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SUPPORTING KINDERGARTEN WRITERS

by

Debra Ellen Jacobson

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, READING, AND CULTURE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2002
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Debra Ellen Jacobson entitled Supporting Kindergarten Writers and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date 3/6/02
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DEDICATION

ROSALIND JACOBSON

LOIS TOBY JACOBSON

CHRISTINE McLEAN PARKHURST

GEANE HANSON

THE FIRE OF THEIR INSPIRATION WILL BURN IN ME ALWAYS
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This study of teacher interactions with kindergarten writers is grounded in a holistic, socially-mediated constructivist framework. As a participant observer, I conducted a sociolinguistic microanalysis of ten transcripts from a kindergarten classroom to look at how teachers support kindergarten writers. These transcripts served as the primary data. Secondary data included copies of children's writing, dialogue journals between myself and the classroom teacher, videotapes and audiotapes.

The three dimensions of context, focus and position were analyzed. Four of the five contexts were related to the classes' journal writing engagement: Mini-Lessons, Targeted Journal Conferences, Concurrent Journal Conferences and Journal Sharing. The fifth context was a writing and drawing option that children chose during Free Choice time.

The teachers' five foci identified in the analysis were: Management, The Writing Act, Conventions, Materials and Meaning. The positions the teachers were in as they engaged with children and their writing were: Follower, Leader, Informer and Director. Two-way and three-way
Cross analyses revealed that the teachers were primarily in the Leader position focusing on Conventions. Students' primary foci were Materials and Management. Also, the specifics of the context as well as the adult present in that context influenced the foci and the positions of the teacher.

The findings of this study and the professional literature about learning and teaching both indicate that teachers of young children feel pressures from a variety of sources to teach conventions. This pressure, often results in teachers leading children to produce conventional writing at the expense of children learning about the writing system at their own pace and in ways that make sense to them. Findings from this study also suggest that it would be useful to configure classroom contexts so children have access to the teacher as they are exploring the writing system and using it for authentic purposes.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the school year Karen West was helping one of her kindergarten students to write a sentence in his journal. Karen invited Mason to read what he had written so far with her. They read, "The lion is inside." Since the words on the page were, "The lion is in", Karen said, "inside, that will be the same word so you don't need to leave a space. What do you hear for side?" When Mason said, "D", Karen said, "Mm hm. Can I put the rest in the middle too?" After Mason said, "Yeah", Karen provided further information. "There's actually an S-I. You put your D there and there's a silent letter at the end. Do you know what letter can be there that we don't hear a lot of times?" When Mason volunteered, "E?", Karen said, "Yup, silent E. This is a neat word. If we cover up 'in' it says 'side'. If we cover up 'side' it says 'in'.' Put them together and we get 'inside' OK?" Then Karen invited Mason to read the sentence with her again and they continued together to write the rest of the sentence before Karen moved on to help another student.

On the same day, I was also helping students with their writing. Tylor had asked me to staple together the
book he was making. I asked him, "Do you want me to put the pages inside each other and staple in the middle?"
When Tylor nodded I stapled his book while asking, "What's your book going to be about Tylor?" To Tylor's response of, "Cats" I exclaimed, "Cats! You know about cats. What are you going to write about cats?" After Tylor shared some of his ideas I asked, "Will you bring it back in a little while and show me?"

These scenarios reflect some of the ways adults can support students with their writing. As I observed Karen conferencing with students and worked with them myself I wondered about the range of possible ways to help students with their writing. What are the various kinds of support? How do we decide what to do with different individuals? What kinds of support are most useful in helping students become independent writers? What aids students in discovering powerful purposes of their own for writing?
These sorts of questions led to my broad question for this study: How do teachers support kindergarten writers?

Background of the Study

The road to the present study began when Karen West agreed to open her classroom for my dissertation research. I had been working in various educational capacities for 25
years and wanted to do a classroom-based study. I knew that the specific topic would grow out of the context because my passion for education extended to a wide range of interests.

While I talked with Karen at length in the months before we worked together in her classroom, I had not yet zeroed in on a focal question. I took to heart the advice of Barry Lopez (1992) that when we enter a new place we are not yet ready to ask questions; we have to first listen in an open way, experiencing the context as fully as possible. I had not spent significant time in kindergarten classrooms and I wanted my questions to grow out of the specific context where I would be collecting data.

As I observed and participated in this kindergarten classroom I became intrigued by the specifics of the interactions that occurred when Karen and a student wrote together. Evidence of this interaction was already apparent the day before school started. Children's papers were posted on a bulletin board and each one had a child-drawn picture with some accompanying writing in two colors.

Karen explained to me that in a "meet the teacher" time with individual students and their parents the week before, she had engaged each child in what she called team
writing. Team writing involved Karen and the child interactively working at writing the child's message.

As the school year got underway I witnessed this team writing strategy between Karen and either individuals or the whole group repeatedly. This led me to wonder about the range of possible ways that teachers can support students as they make meaning on paper. Are there times when taking the child's dictation is appropriate? What about asking the student to copy or trace over something we wrote? When do we just listen to a child who wants to tell us about his/her picture or writing, expressing only interest? How do we respond to students' questions as they engage in making meaning on paper? What roles do oral language, drawing or peers play in learning to write? How should we respond to children's drawings?

These questions led to others about the invitations and routines teachers set up in classrooms in order to create contexts so that students have full range in exploring while teachers interact one-on-one and in small groups. My focus took shape as I realized the commonalities across all these questions.

While my broad focus, teachers' support for kindergarten writers, grew out of my observations in
Karen's kindergarten classroom, I acknowledge that there are deeper roots for me related to this issue. As a teacher working with readers I remember wondering about the best kinds of assistance as I listened to children read out loud. I continually reflected on how to support students with their learning. This study is significant for me personally because I believe it can help me consider broader issues of teachers' support for any learner across the curriculum.

As the focus for this study became clearer, I developed my specific research questions.

Overarching question: How do teachers support kindergarten students as they write?

Subquestions:
1. What contexts do teachers create to support kindergarten writers?
2. What is the focus of teachers while supporting kindergarten writers?
3. What positions do teachers take as they support kindergarten writers?

The research context for examining these questions was Karen West's kindergarten classroom where I collected field notes, children's writing samples and audio and video tapes.
I was a participant observer, interacting with students and thinking with Karen about the writing curriculum. This extended participation allowed me to more deeply understand the complexities involved in creating classroom contexts and in making decisions when working closely with individual students.

I used qualitative, naturalistic, case-study methods to investigate this topic in the context of a kindergarten classroom with all of its complexity. The data analysis process was on-going throughout the data collection phase and gradually evolved into a sociolinguistic microanalysis of ten transcripts, two each in five classroom contexts involving teachers supporting student writers.

Broad Theoretical Framework

The methodology I used in this study is consistent with my broad framework of a holistic, socially-mediated, constructivist learning theory. I believe that young learners must be given opportunities to be inventors, actively involved in their own learning. I also believe that learning is a social process. I include mediated in my theoretical orientation to stress the importance of the interaction between the child and the adult.
Lev Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) ideas anchor my beliefs in the centrality of social interaction for learning. Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' is especially pertinent because of my focus on the adult's role in supporting young learners. In the zone of proximal development adults or more competent peers help learners accomplish something they could not do alone. Another connection is Bruner's notion of scaffolding learners (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) to accomplish a task they could not do independently.

Barbara Rogoff's (1990) 'guided participation' construct contributes to my thinking about how teachers support students. Briefly, in guided participation the adult orients the child towards the focal event, and offers support in linking the child's current understandings to new ones. Intersubjectivity between people stresses a shared focus and purpose for those working together.

Holistic is part of my theoretical framework because of my belief that learning best occurs in contexts that are meaningful and purposeful for the learner (Goodman & Goodman, 1979). I believe that children develop an awareness of function before form (Halliday, 1975) and that
the conventions of language (the parts) are best learned in the larger context of the language it is embedded in.

**Professional Significance**

Grounded in this theoretical framework I hope the implications based on the findings of this research will be useful to the educational community. While a social constructivist paradigm by theoreticians and researchers in the educational community is generally accepted (Rowe, 1994), there are disparate ideas about how to support young students in their literacy learning. Political involvement with making educational decisions (Goodman, 1998) raises questions about the theoretical framework discussed above.

As in other times in history we are in danger of "sanctifying activities" (Dyson, 1986a) and "hothousing" children (Zuckerman, 1987) as school districts grapple with pressures to raise test scores and in desperation look for programs with 'proven' results that are often mandated by different levels of government.

The federal government is currently including the literacy of young children in its education agenda. There are plans for a large research project conducted by the
National Institute of Health, "to identify interactions that help young children...develop learning skills" (Kiefer, July, 2001). G. Reid Lyon, Director of Research for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, has stressed 'scientific' research (Taylor, 1998; Strauss, 2001) which excludes most of the recent qualitative research grounded in a social-constructivist framework. Therefore, it is important to interpret research findings carefully in light of the extensive knowledge we have about the needs of young children and the complexity involved in their literacy learning.

From my experiences in this kindergarten classroom and from on-going interactions with teachers and parents, I have come to realize that many people involved on a day-to-day basis with young children have questions about how best to support literacy learners. This study contributes to understandings about the many complex decisions adults make in responding to young children as they explore literate meaning-making potentials.

My findings about how adults assume various positions of more or less power in relation to young learners and the focus during these interactions can prove useful in considering how to optimally offer support. Children
receive messages tacitly or explicitly about what is valued as they participate with adults in experiences in classrooms. These messages impact children’s learning.

It is important to consider the positions teachers take as adults in power in classrooms. The language used in establishing our positions as teachers can help or hinder children’s desire to take ownership of their learning and their willingness to take risks.

Because learning takes place in the social context of the classroom, children notice adults’ preferred foci. What adults privilege with their attention sends messages to children about what is worth valuing. If adults’ foci vary considerably from children’s foci as they engage with their early attempts at literacy, adults and children can act at cross purposes. This can interfere with establishing intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990) between the teacher and child. A lack of intersubjectivity limits the child’s willingness to accept help from the teacher. For children to learn they must be willing to receive support. This study raises questions about several issues involved in offering the best assistance possible.

Successful early experiences with literacy are important for building a strong foundation as participants
in our society and as life-long learners (Stanovich, 1986; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Teachers want to be informed by a sound theoretical foundation and relevant research when making decisions about instructional support.

The findings gained from this study can contribute to classroom teachers' and policy makers' further understandings about the complexity of children's learning in a mediated social environment. These understandings can contribute to making sound decisions for early childhood programs and while working with individuals, as well as small and large groups.

Overview of the Dissertation

In this first chapter I introduced the research focus on the teacher's support for kindergarten writers. I then explained my path in arriving at this specific study and the theoretical framework that anchors this research. The theoretical framework will be expanded upon in the literature review in chapter 2. A fuller description of the methodology, which is introduced in this chapter, is provided in chapter 3. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 include the data analysis and discussion of findings for my three specific research questions. Chapter 7 presents the implications and conclusions for this study.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review includes issues involved in kindergarten writing that are relevant to the focus of this study. After expanding on the theoretical framework outlined in the first chapter, I briefly discuss the history of kindergarten writing, developmentally appropriate practices related to early writing, and current issues in early literacy. This section ends with a discussion of convention and meaning as related to kindergarten writing.

The main part of the literature review elaborates on the theory and research about the teacher’s role in supporting learners in general and kindergarten writers in particular. This section is followed by a discussion of instructional contexts relevant to this study such as journaling, conferencing, and interactive writing. While some of the theoretical aspects of these instructional contexts will be explored here, there are other references in chapter 4 on context and in the concluding chapter with the implications.
Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a holistic, socially-mediated, constructivist theoretical framework. Each term of this framework is related to the others and the definition for each one could easily include the other descriptors. In order to curtail redundancy I do not include the other terms as I define each one.

The holistic part of my framework is based in whole language theory (e.g., Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991), asserting that learning is most powerful when it is meaningful and purposeful for the learner. Language learning is best supported by keeping language whole and then focusing on the parts of language within the whole. Learning takes place when students are supported in maintaining ownership for their learning; to try out their own ideas and to take risks in thinking through solutions to their own questions.

Constructivism (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Fosnot, 1996) is consistent with a whole language viewpoint in that a constructivist orientation is rooted in a tradition that stresses the active learner involved in a dynamic process of shaping knowledge for him/herself in interaction with the environment.
Social-mediation (Vygotsky, 1978) relates to my belief that while students are actively constructing written language, they do not do it in a vacuum. Instead they are influenced and supported by the people and objects in their contexts. Bruner (1986) places constructivism within the social context:

I have come increasingly to recognize that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. It is not just that the child must make his knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture. It is this that leads me to emphasize not only discovery and invention but the importance of negotiating and sharing. (p. 127)

This viewpoint highlights learning among others as does Vygotsky’s (1978) construct of the zone of proximal development which suggests that what children can do with the support of others they will later be able to do on their own. Vygotsky also argues that instruction within the zone of proximal development awakens aspects of development that are not yet in play for the individual.

Anne Haas’s (e.g., 1985, 1993b, 1997) research contributes to the socially-mediated pillar in my theoretical framework. Through her many studies she shares a view of early writing development as complex and inseparable from sociocultural issues.
Given these beliefs about the social context, a logical consideration is the quality of the child’s environment, especially that close relationship between the child and the adult or peer offering support. Instructional contexts as well as child-adult and peer interactions will be discussed later in the literature review.

Kindergarten Writing

This section includes aspects of the history of writing in kindergarten relevant to this study as well as the status quo of early literacy practices today, including current thinking on developmentally appropriate practices and issues of convention and meaning as related to kindergarten writing.

History of Writing Instruction for Young Children

Knowing the historical roots of writing instruction can help in understanding current practices. Most early instruction reflected the belief that young children were not able to write independently (e.g., Foster & Headley, 1966; Willis, 1967). Therefore, typical practices included teachers taking children’s dictation; asking children to copy from the chalkboard, to trace over and/or copy underneath adult writing; or simply planning other activities until students were considered more ready to
begin even holding a pencil. This latter practice came out of the belief that kindergartners needed to develop their large muscle coordination before they were ready to use their fine muscles. In *Kindergarten for Today's Children* (Willis, 1967) there is only one page that refers to writing. The author writes, "Kindergarten-age children generally have neither the muscle control nor eye-hand coordination to form letters successfully in handwriting" (p. 182).

Kindergartens were first developed by Friedrich Froebel in Germany about 150 years ago. His specific philosophy was brought to this country and modified by progressive educators in the early part of this century. As kindergartens became more prevalent in the public school system, they changed from a predominant focus on socialization into the routines of the classroom to a more academic experience. Still it was not until the last few decades that kindergartners were seen as being capable of writing on their own (Clay, 1975).

The fourth edition of *Education in the Kindergarten* (Foster & Headley, 1966) has only 3 pages in which writing is mentioned. The authors write, "The kindergarten child is not yet ready to write down words for himself, but he is
able to dictate letters and stories to be written by adults and teachers” (p. 131).

Early educators such as Gertrude Hildreth took young children’s writing more seriously. She advocated for less emphasis on handwriting drills and more on using writing for real purposes. Hildreth (1947) cites a 1933 Chicago educational survey which found problems with the pervasive handwriting instruction including:

1. More time was spent practicing writing than in using it for any practical purpose.
2. The most common use of writing was to put it on the wall...
4. The most common technique was to copy the teacher’s writing on the blackboard. (Hildreth, 1947, p. 597)

This list suggests that Hildreth considered the emphasis on writing as handwriting in the first half of this century problematic. One of Hildreth’s recommendations is to link “writing instruction at every possible point with meaningful content, making sure that writing serves a real function” (p. 600).

Hildreth (1947) also shared her belief that children are not ready to write before they are seven years old due to their “rudimentary motor skills” (p. 606) which was the reigning view until researchers in the early 1980s (e.g., Goodman, 1980; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste, Woodward
& Burke, 1984) asked children to write and to talk about their understandings of the writing system. They realized that children as young as three wrote in systematic ways and not randomly as previously thought. They also found that young children from a variety of backgrounds had a wealth of knowledge about their own writing systems. These researchers asked children to write individually or with the researcher.

Donald Graves' (1981) research in the early 1980s looked closely at young writers' composing processes in the context of their classrooms. These studies introduced new awarenesses about the capabilities of young writers. The long-held belief that young children were not able to write contributed to a dearth of writing experiences in kindergartens which, in turn, did not help young children grow in their writing abilities. Graves (1983) argued that the second R, writing, was sorely neglected in American classrooms.

Smith and Elley (1997) state, "The genesis of Graves' thinking lies in the dissatisfaction he felt at the lack of progress American children made when taught to write by the traditional approaches of the sixties and seventies" (p. 41). The classroom practices that grew out of Graves'
research had a large impact on the direction of writing instruction throughout the world. Young children starting in kindergarten and even preschool were invited to write and participate as authors in the writing process in the last few decades. A common kindergarten practice is to keep daily journals (e.g., Hippie, 1985; Dyson, 1988a; Mulhall, 1992; Kaufman & Wieneck, 1999).

In kindergarten classrooms not influenced by the process writing movement, an emphasis on learning the letters of the alphabet such as letter of the week programs, has continued as the dominant focus.

