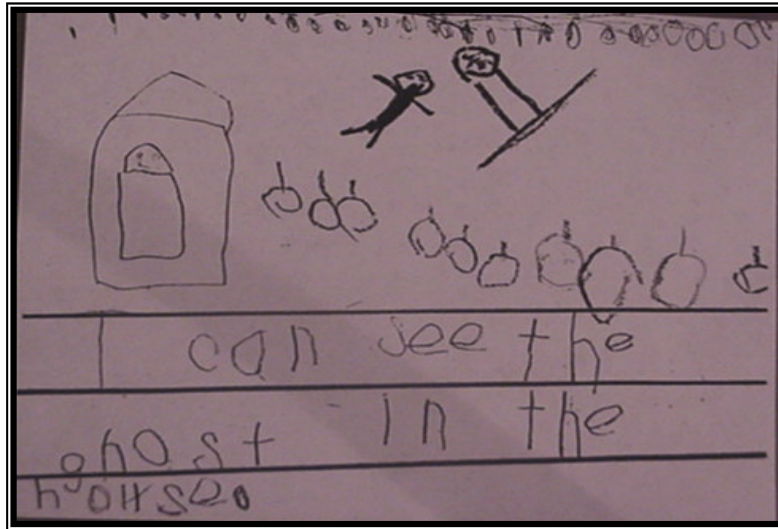
He copied the sentence, **The sunflower is so big.** I did not get the chance to hear James talk as he was drawing. When I asked him to tell me about it later, it was not as animated as when he talks as he is drawing. He said, “This is my brother. This is me. This is the flower. I am saying ‘Whoa’ because the flower is so big.” I asked him to read the sentence to me and he just looked at me.

I said, "Come on, I will help you." He read **The and** I pointed to the sunflower he drew and James said "Sunflower." He read **is** and I read **so** then James finished reading **big**. I said, "Good job, James."

James does not draw any more than he has to draw. Usually the picture illustrates the sentence exactly. He only adds sky and ground when he is told to do so. He does not seem to have the attention span needed to stay on task to complete his work because he is more interested in those around him.

Week of 10-10-05 Ghost

I can see a ghost in the house.



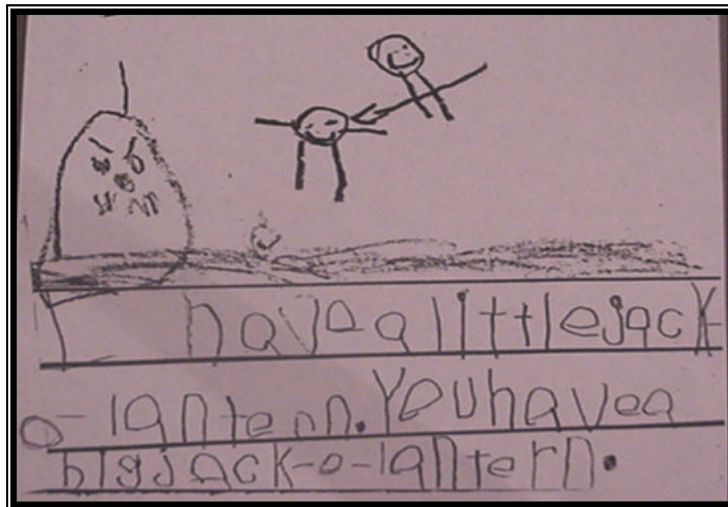
67. James – I can see the ghost in the house.

Very slowly James copied the sentence, **I can see a ghost in the house**. He was not very excited about writing because it was so many words. Without

saying anything to James, I smiled and pointed to each word on the sentence strip to help him focus on copying one word at a time. He copied the sentence and said, "I am going to draw a witch in the air. I like to draw witches. The bat is getting close to the witch. I am making Halloween night with the ghost in the house. Here is going to be lots of pumpkins sitting on the ground at Halloween." I looked at him, and he looked at me and finally said, "I know you want me to read the sentence for you." I smiled at him. He was able to read the entire sentence without any help from me. James drew more in this picture than he usually does.

Week of 10-17-05 Pumpkins

I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern.



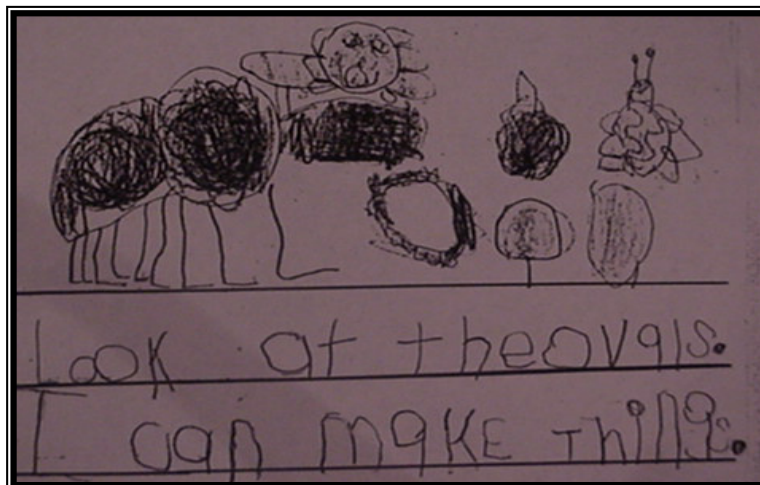
68. James – I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern.

The lengths of these sentences were overwhelming for James. He became upset and looked as if he were going to cry and said he had a headache. I said, “I think you are worried about copying the sentences because they are so long. You can do it, James, I’ll help you.” I gave him words of encouragement, and he finished copying the sentences without any more complaints of feeling ill.

He copied the sentence, **I have a little jack-o-lantern. You have a big jack-o-lantern,** and began drawing. As he drew, he relaxed and began to talk, “The broom of the witch is going to bump the bat. The big jack-o-lantern is a very scary one. Mrs. Aliotta, you would not believe the jack-o-lantern we bought. We have three jack-o-lanterns. A really big one, and then one for Justin, you know my brother, and then one for me. Dad says we can not carve it yet because it would rot.” “That is true, James,” I said.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.

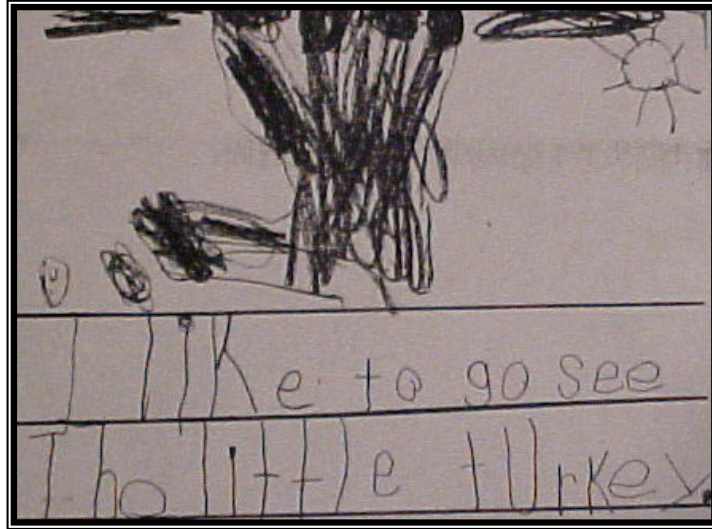


69. James – Look at the ovals. I can make things.

James watched other children, stared, or played with his pencil. He wrote, **Look at the ovals. I can make things.** When I asked him to read, he needed help with **ovals, make, and things.** He drew a ladybug, a fly, lollipop, and sun. After he drew an ant, he said, “An ant.” Then he drew an elephant. He kind of laughed to himself and said, “The ant is on the elephant.” I questioned, “The ant is on the elephant?” He said, “Yeah. Actually the ant is sad. I have to change his mouth. I am going to change it to a mad face. Good thing I drew the ant with a pencil. I can change it to mad. I am going to color his face red.” I asked James, “Why is the ant was sad or mad?” He said, “The elephant is too heavy and it is making him mad that the elephant would sit on him.” I told James, “It would make me mad if an elephant was on my head, too.” James laughed.

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to go see the little turkey.

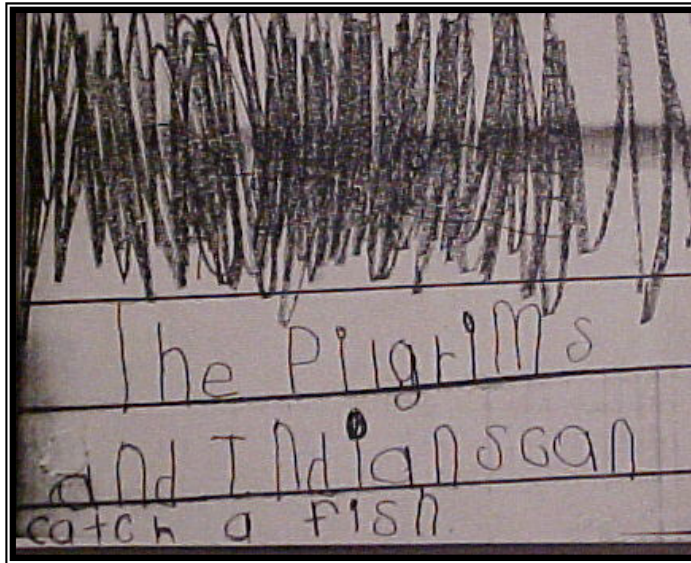


70. James – I like to go see the little turkey.

Usually James would get distracted while writing his sentence. On this day, he worked very quietly and quickly wrote, **I like to go see the little tur.** He said, “Look Mrs. Aliotta, I am almost done.” “Unbelievable!” I said. James asked, “Is that good?” I said, “It sure is.” “Look, my letters are not floating in the air,” he said. I said, “You are doing a wonderful job of writing, James.” It took him about four minutes to get back on task, and he wrote **key**. He said, “Like it?” I said, “Love it.” He then asked, “Want me to read it to you?” I said, “I sure do!” He read, **I like to see** and then stopped and corrected himself and said, “I like to go see the little turkey. I am not really good at drawing a turkey. I am going to draw a worm for the turkey to eat. The turkey is about to eat the worm.” I asked, “Why is the worm smiling?” He looked at his picture and then looked at me and said, “Because he likes to be in a stomach.”

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrims and Indians can catch a fish.



71. James – The pilgrims and Indians can catch fish.

James gradually copied the sentence, **The pilgrims and Indians can catch a fish.** After he wrote **The**, he said, “Mrs. Aliotta, isn’t that a good e.” I said, “Yes, James that is beautiful.” He wrote the **a** for **and** and said, “Oops, my **a** is floating in the air.” He erased it and wrote it on the line. He watched Nat next to him drawing his picture. Then finished his sentence and quickly drew his picture. When he said to me, “The fish, Indian, and pilgrim are in the water.” Nat said, “Why you copy me? Why you copy me? Why you copy me?” James thought for a bit and said, “Cause I like to copy people’s stuff.” I said, “Well, James, you could say because I liked your drawing so much that I wanted to do mine just like

yours.” “Yeah,” said James. “That’s why.” James then said, “I saw a book with ‘can’ in it, and I was able to read it.” “Boy, James, I bet that was exciting for you. You have become a very good reader,” I exclaimed.

Week of 12-05-05 December and Deer

I am happy it is Christmas. I like _____



72. I am happy it is Christmas. I like presents.

James copied, **I am**, and then sat watching the other children. He copied, **happ**, and said, “Oooh, I have a hair on my arm.” He continued to watch the other children working and listened to conversations. He poked his crayon box with his pencil for a while and then looked at his work and said, “Happy. I need a y.” He then finished writing the word.

James had been listening to Nat’s conversation and said, “I hate fish, but I like shrimp.” All the children at the entire table stopped writing and had a

conversation about which seafood each did and did not like to eat. James looked at his writing and said, “The next word is ‘it’. I can write ‘it’ without looking.” He wrote the word and said “Oooh, I can write ‘is’ without looking,” and he did. “See I did it,” he exclaimed. Then he copied the word, **Christmas**. I can write ‘I like’ without looking at the sentence strip”, and he wrote the words. He was very excited, and I told him, “You have learned how to spell and read many words, James.” He smiled at me and said, “I know.” I reminded him that he needed to finish his sentence that began with, **I like**, and he said, “I can write ‘the’ but I need help with presents.” I said, “I can help you. I will pronounce each sound in the word, and you write the letter for that sound.” “O.K.,” he agreed. I slowly pronounced each sound, and he was able to say and write the letter. I explained that the letter “e” is in the word even though we cannot hear it. He was excited that with a little help he was able to spell the word. He said, “I am going to make ten presents.” He drew and said, “This is your present, Mrs. Aliotta. Do you know what it is?” “I sure don’t”, I said. He exclaimed, “O.K., O.K. Yes, it is a treasure chest full of stuff”. He continued to draw and said, “This is the opening.” I told him thank you so much for the nice treasure chest full of stuff.

James and I had a history because I taught his brother two years ago. Even though he attended pre-school at Hesse Elementary School, as did Nat, he was not comfortable with writing or drawing. He really did not want to do his work and tried to put it off until later in the day. With my support James began to feel more comfortable writing and drawing. With my patience and encouragement, he made such progress in just four months. He seems to have finally become comfortable,

even excited, with completing his class work and is happy copying the sentences and talking about his drawings. By the end of the semester, he realized he was quite capable of doing the work expected of him. I could actually feel his joy in his accomplishments.

Throughout the semester his drawings have remained simplistic. Unlike Andrea or Andy, James would draw only as much as was needed to illustrate the sentence. Just like Nat, he began adding more to his drawings in October, and he began talking more with the friends who sat next to him and with me. During the month of December, I had to remind him more often to stay on task and complete his work. He was frequently daydreaming, watching others, or playing with things around him.

Like Debbie, I noticed that James related some of his drawings to previously read stories and to activities he had enjoyed with his family. At the beginning of the semester, he included his brother in the drawings and gradually began adding his classmates.

Debbie's Story

Debbie was a very quiet well-mannered little girl. She smiled shyly at me whenever we made eye contact, and she listened very attentively as I taught the children. I have noticed that she is very kind to other children. She shared things with others and helped when a child had a question. She laughed softly with the three other girls who sit at the table with her. When it was time to sit on the carpet for listening activities, she was comfortable sitting by any student.

Her favorite center to play in is the housekeeping center and art center. She is always creating things for me to hang on the closet doors by my desk. She seems to enjoy playing with the boys in block center and with puzzles in the game center. I have never seen her chose to go to the computer. I have noticed that she is a leader as she guides different children to join her in the varied activities during center time. She rarely asked questions about what she was supposed to do as she completed her work. Although I give very specific directions to the children, I think Debbie is quickly able to grasp new concepts. She often talks about topics we have previously discussed and loves to share information about herself with me.

Debbie's Talks and Drawings

Week of 8-22-05 Hesse

I go to school.



73. Debbie – I go to school.

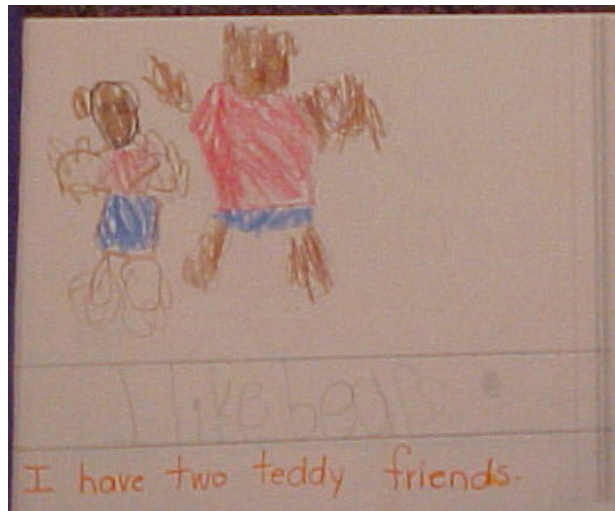
Debbie was very relaxed as she copied the sentence. She held her pencil correctly and had great letter formation. However, she did not leave spaces between the words. The sentences that she copied were easy to read. When she drew pictures of people, the bodies were complete with head, hair, eyes, arms, fingers, body, legs, feet, and clothes colored to match what she might be wearing that day. When she drew many people in the picture, each person's hair was the correct color. She liked to draw people with their hands in the air.

She worked very quietly only occasionally talking with the girl sitting next to her. She talked about school and how much she liked Hesse. She copied the

sentence for the day, **I go to school**. Then she asked me how to spell Hesse. I reminded her that it was written on the board. She said, “Oh, yes.” I watched to see if she could copy from the board, and she copied it twice in her book. She smiled at me and said, “Hesse, I go to Hesse.” I said, “You sure do and I am so glad!” “I would like for you to read the sentence to me, please”, I said. “O.K., Mrs. Aliotta. I go to school”, she said. “Very good, Debbie, I am proud of you!”

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

I like bears.



74. Debbie - I like bears.

Debbie copied the sentence, **I like bears**. She said, “I have two teddy friends.” After she told me that, I wrote the sentence under the sentence she copied. I asked her to read the sentence she copied, and she was able to without any help. I told her I was going to read the sentence she told me. I pointed to each

word as I read it and Debbie read along with me. All the bears she drew this week were happy and had on clothes.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

I have a teddy bear.



75. Debbie – I have a teddy bear.

Debbie copied the sentence, **I have a teddy bear**, and she drew a picture of herself holding a large blue bear. She said, “This is the teddy bear I brought to school this week. I have three bears, but this one is the biggest.” I asked her, “You have three bears? That is like the story Goldilocks and the Three Bears. We could write a different story about Debbie and the three bears,” I laughed. Debbie laughed, too and said, “Yeah, but my story would be about the three bears that lived with me.” “That could be very interesting,” I said. “Yeah, because my three

bears are small, medium, and large, too.” she said. We are studying the letter “b” and talking about bears. The children were allowed to bring a teddy bear to school this week. If there was a child that did not bring a bear, I had a variety of bears in the classroom for a child to choose from.

Week of 8-29-05 Bears

See the bears play.



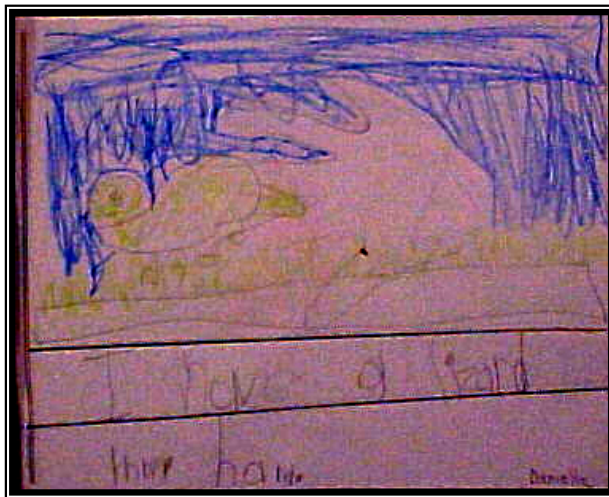
76. Debbie – See the bears play.

Later in the week, she copied the sentence, **See the bears play.** She drew a picture of three bears playing hopscotch. She said, “This is the three bears, like in the story. You know, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. When they went for a walk to let the porridge cool.” “Oh, yes.” I said smiling, “I remember that story. We talked about it yesterday when you were drawing. Maybe they did play

hopscotch while they were walking in the woods.” She said, “I really like that story. And the three bears had to do something while they waited for the porridge to cool.” “I like the story, too. I like how the baby bear sounded so sad when he came home to find all his stuff messed up.” I said. “Yeah, Goldilocks sure shouldn’t have done that to the bears stuff, Mrs. Aliotta.” Debbie said. “I agree with you, Debbie.” I said. Debbie was very quiet as she worked. She seemed to be listening to the other children as they talked and she spent a lot of time watching others as they worked at copying the sentence and drawing. All the bears she drew this week were happy and had on clothes.

Week of 9-26-05 Leaves, Like, and Love

I have a lizard in my hand.



77. Debbie – I have a lizard in my hand.

She copied the sentence, **I have a lizard in my hand.** Her handwriting was not as good as it has been. The letters were more loosely formed without the controlled lines and curves. She and the girls at the table were having a discussion about catching lizards and frogs. Debbie said, “I don’t want to catch or hold a frog or a lizard.” Another girl at the table explained that it was all right because they don’t hurt you. Danielle said, “I just don’t want to hold it. They are too wiggly.” “Yeah, they are,” the other little girl said, “you have to be careful or they get away.” Debbie wrote, **I have a li,** and then she said, “Ooooh, “z” is not easy to write, but I can write it. See!” She colored her lizard and said, “My lizard is green. I am coloring her light green like the grass so that no one can see her. She is a girl. See the eyelashes? She is happy. This is her tail.”

Week of 10-03-05 Scarecrows

See the scarecrow in the garden.

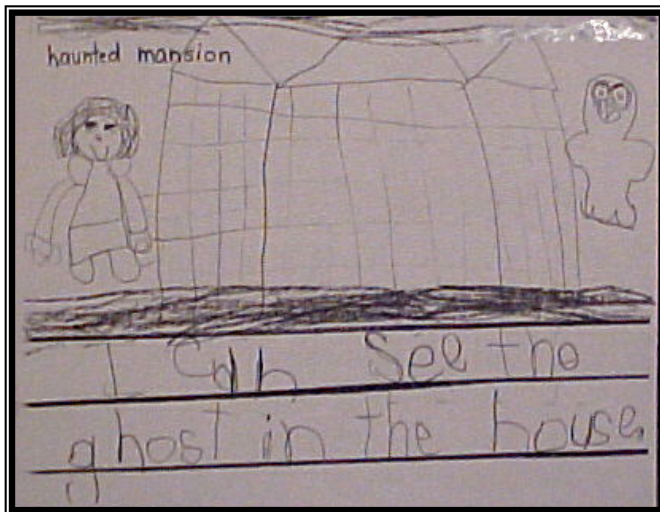


78. Debbie – See the scarecrow in the garden.

She copied the sentence, **See the scarecrow in the garden.** Once again her handwriting was not as good as it has been. She spent a lot of time talking to the friends around her. It was hard to distinguish the capital from the lowercase by the size of the letters. As she wrote she said, "Scarecrow has a lot of letters. Let me see 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9." While she was drawing she enjoyed the conversation with the children sitting around her. She said, "My scarecrow is in the middle of the garden, and the crows are flying all around. They are not getting the seeds that are planted, though. The crows are scared away." I asked, "What is the brown at the bottom of your picture?" "That is the dirt. No plants are growing yet," she said. I asked Debbie to read the sentence to me and she pointed to each word as she read. "I didn't need any help, Mrs. Aliotta, I can read!" "I know you can, Debbie!" I said as I smiled at her.

Week of 10-10-05 Ghost

I can see the ghost in the house.



79. Debbie – I can see the ghost in the house.

She copied the sentence, **I can see the ghost in the house.** Danielle's handwriting has improved. She drew herself by the house and said, "I am standing by the haunted mansion. The ghost is over here flying out. He has a scary face, but I am not scared because ghosts are not real. Remember, Mrs. Aliotta, what you said?" "Yes, Debbie, that is right. I love how big your mansion is. It looks like it could hold a lot of ghosts," I said. "I made it big with a lot of stripes on it. It is night." Debbie looked at me and said, "I know, you want me to read the sentence to you, Mrs. Aliotta." "That's right, I sure do." I said as I smiled at her. She quickly read the sentence to me without any help.

Debbie seemed to enjoy talking and drawing as she has relaxed with the friends sitting near her. She compliments the other children on their drawings and loves to share her crayons with other children that may not have the color of crayons that she has in her cup.

Week of 10-17-05 Pumpkins

The cat in the hat comes back.



80. Debbie – The cat in the hat comes back.

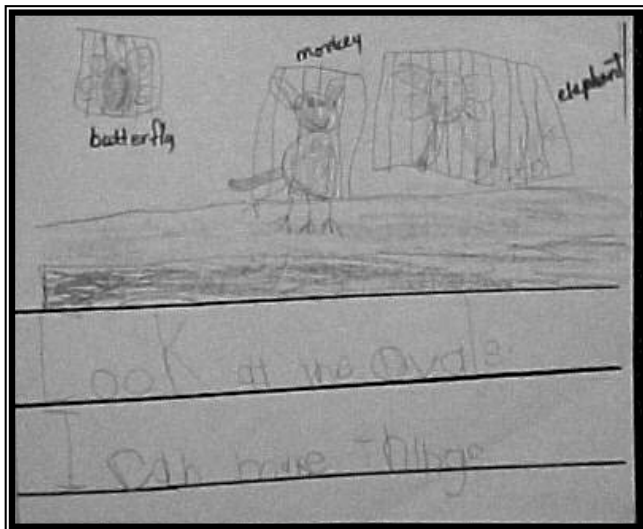
Usually the sentence I wrote was about the unit of the week, which would have been pumpkins. However, the children often asked me to read a particular book because the twenty minutes before we gather to hear a story and discuss the sentence is the time the children are sitting on the carpet looking at books. Consequently, a child asked me to read the story, The Cat in the Hat Comes Back. The children have come to know that the story I read is associated with the sentence they are going to copy. Therefore, when I began to write the sentence, a few children said, “You are going to write, **The cat in the hat comes back**”. I said, “That is a great idea. That was not the sentence I planned to write, but I like your suggestion.” So I changed my plans and wrote, **The cat in the hat comes back**. Then as the children were going to their seats, I quickly typed the sentence and printed it from the computer for the children to copy.

Before Debbie started writing the sentence, she said, “I can spell **cat** without looking at it.” She wrote **The** and then wrote **cat**. “See, I didn’t even have to look to write it.” She smiled at the girl sitting next to her and finished her sentence. I asked her to read the sentence to me and she did without any problem until she came to the words **comes back**. She hesitated, and I read it for her. She repeated the words after me. Debbie drew herself first, and then she drew the triangle house and said, “The cat in the hat is beside the house. He has not gone inside the house yet. Look at how high I made his hat, and it has red stripes just like in the book.” I said, “Oh, Debbie, I like the red bow you put on him. He is

going to cause trouble, isn't he?" Yeah, Mrs. Aliotta, and they knew not to let him in the house." "I agree with you Debbie, they should not have let anyone in the house," I said.

Week of 10-31-05 Owls and Night

Look at the ovals. I can make things.



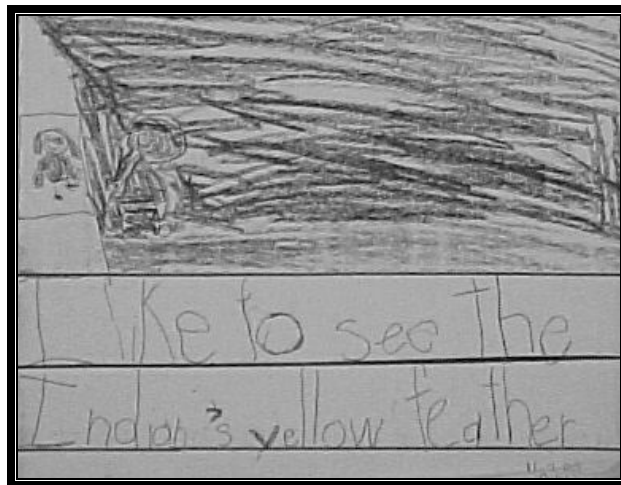
81. Debbie – Look at the ovals. I can make things.

She copied the sentences without talking, **Look at the ovals. I can make things.** She drew three ovals and said, "I am going to make this one into a butterfly. I do not want him to get out. I am going to put him in a cage." I said, "I like that idea." "This one is a monkey. They're in a zoo. Here is an elephant. Look, I drew one like you did, Mrs. Aliotta. He has a very long trunk. He would like someone to give him peanuts." I said, "All your animals look very happy. I

can tell because you drew a smile on all the animals faces.” “Yes, they are ‘cause they are someone’s pets.” I asked, “Do you have a pet?” “No, I don’t, but I would like one. Do you have a pet, Mrs. Aliotta?” “I sure do. I have a dog, named Darby.” “That’s a cute name,” she said. “Well, thank you, Debbie. My boys helped me name her.”

Week of 11-07-05 Indians

I like to see the Indian’s yellow feather.



82. Debbie – I like to see the Indians’ yellow feather.

I said, “The sentence we are writing today has eight words. The first five words in the sentence are sight words that you know. I will write them.” I wrote, **I like to see the**, and the children read each word as I wrote it. I said, “Very nice reading. The next word in the sentence begins with the letter **I** and we have been

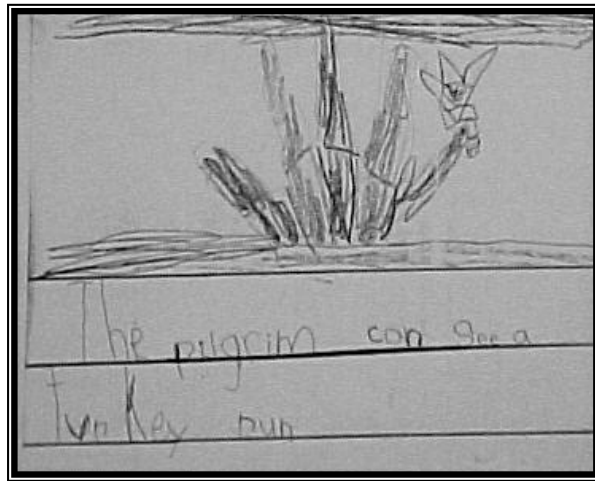
talking about this word this morning.” Most of the children said, “Indian.” “Yes!” I said and I wrote **Indian** and told the children that I was writing apostrophe “s”. Then I said, “The next word I am going to write is a color word. I am going to write the first letter of the word, and I want you to try and guess what I am going to write.” I wrote **y** and the children said, “yellow”. I said, “Now if I had written the letter **b**, it would have been harder to guess because there are three color words we know that begin with the letter **b**.” I wrote a **b** on the side of the board. Debbie said, “Blue.” I said, “Very good.” Then I wrote the word **blue**. Many children said “black”, and I wrote that word. Katie said, “Orange”. I said, “I will write the word orange, and let’s see what letter it begins with.” The children said “o”. There is one more word that begins with the letter **b**. Another child said, “brown”, and I wrote it on the side of the board. “O.K,” I said, “Let’s read what I have written.” Together we read, “I like to see the Indian’s yellow.” I questioned, “Yellow what?” The children gave me many suggestions including yellow tent, yellow leaf, yellow flower, and yellow feather. “That’s it,” I said, and I wrote feather. We read the sentence together, “I like to see the Indian’s yellow feather.” I demonstrated how to draw a person and how to add a headband and a yellow feather.

Working very quietly, Debbie copied the sentence, **I like to see the Indian’s yellow feather**. She used the side of her hand to mark the space between words. She wrote the sentence and told me she was ready to read it. She read, “I like to see the” and hesitated at the word **Indian’s**. I pointed to the picture of the Indian I placed on the board earlier with the word Indian written beside it,

and she said, "Indian's". I smiled and said, "Very good." She finished reading the sentence and began drawing the picture. She drew quietly and looked up to see me watching her. She said, "I love you, Mrs. Aliotta." "I love you, too, Debbie." She said, "Can I give you a hug?" I said, "Of course!" She came around the table and hugged me. While she was standing there, I said, "Tell me about your drawing." "The Indian is walking in the house. She was tired of playing," Debbie said. I asked, "Where's the yellow feather?" She said, "She lost it. She is going to go and look for the feather on the ground." With that, she was finished.

Week of 11-14-05 Turkey and Thanksgiving

The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

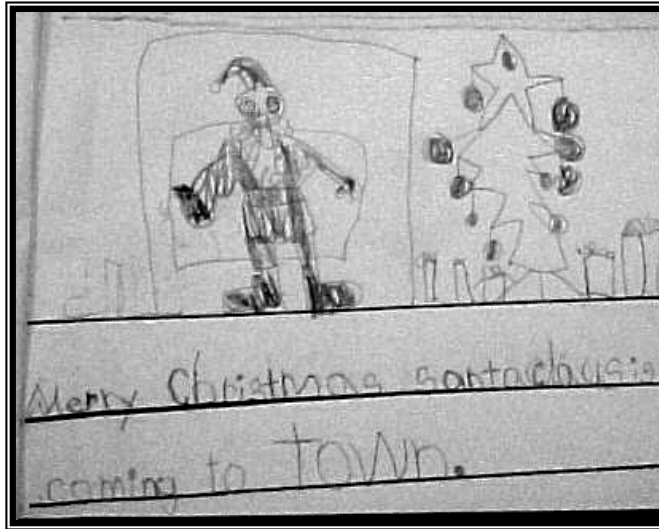


83. Debbie – The pilgrim can see a turkey run.

Debbie wrote, **The**, and then began balancing a pencil on her hand. The girl beside her did the same thing. I complimented the boy sitting next to them on how well he was writing, and the girls began writing. Debbie worked very slowly and quietly copied, **The pilgrim can see a turkey run.** Then she drew her picture and said, “She is queen of the turkeys.” She looked at me and said, “See her crown?” I said, “Very nice. I think a queen turkey is a great idea. You are very creative. I love to listen to you when you are drawing. Read your sentence to me.” She read the sentence without any help and smiled. “Mrs. Aliotta, I am going to ride to Jacksonville, then fly to Minnesota, then fly to San Francisco. I am going on two planes.” She showed me two fingers. I asked her who was going with her and why she was going to San Francisco. She said, “We are going to visit my cousins. My mom and dad are going with me.” I asked her, “When are you going?” “I don’t know,” she said. “Well, I it sounds like it will be very exciting. Have you ever flown on a plane before?” I asked. “Not yet.” she said.

Week of 11-28-05 Deer and December

Merry Christmas. Santa Claus is coming to town.

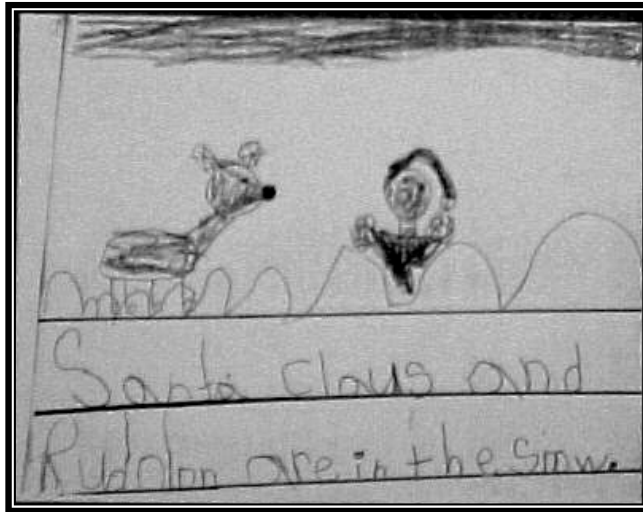


84. Merry Christmas. Santa Claus is coming to town.

Debbie said, "I am excited it is Christmas. Do you know, Mrs. Aliotta, I am going to get my Christmas tree soon?" "I know that is exciting. I am going to get my tree soon, too." Danielle copied **Merry Christmas** and said, "I am going to the mall to see Santa." Then she copied, **Santa Claus is coming to town.** She said, "I am going to draw a really big Santa coming down the chimney." Then she began drawing and said, "My Christmas tree has lots of ornaments on it and lots of presents under it. See, Mrs. Aliotta, see all the presents?" "I do see, and I love how you drew Santa, Debbie." "I am going to put a really big star on top of my tree," she said. The little girl sitting next to her said she had a star on her tree, too. After the two girls talked awhile about their drawings, I asked Debbie to read the sentences to me. She was able to read both sentences without any help.

Week of 12-12-05 Christmas

Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow.



85. Debbie – Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow.

She was copying the sentence, **Santa Claus and Rudolph are in the snow**. She wrote **Santa Claus**, then the boy beside her began rolling his pencil on his book, and she began rolling hers on her book, too. I looked at both of them, and they quit and began writing again. She looked at me and said, “Mrs. Aliotta, on Billie and Mandy’s Holiday Christmas, Santa turned into a vampire.” “Why?” I asked. “It is a cartoon. Mrs. Claus was a vampire. They both were vampires, and then Mrs. Claus turned into a bat vampire. Billie baked cookies for Santa Claus. He is a big kid that always picks his big nose. Then Santa turned back into a human,” she said. She wrote, **and Rudolph**, looked at me and said, “I went to Disneyland and saw Beauty and the Beast.” She spent a lot of time thinking, watching others, and smiling. I had small red pom-pom noses for the children to

glue on the Rudolph's face that they had drawn. She pointed to the pom-poms on the table and said, "They are in the shape of a diamond." I said, "You are so right." She wrote, **are in the snow**. She said, "You know what I am getting for Christmas, Mrs. Aliotta?" I said, "What?" She said, "Barbie and Bratz Airplane. And guess what else? I have a Bratz limo." The child sitting next to her asked why she wasn't drawing her picture, and Debbie began drawing. I asked Debbie to read the sentence to me, and she was able to read the entire sentence.

Debbie was my student who was most comfortable copying the sentences each week. Her handwriting was very legible with correct letter formation and spaces left between each word. While at first she was quiet, like James, Nat and Andy, she became very verbal as the semester progressed. She interacted with all the children in the class and seemed to spend a lot of time watching others as they worked. Unlike Katie, Debbie was in no rush to complete her work and seemed to enjoy writing and drawing in a relaxed manner.

Most of Debbie's drawings included ground and sky. Like Andrea, she would completely fill up the page with drawings. However, her drawings were much larger than Andrea's. Both she and Katie liked talking to other children as she drew, although the conversations were not often about the writing topic, but a topic of interest to the girls.

Understanding the Talks and Drawings

This chapter consists of Andrea's, Nat's, Andy's, Kristen's, James' and Danielle's interactions with their own drawings and the ensuing talks that evolved from the children discussing their drawings. During the twenty-one picture

labeling discussions from August through December, the children's talking and writing about pictures expanded. It was difficult to share the conversations of only six of my students because there were seventeen students in the class, and all of them had interesting stories they shared with me.

I believe that because I presented the copying of the sentence and drawing activity as a natural process, the children never thought for a minute it was something that they could not do. Not even the children who did not know all the letters of the alphabet or the children who could not write their own name correctly felt the copying task was too difficult. At first my paraprofessional was concerned about the children's formation of letters during the first copying sentences experience. I assured her that with daily practice of copying, the children's handwriting would naturally improve. I did not want to stifle the children's imagination by being overly concerned about the writing. In December, she commented that the children's handwriting had improved so much and that she loved seeing the children's drawings and hearing their talks because the children used so much imagination as they expressed themselves describing their drawings.

As I watched the children drawing, I was often curious about what the child was depicting in the drawing. However, I hesitated to question too much because I have learned from experience that when a teacher does too much of the talking the children begin to doubt if they are doing it correctly. This often stifles the child's imagination and the child's thought process. The children did have to

learn patience as they waited their turn to read to me or to tell me about their picture.

CHAPTER V

DATA PRESENTATION: CHILDREN'S TALKS DURING PICTURE LABELING ACTIVITIES

This research examines how children's talks could possibly inform the delivery of a curriculum for kindergartners. I wanted to investigate whether children could be taught the required state mandated standards in a caring imaginative style or not. I was also curious if this method of instruction could provide the children with the opportunity to explore life's experiences, naturally developing a curriculum of caring and imagination. The research was carried out using John Dewey's theory of imagination and life's experiences, Lev Vygotsky's theories of social constructivism and zone of proximal development, and Nel Noddings' ethic of care. I hoped that the children could use the pictures to inspire their imagination and possibly share previous experiences through an amiable method of listening carefully to other's words. I studied children engaging in dialogue with peers and taking into account others' viewpoints. I questioned if the picture labeling method could communicate meaning in authentic, social contexts while strengthening literacy growth.

This is the first of two chapters in which I present collected stories. This chapter includes a summary of four months of children's talks during picture labeling activities. The first week the children and I spent getting to know one another and learning the routines of the day. We talked about what we all had to do to have a safe and happy classroom. I allowed each child to share her/his thoughts about how to have a pleasant classroom and I wrote the children's

suggestions. Many of the children told me what they should not do. As I listened, I wrote the list on a large piece of paper. I prefer to encourage and reinforce positive behavior; therefore, I asked the children to tell me things that they should do and I wrote the suggestions on another piece of paper. We discussed proper behavior in various situations, such as, in the classroom, in the halls and bathrooms, during centers, listening time, outside time, lunchtime, and quiet time. I explained to the children that I wanted them to remember what they should do, so I hung up the list in the classroom.

At Hesse Elementary School, the kindergarten teachers (myself included) developed an interdisciplinary, holistic, thematic unit approach to teaching. We developed units that reflected the seasons, our school interests, letters of the alphabet, and interesting topics. We have a focus letter of the week, but we teach all the letters everyday. The focus letters and corresponding letters taught through the fall include H-Hesse School, B-Bears, M-Me, Myself, and I, F-Family and Fall, A- Apples and Autumn, L-Leaves, Like, and Love, S-Scarecrows, G- Ghost, P-Pumpkins, J-Jack-o-lanterns, O-Owls, N- Night, I-Indians, T-Thanksgiving and Turkey, and D-Deer and December. While I use this as an outline, I am very flexible as to other topics that may delight and interest the children. Last year, I had a child who was very interested in tornadoes. Every picture he drew had a tornado in the picture. The entire class became interested in his passion for tornadoes, and many of the children regularly discussed becoming storm chasers. So while I have a format to guide my teaching, my picture choices, and my sentences to be copied, I do allow the children to influence my instruction.