Status Quo of Literacy Instruction For Young Children

Currently, there is a move towards more academic work in kindergarten in order to teach children to read as early as possible. Researchers (e.g., Stanovich, 1986) assert that if children fall behind their classmates in the early grades, it is hard to catch up and they fall further and further behind. The editors (Snow, Burns, Griffin, 1998) of the well-publicized National Research Council report argue that "preparing children to learn to read is the top priority on the kindergarten teacher's agenda" (p. 179). The report's recommendation on writing for kindergartners is, "Once children learn to write letters, they should be
encouraged to write them, to use them to begin writing words or parts of words, and to use words to begin writing sentences" (p. 323). This suggests children should learn to write letters before they are encouraged to explore the writing system and write continuous text. The recommendation is at odds with respected early literacy research (e.g., Goodman, 1980; Teale, 1982; Dyson, 1986b, 1993a) that advocates for the usefulness of supporting children's exploration of interwoven symbol systems such as drawing, talk, movement and writing.

In the last few years there has been a lot of publicity (e.g., Davis, 2001) for teaching children phonemic awareness and learning phonics in a systematic, explicit way. For instance, in a recent Wall Street Journal article, Davis (2001) reiterates the message that has been in the media for the last few years, that a whole language approach is wrong and phonics is the only answer. Stress on early phonics and phonemic awareness has become part of position statements on early literacy instruction (Snow, Burns, Griffin, 1998; Neuman, Copple, Bredekamp, 2000).

Balanced instruction has been another recent buzzword. Freppon and Dahl (1998) surveyed educators and theorists who are writing about balanced instruction and found a range of
definitions. Short (1999) argues that, "frequently 'balance' means a return to highly sequential, hierarchical approaches where children are first taught phonemic awareness and then must undergo isolated phonics lessons" (p. 131). This focus on phonemic awareness and isolated phonics lessons can have a deleterious impact on allowing kindergartners time to explore the complex writing system and use it for their own purposes.

Other researchers and well-known literacy theorists (e.g., Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998; Goodman, 1998; Smith, 1999) question these strong assertions about phonemic awareness and a heavy academic focus and attribute them to inappropriate government control of classrooms as well as commercial interests. Elkind (1981) has made the case that children can be harmed by rushing them academically. Advocates of developmentally appropriate practices are concerned that the current emphasis on early academics and phonemic awareness is not developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

These current educational issues impact how teachers plan for developing kindergarten writers. While developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) support young children's exploration of written
language at their own pace, and in ways that make sense to them, current pressures point towards using explicit, systematic teaching methods. More and more, mandated programs that emphasize direct instruction are foisted on teachers which gives them less opportunity to exert their professional judgment.

A case in point is that when the revised edition of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) document came out, it was criticized by then president of the International Reading Association (IRA), Jack Pikulski, as representing “developmentally appropriate practice as meaning no teaching about literacy to young children” (Neuman, Copple & Bredekamp, 2000, p. vi). His concerns led to a large collaborative effort between the IRA and NAEYC to author a position statement (Neuman, Copple & Bredekamp, 2000), stressing more explicit teaching of early literacy. So while the 1997 revised edition of the developmentally appropriate practices was in part a response to pressures of “a growing trend toward more formal, academic instruction of young children” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) the IRA/NAEYC document went right back in that direction.
Conventions and Meaning

The current pressure to focus on the conventions of language raises questions about the appropriateness of this focus for our youngest learners in schools. Even without these current pressures, a focus on conventions tends to take precedence over other possible foci, because this language system is most visible and therefore easiest to manipulate and talk about. Bissex (1985) explains adults' tendency to focus on conventions by suggesting that they have a need to correct mistakes especially related to writing "because an error...in writing...may appear permanent and thus in need of immediate erasure and correction lest it become established" (p. 99).

Historically, the mechanics of writing have been emphasized above "communicative aspects" (Donsky, 1984). Dyson (1982b) found in the classrooms where she conducted her research that conventions such as "handwriting, the alphabet, and sound/symbol associations are considered basic to writing success" (p. 674). She didn’t find this surprising as these foci were receiving a lot of attention in the language arts literature at that time.
A focus on conventions over meaning and other broader aspects of language can have a deleterious influence on learners. Dyson (1984b) suggests that,

seeking to learn how to perform effectively in school literacy tasks may lead children away from the major historical and social value of writing - to accomplish necessary personal and societal goals. Rather, children may simply become good at the school game. Perhaps this learning culminates in writing that demonstrates language skills but little content. (p. 624)

Bissex (1981) notes that "poor writers...view writing as an externally imposed task...and their teacher audience at school 'corrects' their writing rather than responding to its message" (p. 789). Writing theorists (Mayher, Lester & Pradl, 1983) warn against overemphasizing correctness before fluency because the developing writer might find this constraining.

Perl (1979) found that when the focus is on conventions "students begin to conceive of writing as a 'cosmetic' process where concern for correct form supersedes development of ideas" (p. 334). She suggests that some writers' problems might stem from "premature and rigid attempts to correct and edit their work" (p. 328). Kelso (2000) contends that "teacher feedback emphasizing correctness before fluency affects the writer's ability to
write expressively. As the writer struggles to make meaning, the writer's voice is quieted and access to the mind becomes opaque" (p. 415).

When teachers focus primarily on conventions, they have to give up other foci because of limited time in the classroom. Britton (1982) captures this problem when he writes that teachers "sacrifice to [their] role as error spotters and improvers and correctors to that of the teacher as listener and reader" (p. 140). Lickteig (1981) points out the irony that while knowing conventions of writing might be touted as the 'basics', the writing process itself is the real basics.

Researchers such as Michael Halliday (1975) contend that for the young language and literacy learner, interest, awareness and experimentation with function usually precedes form. Halliday's assertion is consistent with a constructivist viewpoint that children should be supported in using their own attempts at literacy for various purposes before emphasizing form such as standard conventions of language.

Dyson (1994) argues that young children's "use of a system is initially very idiosyncratic, their encoding rules very general and flexible, so that they can freely explore
the system's nature, gaining some comfort, some familiarity, with its content, structure, and function" (p. 302). This argument supports students in their explorations without concern for their lack of convention.

Wolf and Perry (1988) contend that children's exploration of language can lead to their comfort and abilities engaging with the "literacy of authors and thinkers...a fuller version of literacy" than the literacy of scribes and clerks which is more about "mastering the technologies of inscription and decoding" (p. 44).

Supporting Learners and Young Writers

As emphasized in the developmentally appropriate practice literature (Neuman, Copple, Bredekamp, 2000) the teacher's role in supporting young literacy learners is crucial. Vygotsky (1978) contends that the interpersonal learning interaction is significant because what transpires as adult and child interact is internalized by the child. Since my study is concerned with how the teacher supports the learner I emphasize this part of the literature review.

The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's (1978) construct, the zone of proximal development, is at the heart of several metaphors based in a socially-mediated framework for how teachers can best
support learners. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

Central to the zone of proximal development is Vygotsky's (1956) assertion that, instruction is good only when it proceeds ahead of development. It then awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing which lie in the zone of proximal development. It is in this way that instruction plays an extremely important role in development. (p. 278)

Vygotsky uses the Russian word 'obuchenie' for the word that was translated in this quote as instruction. Rogoff and Wertsch (1984) point out that there is no English equivalent for obuchenie because it includes both teaching and learning. This captures the active roles of the teacher and student as well as implies that the teacher and student each take on both roles as they interact in the zone of proximal development.

According to Wertsch (1984), Vygotsky never went into any detail about "problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" so his intentions for
the specifics of this metaphor are unknown. While researchers ground themselves in the zone of proximal development construct, they have used Vygotsky's undeveloped idea to suggest their own theories about its specifics.

For example, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) depict the zone of proximal development in four stages. In the first stage the learner's performance is assisted by the more capable other. Early in this first stage the child has a limited grasp of what is involved in the task at hand including its goals (Wertsch, 1979). The teacher "offers directions or modeling, and the child's response is acquiescent or imitative" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 33). Tharp and Gallimore consider this type of assisted performance as similar to the scaffolding metaphor by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) in that the teacher gives selective assistance depending on the child's extent of involvement.

As the learner and teacher interact, the child begins to realize the meanings involved and the ways in which the parts of the task relate to one another. When the child has an overview of the task the teacher can offer different kinds of support such as questioning or giving feedback. Griffin and Cole (1984) contend that there are many ways to assist the child at this stage which are qualitatively
different from each other such as directing attention, acting as memory for the child or giving encouragement.

The teacher must be alert to the child’s perspective throughout the zpd. The goal of the activity might be seen differently by the teacher and learner. Both of their conceptions might change as they interact with each other.

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) believe that teachers need a deep understanding of the subject matter they teach in order to assist performance by comparing the child’s conceptions of the goals of the task at hand to those of the academic discipline.

Knowledge about literacy development is important for the teacher supporting the young writer so s/he can understand the child’s complex developing awarenesses and make on-the-spot decisions about the appropriate next move.

As the learner and teacher move through the first stage of the zpd the learner takes on more responsibility for the task. Adults must customize their assistance by responding to the child’s current effort and comprehension of the task goal. Children are not passive receivers of adult help and as they approach the end of the first stage, they influence the level and kinds of assistance provided.
As children adopt some of the adult’s routines for assistance they move into the second stage of the zpd where they assist their own performance. They move from being able to engage with the task because it is regulated by others to being able to regulate it themselves.

In the second stage, “the definitions of situation and the patterns of activity which formerly allowed the child to participate in the problem-solving effort on the interpsychological plane now allow him/her to carry out the task on the intrapsychological plane” (Wertsch, 1979, p. 18). While the child can carry out the task without assistance, the performance is not fully developed. The child might speak to him/herself, usually overtly, the helper’s words that provided assistance in the first stage.

The function of self-directed speech is “self-guidance, ...its developmental origins have to do with early social experiences, and...it increases under task circumstances involving obstacles and difficulties” (Berk & Garvin, 1984, p. 282). According to Elsasser and John-Steiner, (1977) the self-speech evident in this second stage is apparent as children learn to write.

When the child does not need to use self-regulation, such as speech, to accomplish the task, s/he leaves the zpd
and enters the developmental stage for that task. Carrying out the task is internalized and 'automatized'. No assistance is needed from the self or the adult and assistance would be disruptive. According to Tharp and Gallimore's model, performance is no longer developing.

The fourth stage in Tharp and Gallimore's model is one of de-automatization of the performance. The learner encounters difficulties and needs to go back to other stages in the zpd to seek help first from self by reverting to overt verbalizations, and then secondarily from a more capable other.

Elizabeth Petrick Steward (1995) refined the four-stage model for her purposes in a study about young writers. She reconceived the early part of stage 1 as an object-regulated stage of operations where the new skill is tried out without connecting the actions with the goal of the activity...the child is outside the zone of proximal development for that particular activity, but uses its forms in an object-like way. (p. 14)

One example from Steward's study was a child using letters seemingly for decoration only. When children seemed to be in this object-related stage, the teacher and peers did not often attend to their work. This raises questions
about when it is most useful for teachers to invest time supporting young writers.

Another researcher who uses the zpd as the core metaphor in her work is Barbara Rogoff who explores the notion of guided participation as important to learning in cultures throughout the world.

Guided Participation

Rogoff (1990) explains that she chose the term 'guided participation' because while the adult is important as guide, the learner must be an active participant. Rogoff uses an apprenticeship metaphor in which "shared problem solving with an active learner participating in culturally organized activity with a more skilled partner is central to the process of learning" (p. 39).

Closely connected to guided participation is the construct of intersubjectivity in which a purpose and focus are shared between the participants. Understanding is achieved between people, neither party being solely responsible. Intersubjectivity is also a relevant construct in the zpd where in the early stage the adult endeavors to understand the child's point of view and the child begins to understand the adult's definition of the task.
An active adult supports the child’s active involvement. Rogoff (1990) cites studies by Henderson (1984a; 1984b) who found, “the active and supportive involvement of an adult in children’s exploration of novel objects led to more exploration by 3 to 7 year olds than did the simple presence of the adults” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 158).

Central to Rogoff’s guided participation construct is that adults modify their support depending on children’s needs and performance. Rogoff’s construct is consistent with Wertsch’s (1979) argument that adult’s assistance for children changes from the adult exerting executive control to asking questions and making suggestions in order to show the child a strategy or next move. Next the adult offers general help and the child takes more of the lead.

Given the importance of the relationship between the student and teacher in guided participation, Rogoff’s ideas are consistent with the centrality Vygotsky places on social context for learning. In both metaphors, “development builds on the internalization by the novice of the shared cognitive processes, appropriating what was carried out in collaboration to extend existing knowledge and skills” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 141).
Scaffolding

The scaffolding metaphor developed by Bruner and his colleagues (Bruner, 1975; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Ratner & Bruner, 1978) has a lot in common with the zone of proximal development and guided participation.

In one study Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) found that "the tutor's theory of the learner is...crucial to the transactional nature of tutoring" as well as "a theory of the task or problem and how it may be completed" (p. 97). Having at least these two theories allows the tutor to generate feedback as well as to create situations in which feedback would be useful. The requirements for effective support at a particular moment will arise from these considerations on the tutor's part which again suggests the importance of a knowledgeable teacher.

In the scaffolding process the tutor endeavors to enlist the child's "interest in and adherence to the requirements of the task" (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976, p. 98); reduces the degrees of freedom by simplifying the task; redirects the learner's attention when it is not focused on the task at hand; marks critical features such as the relevant facets of the task; and makes sure the experience does not feel too dangerous or stressful. The tutor also
provides demonstrations that are helpful to the learner. Dependency on the tutor is a possible risk when the tutor alleviates frustration in some of the ways listed above (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

In a study focusing on intersubjectivity between mothers and infants, around developing language, Bruner (1975) found that the adult acted as interpreter, and less as “a corrector or reinforcer;” more “as a provider, an expander and idealizer of utterances while interacting with the child” (p. 17). Bruner uses the term 'scaffolding' here to mean the mother’s attempts to support the child in aspects of the task that the child could not do alone. Mothers saw their role “as supporting the child in achieving an intended outcome, entering only to assist or reciprocate or 'scaffold' the action” (p. 12).

In a study that examined how early games assist infants in acquiring language (Ratner & Bruner, 1977) the child is given assistance when the adult: limits and makes familiar the “semantic domain in which utterances are to be used” (p. 401); provides an easily predictable task structure; allows for reversal of roles; and creates a playful atmosphere which “permits the child to 'distance' himself from the task sufficiently to sustain a readiness to innovate” (p. 401).
This last point is reminiscent of a constructivist learning theory that supports learners' inventions. It's also connected to Dyson's (1994) contention that young learners need to be flexible and playful in order to gain comfort in exploring new meaning-making systems.

Criticisms of the scaffolding metaphor (e.g., Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Searle, 1984) are based on interpretations of it as too rigid and too much in the teacher's control. Searle (1984) notes that Bruner's original intention for the scaffolding metaphor was that adults would provide support to help the child achieve his/her intentions. Searle points out that "until teachers are ready to turn over more control to students, there appears to be no way in which scaffolding can be an effective classroom strategy" (p. 483).

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) argue that the scaffolding metaphor is limited because it conceptualizes the assistance offered by the adult as changing quantitatively instead of the more responsive qualitatively different support offered in the zone of proximal development (zpd).

Still, scaffolding is a well-known metaphor that has been used to think about many aspects of learning including writing conferences (Graves, 1983; Sowers, 1985). It has
similarities to theorists' interpretations of the zpd especially as noted by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) in the early part of the zone where the adult supports the child in various ways. Like the zpd and guided participation, an understanding of scaffolding can be useful for teachers who want to effectively support their students.

These theories are consistent with my underlying framework of socially-mediated learning. They suggest that to support young writers successfully we must recognize the importance of learning as a social process that involves active participants.

**Talk as Support for Writers**

Given the importance of the social context, there are many issues related to children’s talk, both to themselves and to others, as a support for their writing development. Dyson (e.g., 1981; 1986b; 1988b; 1989a) has conducted many research studies to better understand the role of talk in writing development. She found that talk is an important context for early writing, in part, because it is familiar and therefore a comfortable way to communicate. Karnowski (1986) also highlights talk as a more “familiar communication system” which can “add depth and meaning to their newly acquired skill of writing” (p. 59). Dyson
(1981) found that children’s “talk surrounds their written graphics, augmenting the message-producing power of first writing strategies” (p. 776).

Dyson (1981) and Karnowski (1986) enumerate the many ways students use talk to support their early writing forays including to “seek needed information, to assist in the encoding and decoding process, to share information and to elaborate on the meaning of their product to others” (Karnowski, 1986, p. 59).

In addition, Britton considers the representational and interactional functions of talk to be the “recruiting area” (1970, p. 29) for writing. Halliday’s (1973) directive language function supports children in monitoring and planning aspects of their writing. Dyson (1983) sees talk functioning in children’s earliest writing as well as later when it “permeates the process, providing both meaning (representational function) and the means (directive function) for getting meaning on paper” (p. 22).

Joanne Larson (1995b) also considers talk an essential element in classrooms where young writers are at work. Her research examines “how the talk surrounding writing activity constitutes the means through which learning to write is a socially-shared and distributed process” (p.
Larson found that the teacher in the classroom where she collected her data allowed students to talk around her as she worked with individuals because she knew that knowledge was being distributed among peers in this way.

Blazer (1986) found that children who talked more as they were writing became the more advanced writers in the class. There are many valid reasons why a classroom with young learners is a noisy place. "The 'muttering' of young children to themselves and their 'chattering' with each other can be valuable and for some children critical factors in the process of learning to write" (Dyson & Genishi, 1982, p. 131).