The second week of school I began the picture labeling activity by choosing pictures I hoped the children would have had experiences with and which related to the focus letter and unit of the week. I chose pictures from magazines, photos, newspapers, or books and glued the picture or pictures in the center of a piece of manila unlined paper. I usually chose four pictures for the week and displayed the pictures around the room. Each day I placed the picture of the day on the large dry erase board so that the children had the opportunity all morning to look at the picture. I usually did the picture labeling activity after lunch before the children went to Centers in the classroom.

The picture labeling activity usually took about thirty minutes to complete. I wrote the date at the top of the page. Each day I chose a child's name out of a box, wrote her/his name at the top, and allowed that child to take the picture home after I had displayed the labeled picture in the classroom for two weeks. After each child was chosen to receive a picture, I placed the names back in the box to begin choosing again.

The children sat on the carpet in front of the board with the displayed picture. I did not like to discuss the picture as a group before we begin labeling because I did not want a child's ideas or thoughts influenced by others. I told the children that I would like for each of them to come up to the picture, look at it, and tell me something about the picture. As the children looked at the picture, I began an audio tape recorder that was positioned on the floor beside me, and wore a microphone during the activity. Taping the children did not appear to concern them.

Although the entire class participated in the picture labeling activity, I only transcribed the talks of the six children I included in my study. The collection of stories that follows is an accumulation of twenty-one picture labeling exercises from August through December. In the transcriptions of the talks I typed the word, phrase, or sentence in capital letters to differentiate between what I wrote beside the picture and what each participant said to me during the talks.

2. Picture Labeling Activities

1. August 24 – COMING TO SCHOOL
2. August 31 – BEAR, BLOCKS, BALL
3. September 6 – BEAR PICTURE
4. September 8 – RAINY DAY PARTY
5. September 13 – BOYS BETWEEN TREES
6. September 20 – PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PICTURES
7. September 28 – LITTLE GIRL
8. October 6 – DANCING ANIMALS
9. October 12 – BOY AND OWL IN A TREE
10. October 25 – HAPPY HALLOWEEN
11. November 1 – NIGHT SKY
12. November 8 – BOY AND HIS DAD
13. November 15 – INDIAN GIRL
14. November 17 – FOOD
15. November 22 – THANKSGIVING DINNER

16. November 29 – CHRISTMAS TIME
 17. December 6 – BENDING OVER A FENCE
 18. December 8 – SANTA CLAUS
 19. December 13 – FAMILIES AT CHRISTMAS
 20. December 14 – LITTLE BOY BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE

1. COMING TO SCHOOL

August 24, 2005

I chose this picture because it is the second week of school and I hope the picture will remind the children of experiences that may have occurred as they were coming to and leaving from school.



86. Coming to School

Teacher: I found two pictures of children and school buses. I want each of you to come up to the picture when I call your name and tell me what you see in the picture. Everyone will get a turn. I want all of you to listen as each of you talks about the picture, and I would like for each one of you to tell me something different. This means you need to listen as your friends tell me something.

Nat: GIRL

Teacher: We have girls in our class.

James: And boys.

Teacher: You are so right, James.

Katie: WHEELS

Andy: SCHOOL BUS

James: LIGHTS

Debbie: HOUSE

Andrea: KIDS

Teacher: The children could be coming to school or going home. The bus has picked the children up and has brought them to school or possibly brought them home. Can you tell me the name of your school?

Most the children: Hesse.

James: I went here last year. I was in Mrs. Barras's class.

Nat: (Very quietly) Me, too.

Teacher: Do the children in the picture look happy or sad?

Most the children: Happy.

Teacher: Why do you say happy?

Most the children: 'Cause they are smiling.

Teacher: Very good observations. You have really used your eyes. I like that you were all very good listeners. I hope that we can make this classroom a place where we are all happy together. Sometimes when a place is new to us it can be scary. If there is anything that you are not sure of or uncomfortable with, I hope you will tell me. It is O.K. to not understand and it is O.K. to have feelings about going places in the building or doing things that you have not ever done before. If you were in Pre-K at Hesse last year stand up. (*I say the names of the children*). The children standing can be helpers because they know where the bathrooms, lunchroom, gym, our classroom, and other places are located. We will all work together to help each other.

The children are exceptionally quiet during this activity seemingly engrossed in what a child may say about the picture. After this activity we continue to talk about how each of the children arrives at school. I write each

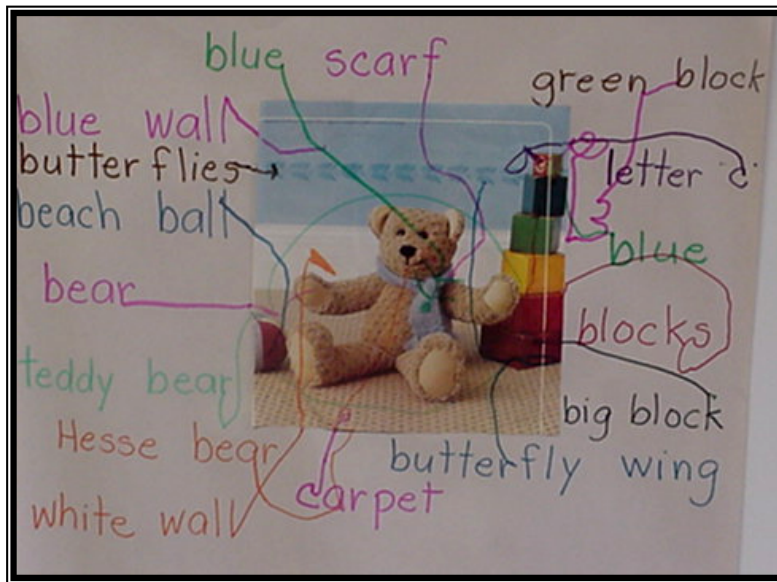
child's name on the board and as the child tells me how she/he gets to school, I write the mode of transportation beside each name. Then I give the child a paper cutout car, day-care van, or bus with the child's name on it. We create a graph to see how the children get to school. It is so interesting to hear the children talk about whether they arrive by car or bus and who brings them to school in the car. Some children mention that mom or dad takes them to a day-care in the morning, and the day-care van brings them to school. I then get detailed explanations of many of the children's cars, trucks, and day cares.

Nat is very shy and seems to be overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of some of the children. He is brought to school with his sister in his grandmother's car. Debbie is brought to school by her mother but is picked up by the day care van in the afternoon. Andy's dad brings him in a car to the school's morning day care. James' mother brings him to school in a van, and he goes to a day-care next door to the school in the afternoon. Andrea is brought to school in a truck by her dad and Katie is brought to the school's morning day care in a car by her mother.

2. BEARS, BLOCK, BALL

August 31, 2005

I chose this picture because we were studying the letter "b" and this picture contained four items with the beginning letter "b". I hoped the simplicity of the picture would help the children find items to label.



87. Bears, Block, Ball

Teacher: What do you see in the picture?

Andrea: BUTTERFLIES

Teacher: Where?

Andrea: See there, on the wall. Lots of butterflies.

Teacher: Very good, Andrea.

James: BEAR

Katie: BEACH BALL

Debbie: TEDDY BEAR. I have a teddy bear.

Andy: CARPET

Nat: BLUE

Teacher: Ooh Nat, that is a color word. Let's look at the words you asked me to write. Many of the words begin with the letter "b".

Debbie: There are a lot of "a" and "l" in the words.

Teacher: You are right.

Teacher: Let's look at the picture. There are not very many things in the picture. On the carpet there is bear, blocks, and a ball. Why do you think they are there?

Katie: Somebody left them on the carpet.

Andy: Yeah, the children went to go eat a snack.

Andrea: I think they are getting ready for a party.

Debbie: They are somebody's toys.

While the picture I chose had items the children could talk about, it did not generate very much discourse. I discovered that a picture could limit dialogue as

well as inspire it. Even the question I asked, “Why do you think the toys are there?” was not stimulating. The children that did answer gave me brief explanations. I discovered that I can never be sure if a picture will inspire.

3. BEAR PICTURE

September 6, 2005

Hesse Elementary School’s mascot is a bear, so we studied a unit on bears. I read fact and fiction books about bears to the children. Each child brought a stuffed bear to school all week. If there was a child that did not have a stuffed bear, I had many stuffed bears for the children to choose from to have as their bear for the week.



88. Bear Picture

Teacher: We have a picture about animals. Tell me about what you see.

Nat: BEAR

Debbie: NAILS. His nails are very sharp.

Andrea: Yeah, so he can scratch the ground to find things to eat.

Debbie: And so he can catch the fish that are swimming.

Andrea: SQUIRREL

Debbie: That's not a squirrel. Look at the other picture. By the rabbit. That's a beaver.

See, see he has a flat tail.

Teacher: Yes Debbie, in the other picture I can see the animal's tail. I think you are right. It is a beaver.

Debbie: They use that to build their houses in the water.

Teacher: How did you know that, Debbie? How did you know that beaver's use their tail to build houses?

Debbie: Because my mom read me a story about a beaver.

Teacher: Why could we not tell it was a beaver by looking at the animals in the bottom picture?

Debbie: 'Cause the beaver is behind the bear and we cannot see his tail.

James: RABBIT. He is bigger than the frog.

Andy: BUNNY

Teacher: Very nice. We can call the animal a rabbit or a bunny.

Andy: How about bunny rabbit?

Teacher: That sounds good to me. Not many animals get to have two names.

Kristen: SKY.

Teacher: Watch me write this word. The first letter sound is easy.

James: "S"

Teacher: That's right, James. The next letter sound is tricky. I make the sound "k".

Some of the children say "c" and some say "k".

Teacher: Yes, the sound could be "c" or "k". That is why I have to teach you how to

spell many words. Spelling words can be very tricky. In the word "sky", we write a "k". The next sound in the word is tricky, too. Listen as I say the word "sky".

Many of the children: "i".

Teacher: You are right, it does sound like the letter "i". Watch as I write the last letter in

this word. You are going to be so surprised. I write the letter "y". This is why I teach you how to spell words. Not all words are written the way that they sound.

Debbie: That is crazy.

Teacher: That is why it is so important that I teach you how to spell many words because the letters sounds are not always as you might think.

Teacher: What do you think the animals are doing?

Andy: They are talking.

Debbie: Yeah, they want to play together.

Teacher: So you think they are talking about what to play? Does the picture show us

what they might be doing next?

There is a pause.

Andy: Not really. The only thing in the picture is the animals.

Debbie: They all look nice to each other.

Andy: They are looking at the flower.

Debbie: They are watching it grow.

Andrea: That could take a long time. Flowers do not grow fast

Teacher: As we look at the picture and the words, we see that there are a lot of words

that begin with the letter “b”. I am going to read the words and I want you to repeat after

me. I read all the words while pointing to the words and following the lines to the

words. The children then repeated the words.

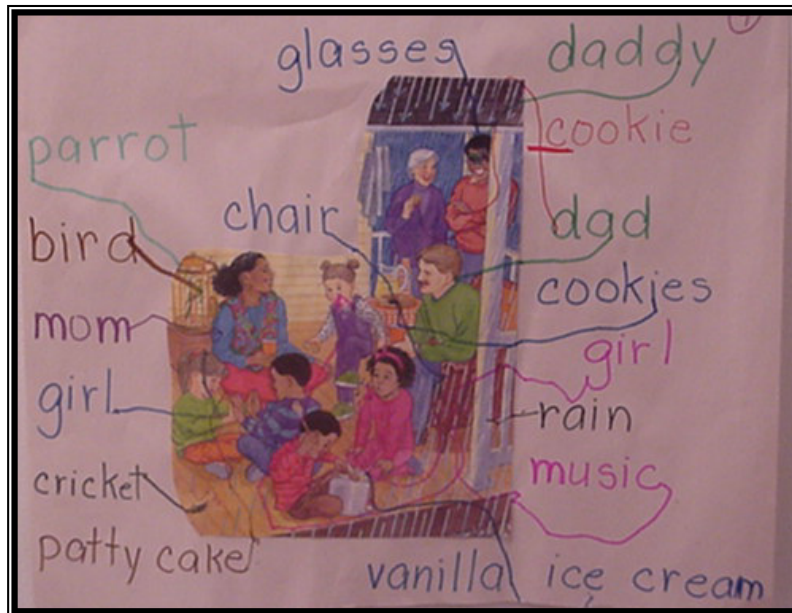
The children seem to enjoy pictures that have animals. The children talked about that, if you cannot see the whole picture of something, then you cannot be sure of what you are seeing. We needed to see the whole animal to know that it as a beaver. We had read many books about bears before labeling this picture, so the children were familiar with the habits of bears.

At this time the children are still reserved and do not offer more than I ask. I guess we have not had enough time together for them to feel safe to take chances or make guesses. Debbie is more verbal than many of the other children. I was delighted that she knew that beaver had flat tails and that they used their tails to build their homes.

4. RAINY DAY PARTY

September 8, 2005

I chose this picture because there was a varied group of people to talk about. I hope that there will be many possibilities to explain the action of the people in the pictures.



89. Rainy Day Party

Teacher: Let's look at this picture.

Andy: PARROT

James: BIRD

Andy: I said that one, I said bird.

Teacher: You are both right, a parrot is a type of bird. We can write both words.

Andy: My grandmother has a parrot. She has a cage just like that.

Andrea: MUSIC. See the black things by her mouth. (There are notes beside the little girl's mouth). I can't whistle.

Andy: I can. See (he whistles)

Teacher: Boy, that is great. Whistling can be very hard to do. It takes practice like many things we learn to do.

Many of the children try to whistle.

Debbie: Yeah, that is why we practice writing.

Teacher: Yes, just like each of you had to practice crawling as a baby, standing up, and even learning to talk.

Debbie: CRICKET. See that little green thing. He jumped on the porch to get out of the rain.

Katie: Yeah, he doesn't want to get wet.

Katie: RAIN. They are having a party on the porch. They were in the yard.

James: Yeah, they are having a picnic.

Andrea: They are eating the cookies and having fun.

Nat: COOKIES

Teacher: Is there anything else we can see?

Andrea: The two children are playing patty cake.

James: The little girl is stomping to the music.

Debbie: I think that they are having fun even in the rain.

Teacher: There are a lot of people in the picture. Let's count together and see how many there are.

All the children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine.

Teacher: How many are children?

All the children: One, two, three, four, five. Five.

Teacher: How many adults?

All the children: One, two, three, four.

Debbie: One lady has white hair. She's the grandmama.

Nat: Yeah.

Andy: There could be a bad storm coming. They should get inside.

Katie: It is not safe to be outside in the rain.

James: I am scared of lightning and thunder.

Debbie: Me, too. I always go find my mommy.

Andrea: It woke me up last time and I got in bed with my mom.

James: My brother and me sleep with my mom. My Dad sleeps on the couch because he

says the bed is too crowded.

Katie: I sleep with my mom.

Teacher: Where does your dad sleep?

Katie: He isn't here. He is in Kuwait.

Debbie: My mom and dad say I have to sleep in my own big girl bed. I don't like it.

Teacher: Why?

Debbie: It is too scary.

Andy: My mom says I have to sleep in my bed, too. She says I have to go to bed at 8:30 (he says very sadly).

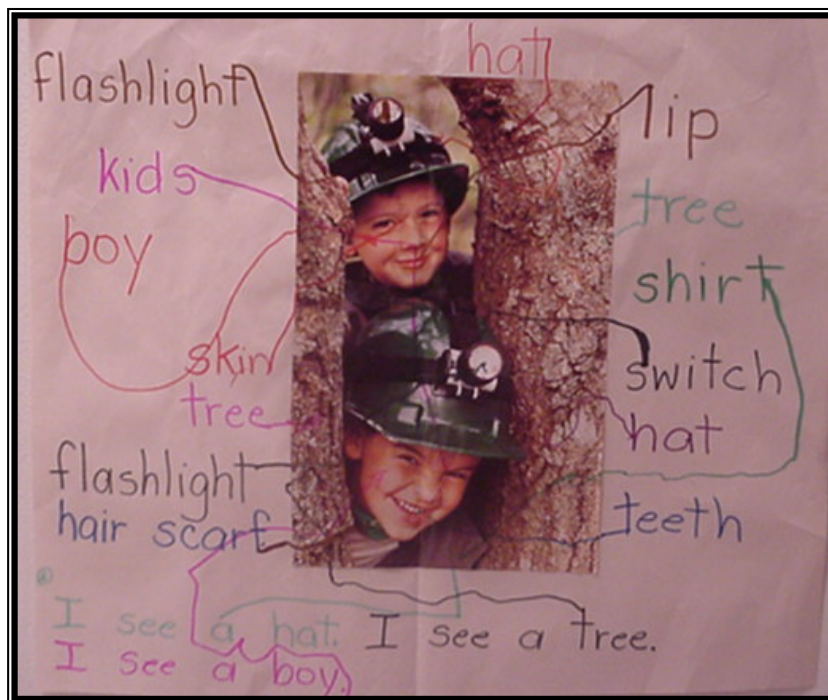
We ended the discussion there because many of the children were getting restless. During the discussion of this picture, I made a point to stress that the picture of the bird could be labeled bird and parrot, and that both children were

right. I hope that, as we continue this process throughout the year, the children will have many opportunities to witness multiple descriptions of one item. The children seem to be sharing much more information about themselves in relation to the picture.

5. BOYS BETWEEN TREES

September 13, 2005

I chose this picture because it showed two boys with flashlights on their hats with their head sticking between the trees. I hoped that there was enough detail in the picture to inspire the children to use their imagination and to develop many opinions about the picture.



90. Boys Between Trees

Teacher: Let's look at this picture.

James: FLASHLIGHT. See on his hat.

Andy: KIDS

Debbie: HAIR SCARF. It is around his neck. You can only see a little bit of it.

Nat: KIDS. Oooh, he is on top of him.

Debbie: Maybe not. He might just be taller and looking over his shoulder.

Andy: He might be standing on his back.

Andrea: I think the one on the bottom is bending over so his friend can see through the tree, too. You know, so his picture can be taken.

Teacher: You all have a wonderful imagination. All of those ideas could be true. I like how you listen to each other as you talk about the picture. Since we do not have a picture before or after to show us how the children got between the trees and because we cannot see behind the tree, all of your suggestions are possible.

Andrea: TREE

Katie: I SEE A BOY.

Andy: They are playing Hide and Seek.

Andrea: They are in the woods.

Teacher: How do you know that?

Katie & James: 'Cause I see trees.

Debbie: Yeah, the boys are between the trees.

Andy: Like on an alligator hunt. You know like TV.

Andrea: When it is dark, they hunt for things. That's why they need light.

Teacher: Is it night in the picture now?

Nat: No.

Andrea: No, because it is light outside.

Debbie: But it looks like the light is on.

Teacher: I wonder why the lights are on in the daytime.

Nat: Maybe they want to make sure the lights work before it is dark.

Katie: Yeah, in case they need batteries.

Teacher: Boy that's thinking!

Teacher: They sure do look happy.

Debbie: That's because they are having fun.

Teacher: You think so?

James: I like to be in the woods. I went walking in the woods with my brother and my momma and we were at the pond and we saw an alligator. My momma said not to get too close. But I went up and jumped on his head and he didn't even bite me. I jumped off and ran.

Teacher: Wow, James that is an interesting story. Sounds like quite an adventure with your mom and brother.

Andrea: I once saw a turtle in a pond. He was sitting on a log.