Students learn through talk with their teachers and also with their peers. Even though learning transpires as students construct knowledge for themselves, this construction is best promoted during social interactions where points of view can be exchanged and examined.

Hatano (1993) suggests adding elements of constructivism to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, such as valuing peer interactions (horizontal interactions) at least as much as the vertical interactions students have with their teachers. He contends that,
learners' construction of knowledge is facilitated by horizontal as well as vertical interactions...[T]he less mature member in a vertical interaction is not highly motivated to construct knowledge, because she or he knows that the other member possesses that knowledge. In contrast, during horizontal interaction, members' motivation to disclose their ideas tends to be natural and strong because no authoritative right answers are expected. (p. 157)

Children find support for their writing as they talk with their peers. While this talk is a potential tension between students and teachers it also presents a powerful potential for learning. Dyson (1989b) found that over time (from kindergarten to 2nd grade) children became more involved with their written texts and that this "seemed supported in part by the children's progressively greater involvement...with the ongoing social world in the classroom, a world that was forming...through the children's talk during journal time" (p. 335). She found that "more powerful literacy action in textual worlds comes as children lean upon other symbolic media...(including) ...dramatic talk...and upon interaction with interested others...(who offer) both resources and challenges" (p. 339).

Private speech, Vygotsky's construct of children's talk seemingly to themselves in the zpd as they are moving towards inner speech or thought, is another important
support for learning. Diaz & Berk (1992) note that, "a crucial observation in Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is that young children use language not only for social communication but also to guide, plan and monitor their own activity in a self-regulatory manner" (p. v). Vygotsky predicted that private speech would increase during the early grades of school and decrease when regulation was internalized.

Berk (1992) lists seminal studies (e.g., Kohlberg, Yaeger & Hjertholm, 1968) that "extended Vgotsky's ... investigations, offered confirming evidence that private speech is linked to early social experience, follows a developmental path proceeding toward internalization, and is augmented by task difficulty" (p. 26).

Children's private speech increases when a social partner is receptive and available (Diaz & Berk, 1992). In Berk's (1992) literature review on private speech she lists several uses researchers have found for these utterances including to "sustain attention, mentally represent important aspects of the task...and recall previously successful strategies" (p. 36).

Azmitia (1992) cites researchers (e.g., Behrend, Rosengren & Perlmutter, 1989; Bivens & Berk, 1990) who
“found that...private speech increases when children are first mastering a task or when they encounter difficulties; talking through the problem helps focus their attention and...monitor the success of task strategies” (p. 102).

Children’s talk as they are involved in writing activity, whether to self, peers or teacher, is an important support for their development as writers. Dyson (1993a) notes that, “written language emerges most strongly when firmly embedded within the supportive symbolic sea of playful gestures, pictures, and talk” (p. 39). There are many ways that the support of children’s artwork is similar to the support talk offers.

**Drawing as Support for Writers**

Just as young children find talk a comfortable way to communicate, drawing is available to children as a first-order symbol system, representing reality more directly than writing. “For young children, the most accessible media are those that most directly capture the movements of their own hands, as lines, curves, and colors take form on paper” (Dyson, 1993a, p. 36). Initially, children rely on drawing and talking to carry most of their meaning. Dyson (1989b) found that “children’s written products were often controlled by their pictures” (p. 333). Several
researchers have noted that drawing supports children’s explorations with print (Dyson, 1982a, 1988b; Graves, 1981; Gundlach, 1981).

Karen Ernst (1994) and Janet Olson (1992) are both advocates of the “mutually enhancing relationship between writing and art in school” (Engel, 1995, p. 22). Ernst’s (1994) research demonstrates “the interactive continuity of visual and verbal modes of expression and the benefits of their integration” (p. 156).

Dyson (1982a) points out that, “writing appears to have particularly close ties to drawing, the earlier developed and less abstract form of graphic symbolism” (p. 360). She credits Vygotsky (1978) as noting that writing develops as children are increasingly able to use a variety of symbols. As children use familiar symbolic tools such as drawing, they are supported in new learning about more complex symbol systems such as writing.

Talk and drawing are both important support systems for early writing development. Dyson (1993a) describes the plight of one student in her research who suffered because these supports were not available in first grade:

Lamar made good progress in literacy learning during his kindergarten year, but he did not make progress in his first grade year. One difficulty was that his
[first grade] teacher viewed talk during writing as useful only for getting or giving "help" - all other talk was just "playing around." Drawing was also discouraged during daily "journal" time. But it was playful and social talk during drawing that, in fact, helped Lamar shape his ideas and that provided the social energy for his writing. Without such support, he maintained only minimal involvement in writing. (p. 37)

In order to value children's talk and drawing and use it to support their writing development teachers must listen to them as they talk and draw and respond to their efforts. This suggests the importance of teachers' relationships with students.

**Relationships between Teachers and Students**

Many of these supports for children's development involve children and teachers working together closely. The quality of their interpersonal relationships is an important factor in the outcomes of the interactions. Stone (1993) considers scaffolding a "fluid interpersonal process" (p. 180). He stresses that "the effectiveness of interactions (and therefore the potential for new learning) within the zone of proximal development varies as a function of the interpersonal relationship between the participants" (p. 170).

Judith Lysaker (2000) studied the relational dimensions in literacy learning. Like Bruner, she found
that scaffolding is successful when the adult is able to share consciousness with the child. Sharing consciousness is similar to Rogoff's (1990) construct of intersubjectivity. The close relationship Lysaker had with her student allowed them to share their meaning-making processes. She entered "into his process...allowing him to borrow what he need[ed]" (p. 482) of hers. She found that while their close relationship was intense, it was also brief and that independence came quickly.

Bonnie Litowitz (1993) considers positive relationships important so that the child's process of internalizing knowledge from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal plane will not be fraught with resistance.

Instructional contexts ought to be orchestrated carefully to optimize contact with adults and peers at opportune times while creating other opportunities for learners to work independently. The instructional contexts discussed in the next section are ones relevant to this study and have the potential to be consistent with the theories discussed above.

Instructional Contexts

In this section, I discuss journaling and group writing formats such as shared and interactive writing. In
addition, I emphasize conferencing as an instructional context since it is the close interaction between the teacher and child that is at the heart of this dissertation.

Journals

Daily journaling is a common kindergarten practice (Kaufman & Wiencek, 1999). While there have been articles written by classroom teachers about successes and procedures for keeping journals in kindergarten (Hipple, 1985; Strickland & Morrow, 1990; Mulhall, 1992; Hannon, 1999) more formal research has also been conducted about different aspects of the journal writing experience (Wortman, 1990; Larson, 1995a; Piccirillo, 1998).

Robert Wortman's (1990) study about authentic writing events includes considerations about kindergarten and first graders' dialogue journal writing. In his context, students wrote in their journals and then sought out an available adult in the classroom to respond in writing on the journal page.

His findings led him to recommend that journals should not be required for young students, especially kindergartners, partly because "children have little or no receptive experience with the genre of journal writing"
outside of school" (p. 307). Their perceptions of dialogue are in the oral language mode, not written. Since the adult determined the genre and audience, the child was in a position of little power. Also, because the whole class had to receive a response from an adult each day, the adults’ responses tended to be "abrupt and narrow in variety" (p. 303). Wortman suggests that these demonstrations could influence the writers’ texts over time.

Wortman recommends that if the journal genre is used, it be expanded to include different purposes such as to record observations in content areas. He also recommends that if teachers ask students to keep individual journals they provide receptive experiences first such as keeping a class journal. Wortman’s overall recommendations for authentic journal writing in the earliest grades are that students ought to have "a clear purpose, a chosen audience and desire to write" (p. 304).

In a teacher research study, Hannon (1999) found that when students did not seem to be using their journals in generative ways, the invitation that the teacher would respond to requests from students to write in their journals led to students experimenting with wider forms of
writing. The dialogue journal format seemed to offer authentic opportunities for students.

Joanne Larson's (1995a) findings about kindergarten journal writing "challenges...the efficiency of the traditional dyadic interactional frame as the locus of learning" (p. 162). For Larson, conceiving writing as a process oversimplifies its "profoundly social nature...and how the participation framework either constrains or enhances the knowledge distribution process" (p. 167).

More specifically Larson's study (1995a) revealed that some information shared in an interaction between a teacher and student (primary dyad) is appropriated by other children within earshot (peripheral participants). Also, talk among peripheral participants can influence the primary dyad. In this way, "purposeful talk becomes both a central mediating tool and an integral part of writing" (p. 168). A great deal of information was shared during the journal writing time in this classroom.

Kaufman and Wiencek (1999) found journal writing to be the second most frequent literacy event to teacher read alouds in their study of kindergarten classrooms. While the teachers did provide writing support, it was offered after the child actually wrote, not during the writing.
Also, there was little evidence of modeled or shared writing. Students generally made little growth and the most typical feature of the children's writing was extended repetition. Their findings suggest that interactions during writing times are important for kindergartners.

The results of Margaret Schimmoeller's study (1999) of kindergarten journal writing are consistent with Vygotsky's hypothesis that more task-relevant private speech will occur as tasks increase in difficulty but stay in the child's zone of proximal development. This finding supports the importance of talk for young writers.

The study by Kitagawa and Kitagawa (1987) of the writing education movement in Japan, seikatsu tsuzurikata, contributes to an understanding of how journal writing can support young writers. The youngest students in Seikatsu classrooms are encouraged to write about a specific time and event and the teacher collects the journals and responds in writing in a very detailed and personal way. The teacher is the initial trusted, interested, empathetic audience and peers are involved later.

Kitagawa and Kitagawa (1987) use Linda Flower's (1979) 'writer-based' term to capture the teacher's intent. Students are encouraged to write self-expressive, personal
entries that are meant to nurture the "writer-self more than the text-producing capabilities of a potential author" (Kitagawa & Kitagawa, 1987, p. 12).

Writer-based writing, meant for the self more than an audience, is close to Britton's (1975) expressive category of writing which "provides an essential starting point because it is language close to the self of the writer, and progress towards the transactional should be gradual enough to ensure that 'the self,' though hidden, is still there" (p. 15). Britton's term, 'transactional writing,' is close to Flower's 'reader-based' writing in that the writer takes readers into account in some way, such as by attempting to persuade them of something.

Using journals in kindergarten provides learners with independent practice. Interactive writing, described in the next section, supports group involvement in the writing process.

Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is currently popular in kindergarten classrooms and is similar to the team writing used in the classroom in this study. According to McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas (2000) the term 'interactive writing' was "coined in 1991 by a research group comprised
of faculty members for The Ohio State University and
teachers from Columbus, Ohio" (p. xvii). It is based on
the work Moira McKenzie did in developing shared writing.
McKenzie (1985b) explains that shared writing grew out of
shared reading. These two instructional contexts "function
in similar and complementary ways. While working
collaboratively to create books to be read by a wide
audience, children gradually, with strong teacher support,
learn important aspects of writing" (p. 2).

According to Connie Compton (1994) "in shared writing,
the teacher models the writing process for the students"
(p. 7). While the students are actively involved with the
teacher in deciding what to include in the text, they
observe and listen but do not add any of their own writing.
As the teacher writes she explains various aspects of the
writing system.

Interactive writing includes many of the same elements as
shared writing but the teacher shares the pen with
students, inviting them to add letters or words to the
unfolding text. Still, the teacher has control over who
will write and what will be written as she calls on
individuals to verify they will add the correct letters.
The teacher's role in interactive writing is to act as a guide and to engage a group of young children. McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas (2000) argue that interactive writing is meant for group instruction, not for work with individuals. Within my study, a form of interactive writing was used widely with both the whole group and individuals.

McCarrier and Patacca (1999) report growth for children involved with interactive writing and other strategies related to their names. These gains were in letter identification and hearing and recording sounds in words.

Wiley (1999) considers interactive writing an instructional tool that enables teachers to work with students in their zpd since it allows an "assisted learning situation" (p. 30). Wiley also states that "interactive writing lessons become more powerful when they are based on observation and analysis of children's behavior at specific times" (p. 31). This is consistent with the assertion that teachers must be active and knowledgeable on many levels in order to optimally support students in their zpd.

Compton (1994) found in her study of interactive writing that all students progressed in their writing, including an increase in their writing vocabulary. She
also found "evidence of transfer of writing strategies from the group context to the children's independent writing" (p. 247). Many of the writing strategies students used in their independent writing had been demonstrated and discussed during the interactive writing sessions.

Interactive writing is potentially a powerful instructional context for young writers to observe the writing process in action while also having opportunities to contribute to the text and thus feel like a writer.

**Writing Conferences**

There is a considerable amount written on conferencing with students about their writing, especially in the 'process writing approach' (Murray, 1979; Graves, 1983; Sowers, 1985; Anderson, 2000; Ray, 2001). This literature is grounded in each author's prolific experiences with conferring. Most of these writings are not research studies and their theoretical base is only implicitly grounded in Graves' (1983) research.

I have not encountered many specific studies about writing conferences in kindergarten classrooms. Hannon (1999) conducted conferences of a sort in her teacher research study, in that she talked with individuals about the content of their journal entries. This opportunity to
meet seemed to impact several qualities of the students’ writing. Hannon explained that conferences with her students took place as she met with individuals to respond in writing to their written missives to her. This opportunity was meaningful to her students in part because they were eager to have individual contact with her.

The literature connected with writing conferences in general includes issues relevant to this study. The teacher and student dialogue in the writing conference has the potential to take on a different shape than what is usually expected in traditional classroom talk (Murray, 1979; Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1983; Florio-Ruane, 1991).

Traditional discourse in schools follows a pattern where teachers ask known-answer questions and then evaluate students’ responses (Mehan, 1979; Cazden, 1988). In a writing conference, the teacher is open to reversal of the traditional classroom role of teacher as leader. Graves (1983) writes, "I have to give up the active, nondelegating, pushing, informing role for another kind of activity, the activity of waiting. Action in conferences is redefined as intelligent reaction. The child must lead, the teacher intelligently react" (p. 127). This
description is similar to Ratner and Bruner's (1978) discussion of one way adults scaffold young learners.

In this one-on-one conference, there is an opportunity for the teacher to engage with the child in his/her zone of proximal development. The teacher, in close proximity to the child and his/her in-process writing, can offer support in ways that allow the learner to carry out tasks because of the interpersonal support. Later the child uses the teacher's words or acts of support to self-regulate.

Graves (1983) considers teacher's questions during conferences as a way to "enable the writer to see answers for himself" (p. 277). Murray (1979) tries to find the most useful questions during writing conferences and recommends using "the voice of a fellow craftsman having a conversation about a piece of work, writer to writer, neither praise nor criticism but questions which imply further drafts, questions which draw helpful comments out of the student writer" (p. 15). Murray describes how the questions he asks as students engage on the interpsychological plane, move to the students' intrapsychological plane. "And now that I have my questions, they quickly become unnecessary. My students
ask these questions of themselves before they come to me” (p. 15).

One caution about the questions asked in writing conferences is to consider the diverse ways students are comfortable communicating. Dyson and Freedman (1991) note that while some children like to have an individual conversation with their teacher,

   others are uncomfortable in that context, especially if the adult repeatedly questions them about their work; this discomfort has been particularly noted in children who are not of the same ethnic or social class as their teacher (Labov, 1970; Tizard & Hughes, 1984). (p. 758)

Still, the writing conference can be a valuable learning context. Florio-Ruane (1991) writes about the potential for the writing conference and suggests what stands in the way of that ideal. Like Graves (1983) she counts as one of the positive attributes of a writing conference that same aspect from Bruner’s scaffolding model where the learner can trade places with the teacher:

   In the ideal writing conference...students and teachers are practically free to trade conversational places. Students have the right to initiate talk and determine topic...Even when teachers actively instruct about writing, that instruction is offered in the service of the student’s current writing needs and concerns. Thus, writing conferences potentially alter the conversational rights and duties of teacher and students and, in so doing, change the range of language strategies available to students for learning
(Barnes, 1976). Given what we know about the norms organizing routine classroom talk, however, it seems appropriate to question the possibility of such a profound and localized shift in classroom task, talk, and text. (p. 369)

So while the ideal writing conference has the potential to change prevalent power structures in classrooms, in reality this is usually not the case. Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) demonstrate this reality in a study of writing conferences in two sixth grade classrooms where the teacher was using a modified process writing approach (Graves, 1983). The researchers found that the feedback students received about their writing during conferences “and the social messages embedded in the feedback, seemed strikingly at variance with the process writing ideal” (p. 311). More specifically, “the teacher controls access to the speaking floor and monitors contributions to the content of discourse (i.e., Mehan’s 1979 teacher initiates-student responds-teacher evaluates pattern)” (p. 311).

Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) developed the DIF (dominant interpretive framework) analytic construct, in part to “conceptualize the power differential that exists between teacher and student” (p. 312). They explored the contradictory notion that while the student knows the most
about the content of his/her writing, "the teacher's definition and interpretation of the ongoing situation and of what counts as knowledge...sets the parameters for what occurs and how it is evaluated" (p. 313).

The focus of the conference in the Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) study was usually on a 'correctable' that involved mechanics. The 'correctable' was embedded in the correction routine which is "a sequence of exchanges in which the teacher used various cues to signal the nature of the correctable, and to elicit from the student the 'correct' form" (p. 315). Through the use of prosodic cues such as stressing certain words or parts of words, the teacher set "up a slot which the student was to fill with the correct form" (p. 315). Stubbs (1984) describes this sort of exchange as "effectively a monologue with the pupil supplying short answers on demand to contribute to the teacher's train of thought" (p. 125). These sorts of routines led to students taking less initiative and a fragmentation of knowledge.

Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo suggest that the ways writing conferences get played out on the local level in classrooms between students and teachers is a reflection of power relations in the broader context of society. In their
study, among other pressures, the teachers were receiving pressure to increase scores on writing tests.

In Jane Denyer’s (1993) study focusing on teacher candidates learning about the intricacies of conducting writing conferences with students, the teacher candidates were encouraged to “think carefully about how to engage children in conversations about text that would support their development of inner speech and reflective thought” (p. 248). This goal proved challenging because through experiences during their own schooling history, they were already enmeshed in “an image of teaching as telling, managing, and assessing” (p. 248).

While these above-mentioned studies were not focused on kindergarten classrooms, similar issues are apparent. Kindergarten teachers are already feeling the pressures from administrators to teach specific skills so there will be improvement on post-test scores of such things as letters, sounds and sight words, as was the case in the classroom where I collected data.

Perhaps one reason why there are not a lot of studies on writing conferences in kindergarten is that the structure and intent of these conferences is not appropriate for young children. Dyson (1993a) states that
"serious talk during a writing 'conference' with their teacher may be less important than playful and reflective talk during an activity involving writing" (p. 38). This suggests that teachers need to orchestrate instructional contexts to support kindergarten writers that may be different than those for older learners. Still, there are aspects of the above-mentioned studies on writing conferences that are relevant as we reflect on our interactions with early writers such as issues of power differentials, pressures from outside the classroom or questions we ask students.

Conclusion

There are many issues to consider in seeking a deeper understanding about how kindergarten teachers support students in their classrooms. Grounded in a holistic, socially-mediated, constructivist framework I discussed the history of kindergarten writing, and the relationship of kindergarten writing to current pressures for academic growth. Then I explored theories grounded in my theoretical framework that relate to adult support of learners. Finally issues related to instructional contexts relevant for this study were discussed.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers support kindergarten writers and drawers. Qualitative, naturalistic, case study methods were used to investigate this topic in context and in all of its complexity.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that qualitative research entails intense or on-going involvement with everyday experiences of groups or individuals. The role of the researcher is to get a full overview of the context being studied as well as an in-depth understanding. These descriptions of qualitative research fit my purposes for this study. For instance, in order to better understand the complexity of what is involved as teachers support students, observing, experiencing and participating in the classroom context on an on-going basis was useful.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe qualitative research "as an umbrella term referring to several research strategies that share certain characteristics" (p. 2). One primary strategy I used was taking on the role of participant observer. This served the purpose of gaining the participants' perspective which is another aim of qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Working alongside Karen West, the classroom teacher, and interacting with students as they were writing and drawing allowed me to understand the complexity involved when teachers respond to individuals. My interactions with students, as well as Karen’s, were examined to understand the contexts that were created as we conferred with students about their writing.

Research Context

The kindergarten class that was the focus of this study was at Hudlow Elementary School in the Tucson Unified School District. The school is on the eastside of town several blocks from a busy city intersection with restaurants and stores. While the surrounding houses would suggest a middle class population, in actuality there is a range of socioeconomic levels for the students in this school as evidenced by the number of free (220) or reduced (54) lunches children received. During the year I collected data Hudlow had 471 students.

This class started out with 25 students, and expanded to 31 as new students arrived. A fourth kindergarten teacher was hired in November in order to reduce class size. At that point this class moved into the teacher’s lounge as there were no other available classrooms in the school.
After winter break, and some rearranging of other classrooms, Karen and her students moved into another full-size classroom. After this last move there were 24 students for the rest of the school year. The students included one African-American, three Hispanic, one Arabic, and nineteen European-Americans. The majority of the children in this classroom lived in single parent households.

There was a range of developmental levels related to literacy. At the beginning of the school year a few children were beginning to read and able to suggest a few letters needed in a writing experience with the teacher. At this same time other students were not able to write their names, think of any letters to contribute to the writing of a sentence and appeared unfamiliar with the reading event as indicated on beginning-of-the-year school district assessment tasks.

When I received permission from the school district to conduct this study I sent home permission letters to the parents of the students in the classroom and they were all signed and returned.

The Classroom Teacher

Karen West was the teacher of this class. When I collected data in Karen's classroom she had been teaching
for 15 years. Her original training was in music which she taught for four years followed by one year each teaching second grade, kindergarten, first grade, and extended first. Then she taught kindergarten for 5 years. She had taken classes at the university recently, graduating with her masters in 1996. When I met Karen she was sitting in on a university class and joined a study group to delve deeper into the class readings. She also was participating with a local teacher-as-reader group and several educational related listserves on the internet.

My criteria for selecting Karen to work with, besides her willingness to engage in this project with me, was that she is a teacher who is interested in reflecting on her work and involves herself in opportunities to grow professionally. At the time I was talking with Karen about the possibility of working together, she was writing an article about her classroom (West, 1998). Our talk around the content of this article suggested that Karen had many developmentally appropriate practices in place which also influenced my decision to work with her.

Karen’s role in the research included discussions with me as I was formulating my research question before and during the school year. She also kept a dialogue journal
with me, exploring issues and questions related to the research. Due to her personal schedule Karen was not involved in the analysis of the data.

**Physical Environment**

The classroom was set up with various sizes and shapes of low tables, center areas, song charts, posted materials and a designated place to meet as a whole group. There was a pretend center, block area, game area, alphabet center, math manipulative area, a centralized location for crayons, pencils and paper containers and shelves with books organized topically according to a system negotiated with the students. In addition to cubbies where students stored their backpacks and coats, they had individual book boxes for most of the year, where they put books they made in class, their personal alphabet chart and weekly journal. These physical aspects, with some minor variations, remained stable in the three different classrooms used by Karen and her students during the school year.

Karen involved her students in setting up the two new rooms, making maps together and considering what to include. The children also helped move what they could easily carry from one room to the next.
The children received a new journal every Monday, with a construction paper cover stapled together with 5 sheets of paper that had a blank space on the top and lines underneath. There were a few occasions when a different kind of paper was used due to a lack of availability of the usual kind.

Starting in early March, instead of keeping journals and other writing-related papers in the book box, the children had hanging files in a class box to store journals and writing folders. Students received folders to house in-process drafts when we began work on a class magazine and introduced a variety of writing projects to choose from if time allowed after completion of the journal requirements.

**Daily Schedule**

In this section I describe the parts of the daily schedule that are relevant to this study. The schedule of the day was predictable although it evolved as the school year unfolded. Students entered the classroom at 8:00 a.m. and were expected to Be a Reader (Tuesday and Thursday) or be in a Storytelling Circle (Monday and Wednesday). On Fridays the whole school met at the flagpole at the beginning of the school day.
At 8:15 the class came together in the group meeting area for attendance, lunch count, pledge and the calendar ritual. This led into an extended read-aloud time and then a bathroom break. Since there was no bathroom in the classroom used during the second semester, the students lined up, walked to the bathrooms and spent a brief time waiting for a turn. While they waited students either read individually or with a partner, or wrote in a steno notebook that students kept in their cubbies.

When the class returned to their room, the whole group met before journal time. For the first half of the school year, this routine was called Daily News where students volunteered something that happened that day. From these suggestions, Karen enlisted the students’ participation in choosing a sentence to write on the large sheet of paper she affixed to the chalkboard with magnets.

Karen led the group to think about specifics such as the order of the words, which letters would be written for each word, spacing in between words, or capital and lower case letters. As students were called on to answer her questions, Karen asked the rest of the class to show whether they agreed or not by putting their thumbs up or down. When a student’s suggestion was considered acceptable by Karen
and the group, that student went to the front to write the letter s/he had volunteered on the Daily News paper. Karen usually added the letters that hadn't been mentioned to end up with a conventionally spelled message.

Another typical activity that followed the writing of the group message was called, Show What You Know. Students lined up and walked, one at a time, to the finished Daily News pointing to something they knew and saying what it was as Karen circled it.

Right before winter break Karen decided to drop Daily News, replacing it with other whole group pre-journal writing foci. In one typical activity Karen wrote in her 'journal' which was a large blank piece of paper affixed to the chalkboard. She demonstrated a variety of things such as her own selection of an idea, drawing a picture and writing the text underneath. This new form of Daily News was similar to the previous format in that Karen engaged the children in contributing to both ideas and letters of the message. Karen still asked the students to line up after the text had been written and point to something they knew on her 'journal' page.

This whole group time resembled the mini-lessons described in writing workshop literature (Graves, 1994) in
that Karen usually chose to focus on specific content she felt her students needed to know.

After the whole group mini-lesson, students left the meeting area, got crayons, pencils and book boxes, which contained their journals, and sat at any table they chose with other students. They got going on their journal work, usually by chatting with their peers as they made a picture in their journal.

The familiar routine of journal time evolved slightly as the school year unfolded. For instance, when journals and writing folders were stored in a box in hanging files, rather than in book boxes, students lined up after Show What You Know to get these needed papers before going off to find a place to sit.

Also, on 1/19/99 Karen instituted the rule that when students got their journals, pencils and crayons and found a place to work, they would be quiet and work in their own individual journals. A few days later, after we discussed this rule, Karen modified it. Students were invited to talk briefly when they were first settling down with their journals. Then Karen rang the bell indicating quiet time when students were expected to work silently in their own
journals. After about 7-12 minutes another bell signaled they could talk quietly about their journal work.

The requirements for journals were to draw a picture, write something that goes with the picture, write your name (during the second half of the school year the requirement to write your first name was expanded to include your last name), the date and use only one page. There were a few occasions when Karen encouraged a student to also use the back of the page. Students chose their own topics to draw and write about.

Karen demonstrated the journal activity by drawing and writing on her own piece of paper in front of the class. When I asked her how she remembered introducing journals, Karen responded by saying that she probably said, "We're going to be drawing and writing every single day of the year so we can see how we're getting stronger as writers. I believe a good way to learn to write is to be a writer just as we learn to read by reading."

When students finished working in their journals they were supposed to read something from their book box. In early January, Karen and I talked about extending the journal time into a writing workshop format where students could work on different writing projects after they
completed their journal requirements. We started this by giving the students a sheet to list the names of people to whom they would like to write letters. When students finished their journals they could read from their book boxes or write letters. Then we added other projects to the available choices after journals such as making books.

While students were drawing or writing in their journals and talking to each other, Karen usually interacted with individuals, engaging in team writing. Team writing is when Karen asked the student about her/his picture and then decided with the child on one sentence to compose together. The interaction that transpired is similar to that described above for Daily News where Karen asked guiding questions leading the child to write some of the letters. Karen usually wrote the letters the child didn’t know. Karen asked that before she began working with a child s/he had done some writing on her/his own.

After students wrote in their journals, everyone cleaned up and then the whole group sat on the rug, the class meeting place, and designated students for that day of the week had an opportunity to share their journals with the class. When students opted not to share orally, Karen
sometimes asked if they wanted to cut the page out from their journal and display it on a bulletin board.

A ritual developed around the group sharing time where the sharer sat in the author's chair in front of the group, taking on the persona of the teacher, asking students to sit correctly or be quiet. Then the sharer showed their completed journal page, said something about the picture and asked, "Any questions or connections?" Students raised their hands and the sharer called on them. If Karen raised her hand, she was always called on immediately, even repeatedly. The first child called on usually would say, "Please read us what you wrote."

After journal sharing students went outside for a brief recess before coming in for free choice. One student each week had the responsibility to go around to everyone in the class, asking students to sign up for one of the free choice options on a paper attached to a clipboard. There were ten choices listed on the paper, with a limited number of sign-up spaces for each choice. The student responsible for this task started the sign up first thing in the morning and read the list to the group after recess to remind everyone where to go. One choice was Color, Draw and Write where I sat for most of the second semester, offering paper and a variety of
writing and drawing utensils for students to use in any way they chose.

After free choice, students went to lunch at 10:50.

The schedule that I outlined above was in place in January. It had been revised up to that point and continued to be revised slightly as the year went on.

**Secondary Writing Experiences**

The daily schedule described above includes the writing experiences related to the contexts I use in this study for the primary data. In this section I briefly describe other writing opportunities that were available. While journal writing formed the central core of writing experiences in that there was a lot of time devoted to its various aspects on a daily basis, children participated in other writing activities throughout the day and school year. Some of these secondary experiences were mentioned in the previous section such as writing in steno pads during the bathroom break or the after-journal choice of writing letters to friends and family.

**Song Innovations**

Karen sang the text in big books with the class throughout the school year. On several occasions, Karen led the students in rewriting these big books using other words
that connected with the content area they were focusing on at the time.

Class Books

Karen made several class books with her students. Children contributed pages to the book individually, in pairs or small groups. The topics of the books varied from math concepts to families.

Whole Group Demonstrations

There were a variety of occasions when the whole group witnessed Karen writing in different genres and for different purposes. For example, when a certain content area was being studied Karen enlisted the students' input in creating webs and charts. She composed letters to the principal and others in front of the children. Most of the time Karen put a large piece of paper up so the children could see her add to the text. A few times Karen wrote on a table where the students did not actually see the writing although they did get to see a writer at work.

Writing Workshop

Early in the second semester Karen and I talked about extending the journal time into a writing workshop format so students could work on different writing projects after they finished their journal page. We expanded journal time,
adding other writing options to choose from after journal requirements were completed.

The decision to begin writing workshop grew out of a need Karen and I both felt to give students opportunities to extend their writing beyond a one page journal entry. We also noticed some students seemed bored during the journal time. In addition to the letter writing option, we encouraged students to embark on projects such as making books or posters.

As students began to produce books Karen made an editing box where the books were placed. She read them and wrote detailed post-it notes with questions for the students. Then Karen waited for students to initiate a conference. Most students did not initiate this conference and their books sat in the editing box.

Karen and I met in mid-March and decided to embark on a student-made space magazine. We chose this topic because the class was studying space at that time. We intended to give children an experience with the writing process that they would be able to use later. We introduced this idea to the class on March 22\textsuperscript{nd} and everyone got going on their first draft of a piece about space after writing in their journals that day.
We set deadlines and used the sharing time for students to read their drafts and get feedback from other students and teachers. Students drew pictures to accompany their texts that would go in the magazine. Karen also wrote other pieces for the magazine with small groups. The magazine was published on April 12th, shared in class and then students took their copies home. As the school year went on, students went back to writing in their journals as they had earlier in the year.

**Computers**

There was a computer in the classroom that students could choose as a free choice option. Towards the end of the year, a second computer was added to the classroom that some students used to write their journal entries.

Karen also used the school's computer lab extensively with her students. During the second semester Karen took her class to the lab on Wednesday mornings in addition to their regular Friday time. Students wrote, drew, played games and did some math on the computers in the lab. Some of the artwork in the Space Magazine was generated on the computers in the lab.
**Researcher's Role**

I was a participant observer in the classroom, working with students during journal writing times and free choice. I went with the class to their bathroom breaks and recess. Karen was clearly the classroom teacher in charge of all aspects of the daily routine, making decisions and taking initiative. Typically I arrived in the classroom during the morning bathroom break and left at lunchtime although on several occasions I drove to the school with Karen and stayed for the whole day.

Since I have never been a kindergarten teacher, I acknowledge that the interactions I had with students were not based on experiences with kindergarten students but rather were more exploratory in nature. I had spent most of my teaching career with second and third graders or helping older students with reading difficulties. I deferred to Karen's judgement in making decisions because of her greater experience with children of this age and because of her role as teacher in charge. My affective stance was to be more passive and observant than to initiate ideas or contact with students. The exception to this was during the journal conferencing times when I did initiate contact and encouraged children to focus on the task at hand.
My personal view of learning comes from a holistic philosophy that is social constructivist in nature. This stance influenced the ways I interacted with students.

Data Collection

I collected and analyzed data that would lead to a fuller understanding of teachers' support of kindergarten writers.

To reiterate, my research questions are as follows:

Overarching question: How do teachers support kindergarten students as they write?

Subquestions:
1. What contexts do teachers create to support kindergarten writers?
2. What is the focus of teachers while supporting kindergarten writers?
2. What positions do teachers take as they support kindergarten writers?

In order to address these questions, the data sources I collected were field notes, dialogue journals between Karen and myself, audio and videotape recordings of teacher/student interactions around students' writing both individually and in small and whole group settings, copies of children's writing and drawing, formal and informal
interviews with Karen and students; and classroom artifacts such as daily schedules or notes that went home to parents.

**Description of the Data Sources**

In this section I describe the primary and secondary data sources collected during the course of this study.

**Primary and Secondary Data Sources**

As I engaged in a lengthy process of analyzing the data, my field notes turned out to be an important source for making sense of the experience because I reread them several times, searching for patterns, reflecting on them and coding them in different ways. These extensive interactions with my field notes led me to realize that what was really interesting to me was looking as closely as possible at the specific interplay between a child and teacher.

Therefore, the audio tapes of these close interactions between teacher and child around the student's writing became the primary data source in the final analysis. All the other data sources became secondary data sources in this study to which I referred during analysis of the 10 transcripts that became the primary data.
Audio and Videotape Recordings

According to Silverman (2000), tapes and transcripts are useful for research because, "they are a public record, available to the scientific community, in a way that field notes are not" (p. 829).