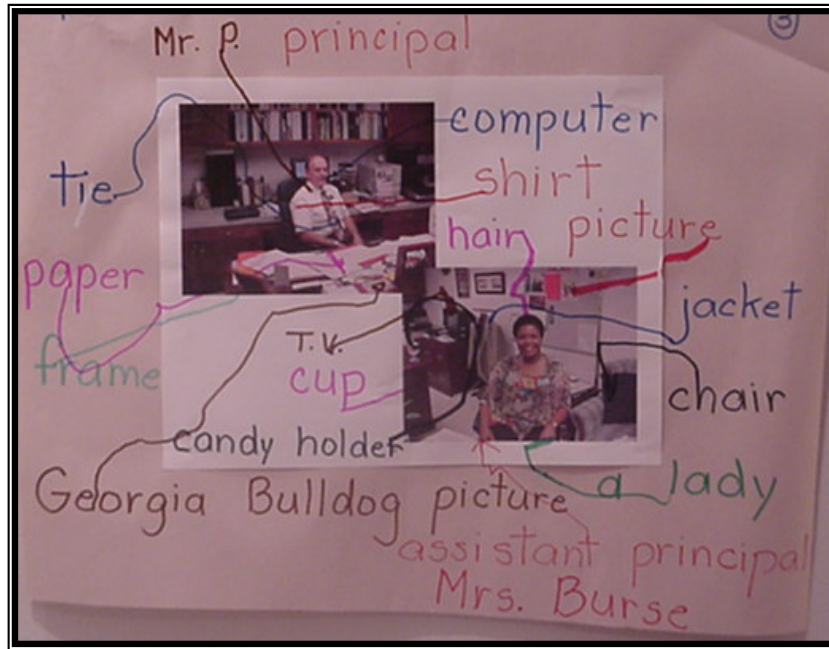
The children used critical thinking skills to figure out where the boys were and why they might have flashlights on their heads. The children's prior

knowledge about being in the woods was understood as they talked about what the children were doing. Nat, who is often so quiet, must have experienced have watched something on television that showed how people could spot alligators at night. I had seen making sure that flashlight batteries work before you need them in the dark. Andy must a similar show and the alligator's eyes reflect like red lights when a flashlight was pointed at an alligator.

6. PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PICTURES

September 20, 2005

I chose this picture because the children had been in school long enough to become acquainted with the principal and assistant principal. I thought it would be interesting to see who could identify both of them and tell about the job each did at Hesse Elementary School.



91. Principal and Assistant Principal

Teacher: Look at this picture and let us talk about whom the people in the picture are.

Katie: A LADY

Andy: She was in here this morning.

Andrea: Yea, she was watching us work.

Teacher: Does anyone remember her name?

No one answers.

Teacher: Her name is Mrs. Burse. She is the assistant principal. She likes to watch children working nicely. She cares about you. She helps the principal of our school.

James: Yeah, Mr. P.

Nat: I know Mr. P. I have known him for three years because my sister is in second grade and I have been coming with her. So I know Mr. P.

Teacher: Well, how old are you now?

Nat: Five.

Teacher: If you are five (I write a five on the board) and if you have known Mr. P. for three years (I write take away three). (I write equals two) then you were

two when you first met Mr. P.

Nat: Yeah.

Debbie: MR. P. He's the principal.

Teacher: Mr. P. is his first initial of his last name. Do you know what his whole name is?

No one answers.

Teacher: His name is Mr. Patricio. I write the name on the board for the children to see, and I explain that the "P" is the first initial in his name.

James: FRAME

Nat: PRINCIPAL

Andrea: GEORGIA BULLDOG PICTURE. I see it sitting on his desk.

Teacher: Mr. Patricio is a Bulldog fan. The Georgia Bulldogs is a college football team. Just like we are the Hesse Bears. But we do not have a team.

Debbie: My Dad likes the Georgia Bulldogs. They win football games.

Andrea: They loose, too. My daddy is for the alligators.

Debbie: SHIRT.

Andy: COMPUTER.

Teacher: How many people do you see in the pictures?

All the children answer: Two.

Debbie: The picture was taken in their offices. They work at Hesse Elementary School.

Teacher: Yes, they do work at Hesse. They have many jobs here. They both make sure that everyone is taken care of here, that the school is open in the morning, that every teacher is at work, that the rooms get clean, that lunch is served, that the playground is safe. Those are the kind of things they take care of for all of us.

James: They make sure that children aren't bad, too.

Teacher: Well, sometimes they do have to talk with children and help them remember to listen to adults and do as they are told to do.

Teacher: How do you think they feel about working at Hesse?

All the children answer: Happy.

Debbie: They are smiling.

Teacher: Why do you think they are happy?

James: Because they like what they do.

Andy: They like to see children.

Teacher: Yes. You are right. They care about children and they care about teachers. I care about you, too.

We are so fortunate at Hesse Elementary School because the children are the number one priority of both the principal and the assistant principal. Both of these caring devoted administrators spend a lot of time interacting with the children. The children can see both of them observing in our classroom, on the

sidewalks, in the lunchroom, and on the playground. The children also know both administrators support the teacher. There have been two occasions where the assistant principal had to talk with an obstinate child in our class who was disrupting the class. I hope I have helped the children understand that all of them must follow the rules for the classroom to be a place where everyone is happy, both the children and the teachers. I explain to the children that no one wants to be in a room where someone is always fussing with children. No one wants to be in a room where it is too loud or crazy and that is why everyone in the class must try very hard to keep the room a nice place to be.

7. LITTLE GIRL

September 28, 2005

I chose this picture because the little girl's face is so inviting. I hope that the picture will inspire many theories as to what the little girl is doing and/ or what she may be thinking.



92. Little Girl

Teacher: Tell me about the picture.

Andy: HAND

Teacher: I am going to let you help me spell the word. I am going to make the sounds that we hear when we say “hand” and I want you to tell me the letter of the sound you hear. I make each individual letter sound and many of the children are able to tell me the correct letter to write.

Debbie: GIRL

James: FLOWER

Andrea: BROWN SKIN

Katie: LIPSTICK

Teacher: Something that sticks on the lips. So the two words are “lip” and “stick”.

Nat: TEETH

Teacher: That girl looks to be about the same age as you boys and girls are. I wonder if she is five years old.

Debbie: She looks like a baby to me.

Teacher: So you think she is younger than you?

Andrea: No.

Debbie: Yes. She’s three, I bet.

Katie: Yes.

James: Yes

Teacher: Let’s look at the picture. She has her finger in the air.

Debbie: Yeah, she is thinking “I have a great idea”.

James: She's counting and starting with one.

Nat: She wants a turn.

Andrea: She says she wants a cookie.

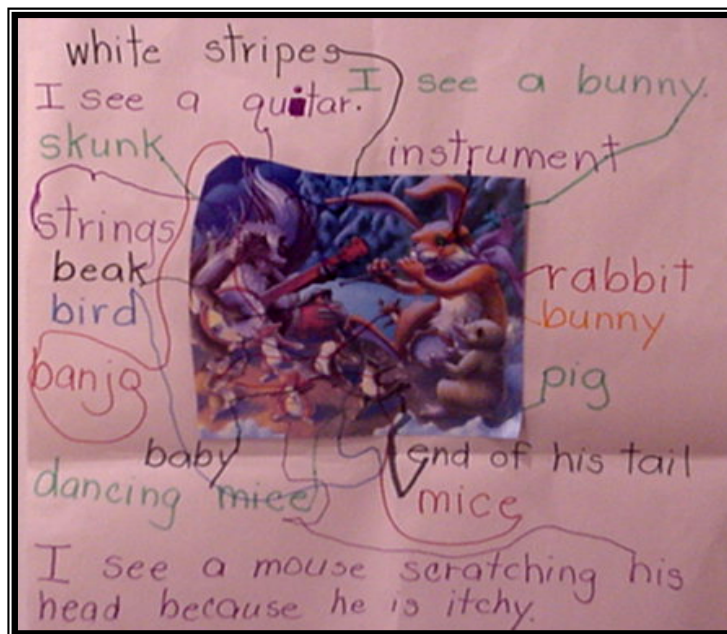
Debbie: She has a cute face.

Teacher: All of your ideas are great!

The children seemed to get very excited as I put the picture up on the board. One child even said I have seen that picture before, but he could not elaborate. Even though the picture did not have many items, the children seemed to enjoy finding things to give a word to label. I adore the suggestions the children gave for why the little girl had her finger up. I hope that by setting the example in previous pictures, the children understand that there can be many answers.

8. DANCING ANIMALS

October 6, 2005



93. Dancing Animals

Katie: DANCING MICE. They look happy (she says as she draws the line from the word to the picture.)

Andrea: INSTRUMENT. See the rabbit (she says as she draws the line from the word to the picture, indicating that the rabbit is playing the flute.)

Nat: RABBIT (His ears are really big).

Debbie: I SEE A GUITAR. See, he is playing the music for the animals. The little mice are dancing.

James: SKUNK

Most the class: Eeeehu!

Teacher: Why do you say that?

Most the class: Because he stinks.

Teacher: How do you know he stinks?

Andrea: Because they lift their tails and they stink.

Teacher: Do you know why they do that?

James: To make people and other animals run away.

Teacher: That's right. Skunks are very small animals of the forest and just the right size for other animals to eat. They do not move very fast because their legs are so short.

Debbie: Yeah, like bears.

Teacher: Exactly. To protect themselves they lift their tails and spray a stinky odor. I think that is a great idea. That way the skunks won't be eaten. Pretty smart! Many animals protect themselves in ways that we might not like. For example, bees sting us before we can hurt them. They are much smaller than us, and they see people as giants that could hurt them.

Katie: I don't like bees.

Teacher: Well, you do not have to like them, but you need to understand them. Bees are very important to people. They fly from flower to flower, and the yellow pollen that is on the flower sticks to their legs when they land. Then they fly to another flower, carrying the pollen with them and this fertilizes the flower. Then the flower can grow.....??

No one answers.

Teacher: Remember the bee flying around the flowers on the trees we talked about?

James: Oh, apples!

Andrea: Yeah, the bees help make the fruit.

Nat: They make honey, too.

Teacher: They sure do, Nat. See you may not like bees because they sting, but we need bees to have fruit and honey. We just have to be careful when we see a bee to stay out of his way.

Andy: BANJO. It's night.

Teacher: How can you tell it is night?

Many of the children: Because the picture is dark.

Andrea: Because it is hard to see the animals.

Teacher: I wonder what they are celebrating.

Katie: It is probably one of the mice's birthday.

Nat: Yeah, because the other animals are playing for them to dance.

James: I think it is the mouse that is scratching his head.

Teacher: You think it is his birthday?

James: Yeah. 'Cause the other mice are making a circle around him, too.

I think it is important to teach acceptance of animals just as we have to accept other people. People and animals have differences. If we teach children why an animal behaves the way it does, then we are teaching understanding. All creatures on this earth need to be respected. It is through discussions like the one inspired by this picture, that feelings can be expressed and understood. I try very hard to find the good in others (even animals), and, when I talk about things in pictures, I try to model unbiased thinking and an awareness of others' differences.

9. BOY AND OWL IN A TREE

October 12, 2005

I chose this picture because we have been talking about nighttime. I hoped the picture would encourage the children to consider different reasons why the boy might be in the tree and to talk about night activities.



94. Boy and Owl in Tree

Teacher: Tell me about the picture.

Andrea: TREE

Teacher: I am going to say “tree” very slowly, and I want you to try and tell me the letter to write. *I make the sound for “t”.*

Debbie & Andy: “t”

Teacher: Great, you are right: “t”. *I make the sound for “r”.*

Many children: “r”

Teacher: You are right: “r”. *I make the sound for “ee”.*

Debbie & Andy: “e”.

Teacher: Yes, You are right. It is “e”, and the word tree has two “e’s”.

Kristen: LEAF

Nat: OWL WINGS. I think he is going to fly. Why is the boy there?

Teacher: That is a very good question. Maybe as we talk about the picture more, we can figure that out.

James: A BOY IS STUCK UP IN THE TREE WITH AN OWL.

Teacher: (As I am spelling the sentence. I made a mistake and wrote boy again.) Since I am using a marker, I cannot erase. I will cross it out and write owl. That’s O.K. because everyone makes mistakes.

Andrea: That’s a long word.

Nat: It has a lot of letters.

Debbie: That’s a lot of words.

Teacher: You are right. It does have a lot of words. When we have a group of words written together that makes sense when you read it, it is called a sentence. I write the letters to form words and the words form sentences. Let’s read the sentence together. “A boy is stuck up in the tree with the owl.”

Debbie: BRANCH

Andy: JACKET

Teacher: Look at the picture. Let’s think about why the boy and the owl are in the tree together.

Andy: The boy was climbing the tree, and the owl did not see him when he landed.

Nat: They are friends.

Debbie: The boy is hoping to catch the owl for a pet.

James: I don’t think he should do that. Owls have sharp claws. Remember that book we read. It showed the owl coming down to catch the mouse.

Debbie: Yeah, and he could fall and break his arm like Pat did (a boy in our class that fell on the playground equipment during after-school care).

James: And then he would have to wear a cast.

Andy: And people would have to help him do things. Like we have to help Pat cut things out.

Teacher: I have noticed a lot of you helping Pat with things. You are all very sweet children and so nice to each other.

Nat: But he can color without help.

Teacher: You are right Nat, there are some things Pat can do without any help.

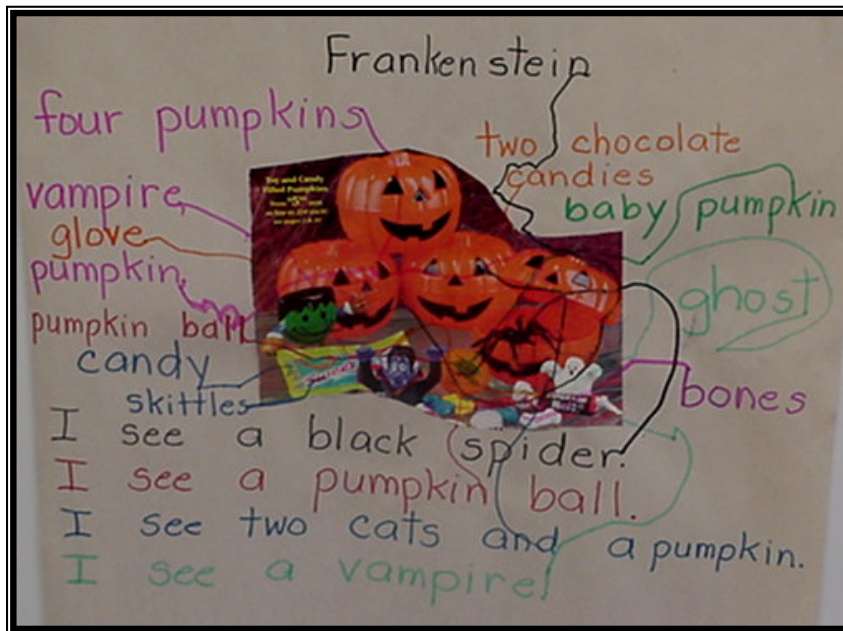
The children have enjoyed learning about owls this week. I read a wide variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction. The story that James is talking about is Owl Moon. They seemed intrigued to learn about an animal that sleeps during the day and is awake at night hunting for food. None of the children in the classroom have seen a live owl. I talked about seeing an owl at different times in my backyard. However, I told the children that I have heard them at night because I live in a very heavily wooded area. During the week I demonstrated the sounds I have heard owls make, and the children have mimicked me.

Another valuable aspect of this lesson was the discussion of the sentence. I had the opportunity to correct the misunderstanding that a long group of words is not just a long word but also a sentence. I explained to the children that as they watch me write everyday, it would help them to understand the difference between a word and a sentence.

10. HAPPY HALLOWEEN

October 25, 2005

We have been talking about Halloween for a couple of weeks in the classroom. When I chose this picture, I hoped that it represented the fun, light side of Halloween, the aspect of receiving candy that most children enjoy.



95. Happy Halloween

Teacher: This is an interesting picture. Tell me something about it.

Debbie: How do I make a sentence about the spider?

Teacher: Well, tell me about the spider.

Debbie: I SEE A BLACK SPIDER.

Teacher: I am going to write the sentence and show you that you could write this sentence, too. The first three words are sight words that you have on your rings. I write "I see a". Now the next word is a color word that we have been talking about it is "black". Debbie, go to the color chart, find the word black, and spell it for me. (She did this) I want all of you to help me sound out the word spider. To help us hear the sounds in the word spider, I am going to say spider very slowly. Listen: "s". The children said "s". I wrote "s". I made the sound for "p" and the children said "p". I wrote "p". I said "i" and the children said "i". I wrote "i". I made the sound for "d". The children said "d" and I wrote "d". Then I said "er" and the children said "r". I said yes, it is the letter "r", but there is the letter "e" before the "r" that we can not hear. *I wrote "er" and the word spider was spelled on the chart.*

Nat: GHOST. See by the pumpkin.

Teacher: Yes Nat, the ghost is by the pumpkin.

Katie: CANDY

Teacher: The beginning of the word candy is can, which is one of your sight words. Then you can hear the "d", but the "y" is not the sound that we know

stands for the letter “y”. This is why I am teaching you how to spell because many times there are letters in words that we cannot hear.

James: FRANKENSTEIN

Katie: That’s a sentence isn’t it Mrs. Aliotta?

Teacher: Well, it looks like a sentence, because it has so many letters. But it is not a sentence; it is a word with a lot of letters. If I had written *Frankenstein is purple* or *I see Frankenstein* then that would be a sentence.

Debbie: Yeah, like I did about the spider.

Andy: PUMPKIN BALL. I can spell ball, b-a-l-l.

James: I can spell boy, b-o-y.

Teacher: Very nice!

Andrea: I SEE TWO CATS AND A PUMPKIN.

Andy: I love you, Mrs. Aliotta.

Teacher: I love you and all my children, too.

Teacher: What holiday are we looking forward too?

All the children yell: Halloween!

Teacher: Yes, Halloween will be here soon. Let’s look at the calendar again and see how many days. Let’s count.

All the children: One, two, three, four, five, six!

Teacher: We are so excited. On Halloween, some children put on costumes and do what?

All the children: Say Trick or Treat and get candy.

Teacher: I want each of you to take a turn and tell all of us what you are going to be on Halloween.

Andy: (He mumbles) Power Ranger. But I do not have it yet. I am going to the Big K.

Debbie: I am going to be a princess and I have these special shoes.

Katie: Cat Woman.

Andrea: I am going to be Tinkerbell. I even have wings.

James: I am going to be the Hulk and my brother is going to be a soccer player.

Nat: I don’t know. I have not been to the store.

Teacher: Well, we are going to have a parade on Halloween day here at Hesse. After lunch and after we play outside, we are going to let you put the costume on that you bring to school, and we are going to have a parade with the other kindergarten classes.

The children are getting so comfortable with knowing their letter sounds that I can make the sound of the letter in the word and many of the children can tell me the letter to write. I find the picture labeling activity a valuable way of using the children’s words to teach literacy. The words the children give me will

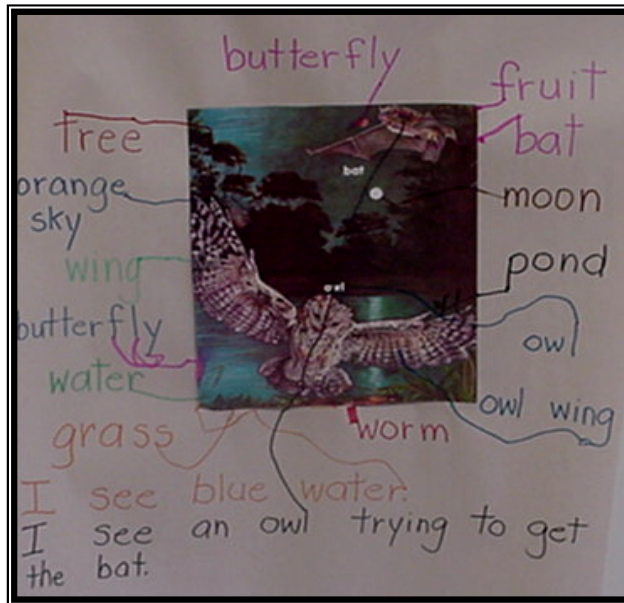
be the words that the child will probably try to write herself/himself when writing a sentence.

I am not sure why Andy told me he loved me in the middle of the activity. I have him sit in the front row on the carpet because he seems to often be in his own world during carpet time. He rarely looks at me and often seems to be talking to himself. So he sits near me every time. He is usually very quiet, and, when I ask him a question, his answer is very soft and mumbled. He is a beautiful little boy with large blue eyes and very dark hair. He mostly interacts with another quiet boy in the class.

94. NIGHT SKY

November 1, 2005

We had been talking about nighttime and animals that are awake and move about at night. I have read many stories about owls and bats. I wondered if this picture could begin discussions about how the children feel about the nighttime.



96. Night Sky

Teacher: What do you see in the picture?

Debbie: FRUIT BAT.

Teacher: I have already written bat, so I am going to write fruit in front of it. Look at what the bat is flying after in the night sky.

Debbie: An insect.

James: A butterfly. Maybe it is not a fruit bat but an insect-eating bat.

Katie: Yeah, like Stellaluna ate a bug.

Andy: Yeah, the momma bird brought Stellaluna a grasshopper when she brought her other babies' dinner.

Debbie: And Stellaluna ate it 'cause she was so hungry. But she was a fruit bat.

Nat: She made a funny face when she tasted it. She went eeyuck.

James: Yeah.

Nat: MOON. I see it up there.

Katie: I SEE BLUE WATER.