I collected audio and videotapes to record teacher/student interactions individually, and in small and whole group settings. I transcribed some of the tapes during the school year to provide a hard copy of the interactions that transpired during a busy day to reflect on and discuss with Karen.

During the first semester when I didn't have school district permission to audio or videotape yet, I was amazed at the complexity involved in interacting with students around their writing and drawing. I found it hard to write a thorough description of the interaction in my field notes and looked forward to the time I would be able to audio and videotape.

After receiving permission to audio and videotape in the classroom I began taping at the beginning of March and then audio taped almost daily and video taped on 10 occasions. I usually tape recorded teacher/student conferencing sessions as well as mini-lessons, journal
sharing times and at the Color, Draw and Write free choice table.

There are 30 audio tapes directly related to my questions. These are tapes of teachers and students interacting about writing. There are several other tapes of Karen and me talking in the car on the way to and from school as well as at her house, my house and in the classroom. The contents of these latter tapes are not directly related to my current questions and became part of my secondary data source. There are also several audio tapes from my final interviews with children. There are 8 videotapes involving the focal interactions in the classroom around writing as well as videotapes from the final writing experience I conducted individually with all students.

All tapes were catalogued and filed chronologically. Tapes chosen for the primary data were all transcribed using Atkinson and Heritage's (1984) transcription notation. Appendix A explains the transcription notation I use in this dissertation. I chose the 10 primary data tapes because they were representational of typical interactions between students and teachers. I chose 2 transcripts for each of the 5 contexts.
**Field Notes**

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define field notes as "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (p. 107). I wrote my field notes in a large unlined sketchbook during the time I was in the classroom the first semester of the school year. I started a new book to collect field notes at the beginning of the second semester. Outside of the classroom I reread these notes, reflecting and writing about them in another notebook.

I varied this procedure on occasion, trying out different formats such as reflecting in the field notebook or only taking notes on the left page and leaving the right page blank for later reflection in the categories suggested by Corsaro (1981). The four kinds of notes Corsaro delineates are: field notes, theoretical notes, methodological notes and personal notes. Based on Corsaro's (1981) description of different kinds of notes, I modified my note taking procedure during the second semester as data collection became more focused.

Theoretical notes suggested theories that might have developed from what I experienced and observed or theories
from the literature that seemed related. Methodological notes reminded me of my research methods and possible changes during the collection period. Personal notes involved comments about how Karen, the students or I were feeling that day in order to remind myself of a specific consideration that might prove significant later as I analyzed the data. They might also be notes about a personal connection I made that seemed unrelated but might prove interesting later.

I read over my notes after leaving the classroom each day, filling in significant events that seemed worth recording in more detail. I also reflected on the day’s events by writing theoretical, methodological and personal notes on the right-hand side of the page. If I needed more room for written reflections, I wrote in a separate notebook designated for this purpose. I numbered all pages in my field notebooks for easy cross-reference and reread them often, reflecting on them. During the year I collected data I used three field notebooks.

There were a few times, especially in the earlier parts of the school year, when students asked to write or draw in my field notebook so the notebooks contain some student work in addition to my notes.
Dialogue Journals

I have used dialogue journals for various reasons in the past when I collaborated with teachers. One purpose they serve is allowing communication when there isn’t a lot of time for it in the busy school day. Karen and I started a dialogue journal during the first semester and eventually began a second one so we would each have something to write in at any given time. We tried different formats in order to find the best way to respond to each other. We numbered the pages in both journals for easy reference. One common method we used was that I wrote on the left page and Karen wrote on the right one. If there was something I wanted to respond to I put a letter near that issue in Karen’s text and then responded to it referencing the letter and page number.

One dialogue journal we used had a section for each child in the class and we wrote about interactions we had with students in their section of the journal, responding to each other’s reflections.

Copies of Children’s Papers

I began photocopying students’ journals after receiving formal permission from the school district to conduct the study and from parents to include their child. I have a
separate file for each student that includes copies of journal entries for most of the second semester as well as papers copied from their classroom portfolios that span the whole school year. These artifacts are all filed chronologically in each child's individual folder.

I collected an assortment of artifacts during the school year such as schedules, notes to parents, writing and drawings students gave me and some I found in the trash. These are all filed for easy referral.

**Informal Interviews**

I conducted informal interviews with Karen throughout the school year in order to ask her perception on certain things that happened in the classroom. These informal interviews took place during lunch, recess, on the phone or in the car when we drove back and forth to school together. Records of the informal interviews are in my field notes. I also interviewed some students informally at various times during the school year. These interviews are informal in that I did not have prepared questions to ask during a scheduled interview.

I conducted a formal interview with Karen during the winter break asking specific questions related to my focus
for the study. I composed a formal interview for students at the end of the school year.

**Final Interviews and Writing Experience**

I developed an interview and journal writing experience at the end of the school year that I conducted with each child individually. Additionally, I planned an experience with the children to further consider the adult's role in supporting them as well as to gather their perspective on how teachers support writers.

In this last experience, individuals wrote a rough draft of an end-of-the-year letter to Karen in the presence of a substitute teacher but without her support. Then I met with each student individually and offered to help as they wrote their final draft. This final writing experience was videotaped.

**Visitations to Other Sites**

I visited 3 other kindergarten classes during the course of this study, taking field notes and observing during times when children were writing. I also visited a pre-school using a Reggio Emilia philosophy (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998) in order to consider the teacher's role with this approach.
Data Analysis

Data analysis was on-going during the school year as I collected data. I continually reread my field notes, making sense of the data, which Merriam (1988) points out is how one begins the data analysis process. This continual analysis informed the ongoing data collection which, in Merriam's words, is "recursive and dynamic" (p. 123). For example, towards the end of the school year I took a week off from my regular time in the classroom to reread my field notes and consider what to include in a final interview with the students.

Merriam (1988) also mentions how "emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one's questions" (p. 119). As I transcribed the early audio tapes of conferencing sessions between a child and teacher and read the transcripts, I found that my real interest was the specifics of these interactions. I focused my questions in new directions as I realized that I wanted to look closely at the interactions between children and teachers.

Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as "consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data
reduction, data display, and conclusion
drawing/verification" (p. 10). Data reduction is "the
process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting,
and transforming the data that appear in written-up field
notes or transcriptions" (p. 10). Data display "is an
organized, compressed assembly of information that permits
conclusion drawing and action" (p. 11).

While the data analysis was on-going, it intensified as
more data accumulated and when the school year ended.
Before the end of the school year I photocopied many
artifacts from students' portfolios and end-of-the-year
journals as well as other writing samples. After the last
day of school I prepared to enter the stage of data
reduction by organizing my data, filing student work,
listening to and viewing all audio and videotapes, and
writing a rough catalogue of what was on each tape.

After organizing the data I had collected and
continuing to reread and reflect on it, I wrote a draft of a
global, descriptive analysis of all the contexts involving
writing and drawing in this specific classroom. At this
time I also typed one of the dialogue journals and
transcribed several audio tapes that seemed to have
potential for helping me consider my questions.
While the qualitative researcher is beginning to draw tentative conclusions from the beginning of data collection, it's important to be "inchoate and vague at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). This was true of my process as I analyzed my data going through several revisions of categories to finally realizing that I wanted to conduct a sociolinguistic microanalysis in order to look closely at the teacher-student interaction.

According to Florio-Ruane (1987), "sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary effort to study language in the context of its use" (p. 186). I was interested in looking closely at the teachers' specific language as we talked with children about their writing.

I discussed my analyses with committee members and finally settled on using three dimensions-context, focus and position, as a framework to look closely at ten transcripts. One change I made was shifting from considering the teachers' roles to a focus on positions. This change was influenced by Davies and Harré (1990) who note that "the use of 'role' serves to highlight static, formal and ritualistic aspects" in contrast to the newer notion of positioning which "helps focus attention on dynamic aspects of
encounters" (p. 43). This seemed relevant to my study because it would allow me to consider the shifting positions we took as we worked with students.

By using position and focus I was able to code the teacher talk twice. I used one transcript to try this out, defining rules for myself as I coded in order to be consistent. At this point I realized that it was going to be cumbersome to handle all the data I wanted to work with and decided to use the qualitative data analysis program, Nudist (1997). My activities at this time were similar to the second phase in Miles and Huberman's (1994) process of data analysis noted above, data display in that I decided which transcripts I would use and how I would analyze them.

Through all the phases of data analysis that I had engaged in up to that point, I realized that the journal writing event was the primary context where we supported children in this classroom as writers. This understanding led me to decide to zero in on four parts of the journal experience—mini-lessons, journal sharing time and the conferencing that Karen and I did with individuals. Also, the Color, Draw and Write option during free choice was interesting to me because it was a different context than
journal writing time and I wanted to include a range of contexts in the analysis.

I selected two transcripts that were about a month apart for each of the five contexts: Mini-Lesson, Targeted Conferences (led by Karen), Concurrent Conferences (led by me), Sharing and Free Choice (Color, Draw and Write). The primary data used in the analysis are these ten transcripts.

Important in this analysis is the definition of the text unit required by Nudist. Because my questions center on the teachers' positions and foci, each text unit begins with the teachers' talk. When Karen or I first talk at the beginning of a transcript I ask, what position is the teacher taking here and what is she focusing on? I code this talk with one of the four positions (Follower, Leader, Informer, Director) and one of the five foci (Management, Writing Act, Conventions, Materials, Meaning). Also, I code the text units for their categories and subcategories within the position and focus. When either the position or focus (or one of their categories or subcategories) changes I label the new talk as the next text unit. So two consecutive text units might have the same position and focus but one of them would have been coded as a different
category or subcategory than the other. Students' talk is included in the text unit but never begins a text unit.

To clarify this definition of the text unit, five text units from the March 15th Targeted Conferencing context transcript are provided. Underneath each text unit are the position and focus for that text unit including the categories and subcategories within the position and focus.

Position: Leader/focusing moves/known answer question/pseudo-open question
Focus: Conventions/sound

2. Karen: mm hm
Position: Leader/confirms/nonspecifically
Focus: Conventions/letter

3. Karen: Do you put it next to it or leave a space?
Franny: Leave a space
Position: Leader/focusing moves/known answer question/binary question
Focus: Conventions/word boundaries

4. Karen: Go ahead
Position: Director/strongest directive/unmitigated command
Focus: Writing Act/continuing/persevering

Position: Leader/focusing move/known answer question
Focus: Writing act/continuing/plans/what's next?

The first three text units have the same position and focus but the categories change which designates them as separate text units.

When the ten transcripts I chose for primary data (2 transcripts in each of 5 contexts) were input into the Nudist program I proofread them carefully to make sure all the text units had been coded correctly. Then I constructed the interconnected flow chart that Nudist allows to support the researcher in seeing relationships among the dimensions. At this point, each text unit had three codes—one for position, one for focus, and one for context.

Then I set out to define each of the four positions and five foci, creating categories and refining my understandings of them as I synthesized the groupings of text units within each position and focus.

Next, I consolidated this preliminary analysis into three analysis chapters, using matrices and other data displays made accessible by Nudist to consider cross analysis across the dimensions.

At this point I had the opportunity to share my data analysis with Peter Fries (personal communication) and he
helped me reconsider some of the analysis I had done from a linguistic perspective. I revised my positions, foci and categories one last time based on the work we did together.

Trustworthiness

Drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 1990), Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, "pairing traditional terms with those proposed as more viable alternatives for assessing the 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' of naturalistic research" (p. 277). The five pairs they suggest are listed below with the more traditional term first followed by the term(s) they consider more useful in qualitative research: "Objectivity/confirmability of qualitative work; reliability/dependability/auditability; internal validity/credibility/authenticity; external validity/transferability/fittingness; and utilization/application/action orientation" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 277).

In what follows I will discuss the trustworthiness of this study with respect to each of these five considerations.
**Objectivity/Confirmability**

Objectivity or confirmability refers to the "relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases—at the minimum, explicitness about the inevitable biases that exist" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278).

In order to strive for confirmability I have outlined in this methodology chapter as clearly as possible the procedures for this study in chronological order especially highlighting the way I used the data to reach my conclusions. I have an audit trail (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988) available in the form of my carefully filed and labeled paperwork through all the phases of the data collection and analysis process. These papers are available to others. I noted my personal biases and how they might have influenced the study in the section on researcher’s role. Also, my extensive use of transcripts as primary data allows a hard copy for public examination.

**Reliability/Dependability/Auditability**

Considerations for reliability, dependability and auditability involve issues of consistency over time. Was the study done with deliberateness and care?
In order to satisfy these concerns I made sure my research questions were clear and that the design of the study was consistent with them. My findings suggest consistency across time and within contexts. I checked my coding on several occasions by proofreading the primary data transcripts, making sure text units were coded appropriately and discussing questions with peer debriefers during different phases of the study.

**Internal Validity/Credibility/Authenticity**

In order to achieve credibility and authenticity I described the primary data contexts as fully as possible. By using the transcripts themselves to write these descriptions I was aiming for my description to ring true to the actual situation, hoping I would create the scene so the reader would get a feeling of being there.

Noting triangulation among the data sources is one way to ascertain the credibility of a study. There was triangulation of the data in that I considered phenomena from at least three vantage points, such as what I was seeing and experiencing as recorded in my field notes, from the transcripts of the five main contexts and from conversations and interviews with Karen and students.
While these different sources allowed me to consider issues from different angles, I didn’t use triangulation in verifying my findings. Richardson (2000) suggests that triangulation is less useful as a metaphor in qualitative research than crystallization “which deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity' (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves), and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic” (p. 934).

Wolcott (1990) also questions the notion of triangulation because, “anyone who has done fieldwork knows that if you address a question of any consequence to more than one informant, you may as well prepare for more than one answer” (p. 130). Wolcott recommends that, “we are better off reminding readers that our data sources are limited, and that our informants have not necessarily gotten things right either, than implying that we would never dream of reporting an unchecked fact or unverified claim” (p. 130).

The idea of crystallization is useful because it supports me in acknowledging that while my primary data are only the ten transcripts, they ring true to me as representative of the five contexts. This is verified further by considering the similar numbers of text units
across the two transcripts in each context and how they differ between contexts. Each context has distinct qualities different than the others.

**External Validity/Transferability/Fittingness**

The underlying issue in external validity, transferability and fittingness is whether this study’s conclusions can be useful to others. To reach this goal I describe the participants and setting fully in order to allow readers to consider these specifics in relation to their own. I try to provide enough thick description (Geertz, 1973) for readers to appraise the possible transferability to their own contexts.

**Utilization/Application/Action Orientation**

The criteria of utilization, application and action orientation suggest that a study ought to contribute to all participants including researched, researcher and reader. I endeavored to write the account of this study in an accessible manner so that the findings and implications suggest useful action for readers in their own contexts. I hope that my presence in the classroom was beneficial for both Karen and her students. Karen mentioned on several occasions that it was helpful to have another adult to
interact with students and to talk to about her thoughts and plans.

I also think my findings are applicable to a wider audience in that I have referred to my findings in writing an on-going column for the Tucson Moms group about supporting early literacy and I plan additional publications for the field.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the research context, data collection procedures and data analysis. I also enumerate ways that I aimed to make this study trustworthy during all of its phases. The study’s timeline is in Appendix B.
Chapter 4
THE DIMENSION CALLED CONTEXT

My data analysis identified three dimensions—context, focus and position. The primary data in this study are ten transcripts, two each in the five main contexts in which students had daily opportunities to engage with writing. These five contexts are: Concurrent Conferences, Targeted Conferences, Free Choice, Mini-Lessons and Journal Sharing. I analyze the five contexts in this chapter in order to answer my first research question: What contexts do teachers create to support kindergarten writers?

The Primary Data Contexts

In this section, after defining context in general, I describe in detail the five contexts in this study that comprise the primary data.

Teun Van Dijk (1999) defines context as "the structure of those properties of the communicative situation that are ostensibly relevant for participants in the production and comprehension of text or talk" (p. 291). Consistent with this definition, children and adults in my study produced different talk and text in the different contexts.

Goodwin and Duranti (1992) consider context a socially constituted, "interactively sustained, time-bound
phenomenon" (p. 1). McKenzie (1985a) would concur that the participants and their "role relationships, i.e. the changing parts they play in interactions" (p. 235) are elements of a context along with many other factors such as the entire environment of the school and classroom and what is occurring at a specific time. Each context has its specific attributes that distinguish it from the others. Through descriptive analysis I focus on the unique characteristics of each context as well as the similarities.

The following analysis involves descriptions of the five primary data contexts: Concurrent Conferences, Targeted Conferences, Free Choice, Mini-Lessons and Journal Sharing. For each context, first I describe it generally and then elaborate more specifically on one of the two primary data transcripts from that context. Next I point out the similarities and differences between the two transcripts. Finally I present a discussion of findings including my interpretations about the advantages and disadvantages of some of the specifics of the context. An understanding of these contexts also serves as background in interpreting the other two dimensions, focus and position, which are analyzed in the next two chapters.
The Ten Transcripts

When I refer to one of the five primary data contexts I capitalize the first letters of the name. Table 4.1 summarizes information about the 10 transcripts that serve as primary data. The numbers in parentheses in the number of text units column are the text units per minute. The text units not included in the last column, in the conferencing and Free Choice contexts, are when the teacher addressed a small group, the whole class or unknown addressees. The students listed after the stars (*) are those interacted with in minor ways. The capital letters in the last column stand for the students. Pseudonyms are used for all students. (A-Syd; B-Miguel; C-Jessica; D-Jake; E-Willis; F-Rebecca; G-Sami; H-Max; I-Ben; J-Lou; K-Franny; L-Betsy; M-Al; N-Dan; O-Leah; P-April; Q-Seth; R-Peter; S-Gabi; T-Jack). There are 1,364 total text units that serve as primary data.
Table 4.1  
Information for the 10 primary data transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Number of text units</th>
<th>Length of transcript</th>
<th>Number of students teacher interacted with and number of text units per student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concurrent Conferences</td>
<td>173 (8)</td>
<td>21.5 minutes</td>
<td>7 main students; A-49, E-41, B-25, D-21, F-17, I-9, C-7 * G-1, H-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrent Conferences</td>
<td>147 (7)</td>
<td>21 minutes</td>
<td>8 main students: Q-41, I-33, A-30, P-13, O-7, R-7, N-6, J-6 * K-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/13/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Conferences</td>
<td>248 (11)</td>
<td>21 minutes</td>
<td>4 main students: K-66, L-55, N-53, O-44 * I-2; A, G, M, D-1 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Conferences</td>
<td>244 (15)</td>
<td>16 minutes</td>
<td>3 main students: D-77, G-74, T-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/13/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* F-7, P-2, C-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Choice</td>
<td>54 (3)</td>
<td>16 min.</td>
<td>5 students, Q-17, P-14, K-11, * S-2, E-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Choice</td>
<td>170 (7)</td>
<td>24 min.</td>
<td>6 students; B-49, K-38, J-31, M-15, L-10, F-9,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/8/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Lesson</td>
<td>95 (24)</td>
<td>4 min.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Lesson</td>
<td>129 (21)</td>
<td>6 min.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Sharing</td>
<td>53 (4)</td>
<td>12 min.</td>
<td>4 students shared; whole class was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Sharing</td>
<td>51 (7)</td>
<td>7 min.</td>
<td>3 students shared; whole class was present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two contexts, Concurrent and Targeted Conferences, are when Karen or I were conferencing with students during journal time. I consider these contexts central in this study as they were the times when we had the most extensive and in-depth interactions supporting individuals with their writing. I am most interested in
Considering what happens between the adult and child when the adult is available to support the child's in-process writing. Because of the extensive teacher support in the journal conferencing contexts, I focus on these contexts in more detail than the other three contexts—Free Choice, Mini-Lesson and Journal Sharing.

I have kept Karen's (Targeted) and my (Concurrent) conferences separate rather than combining them because our styles of interacting were different from each other. These differences allow me to explore a range of possible ways teachers interact with children as they write.

Karen and I had the opportunity to conference with students on an every-other-day basis. Karen conferenced one day and I conferenced the next. We started the routine in February in which one of us conferenced during journal writing time and the other walked around the classroom, checking in briefly with individuals, but mainly monitoring the whole class. Initially the conferencing teacher sat on the floor in the group meeting area but as Karen's pregnancy progressed, the conferencing area became the small table in the middle of the room.

I chose the label 'concurrent' for the type of conferences that I was involved in because I usually
interacted back and forth with several students at the same time. 'Targeted' is the label for the conferences Karen led because she interacted primarily with one student before conferencing with the next one. The label 'conferencing contexts' refers to both Targeted and Concurrent Conferencing contexts. Also, while the full names of the two contexts include the word 'journal', I usually shorten the name by excluding the word 'journal'.

**Concurrent Journal Conferencing Context**

This context is complex since I interacted back and forth among several students during the conferencing time. Children came and went voluntarily and at different times to the area where I was sitting. If I wasn't in the middle of working with someone I usually greeted an approaching child and asked about his/her journal. If I was in the middle of working with someone I continued my work with that child until s/he was writing or drawing something and then I turned my attention to the newly-arrived child.

When the new child I was interacting with was working independently I might turn my attention back to the first child or to other children who were in the process of working in their journals or on a project. This independent work might be the writing of one letter, a
word, their name or date; or drawing a picture. An exception to this was that if a child insistently called my attention I would sometimes pause in the work I was doing to ask the interrupting child to wait or cut off the interaction I was having to find out what the interrupting child wanted.

The 3/8 Concurrent Conferencing transcript. During the 3/8 (March, 8th) Concurrent Conferencing transcript I was sitting on the floor in the group meeting area. When quiet writing time was over, students came down to the floor and sat around me if they wanted a conference. I describe my interactions with students during that conferencing time in order to give a sense of the complexity of these sessions.

The 3/8 transcript starts when I opened a conference with Syd by asking her, “What have you done on your journal entry here?” Syd told me about her picture and then I asked, “And what did you write here?” At this time of the year Syd’s writing was usually a letter string (A group of letters that represent an intended meaning. Hers had no apparent graphophonetic connection to her intended meaning). She pointed to the letters and read, “You are (big). Pretty lady with (tightrotes).” I responded by chuckling
briefly and asked, "Is she wearing tights?" Syd responded affirmatively. After a brief word of confirmation, "Alright," I reminded her to add her name and date. Syd said she wanted to write something else which I left her to do. (see transcription conventions in Appendix A)

Meanwhile, Miguel came to the floor and I began an interaction with him, remarking about his picture. Syd interrupted to ask how to spell my and rather than tell her directly I said the word slowly and asked what she heard. When she said she didn't know I asked if she had her alphabet chart. As she got it out, Jessica approached and I began an interaction with her. Jake interrupted before I got very far with Jessica and then I turned back to Syd to continue the interaction about spelling my. As Syd indicated that she knew she needed an M, I confirmed this and then continued with Jessica.

Miguel called my attention which cut off my interaction with Jessica again and then Syd told me twice that she "got the M." I echoed her, confirmed it and then repeated the word she was writing, my, and asked, "What else- Do you hear anything else in my?" The interactions with Syd continued, intermittently, as I spoke with other children as well, through her finishing up her journal page
and transitioning to the book she had started writing with me the previous day.

When Syd got going on her book, I interacted with her less, but she stayed with me on the floor throughout the whole transcript, drawing and writing in her book about the egg that was going to crack. Occasionally she told me she needed help spelling a word or else I nudged her forward as I reflected to her what I saw her doing with her book, asking if she was ready to start work on the next page. Syd and I interacted in 49 text units, the largest number of text units of the children I interacted with that day.

At text unit 61 Willis arrived in this conferencing spot, showed me his journal where he had written, "Godzilla is fighting New York" and then told me about his picture. When I asked Willis if there was anything else he wanted to say about his journal he asked, "How can I drive a car?" Since Willis had been writing riddles a few days before I attempted to answer his question in that genre, with Miguel’s help.

When I finally figured out the answer to Willis’ riddle I suggested he write it down and cover the answer with post-it notes to hide it. Willis was willing to try my suggestion and worked near me as we interacted
intermittently until text unit 161 which was close to the end of the journal writing time for that day. I spoke with other children during the time Willis was busy writing his question and answer on the back of his journal page, interacting with him during 41 text units.

Miguel was the child with whom I interacted in the third largest number of text units. Like Syd he was present during most of the transcript, interacting with me off and on, for a few text units at a time, commenting on other children’s work and interrupting several times to ask me for something.

There are five consecutive text units early in the transcript when Miguel told me about his picture and I commented briefly, exclaimed positively about it, noted something specific and then asked a question about it. Three text units later I asked him to tell me what he wrote so far and responded to his reading by saying, “Thanks Miguel.”

The children involved in the next largest numbers of text units are Jake (21) and Rebecca (17). Jake was present throughout the transcript calling for my attention at different times to ask for white paper, a pen, post-it notes and to show me he could wiggle his ears. He also
asked Miguel to draw in his book. I attempted to draw Jake's attention to his book by asking him what he had done in it so far.

My interactions with Rebecca were all brief ones about her journal as she worked quietly on her own after our first interaction when I reminded her she should be working on her journal and not just sitting and waiting while I worked with Willis. Later I commented that I saw her "really working and thinking about what you're going to write down" and asked how I could help her. She told me she was trying to write this and I supported her by saying, "this starts the same way as the. Do you know how the starts?" After being interrupted by Jake and checking in with Syd, I looked back at Rebecca's paper and said, "This. Mm hm. Very good thinking Rebecca. You got it. This is-" Then I turned my attention to what Willis wrote so far as Rebecca continued writing her sentence. In the rest of the transcript I continued interacting with these and other children.

There are parts of the transcript in which children interacted with each other such as when Jake asked Miguel to draw in his book, or, overhearing my work with one child, another child became involved. For instance,
towards the end of the transcript when Syd asked, "How do you spell help?" and I responded by saying, "Help, don't you have it on one of your other papers?", Brandon said, "L". I realized that he was responding to Syd's question and said to Brandon, "It does have an L in it. You see this says help? And you see the L in the middle of it? It starts with an H, E, L, P, help. That's good thinking Brandon, you heard the L, help."

**Similarities across the Concurrent Journal Conferencing context transcripts.** There are several similarities across the 3/8 (March 8th) and 4/13 (April 13th) Concurrent Conferencing transcripts indicating that it was in fact a predictable context with specific qualities created by many factors including my style of interacting and role in the classroom. These similarities are discussed in the following section.

**Shuttling back and forth among students.** In both transcripts I turned my attention back and forth among several students, sticking with individuals for varying numbers of text units. Ending one interaction and beginning another transpired either because of my own initiation to focus children or to ask about their work. Other reasons for ending an interaction were due to the
initiation of students calling my attention to ask a question or to show me their work. After turning my attention from one child to another I usually returned to follow up with the children I had begun interactions with several times later in the transcript.

Focusing students on their work. In both Concurrent Conferencing transcripts there are several instances when I acted to focus or jumpstart students on their work. An example in the 3/8 transcript is when I told Rebecca to work on her journal while I was talking to Willis. In the 4/13 transcript I asked Ben if he wanted to start on a new book or continue working on one of the books he had already started. Several text units later Ben was still looking at the slug and snail book I had given him that day to inform his writing. In order to nudge him to start writing, I said, "Ben, does this book- looking at this book, make you think you might want to get back to your snail book? Your slug book?" As I said this I placed the book he was writing in front of him.

Involvement of other children. Something else that happened in both transcripts is that while I interacted with an individual, other students contributed to the dialogue. For instance, in the 3/8 transcript, when I
responded to Willis' entry about Godzilla by saying I'd like to see a Godzilla movie, Miguel told me he had one I could borrow. In the 4/13 transcript when I commented on Syd's picture of her cats, April wanted to see them.

Children taking initiative. There are a variety of instances in both transcripts when children took initiative in the writing act. For instance, in the 3/8 transcript, Syd let me know twice and insistently that she "got the M" because she wanted my help in writing more of the word, my. In the 4/13 transcript, April came over from the adjacent table to ask me how to spell write and then quickly went back to continue writing with her friend Leah. Peter and April both initiated showing me their finished journal entry in this transcript.

Children bidding for my attention. Another common occurrence in both transcripts is children calling for my attention. Sometimes I asked them to wait and got back to them later. At other times when their message was not writing related, I asked them not to interrupt, because I wanted to focus on writing.

Networking children. In both transcripts there are instances when I connected children to each other. In the 3/8 transcript Jake was asking Miguel to draw a picture for
him and Miguel did not seem to understand what Jake was saying so I reiterated Jake's request to Miguel. In the 4/13 transcript Brandon offered to help Seth with his writing and since Seth didn't hear Brandon, I reworded Brandon's offer of help to Seth and facilitated their connection.

A variety of interactions. In both transcripts there are a variety of interactions going on between students and me. Sometimes I initiated contact with children and sometimes they were the ones to initiate. Some interactions were brief, spanning only one text unit while others were longer, spanning up to nine text units. There were occasions when I was working with one student when another in close proximity contributed to the interchange. Sometimes I listened to children's talk about their writing or picture, showed interest, or asked clarifying questions, without an intent to encourage more writing. At other times I asked questions or made suggestions to help them extend their writing.

There were occasions when I encouraged children to either begin or continue their work by asking about what they were up to, reading what they had so far, or just saying, keep going. There were also more extensive
interactions when I stayed with a child as s/he was writing something down.

**Differences across the Concurrent Journal Conferencing context transcripts.** While there are many similarities across the two transcripts from the Concurrent Conferencing context, there are also a few differences. These differences reflect in part how my conferencing style changed in the latter part of the school year.

**Focusing on students' projects.** On 4/13 I addressed students' projects more than on 3/8. By 4/13, Karen and I had instituted different writing choices that were available to students after they finished their journal entries. Earlier in the school year, choices after journal entries were finished involved a variety of reading options. The projects introduced later in the year involved different kinds of writing such as writing letters (correspondence) or making books. There are examples in the 4/13 transcript where I encourage students to finish their journals and either begin new projects or continue ones they had started previously.

**Familiarity with students.** There is more evidence in the later transcript (4/13) that I knew students' interests and work habits well. For instance, in the later
transcript I handed two different students trade books pertaining to their interests. This did not happen in the 3/8 transcript. Also, in the later transcript, I interacted with Leah by very specifically addressing her tendency to be dependent on adults.

Taking opportunities to instruct. I took more extensive time to instruct students in the later transcript than the earlier one. For instance, on 4/13 I told Seth what he had missed in a recent Mini-Lesson when he had been absent and then followed up by asking him to apply this new information in his own writing, staying close to him while he carried that out.

Discussion of findings for the Concurrent Conferencing context. Reading the descriptions of the 3/8 and 4/13 Concurrent Conferencing transcripts, the context might seem disorganized and hectic. I did in fact shuttle back and forth among several children and their work, leaving an interchange with one child to talk with another. My notes from early March indicate that I was frustrated with what felt like a lot of jumping back and forth among children and being interrupted. I was concerned about the Concurrent Conferences also because they were different and noisier than the Targeted Conferences.
Compared to the other contexts, there is a mid-range number of text units per minute in this context. This suggests that while I was shuttling among children, I wasn't shifting my foci or positions as much as in other contexts, so the quality of the interactions was slower and more thoughtful than in other contexts that had more text units per minute. It also means that children had more time to talk in between the teacher's talk.

I began to deal with the interruptions in a variety of ways around the middle of March, so by the 4/13 conferences there were fewer interruptions from children even though I was still shuttling back and forth among several of them. Although this might continue to appear hectic it really wasn't because the description doesn't highlight what children were doing when I left them to interact with someone else.

One thing that should be taken into consideration is that kindergarten children write slowly. So when I began writing a word with one child and then started talking to another, the first child was usually continuing to write during my interaction with the second child. There were times when I left children in the middle of their writing. A few minutes later they told me they were ready for more
support. This allowed students to consider what they could do independently and to ask for help when they thought they needed it.

Other times, children continued on their own when they saw I was busy with another child. Knowing the children allowed me to make on-the-spot judgements about who would continue working on their own and who would need my more direct presence. With Leah, for instance, I was continually working with her to persevere on her own without my nudging her forward. This specific work is reflected in the 4/13 transcript when I asked Leah to get going on her own and to show me when she was finished. This speaks to the importance of teachers knowing their students well and making decisions based on this knowledge.

There are several instances of being interrupted by children during the Concurrent Conferences. This might have been because I was not seen as the teacher who maintained order in the classroom and because the Concurrent Conferencing style was different than the Targeted Conferencing style. While students knew it wasn't appropriate to interrupt during Targeted Conferences, they didn't apply the same rules for the Concurrent Conferences. These interruptions also reflect some kindergarten
children's need for continual interaction with and support from the teacher. Children might have been asking for the kind of support they needed.

Lysaker (2000) worked with a student in her study who asked for "language-learning scaffolds that were familiar and comfortable" (p. 483). She notes that what he needed was at odds with what schools typically offer. This is the case in the Concurrent Conferences when students interrupted me with questions and bids for attention. I encouraged students to wait while I was working with someone else because that was the norm of the class. They might have been served by a quick response to take care of their immediate needs. Smith (1983) contends that "there is...a need for a teacher or other practitioner to be an immediate collaborator with the learning writer, for support and encouragement and also to provide knowledge of technicalities" (p. 564).

Advantages of the Concurrent Conferencing context. One advantage of the Concurrent Conferencing context is that, by not staying with children for an extended amount of time, they had opportunities to be independent and think for themselves. Children had time to do some construction
of the written language system on their own, according to their own pace.

I was able to interact with several students during the conferencing time; probably more than if I had stuck with one student exclusively until s/he finished the entire journal entry as was the case in the Targeted Conferences. (see last column of Table 4.1) Being available to students is consistent with Sawkins’ (1971) recommendation that teachers be visible to students, moving among them and available to encourage and assist while they are writing.

Another benefit of the dynamics of the Concurrent Conferencing context is related to the different kinds of interactions I had with students and how the interactions were often shaped by the child’s agenda. When Syd told me early in the 3/8 transcript that she wanted to write more, I left her to do that rather than staying with her. This may have been a different kind of interaction than I had intended but I was following Syd’s lead, allowing her to follow through on her own intentions.

This interaction with Syd also shows flexibility in my style of conferencing, another advantage, since my agenda at that point was that Syd finish up her journal in order
to get on to her project. Syd wasn’t ready to move on yet and began work on her project when she was ready.

Children had opportunities to take initiative and maintain ownership of their own writing as I often left it up to them to ask questions and let me know when they needed support.