Teacher: This is a sentence you each could write by yourself. There are two sight words you have learned, a color word, and then you could sound out the word water.

James: (*He took a very long time looking at the picture before naming an item*).

WORM. The owl is trying to get it.

Teacher: Why?

James: He is hungry.

Teacher: You gave me a lot of words to write and two sentences.

Teacher: The owl is trying to get the worm, or maybe it is a snake.

James: I think the owl is trying to get the bat.

Teacher: You do? The bat is over the owl's head. How will the owl get the bat?

Debbie: I think the owl is going to go around and circle behind him and get the bat.

James: Yeah, you know owls like to eat bats. Remember the story we read about the things that an owl might eat?

Nat: Yeah, they like to eat mice and fish, too.

Andy: Frogs like to eat worms.

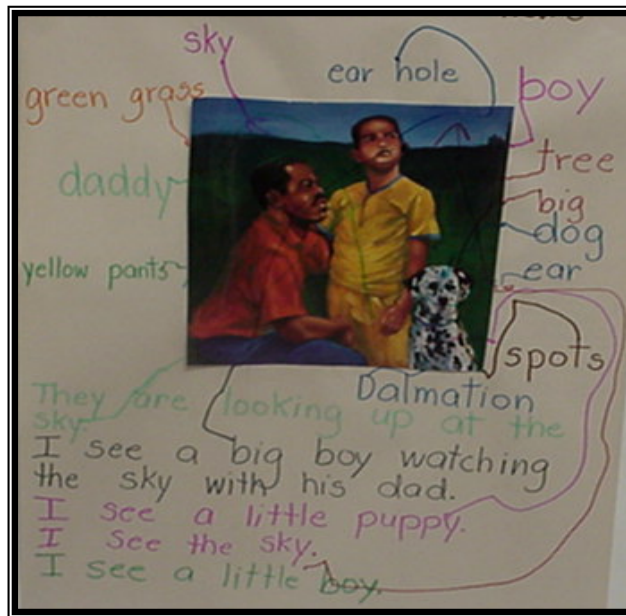
Andrea was absent. She has been absent seven days the past month and tardy three times. Dad does not have a job and mom goes to work. According to Andre, Dad does not wake up. When Andrea is tardy, her dad brings her in. When I have called about her absence, her grandmother returned my call and said that she had been sick. When I tried to call her mom at work, they said mom was not at work because Andrea had a dentist's appointment.

While I am completing the picture labeling, I like that the children are able to recall details from previous stories I have read to them. Not only are they able to recall details, but they are also able to transfer the previous information and make conclusions about the scene in the picture.

12. BOY AND HIS DAD

November 8, 2005

I tried to find pictures that represented many cultures in various activities. I chose this picture because I hoped the children would talk about the boy and what he and his dad might be doing. I liked that the picture depicted the people outside at night and hoped it would encourage the children to speculate about why the boy, his dad, and his dog are outside.



97. Boy and His Dad

Teacher: Let's look at this picture. Why do you think I chose this picture for today?

Many children: Because we are talking about nighttime.

Andrea: YELLOW PANTS

Nat: DOG

James: My Grandmother has a dog like that.

Debbie: Oh, that boy looks like G (a boy in our class).

Teacher: Oh, you are so smart. That is the reason I chose this picture.

Katie: THEY ARE LOOKING UP AT THE SKY.

Teacher: I sure hope everyone is watching as I write each letter.

Andy: I SEE A LITTLE BOY.

Teacher: Watch as I write this sentence. This is a sentence you could write with out any help. The first three words are sight words you have and I write each word. The next word I want you to listen as I sound it out. *I emphasize each sound and the children spell for me. I tell the children that even though you only hear the sound of one "t", there are two "t's" in the word. I also tell the children the reason it is so important that they watch me write is that many words are very tricky to spell, and we can not hear the "e" at the end of the word "little".*

James: DALMATIAN

Teacher: Very good James, you know what kind of dog it is.

Andrea: Those kinds of dogs help firemen. I am going to be a veterinarian when I grow up.

Teacher: You are, why?

Andrea: Because I love animals. They are so cute. When we took Tiny to the vet, she was a girl.

Teacher: The vet was a girl?

Andrea: Yeah, just like me. Ha.

Debbie: TREE

Teacher: *I told the children I was sure they could spell the word tree for me to write because we have written it so many times. Most of the children spelled the word as I wrote it. Then I asked the children to think for a minute and tell me what they think the boy and his dad are doing.*

James: I think they are looking at fireworks.

Debbie: I think they are looking at a bear.

Andy: Bears can't fly.

Katie: Yeah, they are looking up.

Teacher: Yes, they are looking up.

Andrea: Maybe the bear is up on a mountain.

Teacher: That could be. Very good idea, Andrea.

Nat: They are looking at the moon.

Andy: Why is the boy looking mean?

Teacher: I do not know. That is a very good question.

Nat: He could just be thinkin'.

Debbie: Or trying to see the stars.

James: He could be mad about something.

Katie: And his dad is trying to talk to him about it. My daddy said my big brother is going to get something from him when he gets home – a beatin'. *(Her dad is in Iraq and she has two teenage brothers).*

Teacher: Well, we can't be sure why the boy is frowning, but I am glad he has his dad there to talk with him. I sure do like listening to you talk about pictures. You have wonderful ideas about things.

During most of this activity Debbie was not paying attention. She wore a pretty pink shawl, and she was playing with one piece of yarn. When I looked at her she knew that I was expecting her to be looking at the picture. She sheepishly grinned. The children were exceptionally busy on the carpet, and there were a few quiet conversations going on that caused me to stop and repeatedly compliment children who were sitting quietly. After we finished labeling the picture, Andrea said she could not see. I told her to come up to the picture and look at it. She did and smiled.

The children were very observant of the picture today. Andy even questioned how the boy was feeling, asking why he was frowning. Kristen has told me a few times that her brother is not doing what her mother tells him to. She said her dad said he better not hear any bad news about her in school.

13. INDIAN GIRL

November 15, 2005

I chose this picture because we had been talking about the Pilgrims coming to America on the Mayflower. I read many Indian stories to the children and talked about the Indians living in America. We discussed how the Indians helped the Pilgrims live in America, including how the Indians helped the Pilgrims build homes, hunt, fish, and grow food to eat because there were no stores like in England to buy things. I read many stories to the children about Indian folklore and even a story about dream catchers like the one that the Indian is holding.



98. Indian Girl

Teacher: Tell me about this picture.

Andy: I SEE AN INDIAN IN THE PICTURE. How much is that? *He wanted to know how many words were in his sentence.*

Teacher: Count how many words are in your sentence.

Andy: One, two, three, four, five, six, and seven. Seven words.

Teacher: Seven words in your sentence. Nice job.

Nat: INDIAN'S FEATHER.

Andrea: I SEE THE INDIAN'S HAIR. That's a sentence.

Katie: BRACELET ON HER LEG

Teacher: Very nice, Katie. I am going to write it beside the picture because it is not a sentence. For it to be sentence we could write, the bracelet is on her leg.

Debbie: DREAM CATCHER. I have one in my bedroom.

Teacher: You do? Where is it hanging?

Debbie: In the ceiling.

Teacher: Oh, I would love to see it.

Debbie: I could take it down. My mom has a tall ladder.

Teacher: Why do you have a dream catcher in your bedroom?

Debbie: To catch my bad dreams.

Teacher: That's what I thought.

Andy: I have a teddy bear in my room that catches my bad dreams.

Katie: I have a stuffed cat to catch my bad dreams.

Teacher: Having a bad dream catcher is a very good thing. I do not like to have bad dreams either.

Katie: One time I had a bad dream about a scary thing in my closet. I was scared. I didn't want to get out of bed to go to my mom, so I called her. So now I sleep in the bed with my mom.

Nat: I sleep with a little light on in my room. I do not like to be in the dark.

Debbie: I have music in my room that I listen to that helps me go to sleep. Mom says I have to sleep in my big girl bed. I don't like to wake up at night.

Teacher: I know the dark can be scary but you have to remember that there is nothing in your room that is not there during the day. Nighttime can be very peaceful and relaxing. I have a small fan in my room that makes just enough noise that I do not hear many sounds that you can hear in the quiet night.

James: BARBIE

Teacher: Oh, you think it looks like a Barbie doll?

James: Yeah.

Teacher: An Indian Barbie.

The picture did not seem to have enough in it to stimulate interest or much talk. I enjoyed hearing about the children's different bad dream catchers. We spent a lot of time with all the children in the class having an opportunity to talk about bad dreams and what was in their rooms that helped them sleep. Katie is still trying to understand the concept of sentences. She is very interested in telling me a sentence to write.

14. FOOD

November 17, 2005

I picked a variety of traditional foods often eaten at Thanksgiving for the children to talk about. The day before we had talked about food that we eat on Thanksgiving Day after I read the story *The Thanksgiving Dinner*. It was a very good story about a boy who goes to his grandmother's house with his parents, and his aunts, uncles, and cousins are all there. In the story each person in the family is busy preparing some of the dinner. The girls are shucking corn and the boys are

peeling the potatoes. No one will let the little boy help, citing that he is too young. The little boy sits sadly on the swing in the yard until his grandfather takes him for a walk and the two of them collect chestnuts. The little boy brings the chestnuts home, and everyone is thrilled to roast the chestnuts and eat them as an appetizer. After the story I showed the children chestnuts I bought. We opened them, and some of the children tasted them. We discussed foods that the children would be eating at Thanksgiving and where they might be eating dinner. When I chose a few pictures, I selected some of the foods the children mentioned possibly eating for dinner. I picked turkey, rice, green bean casserole, bread, and pumpkin pie. I also chose French fries and shrimp to see if anyone would comment about either of them not being Thanksgiving dinner



99. Food

Teacher: We will soon be celebrating Thanksgiving so I found some pictures of food. When you come up to the picture, I want you to tell me about the pictures.

Katie: CAKE.

Teacher: When we say the word “cake” we hear the “c” sound at the beginning of the word and in the middle of the word. This is why it is so important that I teach you how to spell. We know that both the “c” and the ‘k’ make the sound “ccc” so this could be a tricky word to spell correctly. Watch as I spell it “c-a-k-e”. Whoever decided how to spell the word decided to let both of the letters be in the word cake.

Debbie: WHIPPED CREAM.

Andy: FRENCH FRIES

Teacher: You are right, that does look like French fries. It is French fried onions on top of the green beans. I cook this for my family all the time.

Many of the children: Yuck!

Teacher: Remember I told you that I have two boys? Well, one of my boys likes to eat the green bean casserole with onions on top and one does not.

Debbie: Which one does?

Teacher: Nick, my oldest boy.

Debbie: The other one doesn't?

Teacher: No, he sure doesn't. But that is fine with me. I know that I like to eat things that other people may not like.

James: LEMON

Andrea: I SEE FRENCH FRIES. How many words in that sentence? Let's count.

Teacher: O.K.

Children: One, two, three, four.

Teacher: A very short sentence. It has four words.

Nat: TWO SHRIMP

Teacher: Look at the plate of shrimp, Nat. There are more than two shrimp. Why don't you count them?

Nat: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Nine shrimp.

Teacher: Good job of counting, Nat. We have already written the word “shrimp” so I am going to write the number word nine about the word “shrimp”. That way we will know how many we have.

Nat: I love shrimp.

Teacher: Me too, Nat.

Debbie: When the Pilgrims and Indians went fishing they could get shrimp, too.

Teacher: Yes, they probably could.

James: Well, I don't like pumpkin pie.

Teacher: People do like different things to eat. We all have our own brain and our own tongue. We are different in many ways.

The children laugh.

Teacher: Let's talk about the food we see in the picture. I want you to raise your hand. How many like shrimp?

Ten children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like French fries?

All the children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like turkey?

Thirteen children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like pumpkin pie?

Seven children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like bread?

All the children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like rice?

Fifteen children raise their hands.

Teacher: How many like green beans?

Five children raise their hands.

Debbie: I like green beans but not with that stuff on top.

Children: You forgot about whipped cream!

Teacher: Oh, my gosh, how could I have forgotten about that? How many like whipped cream?

All the children raise their hands and many of the children make comments.

Andrea: You forgot lemon.

Teacher: I did forget. How many of you like lemons?

Ten children raise their hands.

Teacher: I really like to squeeze lemons in water, mix sugar in it, and make lemonade. It tastes so good to me. Tomorrow I will bring some lemons, sugar, a pitcher for water, and we will make lemonade.

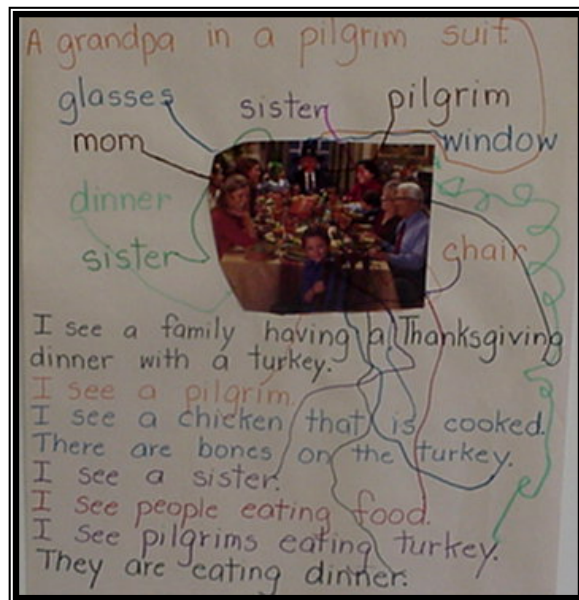
The children cheer.

It was a very enjoyable conversation about foods. I liked talking about how different people may eat different things. This picture seemed to engage the children since the talk was very stimulating and interesting. The discussion about lemons led easily to my decision to bring lemons to make lemonade the next day.

15. THANKSGIVING DINNER

November 22, 2005

I explained to the children that I chose this picture because it showed a family having Thanksgiving dinner. The dinner table shows a lot of different foods they may eat.



100. Thanksgiving Dinner

I always begin with a different child and randomly call on children to come to the picture. Before I started the picture, Andrea was concerned if I were going to start with the children in the front row because she likes to be first. I explained that everyone might like to be first but I begin with different children so that everyone gets a turn to be first. She said all right and waited patiently for her turn.

James: I SEE A FAMILY HAVING THANKSGIVING DINNER WITH A TURKEY. I want to count how many words.

Teacher: O.K. Let's count with James.

Children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Ten.

Many of the children: That's a lot of words.

James: It is a long sentence all right.

Katie: FOOD. I want a sentence.

Teacher: Then tell me something about the food, Katie.

Katie: I SEE PEOPLE EATING FOOD.

Teacher: That is a good sentence. How many words do you have in the sentence? Stand to the side so the children can all see and point to each word and we will count with you.

Katie: One, two, three, four, five. Five words in my sentence.

James: Two are our sight words.

Teacher: Which two words, James?

James: "I" and "see".

Teacher: Yes, those are two of our many sight words.

Andrea: Finally (referring to getting her turn), WINDOW

Nat: THEY ARE EATING DINNER.

Andy: PILGRIM

Teacher: This is a word that each of you could spell by listening to the word as you say it slowly. Let me show you how. *I slowly said each letter in the word and waited for the children to tell me the letter to write. They correctly named each letter.* I knew you could do it.

Debbie: A GRANDPA IN A PILGRIM SUIT.

Teacher: Tell me about your Thanksgiving dinner.

Debbie: My cousins come over and I like to play with them.

Andy: We just eat with my mom and dad. My grandpa and grandma took care of me here. It is too far for them to come back. *Andy's grandparents visited from Brazil and took care of him this summer.*

Andrea: We eat with my Nana. That's all.

Nat: My grandma fixes me and my sister dinner. My cousins come over. It's a lot of people.

James: We are going to Atlanta and stay in a hotel. My momma says I have to be real good. We are going to visit my Aunt Jane. She has children, too.

Teacher: Who is going with you to Atlanta?

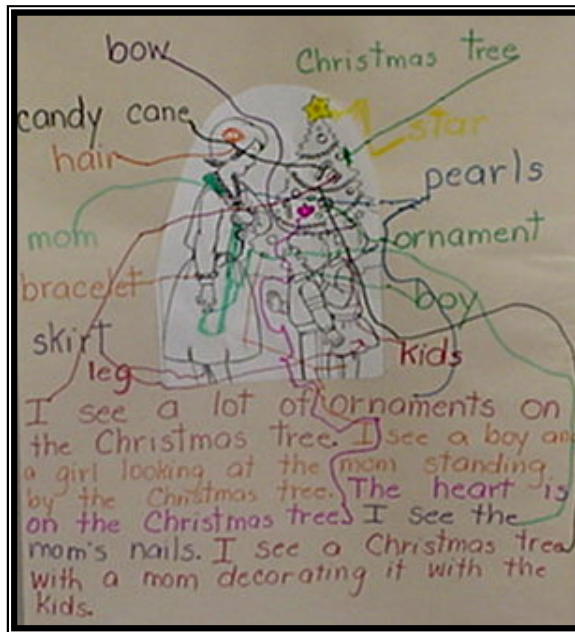
James: My brother, Jordan, and mom. Dad doesn't know if he is going yet.

Teacher: Thanksgiving is a time when many people get together with other people in their family. Sometimes we travel to visit and sometimes people come and visit us.

16. CHRISTMAS TREE

November 29, 2005

I chose this picture from a coloring book. I gave all the children new crayons and coloring books as an early Christmas present. The children keep the books at their seat to color in when ever they want. I selected this picture because it was in black and white and I wanted to see the children's responses.



101.Christmas Time

Katie: That looks like a picture from our coloring books. BRACELET. I like the coloring book you gave us. Thank you.

Andy: I don't like the picture with no color.

Teacher: I agree color can make pictures look nicer.

Teacher: You're welcome, Katie.

James: I SEE A LOT OF ORNAMENTS ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE. It needs to be colored to look better. (After I write the sentence) Wow, that is a lot of words in that sentence. Lot of "o's" too. Let's count.

All the children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Ten.

James: Ten! That's more than ever.

Debbie: ORNAMENTS. I have a lot of pretty ornaments on my Christmas tree. Do you like the ornament that I brought for our tree, Mrs. Aliotta?

Teacher: I like the princess ornament you brought. The ornaments help the tree to look prettier.

Andy: CANDY CANE .We hang candy canes on my tree. We bought some but mommy says we cannot eat them yet.

Teacher: Both of these words begin with the "c" sound. Remember there are two letters that have that sound. You need to watch as I write these words so that when you write these words you will know if it is a "c" or a "k". Both of these words begin with the letter "c". The first part of the word "candy" is "can". You know how to spell "can".

Many of the children: c-a-n

Teacher: Oh, you are so smart. You have really listened as I have been teaching you.

Andrea: THE HEART IS ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE. Oooh. I like that. I would like an ornament on my tree like that one.

Teacher: Do you want to count how many words that are in your sentence?

Most of the children: Yes. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Seven.

Nat: BOY

Teacher: Andrea how many words did you have?

Andrea: Seven.

Teacher: Yes, There were seven words in your sentence. That is less than James' sentence. So James had more words in his sentence.

Teacher: There is a boy in the picture just like you are a boy.

Teacher: Let's think about what they are doing in the picture.

Debbie: I think they are telling their mommy what they want for Christmas.

James: Or maybe they want to go somewhere.

Andrea: Yeah, like to the mall to see Santa. My Nana took me to the mall. We had to wait a long time.

Debbie: Me, too. I rode the train.

Many of the children said they had not been to the mall to see Santa yet. I explained that Santa would be at the mall for a few more weeks and that they would probably have time to see Santa.

Katie: Maybe they want to go out and play.

Andy: Or maybe they are hungry and they want some cookies.

Teacher: You have had a lot of good suggestions for what they children are saying to their mom. Could the woman in the picture be someone other than his or her mom?

Some of the children said "no" and some said "yes". I asked each child that said, "yes" to the question, "Who could she be?"

Debbie: It is her aunt. I have an Aunt Susie.

Andrea: Maybe it is her Nana. I have a Nana. I stay at her house.