Other advantages include the learning opportunities available to children as they overheard my talk with other students, or talked with each other. While many students were actively engaged with their writing around me, there was a good chance that information would be shared among the students.

One last advantage to this style of conferencing is that it allowed children to come to the conferencing area and stay there for the whole journal writing time because of the way I went back and forth among students. They came to know my routine and realized that if they stayed, there would be opportunities for asking questions and getting support when needed. Gallimore and Goldenberg (1993) contend that "the single most critical component in most emergent literacy activities is the personnel present. Someone has to be available and capable of assisting a child if we are to see 'literacy-promoting' interactions"
(p. 323). I believe this is the greatest advantage to this context—the availability of an adult to assist children as the need arises.

Disadvantages of the Concurrent Conferencing context. A disadvantage to the back and forth nature of the Concurrent Conferences is that children didn't get a feeling for the continuous flow of writing as they would have if I had stayed with them from start to finish through their writing, working exclusively with one student at a time to get their text down. Since there were lots of stops and starts as they waited or got distracted they might have felt frustrated and a lack of a feeling of completion and accomplishment.

Also, the variety of interactions I had with students did not create a highly predictable atmosphere. This might have caused a sense of insecurity for some children who needed predictability in coping with the chaos (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987) that can be felt in learning the written language system. The contrast between the styles of the two different kinds of conferences might have caused disequilibrium for some students (and me) since Karen was the classroom teacher, whose style of conferencing was the accepted way to conference.
The Targeted Journal Conferencing Context

In both Targeted Conferencing transcripts Karen sat at the small table in the middle of the room and children arrived voluntarily at different times for a conference. If she was already conferencing with someone, Karen asked students to work on their journal while they were waiting for her. Karen also expected students to do some writing on their own before she would meet with them.

In both Targeted Conferencing transcripts, Karen met with one student at a time for an extended number of consecutive text units (range of 44 to 77; an average of 62 text units per child). These consecutive text units were interrupted only by Karen’s brief reminders to students at the conferencing table to work while they were waiting, when she addressed the class to quiet down or to ask if students needed more time to finish their journal entries. Karen worked with students primarily to help them write a sentence in their journal.

The 3/15 Targeted Conferencing transcript. In the 3/15 (March 15th) conferencing time, Karen met with four children, one right after the other. In order to give the reader a sense of the style of the Targeted Conferences, I describe in detail most of Karen’s first meeting on 3/15
with Franny. I do not describe the conferences with the other students because the other three conferences are similar to the one with Franny.

After clarifying with Franny what the sentence was that she wanted to write, Karen led her in deciding where on the page there would be room to write it. Karen instructed Franny to keep her writing separate from her picture because, "we don't want to mix up the reader." Then Karen suggested they start in a specific place on the page, repeated the first five words of Franny's sentence, "I like my two flowers", and asked, "How do you write I?"

Immediately after Franny wrote I, Karen asked if she had her alphabet chart in her book box. As Franny went off to look for it, Karen told the other children at the table that they could be drawing or writing or thinking while they were waiting.

Seven text units later, after separating Brandon from the group because of misbehavior and conversing with me briefly about Franny's alphabet chart, Franny and Karen resumed work. Karen said, "I like. What do you hear for like?" When Franny said, "L", Karen responded, "Mm hm. Do you put it next to it or leave a space?" After Franny answered, "Leave a space", Karen replied, "Go ahead" and
then, "OK what's next in your story?" Franny said, "I like, K?" Karen misunderstood and said, "Cake? Is that what your picture-" Franny interrupted to say, "K" which was enough clarification for Karen who responded, "Oh I see, the letter K. I didn't hear you. That's part of the same word, so will we leave a space or put it right next to it?" When Franny said, "Put it next to it" Karen confirmed with, "Mm hm" and then suggested to Dan and Leah that they might share work with each other while waiting for a turn.

Then Karen said, "Point and read. What's next?" When Franny answered, "I like the," Karen responded, "Do you know how to write the? Can I write it for you?" When Franny immediately said, "T-H-E" Karen's response was, "Yes, you do know. Will you write it right next to it or will you use a two-finger space? Good, you're learning about those spaces."

In the next text unit Karen addressed the whole class, saying, "Shhh. It's still quiet writing time for two more minutes." Then she returned to Franny asking, "OK, what do you hear for flowers?" When Franny answered, "F" Karen immediately asked, "Will you put it next to it or will you use a finger space?" Franny must have put her finger on the paper to make the needed finger space because Karen
said next, "I like flowers. Why did you like them?"
Franny answered, "Because um they live in water." Karen
followed with, "OK, let's write because, what do you hear
for because?" Karen confirmed Franny's response of "B"
with an "Mm hm. Because they."

Then Karen said, "Watch this. See how these almost
match? The and they are the same. If you want to turn the
into they all you have to do is add the Y, OK? I like the
flowers because they live, what do you hear for live?"
Franny said, "live, L?" to which Karen said, "Mm hm. Will
you put it next to it, oh, she already knew, finger space,
good. What next?" When Franny read, "I like my the. I
like the", Karen interrupted to say, "Let's point like this
right under it, OK?"

As Franny began to read, "I like mm the flowers" Karen
continued with the word "cause" presumably keeping Franny
on track. When Franny continued, "they are" Karen
responded, "you said, they live". Franny picked this right
up by saying, "live in" and since in was the next word
Franny needed to write, Karen said, "in, what do you hear
for in?"

This conference continued for 23 more text units until
Franny had written her whole sentence. At the end of the
conference, Karen spoke positively about all the work Franny did by herself, reiterated her teaching point about keeping the writing separate from the picture and then went on to conference with Leah. The conferences on this day with Leah, Dan and Betsy were similar to the one described here with Franny.

**Similarities across the Targeted Journal Conferencing context transcripts.** The two Targeted Conferencing context transcripts are similar in many ways suggesting this was a predictable context for students.

_Predictable structure and discourse._ During both transcripts the typical way a conference between Karen and a student began was that Karen asked what the child had done so far in his/her journal. Then she engaged the child in deciding either something to add on to what was already written or something new to write. If the child pointed to a letter string and read something that had no apparent graphophonic connection to the intended meaning, Karen usually asked if s/he wanted to write that on another place on the page.

Then Karen led the child in writing a sentence. Karen said the agreed upon sentence, and then the first word. Next she'd ask, "What do you hear?" and repeated the focal
word slowly. If the child said a correct letter Karen would tell him/her to write it down. If the child said an incorrect letter or if the letter the child suggested was not the first letter needed to spell that word, Karen would ask if she could write first. Students always said yes. Karen wrote a letter or a few letters and then told the child to write the suggested letter if it had been correct but not the first letter that was needed.

As new words were added to the text Karen would ask the child to reread what was written so far, either alone or with her. Then they continued writing the rest of the sentence in the same way as described here for writing the beginning of the sentence. If the sentence was brief, Karen usually asked the child a question about it in order to elicit some more writing.

Strategies to think about the letters in a word.

Karen used several strategies across both transcripts to support students in thinking about the letters they needed to write words. One common strategy was asking them to stretch the word (say it slowly), or saying it slowly herself, in order to hear the sounds. For instance, when Dan was writing the word space, and had already written S-

Another strategy Karen used regularly when children did not know the needed letter was to direct their attention to the line on their alphabet chart (see Appendix C) where that letter was located. Then Karen alternately said the focal word with emphasis on the letter she was trying to elicit from the child and one of the four words in the row where the correct letter was located until she had said all four words.

In both transcripts there are a few occasions when children wanted to write the word they or there and Karen showed them that if they wrote the word the they would just need to add a letter or two letters in order to spell they or there.

Conference endings. Karen stayed with one child through the writing of their whole sentence and then usually summarized the work they had done together, pointing out positives the child had done. Other common comments were about the child's specific abilities and how s/he had done most of the work with little help from Karen. Karen had a large, blue, three-ring binder with a section for each student where she wrote what had transpired during
conferences and other evaluative information. After these ending comments she briefly wrote some of them in the binder. Then she went on to the next child waiting to conference with her.

*Making teaching points.* During the course of the interactions in both transcripts, Karen usually made a few teaching points related to what the child was doing, such as when Jack had written the word, fighting, using an E for the *ing* ending. Karen said, "Fighting, it sounds like an E but it's actually the I-N-G...You can turn sing into singing or sleep into sleeping or talk into talking, it's I-N-G. It sounds like the letter E but it's *ing*, OK" (4/13)?

*Differences across the Targeted Journal Conferencing context transcripts.* There are only a few differences between the two Targeted Conferencing transcripts.

*Differing number of text units per child.* One difference is that in the 4/13 transcript there are more text units per child. In the 3/15 conference Karen spent an average of 54.5 text units with each of the four children she conferenced and in the 4/13 conference she spent an average of 73 text units with each of the three children she conferenced with on that day.
Encouraging children to write more or less. In the 3/15 transcript, Karen used the words, 'just write' several times to refer to what the child and Karen would write together. For instance, when Betsy said she wanted to write, "I like this one because it's black and it's really cool," Karen pointed out that there might not be enough room on the page to write that much. She suggested they write on the bottom line, "and let's just write, I like this one, cause that'll fit, alright?"

In the 4/13 transcript, though, Karen encouraged the students she conferenced with to write longer texts such as when she said to Sami, "I want to know what those coyotes were doing cause they were doing something she says, but she wouldn't tell us. Maybe she'll put another idea on the back page. I don't want you to feel like you have to stop on these stories. If you want, you can just keep going on that back page for ever and ever and ever, OK?"

Conferencing or not during quiet writing. In the 3/15 transcript, Karen conferenced with Franny during quiet writing time, interrupting the conference to remind other students that they should not be talking because there were still a few more minutes of quiet writing left. In the
4/13 transcript, the conferences with children began after quiet writing time.

Discussion of findings for the Targeted Conferencing context. On several occasions Karen told me her main goal for students and their writing was to help them become independent writers and the way she felt she could achieve this was through one-on-one conferences. Karen highly valued this conferencing time with individuals and maintained her focus to have three or four conferences on most days. On alternate days when it was my turn to conference and Karen’s role was to oversee the rest of the class, my observations indicated that she still was able to fit in some extended conferences with individuals. These conferences were not as extensive as the ones described above but they were abbreviated versions of the same framework. Students seemed to understand the value Karen placed on these conferences as they tended not to interrupt her while she was having them.

Another indication of the value Karen placed on conferencing with children to write a sentence together in their journal, is that in the two primary data transcripts Karen did not interact with children about projects that they could choose to do after their journal entry. Almost
exclusively her attention was on the journal writing conferences.

Karen's use of the word the to show students the spelling of other similar words was a strategy she used during several conferences. Karen told me she found herself repeating the same point with several different students during conferences on the same day. This raises the issue, that if listening in to conferences with other students had been a sanctioned behavior, students might have picked up information they needed for their own writing, such as the understanding that the spelling of the could be used to help with spelling the words they or there. Larson (1995b) found that teacher's "exclusive dyadic interaction with students limits access to literacy knowledge" (p. 298) for other students. While students were present at the conferencing table during Targeted Conferences, they were asked to work on their own writing or share with a partner rather than appear to be doing nothing, which might have meant listening in on the conversation between the conferencee and teacher.

Perhaps Karen's typical remarks to children about how much they had written on their own is another reflection of the importance of the goal for Karen that children be
independent writers. It was not always the case that children had in fact done as much independent work as Karen noted. Maybe Litowitz' (1993) suggestion for the use of fantasy when supporting children is at play here. She writes, "a child performing in the zone of proximal development with an adult believes himself to be accomplishing the task and that the adult's organization of the task...permits that illusion or fantasy" (p. 190). Karen's positive feedback might have helped students see themselves in that light.

Advantages of Targeted Conferencing context. One advantage of the Targeted Conferencing style is that the structure was predictable for students. This predictability facilitated students internalizing the support Karen offered, to use her language to support themselves when writing alone. The predictability of Karen's conferences also helped students be more successful during the conferencing time since they knew what to expect.

An advantage as well as a disadvantage is the lack of availability of the teacher to most of the class. It is an advantage because students had ample opportunities to
interact with each other and to problem solve independently while the teacher was busy conferencing with one child.

One last advantage that could also be considered a disadvantage is that Karen made many positive remarks about the child's work and this practice may have lent itself to children seeing themselves as capable writers and learners.

*Disadvantages of Targeted Conferencing context.* One disadvantage of the Targeted Conferencing style is that because Karen was always present with the conferencee, that student did not have the opportunity to do much independent thinking while s/he was with Karen. There were many opportunities for children to think and construct their writing independently, but students could not work independently and ask questions as they arose to an available teacher.

I consider the predictability that was evident in Karen's conferences to be a disadvantage as well as an advantage. Knowing what to expect might lead to routinized thinking. For example, one common discourse pattern during Karen's conferences was asking a two-part question in which the right answer was always the second part of the question. There are several examples of this in the description of Karen's conference with Franny above.
Coming to know that they could expect this pattern, children usually chose the second choice.

There was an instance in Karen’s conference with Franny when Karen asked if she could write for her, and another time when she asked Franny if she needed to leave a space before writing the next letter. In these instances Franny quickly showed her knowledge of the spelling of the word and when to leave a space. Perhaps if Karen had slowed her pace of leading children through conferences, they would have had more opportunity to initiate and show their understandings.

The number of text units per minute in the Targeted Conferencing context (see Table 4.1) is at the high end compared to the other contexts. This means that Karen was changing her focus or position (or a category within these dimensions) more frequently than in most of the other contexts. It also suggests that there wasn’t a lot of wait time for children to think and consider answers to her questions. This is consistent with Mary Budd Rowe’s (1986) finding that “when teachers ask questions of students, they typically wait one second or less for the students to start a reply” (p. 43). Rowe recommends that “if teachers can increase the average length of the pauses...there are
pronounced changes (usually regarded as improvements) in student use of language and logic as well as in student and teacher attitudes and expectations" (p. 43).

One last disadvantage in this context is that there was little opportunity for the teacher to interact with other students besides the one in the current conference. When Karen conferenced with one student, the rest of the class knew they weren't supposed to interrupt. This left little room for children's burning, spontaneous questions and their desire to share with an adult while composing.

**The Free Choice Context**

The Free Choice context is the only one of the five contexts that is not directly related to the journal writing time. Free Choice took place towards the end of the morning after recess and right before lunch. Depending on how the morning went, the Free Choice time could be as short as 5 minutes to as long as 25 minutes. It averaged 10 to 20 minutes. Students signed up for the Color, Draw and Write option each day as noted in Chapter 3 where I describe the daily routine of this class. There were 5 slots for students to sign up for Color, Draw and Write on the free choice sign-up paper and these were usually filled
quickly as students signed up during the course of the morning.

While students were walking to their various choices, I usually took out the boxes that housed supplies and began putting them on the long table where Color, Draw and Write took place. As children arrived they helped me take lids off the boxes where a variety of writing and drawing utensils were stored, then either got out on-going projects or selected paper to start a new one. There were papers available in a variety of colors, textures and sizes and some paper stapled together for making books. There were also continuous-feed computer labels which were mostly used to make name tags but were also used for other purposes invented by the children.

The 3/15 Free Choice transcript. On 3/15 (March 15th) Gabi, Willis, April, Franny and Seth signed up for the free choice option, Color, Draw and Write. The transcript begins with unidentified children talking about some of the writing utensils and Franny saying she wanted to sit by me.

Early in the transcript Seth told me enthusiastically that he was drawing about Godzilla. When I responded by saying, "Ooh" Seth continued to talk about what he was drawing and then, as he wrote the word stop he said, "Do
you want to know how to spell stop? S-T-O-P." I asked him, "How'd you learn that Seth?" He answered me and went right on talking about his drawing.

April became involved in what Seth was saying and seemed interested in the spelling of the various stop and go words. I asked April if there were enough colors for her and Gabi told me she likes to rub pencil erasers because "it feels so good." After listening to Seth's talk, April also wrote stop and go. I read those words and Franny got involved wanting to know where it said stop and go. Gabi asked in a singing voice where the colorful markers were. I continued to wonder out loud about whether or not we needed more colors, commented on the colorfulness of Seth's castle and then on the beautiful turquoise color April was using. From the quiet interlude on the tape with a few soft singing voices, everyone seemed involved in their own projects.

Then April said that Kareem, Willis' younger brother, wrote some of the class members' names on the computer. This led to a conversation about Kareem. Willis volunteered that he went to Noahs and April persisted with him in several interchanges as she tried to understand what
he meant by Noahs. Karen called for the classes’ attention and some children went to plant sunflower seeds with her.

I watched April making her picture and commented positively about her as a learner. Then I asked if she was making a traffic light, talking out loud about my thinking relative to her picture.

I commented to Seth that he wrote a lot and then responded directly to April’s question, “How do you spell slow?” April wrote the letters S-L, saying them out loud and also saying, “I already did the S” and then Franny said, “O-W.” After April said “O,” several children said, a split second apart, “W.” April must have looked at me with a puzzled expression because I then said “W” and April responded, “Oh like that?”

There were pencil rattling noises and talk about various writing utensils and then April said, “You need to put the lids back on them.” When I said I might have lost the lid, Franny laughed and said, “You lost the lid?” in a tone suggesting she could not believe a grown-up would do such a thing.

As April and Gabi remarked about one of the unusual pencils, Franny asked me to write something about sunflowers with a certain writing utensil. I clarified
what she wanted me to write and then engaged her in thinking about what letters I should write. I talked about the word sunflower as I wrote it.