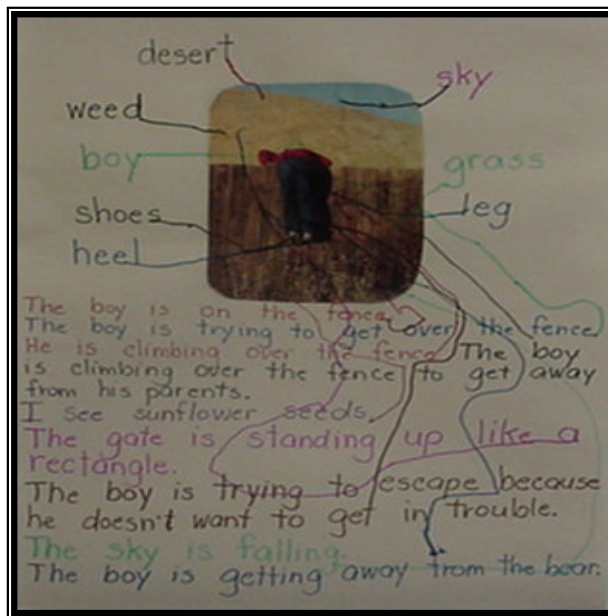
Teacher: So it could be an aunt, a neighbor, a baby sitter, a grandmother many possibilities, not just their mom. I like when you have such great ideas and I can tell you have listened to your friend's answers and you are able to give me other possibilities.

Most of the children tell me a sentence about the picture, and the sentences are getting more descriptive. The children were very tempted to color the picture when they used the marker to draw the line from their word or sentences to the item they were labeling. The children were very responsive when I asked who the lady could be other than the children's mom. I think they like the challenge of thinking of something that has not already been said.

17. BENDING OVER THE FENCE

December 6, 2005

Even though it is Christmas time, I found this picture and I thought it was so intriguing. I hoped that this picture would fascinate the children and bolster their imagination and possibly uncover caring as they thought about what the boy is doing leaning over the fence.



102. Bending Over the Fence

Teacher: Let's look at this picture together.

Nat: LEG

Teacher: I am going to make the sound of each letter in the word and let you spell for me. I said, "l" and the children said "l". I wrote "l". I said, "e" and the children said "e". I wrote "e". I said, "g" and the children said "g". I wrote "g".

Andy: DESERT

Debbie: I SEE SUNFLOWER SEEDS. There are only four words in that sentence. Two and two make four.

Teacher: You think all the yellow on the other side of the fence is sunflower seeds?

Debbie: Yes. You know like in the book we read with the scarecrow.

Teacher: I do remember that story, and there were a lot of sunflower seeds in the story. You have a good memory.

James: THE BOY IS TRYING TO ESCAPE BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO GET IN TROUBLE.

Teacher: Oh so you think he has done something he shouldn't?

James: Yeah, maybe he broke a window. The boy next door to us broke the front window of his house.

Teacher: Do you think he got into trouble?

James: Yeah, I know he did. *Then James kind of laughed.*

Teacher: My goodness James. There are a lot of words in that sentence. Do you think we can count those many?

All the children: Yeah. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Fourteen!

Teacher: That's the most ever. That is a very long sentence, James.

Katie: GATE. I want a sentence.

Teacher: If you want a sentence then you have to tell me something about the gate. Tell me a sentence about the gate.

Katie: THE GATE IS STANDING UP LIKE A RECTANGLE. I want to count how many words are in my sentence.

Andy: "Like" is one of our sight words.

All the children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight.

Teacher: Yes, it is Andy.

Andrea was absent.

Children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight.

Teacher: You have come up with some very interesting sentences describing the picture. *I read each sentence and asked, many of you thought he was trying to get away from something. What could he be getting away from?*

The children suggested many things the boy could be getting away from.

Katie: He could be getting away from a shark.

Teacher: Katie, when you look at the picture and you say he could be getting away from a shark, what would a shark need to live in?

Katie: Water.

Teacher: Katie, do you see any water that a shark could be living in?

Katie: No

Teacher: O.K. So a shark could be chasing him if he was maybe near the ocean, but the picture does not show us that there could be any water near. I will give you a few minutes and think some more about it.

Katie: Maybe he is being chased by a bear.

Teacher: Yes that is a good possibility.

Debbie: Maybe he saw a snake.

James: I think he may be trying to find a caterpillar.

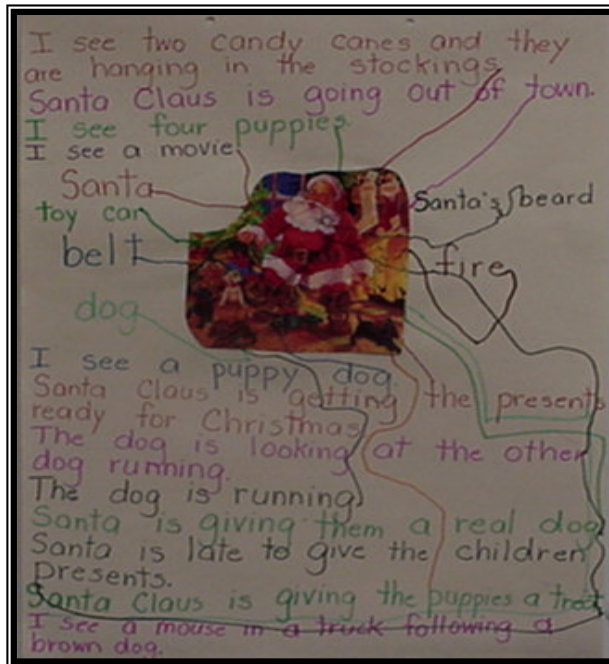
Teacher: Oh, so maybe he is looking over the fence to find something? That is a good idea.

The sentences the children are telling me are very involved and expressive. I was excited to hear the children describe what the boy was doing in the picture. The children are telling me more sentences and fewer single words to describe the picture. Katie still tells me a word and then tells me she wants to write a sentence. When I asked her to tell me about the picture, she is able to give me a sentence. I enjoyed discussing the possibility of a shark chasing the boy. The children talked as though they were concerned with why the boy would be on the fence like that, which could mean they cared about his safety.

18. SANTA CLAUS

December 8, 2005

I chose this picture since it depicted Santa near a fireplace and a Christmas tree. There was a lot of action in the picture and I hoped it would inspire the children's imagination.



103.Santa Claus

Teacher: We have a picture to look at today that excites me.

Andrea: I SEE A PUPPY DOG.

Teacher: This is a sentence all you could write without any help yourself. The first three words are sight words. Spell them for me.

Most the children spell "I see a".

Teacher: I am going to say the sounds in "puppy" and "dog" and let you help me spell. (I pronounced each letter sound and the children spelled the words as I wrote them).

Debbie: SANTA CLAUS IS GETTING THE PRESENTS READY FOR CHRISTMAS.

Teacher: As I was spelling the sentence, I told the children that they knew how to spell "is".

Children: "i-s"

Teacher: As I was spelling the sentence, I told the children that they knew how to spell "the".

Children: "t-h-e"

Teacher: I am going to use a capital "c" for the word "Christmas" because it is the name of a holiday.

Debbie: I want to count how many words.

Teacher: O.K.

Debbie: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Nine.

Teacher: Debbie, what do you mean Santa is getting the presents ready?

Debbie: He has to put them under the tree for the children and then eat the cookies and drink the milk we have for him.

Nat: SANTA. We put cake on the table for Santa and a diet coke.

Teacher: Santa is a hard worker and needs to eat to keep going all night. He has a lot of children to take care of. Santa is his name so I am going to write a capital "S".

Andy: FIRE. Hot, hot, hot. You have to be very careful.

Teacher: Yes, you do Andy. Fire can keep us warm and can be used to cook with but you must be very careful around fire.

Andrea: I have cooked marshmallows over the fire but you have to let them cool before you bite or they will burn you.

Andy: Fire will burn you.

Katie: DOG. I want a sentence.

Teacher: If you want a sentence, then you have to tell me something about the dog. You have to tell me a sentence.

Katie: I SEE A MOUSE IN A TRUCK FOLLOWING A BROWN DOG.

Teacher: Wow, that is a great sentence, Katie. Why do you think that dog is following the truck?

Andrea: He wants to play chase.

Katie: He wants a ride.

Katie: I want to count. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven. Ten.

Teacher: You counted eleven. Count again and let's make sure.

Katie: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven. Eleven.

Katie: Oh yeah, eleven.

Andrea: Which dog did she draw the line to?

Teacher: What Andrea?

Andrea: Did she draw the line to my dog?

Teacher: Oh you mean the dog that you drew a line to?

Andrea: Yeah, my dog.

Teacher: No, Andréa, she drew her line to a different dog. Do you want to come up to the picture so that you can see well?

Andrea: Yeah. Whew.

James: I SEE TWO CANDY CANES AND THEY ARE HANGING IN THE STOCKINGS.

I write the sentence.

All the children: Let's count.

James: *As he is pointing to the words:* One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve.

Teacher: That is a lot of words and it makes a long sentence.

James: Yeah and it has a lot of sight words in it.

Teacher: How many?

James: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

Teacher: I think that is the most sight words we have ever written in a sentence, James. What are some other things that we might get in our stockings?

Debbie: I get toys in my stocking.

James: Me, too. I got a toothbrush last time. (He laughs).

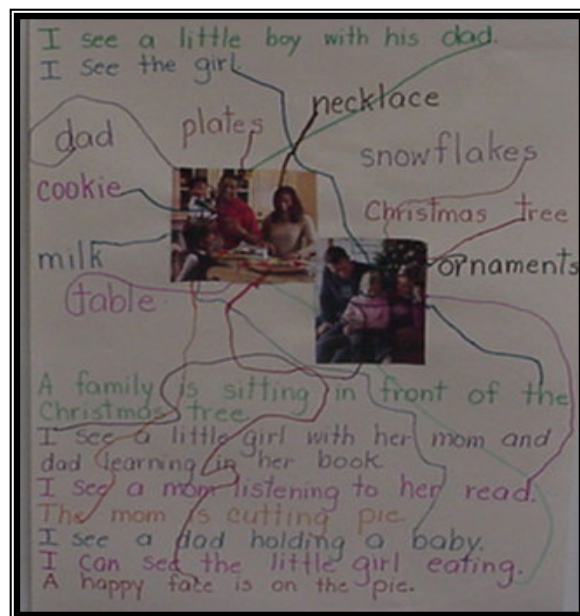
Katie: My momma gives me lots of chocolate candy but I can't eat it all.

The children are very concerned about how many words are in the given sentences. Andrea was worried that someone had drawn a line to the dog she drew a line to. The children seem to be more involved in the action of the picture and relating the words and sentences to their life experiences.

19. FAMILIES AT CHRISTMAS

December 13, 2005

I chose the pictures depicting different ethnic families engaged in activities during the holiday season. I hoped the pictures were captivating to the children and that they might possibly relate to the student's home experiences.



104.Families at Christmas

Teacher: Let's look at this picture together.

Debbie: SNOWFLAKES

Teacher: That is two words written together. The words are "snow" and

Most the children: flakes

Teacher: Yes, flakes. I am going to say the word slowly so that you can hear each sound in the word. I want you to tell me the letter that represents the sound and I will write it. *The children are able to tell me every sound I stress. I have to explain that we cannot hear the "e" and that is why it is so important to watch me as I teach because sometimes there are letters in words that we cannot hear.*

James: *He took a very long time to look over the picture.* DAD. That's one sentence.

Teacher: Well, not one sentence. One word.

Katie: MOM. I want a sentence.

Teacher: Then tell me sentence about the mom.

Katie: THE MOM IS CUTTING PIE.

I wrote the sentence.

Katie: There are two "t's" like "little".

Teacher: There sure is and the word sitting has two "t's". Katie noticed that the word "cutting" has two "t's" like the word "little" and "sitting". Katie, I am very proud of you!

Nat: I CAN SEE THE LITTLE GIRL EATING.

Teacher: The first five words are sight words. You could write the beginning of this sentence. I would like for you to spell each word and I will write it. *The children spell, I can see the little.*

Debbie: I can spell "girl". I think she is five years old.

Teacher: Great. Spell girl for me, Debbie.

Debbie: g-i-r-l *Then I wrote eating.*

Nat: I want to count.

Teacher: Good. Point to each word and we will count with you.

Nat: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

Teacher: Seven words in your sentence, Nat.

Andrea: A HAPPY FACE IS ON THE PIE.

Teacher: Spell "happy" for me.

All the children: h-a-p-p-y.

Andrea: I have two loose teeth.

Andy: How come I am last?

Teacher: You are just lucky I guess.

Andy: ORNAMENTS. I have two red ornaments.

Teacher: Both of these families are getting ready for Christmas. Tell me something that is the same in both pictures.

Andy: Dads.

James: There are two girls.

Andrea: The pie and the Christmas tree are the same.

Teacher: How are the pie and the tree the same, Andrea?

Andrea: Because they are decorating the tree and they decorated the pie.

Teacher: Very good Andrea.

There were many other responses.

Teacher: How are the pictures different?

Debbie: They have different faces.

James: They have different colored shirts.

Andrea: They have different colored skin.

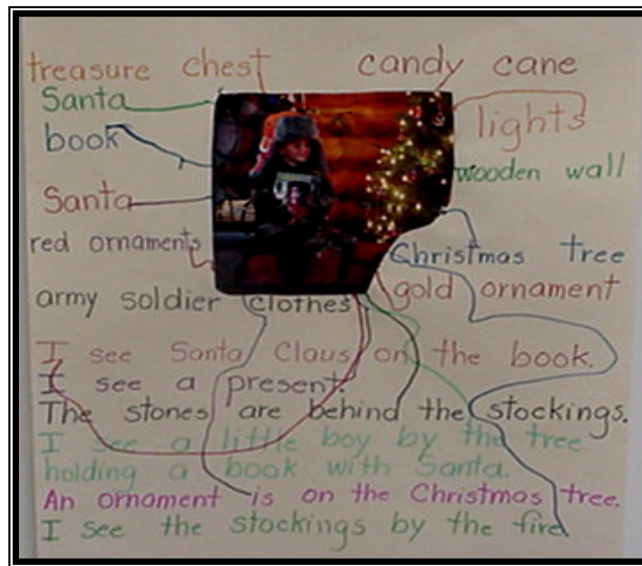
Teacher: You have done a great job of finding things that are alike and different in the pictures.

The children were very squirmy on the carpet and whispering to each other. I had to stop a few times and help the children pay attention. The picture did not generate as many sentences as previous pictures I have chosen. It was interesting that most of the talk was very simple. The children are probably very excited about Christmas. The children are doing a wonderful job of spelling both sight words for me to write and spelling phonetically for me to write.

20. LITTLE BOY BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE

December 14, 2005

I chose this picture because I hoped the children would be able to relate to the little boy looking at the tree and share how they felt about Christmas. I anticipated the picture might invite the children to share their Christmas experiences.



105.Little Boy by the Christmas Tree

Andy: TREASURE CHEST. Does it have money in it?

Teacher: It may.

Andy: Treasure chests have gold coins in them.

Teacher: That can be. I have seen treasure chest in movies and there is a lot of gold and jewelry in them, Andy. Have you ever seen a real treasure chest?

Andy: No, mommy has a jewelry box.

Teacher: That is like a treasure chest, isn't it?

Andy: But, no gold coins.

Teacher: Yes, I have a jewelry box, too. I don't have any gold coins in mine either.

Andrea: CHRISTMAS TREE. I like Christmas.

Teacher: Christmas is a name of a kind of tree. So we are going to use a capital letter for the first letter of Christmas.

Nat: SANTA.

Teacher: I am writing his name so I am going to write a capital "S". Just like you write a capital letter for the first letter of your names.

James: GOLD ORNAMENT.

Teacher: *The children were very restless today. I had to keep them focused.* I like how so many of you are being such good listeners for your friends.

Debbie: I SEE A LITTLE BOY BY THE TREE HOLDING A BOOK WITH SANTA.

Katie: LIGHTS. I have lights on my tree at my house just like that.

Andy: We do not have a tree, yet. Mommy says we are going to get one. We need Dad to help.

Debbie: We have had our tree up a long time. I have a lot of really cool ornaments on my tree. We have white lights. Mommy says she likes the white lights the best.

Most of the children share with the group what kind of tree and the color of the lights they each have on their trees. The children also share if they do not have a tree yet.

James: We have our tree up and we have three reindeer with the moving heads in our front yard. I really like those.

Andrea: I have a tree at my Nana's. I don't think mommy and daddy have one, yet. I am going to spend the night with mommy and daddy tonight. But I can only spend one night until mommy and daddy get their jobs back.

Teacher: Andrea, you are very lucky to have Nana taking care of you. She told me she loves you very much.

Andrea: I know.

Andy: (very softly) I love you Mrs. Aliotta.

Teacher: I know you do. I love you, too.

The children seemed to enjoy telling the class about their Christmas experiences at home. Each child brought different stories about their family and traditions and I liked hearing who had already decorated their tree and who still had to find a tree. The magic of the season seemed to encourage imagination. Most of the children in the class spent a lot of time coming to me as I continued to sit in the rocking chair. They shared stories of baking desserts, shopping, decorating, and what they were hoping to get for Christmas. The children asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I talked with them.

Understanding the Talks about Pictures

This chapter consists of Andrea's, Nat's, Andy's, Katie's, James', and Debbie's interactions with and responses to pictures and the ensuing talks that evolved from observing and listening to other students' ideas and experiences. The children's inquisitiveness and ability to verbalize about the picture expanded during the twenty-one picture labeling discussions from August through

December. The children's progress is made evident in the stories presented as it occurred over a four-month chronological progression.

Initially, in August and the first few weeks of school, the children sat very quietly as they listened to their classmates' word choices for the items in the picture. Most students gave single word descriptions when it was their turn to contribute to the picture. During each picture labeling session, the children used good manners by being very kind and considerate to each other. They listened intently and seemed to care about what their classmates had to say.

Over the course of approximately one month, the students began expanding their contributions for labeling the picture from giving one-word descriptions to using complete sentences to explain the picture. This was an evolution that was not initiated by any directions or prompting from me. As children took the initiative to contribute more complex descriptions, their own experimentation with letters, words, and sentences reinforced learning during the picture labeling interactions.

I noticed the children's interest in using words and sentences opened the door for risk-taking to occur. Children were not afraid to try. By the end of October, most children used complete sentences as they described certain items within the picture. Eventually, the children began trying to see how many words they could use when it was their turn to contribute a sentence to our chart. As children developed their understanding of letters, words, and sentences, Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism was made evident. Each day revealed a progression of learning that occurred through the children's talks about the

picture. Social interactions between students as they watched and listened to each other allowed learning to happen in a caring, risk-free setting. With very little direction from me, my students' imagination, caring, and interest grew. Evidence of that growth is presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER VI

CONSIDERATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I summarize six findings that emerged from my dissertation study: (1) When kindergartners are encouraged to talk and draw as they learn to read and write, the learning becomes more active and imaginative. (2) Picture labeling activities encourage kindergartners to listen to one another and help develop their sympathy and empathy for other children of differences. (3) There is a pressing need for establishing more resources that represent different cultures and races. (4) Allowing kindergartners to interact with one another in the class helps develop their varied capabilities as they approach literacy. (5) There is a demand for reconceptualizing the curriculum for kindergartners. (6) There is a need for developing an appropriate research methodology, which helps unfold the particularity of kindergartners' experience.

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Six kindergartners, Andrea, Nat, Katie, Andy, James, and Debbie, participated in my study. They were, and still are, in my kindergarten class at Hesse Elementary School in Savannah, Georgia. I obtained permissions from these kindergartners, their parents, and the principal to tape their talks as they drew and labeled pictures. I collected their stories as I listened to them talk to me and to other children in my class. I often found that when I was listening to one child, I was missing the talks of others. I would have liked to be able to listen to all of the children at the same time. When I was able to engage the child and listen as she/he drew, the child's stories began to evolve. If I did not have the

opportunity to listen to the child as she/he was drawing and talking, I would ask the child about the picture later in the day.

The race and academic ability of my participants reflected the class composition. Three kindergartners were girls and three were boys, reflecting the same percentage ratio of girls to boys in the class. Four of them were white and two were black. I chose the six participant kindergartners the first week of school; therefore, the only testing data I had was from the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP-R). The kindergartners I chose reflected the class achievement levels. Katie and Andy knew all the letters of the alphabet; Debbie, Andrea, and James knew over half the letters; and Nat knew less than ten letters of the alphabet. Furthermore, as this was the first week of school, it was not possible to accurately assess these kindergartners verbal capability because they were subdued and eager to please. Every child seemed very happy and comfortable to be a part of the class.

As I developed my research, I drew on John Dewey's (1963) theories of education, experience, and imagination, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, and Nel Noddings' (1992) theory of care. I listened to these kindergartners and examined their talks as they used their imagination to create representations of sentences that were copied. I observed as they collaboratively talked about a picture. I witnessed these kindergartners blossoming interest in learning as they talked, revealed experiences, created stories.

I have found evidence that when kindergartners are encouraged to talk and draw as they learn to read and write, the learning becomes more active and

imaginative (**Thesis Finding 1**). As a participant-observer, I watched these kindergartners draw and listened to them talk about their lives. As they shared with one another and with me, I witnessed their imagination flourishing. I also noticed that the interaction between the kindergartners and what was being learned allowed them to construct meaningful pictures. Andrea usually included animals in any picture that she drew. She expressed the desire to own a horse and become a veterinarian when she grows up. She kindly showed other children how to draw animals and how to add many creative features. In November 2005 when she was drawing a picture about turkeys, she drew a dog with a mustache and an invisible dog and cat with a white crayon. The children around her seemed to love to watch Andrea create. I realized when the children were encouraged to talk as they drew, higher level thinking, such as questioning, synthesizing, and using new ideas, was developed. This firmly resonates with what Lev Vygotsky (1986) suggested, the construction of meaning was enhanced through interaction with others. This also confirms what Karen Gallas advocates in *Imagination and Literacy: A Teacher's Search for the Heart of Learning* (2003), "we allow imagination to enter into our work as teachers and as researchers; we make room in the classroom for doubt, intuition, curiosity, wonder, risk taking, and experimentation; we challenge ourselves and our students" (p. 143).

I witnessed that Andy's imagination developed as his drawings and dialogue went far beyond the sentence that he copied. He was an extra-ordinarily quiet boy, who mumbled when he talked. However, when he began drawing, complete stories were developed. Andy copied the sentence, **I like animals.**

Then he drew a very detailed picture. He was very talkative as he drew and talked mainly with the boy sitting next to him. He said, “The alligator ate the fish. This ugly water is making the flower die. He ate three fish. See, he is standing in the water with his toenails. Now he is drinking a cup of milk. I did not draw any fish in the water because he ate them all. The alligator is sweating from the sun. He is going to swim down in the water. Here is a water tornado. It flew everyone away” (*Autumn and Apples*, September 19, 2005, Chapter IV). I was the audience as Andy’s imagination flourished, and he constructed meaning. His words added meaning to the picture he was drawing, and it all began with a simple sentence.

Debbie’s knowledge and imagination were apparent when she would talk about the picture during the picture labeling activities, rather than what she was drawing. Debbie talked more about the picture we labeled each day than she did about her own drawings. It seemed that her mother read many books to her at home, and Debbie was well informed about a variety of topics. She knew that the animal in the picture was a beaver because of the shape of his tail (see more details in Chapter IV). She found a small picture of a cricket and decided he was jumping on the porch out of the rain because he wanted to stay dry. She was worried that a tree looked as though it was falling and the man was lucky to have gotten out of the way. She thought that the lady in the picture could be the child’s aunt and but her mom. She could guide the talks in different directions very easily and she used more words than most of the children to talk about the picture.

The more the children talked, the more complex the talks became, and the more I learned about the children (**Thesis Finding 1**). Although I knew Katie loved to talk, it was not until I listened to her talk about her pictures that I realized what a wonderful story creator she was. We were studying about shapes in the classroom, and the sentences the children copied were, **Look at the ovals. I can make things** (see more details in Chapter IV). Katie began drawing quietly at first as if she were thinking about what to make. Then she said, “The ladybug had to stand up to crawl on the leaf. So he could stand up and look in the mirror that is on top of the pumpkin. He wants to see how dark his antennae are. The butterfly is looking at the little girl. This little tweezer is going to pinch the butterfly wings.” (*Owls and Night*, Katie’s Drawing, October 31, 2005). As I listened, the words just tumbled from Katie’s mouth. It was almost as though the movement of the pencil awakened her thinking. The more the pencil moved, the more her thoughts continued to create and the more she talked.

James was sitting near her and talked about his drawing. He drew a ladybug, a fly, lollipop, and sun. After he drew an ant, he said, “An ant.” Then he drew an elephant. He kind of laughed to himself and said, “The ant is on the elephant.” I questioned, “The ant is on the elephant?” He said, “Yeah. Actually the ant is sad. I have to change his mouth. I am going to change it to a mad face. Good thing I drew the ant with a pencil. I can change it to mad. I am going to color his face red.” I asked James, “Why is the ant sad or mad?” He said, “The elephant is too heavy, and it is making him mad that the elephant would sit on

him.” I told James, “It would make me mad if an elephant was on my head, too.” James laughed (see more details in Chapter IV).

It took Nat a bit longer to begin expressing his imagination through his talks and drawings. I watched as he observed other children interacting with one another and drawing the first few weeks of school. The first indication of Nat’s creativity came as he began using many colors in his fall pictures. Then he began adding items to his picture that were not written about in the sentence. Nat copied the sentences, **Ghosts are not real. Ghosts are funny.** As Nat drew he said, “This is a ghost.” He drew an ant. The child sitting next to him asked about his drawing. Nat said, “The ant is going to bite the ghost. This is going to be a rainbow in the sun.” The child beside him asked if a ghost would be out in the day. Nat replied, “Sure”. Nat was quite content with what he drew and did not feel the need to explain why his ghost was out during the day rather than drawing the ghost at night (see more details in Chapter IV).

What Andy, Debbie, Katie, James, and Nat shared about their learning experiences confirmed what Karen Gallas (1994) explored in *The Languages of Learning: How Children Talk, Write, Dance, Draw, and Sing Their Understanding of the World*. Gallas considers the potential for thinking and learning expansion rather than narrow each child’s range of expressions as we promote their use of language. In my research, I found that children needed to be given more opportunities to explore what they knew by drawing and talking. I also found that giving the children a sentence to copy sparked their imagination.

Picture labeling activities encourage kindergartners to listen to one another and help develop their sympathy and empathy for other children of differences (**Thesis Finding 2**). The kindergartners demonstrated that they valued their classmates by paying attention and responding respectfully to one another. I found that the picture was the catalyst for children to become explorers in their personal worlds and to enjoy listening to other children's perspectives. Since the picture stood alone without a before or after, the picture allowed each child to create her/his own story or to create a story together. As the children voiced their thoughts and weighed others' views, they began to listen to the opinions of their classmates. An example of this was how the children politely waited for their turn, listened attentively as each child shared, excitedly counted the number of words in one another's sentences, and enjoyed each other's talk. This is exactly the care that Nel Noddings (1992) talks about in her work, which is a vital foundation of educational experience. This is also the kind of care that Lisa Goldstein (1997) refers to in *Teaching with Love: A Feminist Approach to Early Childhood Education*, "Caring is not something you are, but rather something you engage in, something you do" (p. 14). As children felt at ease sharing with one another, they learned to care for one another. This is demonstrated in the following picture labeling activity. The activity was also presented in Chapter IV.

RAINY DAY PARTY

September 8, 2005



106. Finding 2 - Rainy Day

Teacher: Let us look at this picture.

Andy: PARROT

James: BIRD

Andy: I said that one; I said bird.

Teacher: You are both right. A parrot is a type of bird. We can write both words.

Andy: My grandmother has a parrot. She has a cage just like that.

Andrea: MUSIC. See the black things by her mouth. (There are notes beside the little girl's mouth). I can't whistle.

Andy: I can. See (he whistles)

Teacher: Boy, that is great. Whistling can be very hard to do. It takes practice like many things we learn to do.

Many of the children try to whistle.

Debbie: Yeah, that is why we practice writing.

Teacher: Yes, just like each of you had to practice crawling as a baby, standing up, and even learning to talk.

Debbie: CRICKET. See that little green thing. He jumped on the porch to get out of the rain.

Katie: Yeah, he doesn't want to get wet.

Katie: RAIN. They are having a party on the porch. They were in the yard.

James: Yeah, they are having a picnic.

Andrea: They are eating the cookies and having fun.

Nat: COOKIES

Teacher: Is there anything else we can see?

Andrea: The two children are playing patty cake.

James: The little girl is stomping to the music.

Debbie: I think that they are having fun even in the rain.

Teacher: There are many people in the picture. Let us count together and see how many there are.

All the children: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Nine.

Teacher: How many are children?

All the children: One, two, three, four, five. Five.

Teacher: How many adults?

All the children: One, two, three, four.

Teacher: O.K. So, five plus four equals nine.

I write the addition problem on the board for the children to see.

Debbie: One lady has white hair. She's the grandmamma.

Nat: Yeah.

Andy: There could be a bad storm coming. They should get inside.

Katie: It is not safe to be outside in the rain.

Teacher: Why is it not safe?

Katie: Because you could get struck with lightning. I don't like the thunder either 'cause it scares me, too.

James: I am scared of lightening and thunder.

Debbie: Me, too. I always go find my mommy when it storms.

Andrea: It woke me up last time and I got in bed with my mom.

Teacher: Yes, sometimes we feel safer when we are with others during a storm.

James: My brother and me sleep with my mom. My dad sleeps on the couch because he says the bed is too crowded.

Teacher: Well, James maybe you should sleep in your own bed. Do you share a room with your brother?

James: No, my brother has his own bed.

Teacher: Well, maybe you and your brother could share a bedroom. Then dad could sleep in his own bed. I bet the couch is not very comfortable. Couches are for sitting, beds are for sleeping.

James: I don't know about that.

Katie: I sleep with my mom.

Teacher: Where does your dad sleep?

Katie: He isn't here. He is in Kuwait.

Debbie: My mom and dad say I have to sleep in my own big girl bed. I don't like it.

Teacher: Why?

Debbie: It is too scary.

Andy: My mom says I have to sleep in my bed, too. She says I have to go to bed at 8:30 (he says very sadly).

Teacher: Why do you say that so sadly?

Andy: Because sometimes I have to go to bed before I can see my dad. My dad comes home too late.

Teacher: I understand Andy why that would make you sad.

The children listened and had empathy for one another as they talked about who the people in the picture could be, why they were having a party, how they felt about being on a porch in the rain, what they themselves did when they were scared during a storm, and even about being able to whistle. The picture stimulated the children's enthusiasm and interests because there were many possibilities as to why the people were on the porch while it was raining. This picture provided an opportunity for the children to talk about how they felt about rainstorms and how they felt about sleeping in their own beds.

I used a wide variety of pictures to try to address the children's knowledge from previous experiences. Most of the pictures I chose related to the unit we were studying for the week. If I found a picture that was fascinating to me and that I thought could perhaps trigger a wide variety of questions, thoughts, and possibilities, I used the picture. This confirms Maxine Greene's (1995) notion of releasing imagination when she reminds us, "This is where imagination enters in, as the felt possibility of looking beyond the boundary where the backyard ends or the road narrows, diminishing out of sight" (p.26).

My research revealed that as children were engaged in activities that required them to hear one another, sympathy and empathy were developed. My research confirmed as suggested by Nel Noddings (1992) "all students should be engaged in a general education that guides them in a caring for self, intimate others, global others, plants, animals, and the environment, the human-made world, and ideas" (p. 173) Young children must be guided to an understanding

that there are others in the world and listening to one another is the beginning of that understanding.

There is a pressing need for establishing more resources that represent different cultures and races (**Thesis Finding 3**). As I further developed picture labeling activities in my research, I found that it was difficult to find pictures that represented different cultures and races. In my kindergarten classroom, I have read books and have taught units that included different cultures and different races. The issue that always seemed critical to me was to teach understanding and kindness towards others. As I progressed through my doctoral studies, I became more sensitive toward and respectful of other cultures and races. I came to better understand the need for multicultural education as I read countless articles and books such as *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* (1998) edited by Joe Kincheloe, Shirley Steinberg, Nelson Rodriguez, and Ronald Chennault; *Race-ing Representation: Voice, History, and Sexuality* (1998) edited by Kostas Myrsiades and Linda Myrsiades; *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (1993) by Ronald Takaki; and *Narrative and Experience in Multicultural Education* (2005) by JoAnn Phillion, Ming Fang He, and Michael Connelly. I reached an understanding that an effort had to be made to include works from different cultures since the majority of books available are written from a white point of view.

As I selected pictures for children to label, I was vigilant about trying to include various cultures and races. Unfortunately, there were not a variety of cultures or races depicted in the magazines I owned. What was equally disturbing

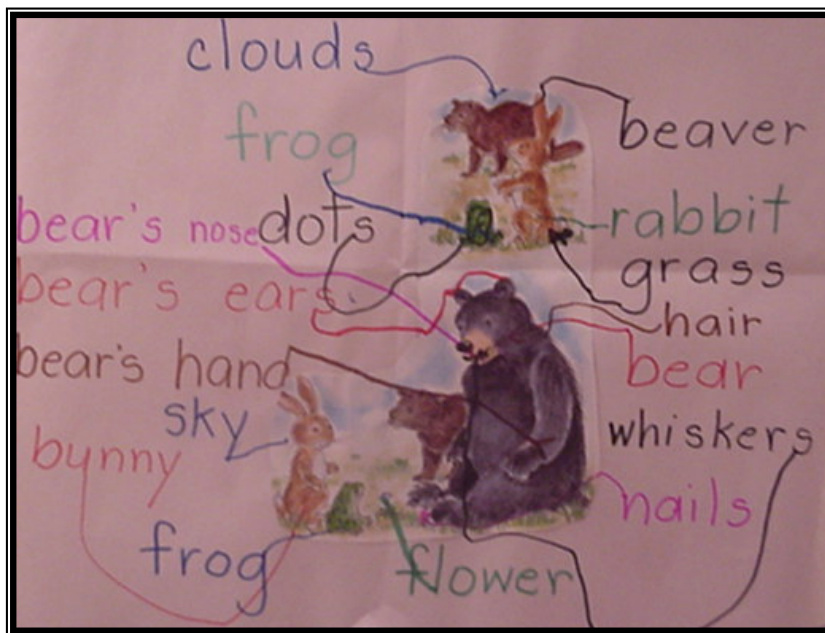
to me was how unaware I was that so many cultures were not represented in the magazines I was reading. I began subscribing to magazines that provided me with a wider variety of picture choices.

Additionally, I began buying duplicates of good storybooks that had high-quality representations of others to cut apart and use for the picture labeling activity in my study. The picture I used November 8 (Chapter V) was from the storybook, *How Many Stars in the Sky?* (1991). I also searched bookstores for calendars that could possibly offer representations of diversity. I wanted to ensure that the children had the opportunity to explore the different cultures and races. JoAnn Phillion, Ming Fang He, and Michael Connelly (2005) remind us “life for children in educational institutions is a microcosm, an educational training ground, for life as a whole” (p.298). As I looked for pictures depicting differences, my awareness of others was raised. I wondered that this limitation of resources might be relevant to other kindergarten teachers in schools.

Allowing kindergartners to interact with one another in the class helps develop their varied capabilities to approach literacy development (**Thesis Finding 4**). Talking and listening are critical components of literacy development. “Oral language and listening comprehension are fully integrated with reading and writing, since students at all grade levels are expected to share their own ideas and respond to the ideas of others” (Au, Carroll, and Scheu, 2000, p.35). In my research, I noticed that as kindergartners were reading, drawing, talking, and writing together, their literacy abilities flourished.

My research allowed me to observe that by heterogeneously ability grouping the children as they wrote and drew pictures, the children could help one another. Debbie's handwriting was a great example of proper letter formation for the children sitting near her to observe. If a child sitting near Debbie had a problem with copying a letter, Debbie would, in a very soft gentle nurturing voice, explain how to form the letter.

During the picture labeling activity, the children witnessed as I modeled letter formation, taught them the letters of the alphabet and letter/sound association, and demonstrated how to spell words and write sentences. The children observed as I wrote each word that was told to me and they repeated after me the name of each letter written. The children listened as I began talking about letter/sound associations as we talked about the picture September 6, 2005 (Chapter V).



107.Finding 5 – Bear Picture

When a child said the word **sky**, I made the “s” sound, and many of the children said the letter “s”. I made the “k” sound, and some children said “k” and some said “c”. I explained the “k” sound could be very confusing because the two letters share the same sound. I then emphasized the sound “c-c-c”. I wrote the letter “k”. I told the children this was the reason why it was so important for me to teach them how to spell some words. Another point I made was that words are not always spelled as we hear them. The next letter sound in the word **sky** was “i”, but the letter I was going to write to spell the word correctly was “y”. The children smiled, thinking it was funny that writing words could be tricky. I reinforced the concept that it was important for the children to try to write words on their own even if they were not sure how to spell them because that is how they would learn. By October 25th (see more details in Chapter V), the children could spell most of the words when I emphasized the letter sounds. If there was a child that was not sure of the letter, she/he was learning by listening to the other children’s correct responses. Through this method of instruction, the children were learning the letter/sound associations. This was confirmed with Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social construction, the range of skill that was developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration, was apparent.

As the children witnessed my use of the letters of the alphabet, words, and construction of sentences, they expressed an interest in the length of the sentences and the sight words in the sentences (**Thesis Finding 4**). When I wrote the

sentence for the children to copy each morning, I would tell them how many words were in the sentence, and I would tell the children how many of the words were sight words. This generated an interest with the students in sentence length and sight words. Consequently, the children often wanted to count how many words they had used in the sentence that they constructed about the picture we labeled. This was substantiated with Michael Pressley, Joan Rankin, and Linda Yokoi (2000) in *Issues and Trends in Literacy Education*, “placing young children in environments that invite and support literacy stimulates them to do things that are literate” (p.27).

James thought the word **Frankenstein** was a sentence because of the length of the word. This gave me the opportunity to discuss and demonstrate to the children the differences between long words and sentences. I reminded the children that when they wrote a sentence there were spaces between the words and that the word **Frankenstein** was just a word with many letters. We counted the letters in the word, I wrote the word **kindergarten**, and we counted the letters in that word. Another child noticed the word **Halloween** written on the board, and we counted the number of letters (*Happy Halloween*, October, 25, 2005, Chapter V). The children were accessing prior knowledge and were linking it to present learning. Many times after this incident, the children wanted to count words that had many letters and would comment on words that were short in comparison.

Katie gave me the sentence, **I see blue water**. I explained to the children that they could write this sentence themselves if they tried. I elaborated that the

first two words were sight words **I see**. The next word was a color sight word **blue**. I showed the children how to say the word **water** slowly to hear each individual sound. I explained that if the children wrote **watr** that would be the sounds that are heard in the word. I told them that I would be very excited that they had tried to write the word and that it would take time for them to learn that the word was spelled **water**. I noticed during this time, when children had the opportunity, more children were trying to write sentences without asking me how to spell a word. If a child did ask me how to spell a word as she/he wrote, I would say the word slowly and see if the child could figure out the letter/sound association to write. If a child were still not sure of a letter, I would tell her/him the letter to write (*Night Sky*, November 1, 2005, Chapter V).

By the middle of November 2005, the children were very eager to give me a sentence to label the picture. Repeatedly, Katie would say a word for an item in the picture, and then she would tell me that she wanted a sentence. I would ask her to tell me something about the item she named, and she would tell me a sentence to write. Many of the children felt challenged to see how many words they could use in their sentences, and together we would count the words. The children also would get excited if they knew how to spell a word in the sentence they gave me.

With only minor adaptations, all the children were able to participate in both the copying and drawing and the picture labeling activities. I was apprehensive that Andrea who is legally blind or Nat, whose fine motor skills were weak, would not be able to copy the sentence or would feel incapable of

copying the sentence. However, I kept in mind Nel Noddings' ethic of care as I guided the children. When Nat needed help forming letters, I gently held Nat's hand and talked him through the writing. Even though Nat needed help copying his letters the first week of school, he was able to copy the sentences by the second week of writing daily without any assistance from me. Nat learned to write by writing, not just watching me write or listening to me talk about the formation of letters. He did not learn to write by incessant, repeated copying of one letter of the alphabet across a piece of paper. He learned by doing, which enabled Nat to use the knowledge in a more complex authentic circumstance. Andrea was another child with varied capabilities. Therefore, Andrea's visual impairment was addressed when I enlarged the writing on the sentence strips that the children copy.

Another method I used to address the varied capabilities in my class was preferential seating on the carpet. Because of Andrea's visual impairments, she sat in the front row on the carpet when we did the picture labeling activity. If necessary, I encouraged her to come up to the picture to see the item another child had chosen to label. I also had Andy sit in the front row during picture labeling time after I noticed that he seemed to be absorbed in his own thoughts and rarely listened as the other children talked. Once I moved Andy to the front of the children, I could tap his foot with my foot to bring him back into the group discussion.

Keeping in mind the diversity of the class, I noticed there was a few times that James felt overwhelmed by the activity of copying the sentence. During the

middle of October 2005, James became upset with the length of the sentences he had to copy. I reassured him in a comforting manner that I would help him. Together James and I worked through a difficult situation for him. I pointed to each word and told him to think only about one word at a time as he copied it. I hoped that by teaching in this manner, as suggested by Nel Noddings, (1992) that I was not only educating for competence but also educating for caring. As a result, by the end of December 2005, James was actually excited about what he was able to do. He brought it to my attention when his sentences were no longer floating in the air, when he was completing his work quickly, or if he could spell some of the words in his sentences without looking at the sentence strip. I discovered that the children's enthusiasm for learning to write, read, and draw escalated as the activities progressed. This was a clear indication for me that the curricular experiences and engagement level of the children influenced their literacy development.

There is a demand for reconceptualizing the curriculum for kindergartners (**Thesis Finding 5**). I wanted to deeply and honestly understand what kind of curriculum kindergarten children need in order to flourish. A child-centered curriculum can be a challenge with present day standards imposed on teachers and children. *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (U.S. Dept of Education, 2001) established new guidelines, and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission of 2003 has been working to ensure that all children are accounted for academically. If a child is not doing well in school, early detection is necessary, and benchmarks have been developed as part of the new accountability

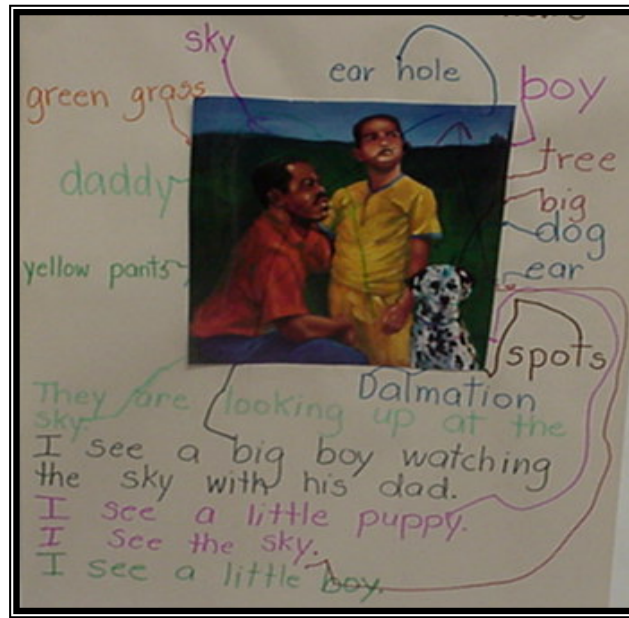
guidelines. However, I maintain that putting too much emphasis on the standards in curriculum planning might lead to failure in educating children. The political powers have simply decided that if there are benchmarks and continuous assessments, then teachers will be held accountable and all the children will meet the standards. While I do agree that teachers should be held accountable and that standards for student learning should be established, we cannot have an assembly line mentality. Though we may devise standards as a guide to what a child should know developmentally at each grade, we cannot have the standards taught and tested with a complete lack of regard for the individual child. Maxine Greene (1995) cautions,

As a set of techniques, literacy has often silenced persons and disempowered them. Our obligation today is to find ways of enabling the young to find their voices, to open spaces, to reclaim their histories in all their variety and discontinuity. (p. 120)

For example, I acknowledge that kindergarten children must be taught literacy proficiencies such as the letters of the alphabet, letter/sound association, and proper formation of letters. Nonetheless, if we consider developmentally appropriate practices as the guide when we teach these standards, we must know the child. For what may be developmentally appropriate for one child, even though they may both be five years old, is not necessarily developmentally appropriate for another child. However, I have discovered that drawing and talking and interacting with pictures is developmentally appropriate for all kindergarten children. I agree with Karen Gallas (1994) that

as soon as children enter school, they are gradually taught that their natural way of understanding the world is not an important and valid way...they are overloaded with words and words and words about every conceivable subject, and these words represent the limited communication of the adult world. (p.116)

As we reconceptualize the curriculum for kindergartners, we must hear the voices of the children and relate the curriculum to each child's world. Some pictures I chose for the children to label were more effective than others at teaching many of the curriculum standards. I tried to integrate science, math, social studies, and health standards with the language arts standards as I chose a picture. One such picture was November 8, 2005 (see more details in Chapter V) about a boy and his dad. I looked for pictures that represented many cultures in various activities. I chose this picture because I hoped the children would talk about the boy and what he and his dad might be doing. I liked the depiction of the people outside at night and hoped it would encourage the children to speculate about why the boy, his dad, and his dog were outside.



108. Finding 5 – Boy and His Dad

Teacher: Let us look at this picture. Why do you think I chose this picture for today?

Many children: Because we are talking about nighttime.

Andrea: YELLOW PANTS

Nat: DOG

James: My Grandmother has a dog like that.

Debbie: Oh, that boy looks like G (a boy in our class).

Teacher: Oh, you are so smart. That is the reason I chose this picture.

Katie: THEY ARE LOOKING UP AT THE SKY.

Teacher: I sure hope everyone is watching as I write each letter.

Andy: I SEE A LITTLE BOY.

Teacher: Watch as I write this sentence. This is a sentence you could write with out any help. The first three words are sight words you have. *I write each word.*

The next word I want you to listen as I sound it out. *I emphasize each sound and the children spell for me. I tell the children that even though you only hear the sound of one "t", there are two "t's" in the word. I also tell the children the reason that it is so important that they watch me write is that many words are very tricky to spell, and we can not hear the "e" at the end of the word "little".*

James: DALMATION

Teacher: Very good James, you know what kind of dog it is.

Andrea: Those kinds of dogs help firemen. I am going to be a veterinarian when I grow up.

Teacher: You are, why?

Andrea: Because I love animals. They are so cute. When we took Tiny to the vet, she was a girl.

Teacher: The vet was a girl?

Andrea: Yeah, just like me. Ha.

Debbie: TREE

I told the children I was sure they could spell the word tree for me to write because we have written it so many times. Most of the children spelled the word as I wrote it. Then I asked the children to think for a minute and tell me what they think the boy and his dad are doing.

James: I think they are looking at fireworks.

Debbie: I think they are looking at a bear.

Andy: Bears can't fly.

Katie: Yeah, they are looking up.

Teacher: Yes, they are looking up.

Andrea: Maybe the bear is up on a mountain.

Teacher: That could be. Very good idea, Andrea.

Nat: They are looking at the moon.

Andy: Why is the boy looking mean?

Teacher: I do not know. That is a very good question.

Nat: He could just be thinkin'.

Debbie: Or trying to see the stars.

James: He could be mad about something.

Katie: And his dad is trying to talk to him about it. My daddy said my big brother is going to get something from him when he gets home – a beatin'. (Her dad is in Iraq and she has two teenage brothers).

Teacher: Well, we cannot be sure why the boy is frowning, but I am glad he has his dad there to talk with him. I sure do like listening to you talk about pictures. You have wonderful ideas about things.

Children come to school with varied backgrounds and factors that directly affect language development. As I encouraged the children to copy a sentence, draw a picture about the sentence, and talk about the sentence, I provided the framework that allowed the children to apply knowledge using their own language. Each child had the opportunity to be heard and recognized which stimulated language growth. The child centered curriculum that was dependent upon children's language and previous experiences.

There is a need for developing an appropriate methodology, which helps unfold the particularity of kindergartners' experience (**Thesis Finding 6**). There

has been a multitude of research using narrative inquiry to study teachers' stories (e.g., Ayers, 1989; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Gallas, 1994).

However, our children's stories are not heard so much in the field of educational research. Through my research, I hope to demonstrate that listening to the children is just as important and empowering as listening to the teachers. This is relevant to researching children of all ages, not just young children. I agree with JoAnn Phillion, Ming Fang He, and Michael Connelly (2005) in *Narrative and Experience in Multicultural Education*. We need to develop a kind of research that allows "readers to vicariously travel with each other into her or his research setting, situate themselves in that setting, and experience, in some small, vicarious way the lives of her or his participants" (p. 294). In my research, as I listened closely to what Andrea, Nat, Katie, Andy, James, and Debbie talked about and observed what they drew about, I began to hear their stories. I began to travel with these kindergartners vicariously into their worlds and began to think about what I could do to make my lessons more engaging, more appropriate, and more imaginative for them.

I am driven by my belief that children must be allowed to have a voice to deconstruct an often-stifling curriculum. The intent of my study was to provide evidence of an imaginative, expressive curriculum through which I was able to teach the standards in a vocabulary rich learning environment. Just as Karen Gallas (2003) suggests, "we need a new paradigm that places imagination in the center of the process, and that paradigm is limited only by the imaginations of those who care about our children and the children themselves" (p.169). We need

to place our children's stories and their imagination at the center of our curriculum making and pedagogical practice.

The curriculum that I planned and practiced is easy to follow and could be adjusted to accommodate individuals, small groups of children, or the total class. Furthermore, allowing children draw while talking and using the picture labeling could help teach a multitude of subjects at various grade levels. We could teach language arts, math, science, social studies, and health standards as we bring each child's world into the classrooms. I sincerely hope that others in the field of education will find value in children's stories.

"For children, meaning is built into stories; they use narrative to construct mental models of their experience, to make the world they inhabit sensible" (Gallas, 1994, p. xiv). "Children do not naturally limit the forms that their expressions take" (Gallas, 1994, p. xv) and they have multiple ways to tell their stories such as drawing, singing, dancing, talking, etc. rather than being confined in words. Children's narratives, if uncovered and honored in the context of the classroom, can become powerful vehicles for thinking and learning. It is in these nitty-gritty details of multiple forms of expressions, we begin to understand their inner world. Understanding their inner world is a starting point for us to develop a curriculum of caring and imagination.

Currently the curriculum in our schools is driven by standards. The mandates of kindergartners' curriculum tend to emphasize children's mastery of literacy skills while ignoring their natural development and imagination. Curriculum should not be driven by standards. Rather, it should be driven by the

stories of those being taught. There is a need for developing such a curriculum that embraces children's diverse needs, releases their imagination. Through children's talks and drawings, literacy and writing skills were developed, child oriented discussions were encouraged, and imagination was cultivated.

Kindergartners' talks and drawings informed my ways of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination. I assessed where the children were academically and developmentally with regard to literacy development. I developed a curriculum that provided the framework for each child to progress from where they were to where they needed to be.

My dissertation study has to conclude, but the lives of my kindergarten children, Andrea, Nat, Katie, Andy, James, and Debbie, continue. I sincerely hope that this study is significant for children, teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers. For children, the significance of this study is a confirmation that children must be placed in the center of the educational experience. For teachers, this study helps to construct caring early childhood practices of literacy development. For parents, the study reveals the importance of creating an environment in which children's imagination can flourish. For administrators, this study reveals that pre-packaged kits might not be the best ways to teach children. For policy makers, this study provides an argument for creating a curriculum of care and imagination for kindergarteners in the era of standardization. I sincerely hope that kindergarten teachers, educators, parents, and policy makers will work together to develop a curriculum of caring and

imagination for kindergartners, not only to educate kindergartners to become good citizens of the United States, but also good citizens of the world.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored
Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone :912-681-5465

Administrative Annex
P.O. Box 8005

Fax:912-681-0719

Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Lisa A. Aliotta
432 Beaulieu Ave
Savannah, GA 31406

cc: Dr. Ming Fang He, Faculty Advisor
P.O. Box 8144

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: August 1, 2005

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: H05200, and titled "**How Children's Talks and Drawings Inform Our ways of Developing a Curriculum of Caring and Imagination for Kindergarteners**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Julie B. Cole

Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX B

APPLICATION FOR THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Personnel.

Please list any individuals who will be participating in the research beyond the PI and advisor. Also please detail the experience, level of involvement in the process, and the access to information that each may have. Participants beyond the principal investigator, Lisa A. Aliotta, and the advisor, Dr. Ming Fang He will be the six selected students in my classroom. The children will be involved in the process three to five times a week from August until November during routine classroom activities. The six children will talk with me about their drawings and chosen pictures and therefore have access to the information that is shared with me.

Purpose.

1. Briefly describe in one or two sentences the purpose of your research. The intent of this research is to explore the impact children's talks and drawings have upon the development of a curriculum of caring and imagination.

2. What questions are you trying to answer in this experiment? Please include your hypothesis in this section. The jurisdiction of the IRB requires that we ensure the appropriateness of research. It is unethical to put participants at risk without the possibility of sound scientific result. For this reason, you should be very clear on how participants and others will benefit from knowledge gained in this project.

The overarching research question is:

1. How can children's talks and drawings inform our ways of developing a curriculum of caring and imagination for kindergartners? Specific research questions are:
 1. How do children's talks and drawings inform the kindergarten curriculum?
 2. How do children's talks and drawings reflect their understanding of the world?
 3. How do children's ways of understanding the world influence the curriculum we intend to develop for kindergartners?

3. What current literature have you reviewed regarding this topic of research? How does it help you to frame the hypothesis and research you will be doing?

I will review five bodies of literature: (a) theoretical framework; (b) standardization of the kindergarten curriculum; (c) elements missing in the kindergarten curriculum; (d) emergent literacy; and (e) appropriate literacy instructional strategies for kindergartners. I will examine John Dewey's theory of education, experiences, and imagination (e.g., 1902 /1990, 1939). Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism which holds that social interaction is a critical component to a child's understanding the world (e.g., 1978, 1986) and Nel Noddings' (1992) ethic of care, a vital component of educational

foundation that guides a teacher's agenda will connect these theories to emergent literacy and appropriate instructional strategies. I will substantiate this association by examining the work of experts in the field of emergent literacy and analyzing the works of Elizabeth Sulzby and William Teale (1991), Russ Whitehurst and Christopher Lonigan (1998), Pamela Cunningham (2000), Don Holdaway (1979), Gregory Payne and Larry D. Isaacs (1987), Paige C. Pullen and Laura Justice (2003) (e.g., oral language development, print awareness, and phonological awareness). I will review relevant bodies of literature to support a theory of education that helps develop a curriculum of imagination and caring for kindergartners based on children's life experience, imagination, and learning development.

Describe your subjects. Give number of participants, approximate ages, and gender requirements (if any). Describe how they will be recruited, how data will be collected (i.e., will names or social security numbers be collected, or will there be any other identification process used that might jeopardize confidentiality?), and/or describe any inducement (payment, etc.) that will be used to recruit subjects. Please use this section to justify how limits and inclusions to the population are going to be used and how they might affect the result (in general). Six individuals will be selected to participate in the study. The approximate ages of the children will be four to six years of age and will represent both male and female students. The individuals will be chosen to represent an academically heterogeneous group of children, ranging from low to high ability. During the first two weeks of school I will individually administer the Revised Georgia Kindergarten Assessment (R-GKAP) which provides valuable data that will insure an academically heterogeneous sampling of students. The randomization process in place will involve examination of the results of the administered R-GKAP. I will sort the children's scores by ability with regard to students that perform well on the objectives evaluated to the students that have difficulty with the objectives evaluated. Once I have ranked the children's results from highest to lowest scores on the R-GKAP, I will randomly choose three boys and three girls. As I randomly choose the six students, I will make the selection ensuring that the students I chose reflect the racial balance of the students in the class.

While names and social security numbers are available to me as the classroom teacher, I will not use this information in this study. Participants and their parents will be informed that all information collected will be reported in such a way as to protect each child's anonymity. Prior to the assessments and interviews of the children, informed consent will be obtained from the parent or guardian of each child selected to participate and a minor assent form will be obtained from each participant.

As my study methodology will be grounded in narrative inquiry, I have to be very prudent to embody all the children's voices in the study as each child constructs a sense of self. Because the study is interpretive, thorough analysis will be required of the stories. In the process of immersing myself in the study, I must also position any biases I bring to the study.

Methodology (Procedures). Enumerate specifically what will you be doing in this study, what kind of experimental manipulations you will use, what kinds of questions or recording of behavior you will use. If appropriate, attach a

questionnaire to each submitted copy of this proposal. Describe in detail any physical procedures you may be performing.

My methodology will be narrative inquiry since the purpose of this study is to examine the children's social interactions as I focus on the talks among the students and with me, their teacher. I will be deconstructing traditional early childhood practices of emergent literacy development with young children as I listen to children within the context of classroom activities. I am going to keep the focus of my narrative inquiry research on the experiences of kindergartners, as they are involved in drawing, observing, and writing. I will listen to children during activities in the classroom. The activities will comprise but not limited to drawing and writing time, picture discussion time, and field notes taken during formal and informal classroom events. How children feel, whether they are happy, engaged, realistically confident, eager for experience, is what I will be looking for. As a qualitative researcher, I will use the complexity of social interactions and meanings that could be attributed to interactions. The research methodology will be narrative inquiry as the emphasis on narrative inquiry is on the telling in relationship to others. As the participant-observer, it will be my role to record group intersections and behaviors as I participate fully. I will use narrative inquiry to explore the lived experiences of the kindergartners and their perceptions of the world. For children, meaning is built into their talks and drawings. They use their talks and drawings to construct meaning of their experience of the world. As a narrative inquirer, I will try to make sense of children's talks and drawings from their perspectives.

Data collection methods will include school portraiture, the Hesse Elementary School kindergarten program portraiture, class portraiture, children's talks and drawings, student performance portfolio which include notes about children's daily talks and direct quotes which reveal their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Formal and informal observations will guide my study. Both individual talks and group talks will be audio taped and later transcribed as the children draw. I will use the children's drawings to document how the child uses prior knowledge to socially construct the world. I will allow the child to talk while drawing without restricting a child from demonstrating what she/he knows. This will allow me to tape record children's learning development that would be elusive if I only assessed children using the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Procedure. I have found that a child can initiate talks which are derived from her \his prior experiences and which demonstrate her/his mastery of the state standards. I will audio tape and transcribe the daily discussions on the chosen pictures. To ensure that I transcribe only the six participating student's discussions as part of the group discussion, I will take detailed field notes and differentiate between the six participating students and the students not participating and I will only use the transcript relevant to the participants. Since the pictures have no prescribed beginning and ending, I will document the children's descriptions of the pictures with reference to what is happening in the picture, what could have happened before, and what could happen next, and why. As teacher researcher, my involvement will be documented as I listen and talk with the students in my class.

Data Management and Analysis: All data gathered would be kept in my possession both at school and at home. At school it will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my

classroom. Daily writing journals will be analyzed daily and stored in a locked file cabinet. Taped talks will be transcribed weekly. The journals, drawings, transcriptions, and other written material will be kept on file until the completion of my study.

Research involving minors. Describe how the details of your study will be communicated to parents/guardians. If part of an in-school study (elementary, middle, or high school), describe how permission will be obtained from school officials/teachers, and indicate whether the study will be a part of the normal curriculum/school process. Please provide both *parental consent* letters and *child assent* letters (or processes for children too young to read).

I will inform the parents of the students in my classroom of my research intent by letter. I will arrange individual conferences to discuss my study, which will allow the parents the opportunity to ask questions. I will provide both a parent and minor child consent letter at the time of the individual meeting. The minor child consent letter will be read to the child.

Deception. Describe the deception and how the subject will be debriefed. Briefly address the rationale for using deception. Be sure to review the *deception disclaimer* language required in the informed consent. Note: All research in which deception will be used is required to be reviewed by the full Board.

This section does not apply to my study.

Medical procedures. Describe your procedures, including safeguards. If appropriate, briefly describe the necessity for employing a medical procedure in this study. Be sure to review the *medical disclaimer* language required in the informed consent.

This section does not apply to my study.

Risk. Is there greater than minimal risk from physical, mental or social discomfort? Describe the risks and the steps taken to minimize them. Justify the risk undertaken by outlining any benefits that might result from the study, both on a participant and societal level. Even minor discomfort in answering questions on a survey may pose some risk to subjects. Carefully consider how the subjects will react and address ANY potential risks. Do not simply state that no risk exists, until you have carefully examined possible subject reactions.

Participation in the study has a minimal degree of personal discomfort, as the study requires the children to talk about themselves. From my twenty-seven years of experience teaching kindergarten children, most children enjoy sharing through drawing, talking, and interacting with others. Often children can be reluctant to share in large group settings, however many of the activities within in the study allow for individual talk and drawing time in small group settings. Steps will be taken to create a classroom environment that encourages active participation.

These minimal risks can be justified by both participant and societal benefits. Participants benefit from this study as the study will focus on the talks and drawings of each child as she/he is engaged in activities that will foster learning. Numerous teachers in classrooms within our present educational system discourage talk. The focus of this

study will be on the value of listening to children. I hope to establish that children's talks and drawings inform us so that we can develop a curriculum of caring and imagination. This information will allow for the natural development of creativity and talent as I appropriately assess each child's literacy development. I uphold that our current method of instruction and assessment can often sabotage a child's imagination and literacy development.

Society will benefit as a result of this study's emphasis on developing a curriculum for kindergarten children that will encourage talk, imagination, and caring. I posit that talking and listening to others is not an independent pedagogical classroom agenda. This research will offer an opportunity to observe children closely, to collect their talks and drawings, and to negotiate with children in the construction of meaning. Talking and listening must permeate all classroom interactions and should be recorded as an invaluable information base. Through this research, I hope to develop a better understanding of what constitutes learning inasmuch as we, as educators, are presented with pre-established standards.