As I continued to write Franny's text, Seth told April he made a joke book and asked her a riddle, reading from what he wrote. I joined April in laughing at Seth's riddle and said, "That's great. Is it going to be the Godzilla joke book?" I continued to make suggestions about the specifics for Seth's book and then asked him to read it to me. I responded enthusiastically to his reading and then Franny asked for glue which I said I didn't have.

The transcript ended as Karen called the classes' attention to clean up and Seth read what he had written so far. I mentioned that he wrote a lot when I wasn't looking.

Similarities across the Free Choice context transcripts. In what follows I discuss the similarities between the two Free Choice transcripts. These similarities indicate that like the journal conferencing contexts, the Free Choice context was a predictable one for students.

Children talking or working quietly. In both of the Free Choice transcripts some children were vocal, saying
what was on their minds in a steady or intermittent stream of talk, as they worked, while others worked quietly or spoke infrequently. Ben, for instance, talked out loud about his "Danny the Slug" book throughout the 4/8 transcript. Other children worked quietly on their own, volunteering to share their work when they were ready or not at all.

Focus on materials. In both Free Choice transcripts there is continual interest, enthusiasm and talk about the various materials from both the children and me.

Workshop atmosphere. The atmosphere in the Free Choice context had a workshop flavor. Everyone was involved in their own projects with on-going casual comments and conversation about the work at hand or related issues.

Taking dictation. In both Free Choice transcripts I take a child's dictation. In both instances the child is the one who initiates this interaction and in both cases I clarify with the child to find out what s/he actually wants me to write.

Differences across the Free Choice transcripts. In what follows I discuss some of the differences between the two Free Choice transcripts.
**Variations in involvement.** I initiated involvement more and was more actively involved with students in the 4/8 transcript than in the 3/15 one. For instance, in the 4/8 transcript Miguel asked me to write my name and rather than just following his instructions I reminded him of the conversation we had the previous day about where my name was written on the front of my field notebook.

Also in the 4/8 transcript Al was quietly drawing across the table from me until I asked him about his work and suggested various extensions such as making a book.

I was also more involved in the 4/8 transcript by interfering with some of the students’ agendas for exploring the materials. For instance, early in the transcript, when Miguel wanted an envelope, I explained that envelopes are used when we write letters. I then guided Miguel in the direction of writing a letter, asking him who he was writing his letter to and commenting about it. Later in the transcript Miguel wanted more paper but rather than give him what he was asking for, I reminded him about the book he had started the previous day.

**Discussion of findings for the Free Choice context.** The relaxed atmosphere during the Free Choice context was due in part to fewer requirements than during the journal
writing times when children were expected to draw, write (something that went with the drawing), and write their name and date on their journal page. Without the pressure to support students in fulfilling these requirements I was able to join in students' conversations and even to do some of my own drawing and writing. While I was not working on my own projects during the two Free Choice sessions that served as primary data, there were several other times during the year in this context when I made birthday cards for children, worked on writing and illustrating my own book and tried out a variety of utensils. Smith (1983) asserts that one of teachers' critical functions in "guiding children towards literacy (is) to demonstrate uses for writing" (p. 564). I provided these demonstrations in the Free Choice context.

There is greater attention to children's drawings and talk about colors during Free Choice than other contexts due in part to a wider variety of materials available during Free Choice than during the journal writing time.

Seth's activities during the 3/15 Free Choice time were unusual for him. At that time in the year Seth usually copied a line or two from a book in his journal using large letters and finished quickly. His writing of
the lengthy Godzilla text replete with invented spelling, small letters and strong involvement in this Free Choice session were uncharacteristic of Seth's writing in mid-March. Perhaps he felt unconstrained during Free Choice to try out some different strategies.

The dictation I took during both Free Choice transcripts was also unusual in this classroom as Karen preferred that children write on their own. I took liberties during Free Choice to experiment with a wider variety of ways to interact with children than I did during the journal writing context. The students I took dictation from appeared actively involved in the composing act with me and I used the opportunity to share some of my decision-making thinking as a writer.

Larson (1995a) also noted that the kindergarten teacher in her study used dictation as a time to talk to her students about writing. Dictation is one of many viable ways to support young writers. Smith (1994) notes that "there is no need to fear that reading to learners, or writing for them, will make them passive and dependent. They will not always expect other people to do their...writing for them. No child has that much patience" (p. 218).
The number of text units per minute during the primary data Free Choice transcripts is on the low end of the continuum relative to the other contexts (see Table 4.1). This indicates that I was not frequently changing my position and focus as much as in some of the other contexts and that students probably talked more than in the other contexts.

**Advantages of the Free Choice context.** Students had opportunities to explore materials and the acts of writing and drawing freely with no daily requirements. They were able to use the materials for their own purposes. As the available adult, I was present and interested and for the most part open to the children's agenda. Following children's lead supports a sense of ownership.

**Disadvantages of the Free Choice context.** There was not a lot of time available for Free Choice so students did not have much time to get involved exploring the materials and using them for their own purposes. As the available adult I was somewhat controlling with the materials, monitoring their use. This might have stifled students' explorations and constructions according to their own ideas.
The Mini-Lesson Context

A Mini-Lesson preceded each day's journal writing time. When the students returned to the classroom after their morning bathroom break they sat down on the floor in the group meeting area facing the chalkboard in the front of the classroom. Karen usually led the group in composing a message on a large piece of paper that was affixed with magnets to the chalkboard in the front of the room. She typically began by calling the group's attention and enlisting them in helping her think of what to write that day. Mini-Lessons were usually short, fast-paced and involved students in a variety of ways.

The 3/9 Mini-Lesson transcript. On 3/9 (March 9th), Karen told the class that they would write about space since they were studying it and would go on a field trip to the planetarium the next day. After deciding with the group what they would specifically write about space, Karen enlisted the class in saying together what they would immediately write: Galaxies are gigantic. Then she led them in thinking about the letters in each word. Karen called on students who raised their hand to volunteer a letter and then asked the rest of the class to show their agreement or disagreement by putting their thumbs up or
down. If Karen and the class agreed with the child who had volunteered the letter, she would ask the child to come up and write the letter on the paper.

When the text read, "Galaxies are gigantic. Stars, gas and", they were ready to write the word dust. Karen said, "We need dust. Du:st du:st." Several students joined Karen in saying, "Du:st du:st." Then Karen called on Jessica who had been raising her hand and Jessica said, "D." Karen responded to Jessica's suggestion by saying, "Jessica says D. Do you agree with her?" The students must have put their thumbs up because Karen said to Jessica, "OK, come on down."

As Jessica added the letter D to the text, Karen said, "Some of you heard something else. What else do you hear for dust?" A child who was probably not raising her hand said "S" but since Maha was raising her hand Karen said to her, "What do you hear for dust, Maha?" Maha said, "O" to which Karen responded, "OK, O's close. It's not an O. It's a different vowel there. A, E, I, O, U. You need one that sounds like uh:mbrella. What do you hear Maha?" When Maha said, "U" Karen replied, "She's right, come on down. Should that U be away from the D or is it the same word?" Several students chimed in, "Same word." Karen
repeated, "The same word" and then went on to say, "So what should she do with it? Right next to it or put a space in there?" When a few children said, "Space, leave a space" Karen asked, "Is dust going to be two parts or will dust be all one word?" This time a few members of the group said, "All one word." Karen confirmed this by saying, "One word, so she’ll leave it next to it. Jake, you need to turn around and watch what we’re doing too please, thank you. Thanks. Anybody else hear something else for dust?" Several students repeated Karen’s last word, "dust" and then Karen called on Gabi who volunteered the letter S.

This was a typical Mini-Lesson in which children were involved adding letters to the expanding group text and then, after they’d walked to the front to write a letter, were asked to sit in the back of the group.

Similarities across the Mini-Lesson transcripts. The Mini-Lessons during the school year had many similarities which made them a predictable context for the students. The similarities between the two Mini-Lessons used as primary data are discussed below.

Both primary data Mini-Lesson transcripts took place in the same spot in the classroom with students gathered in a group facing the same direction. Also, they both had the
same purpose, to construct text together as a group, acting as a demonstration for what the children would do in their own journals immediately following the Mini-Lesson.

In both of these Mini-Lessons Karen suggested ideas to write about that she knew were of high interest to the students—the upcoming field trip to the planetarium in the 3/9 transcript and the previous day's snow in the 4/7 one. After telling the class her general idea for what to write about, she asked several students for specific suggestions before deciding exactly what to write.

In both Mini-Lessons, there were similar foci on what letters to use to spell the words they were writing and whether or not to leave a space in between words.

In both transcripts Karen made teaching points connected to what was being written, integrated into the flow of the writing and usually involving students by asking them questions. In the 3/9 Mini-Lesson one teaching point involved adding an S to make a word plural. After Karen led the class in writing the word star she said, "If it's one star we can leave it like that but if it's more than one' what should we put on the end of it? Stars: Stars: To show more than one, what do we need, Dan?"
Karen took opportunities in both Mini-Lessons to let individuals, and the class as a whole, know their capabilities. In the 3/9 Mini-Lesson, when the group had written the word *dust* with Jessica volunteering the last letter needed, Karen took the opportunity to point out the accomplishments of the class. As Jessica was writing *T*, Karen said, "That was a really good job on that word! You guys got every single letter on it. Good team writing for the whole class."

Karen used a variety of strategies during Mini-Lessons to keep everyone's attention focused on the unfolding writing. In the 4/7 Mini-Lesson she told students to tell their neighbor what they thought the next letter was or how to spell a word. For instance when they were about to write the word *the*, Karen said, "The, whisper to your neighbor, what do you hear for the?"

Another commonly-used strategy to engage the group was to ask everyone to read what was written so far. In the 3/9 Mini-Lesson, after one child had written a letter on the group text, Karen re-engaged the group in the task at hand by saying, "OK' here we go. Let's read it again and see what we have. Galaxies are gigantic. Read with me. Use your eyes and your voice. OK here we go."
Differences across the Mini-Lesson transcripts. Even though there are many similarities across the two primary data Mini-Lesson transcripts, there are also a few differences. In the 4/7 Mini-Lesson, rather than asking the class what letter was needed and then calling on individuals to write the letter, as was the case in the 3/9 Mini-Lesson, Karen did all the writing herself. On 4/7 she made specific teaching points and involved the students in other ways besides their writing the next letter to the unfolding message. The 4/7 Mini-lesson was more similar to shared writing (McKenzie, 1985b) than interactive writing (McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000).

Karen began the 4/7 Mini-Lesson by asking several students for ideas about what to write and then she asked everyone to put their hands down and watch how she wrote. She talked out loud as she wrote, sharing her thoughts with the class.

The teaching points Karen made on 4/7 were different than the ones she made on 3/9. On 3/9 she focused on conventions such as adding $s$ for plurals or when to use commas. In the 4/7 transcript Karen demonstrated a strategy that would support students in getting down whatever letters of a word they could and then using a
placeholder when they felt uncertain about other needed letters. Karen suggested that students return to the words later to fill in more letters.

Karen presented this strategy by talking out loud to make her thinking visible to the students. For instance, at one point she said, “I don’t remember’. I can’t think of the sounds right now’. So I’m just going to put a little line in there and go on. I’ll come back to that later, but I don’t want to get stuck right now, I want to get my ideas down. What’s more important to me right now’ spelling it perfect’ or getting my ideas down?” Karen confirmed the children’s, “Getting my ideas down” response and went on to say, “Then I’ll come back and I’ll fix it up.”

Discussion of findings for the Mini-Lesson context. The two primary data Mini-Lesson transcripts are examples of two kinds of Mini-Lessons that took place during the year. The 4/7 transcript is an example of a Mini-Lesson in which Karen made a deliberate decision in advance to convey a specific point. In Mini-Lessons like the 3/9 transcript, Karen made teaching points that were connected to what was written that day. Since the actual text that would be composed grew out of the group's on-the-spot ideas, the
teaching points were not preconceived like the Mini-Lessons exemplified by the 4/7 transcript.

There are similarities between the strategies Karen used during the Targeted Conferences and those she used during Mini-Lessons. Students could expect the same sorts of talk such as Karen asking a question that offered two choices with the second choice usually being the correct answer. These two contexts were also similar in that they had the largest numbers of text units per minute compared to the other primary data transcripts. Mini-Lessons had the highest number of text units per minute and that might be because Karen was keeping the Mini-Lessons fast-paced in order to engage the group and keep the session short.

The brief, fast-paced Mini-Lesson seemed to work well to hold most of the group's attention and put students in a mind set to work on their own journals.

Advantages of the Mini-Lesson context. An advantage of the Mini-Lesson context is that Karen had the attention of the whole class to convey her teaching points. Because the pace was quick and Karen used strategies to involve everyone, students appeared engaged and focused.

The timing of the Mini-Lesson right after the bathroom break in the middle of the morning contributed to its
success since students had just had the opportunity to move around before they settled down to concentrate on the text being composed. This allowed Karen to address her teaching points to attentive children.

When Karen began a Mini-Lesson with an intention to make a teaching point because of a need demonstrated by several students, she could convey the information to everyone at once rather than one at a time as in conferences.

The Mini-Lesson context was one that supported Karen’s goal for her students to become independent writers. According to Graham and Harris (1994), modeling the writing process and our strategic thinking develops students’ self-regulation. The Mini-Lesson is also a good context for students to be involved in a social setting, problem-solving with their peers. This supports them in internalizing “the processes they initially performed collaboratively” (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 766).

Disadvantages of the Mini-Lesson context. One disadvantage might have been the predictable discourse of the Mini-Lesson such as the use of the two-part question with the correct answer usually being the second choice. While some students might have been actively engaged
following Karen's lead, others might have gone along with the group's responses, not thinking for themselves. Also, the fast pace of the Mini-Lesson might not have given children time to think.

The Journal Sharing Context

Journal Sharing time took place during most of the school year right after the journal writing time and right before students went out to recess. There was a paper posted near the group meeting area listing which students shared each day of the week. After cleaning up crayons, pencils, and papers from the journal writing session the class settled on the rug in the same place where all group meetings were held. The five students whose sharing day it was usually brought their journals to the floor while everyone else stored their journals away as part of the clean-up process.

The child whose name was first on the posted list sat on the chair in front of the group and looked at everyone, waiting for the class to settle down or asked individuals to sit flat or quiet down. Karen and I sat at the back of the group. When everyone was quiet, the child in the chair usually began by showing his/her journal entry for that day and talking about it.
Then the sharer typically asked, "Any questions or connections?" Students raised their hands and the sharing child called on someone. The first child called on would usually ask, "Could you read it to us?" The next child would typically say, "I like it that you didn't scribble and you took your time." Karen raised her hand each time someone shared, was always called on immediately and usually made a teaching point. Sometimes she made a personal connection or asked a question about the child's work. I did not usually say anything during the sharing times except for occasional brief comments.

The two transcripts I chose in the four other contexts are all about a month apart. The primary data Journal Sharing transcripts are only two weeks apart because in mid-March we instituted a different way to share as described earlier in this chapter in the section on writing workshop. Also, I didn't obtain permission to start tape recording until the very end of February so I didn't have any recordings before that time from which to choose. The two primary data transcripts represent sharing times that were typical throughout most of the school year.

The 3/2 Journal Sharing transcript. The 3/2 (March 2nd) transcript begins with Karen asking Syd if she would
like to share. After Syd said, "Yeah" Karen named the next three students who would share that day. Karen explained to Al that it wasn't his day to share and asked him to sit in a different place facing the right direction. Then Syd showed the group her journal page and said, "This is my house and I'm ready for questions." Responding to one of the children who asked her to read it, she read her letter string, "A old lady lived in an old house and it's very old because it's brown and then there's blue and there's- on that little girl'- on the dress ( ) it's my favorite color and I like it."

Syd called on Maha who said, "I was wondering if it was a make-believe or true story." After Syd responded, "Make-believe" she called on Karen who said, "Can you just read one or two lines for me?, but I really want to see you point and read. Can you put it in your other hand so your power hand can read for us? Um, and I'm a little bit concerned. Are we looking at the back of a page or a front of a page?" When Syd responded, "The front", Karen said, "OK. If you just point a little and show us one or two lines of reading please." So Syd again read, "This is a old lady. She lived in a house." Karen responded,
"Thanks. I’m glad that you know how to point left to right and top to bottom. Thanks for showing that to me."

Syd then called on Peter who said, "Uh, I like it because you didn’t scribble and you took your time and it’s beautiful and nice and I like your house because it helped— you didn’t, like what Jake was showing me that had the same color but you— you’re just real beautiful ()." After another child who Syd called on said, "I like it because you didn’t scribble and you took your time and I like the flowers and your house and ()", Karen said, "Let’s give Syd a round of applause."

Similarities across the Journal Sharing context transcripts. The Journal Sharing context was highly predictable and the predictability was created by both students and teachers.

One thing Karen did regularly during sharing time was manage the group and the turn-taking. At the beginning she often asked the group to "Check how you’re sitting. Please sit flat" (3/15) and as the sharing unfolded she monitored the time each child was allotted by saying something similar to, one or "two more questions or connections for Sami" (3/2). If the pace lagged she might say, "Any more questions or connections for Gabi" (3/15)?
Karen also used the work of the sharing child to illustrate teaching points for the whole class. For instance, Karen said to Maha, "I like your work because you explained why you liked something. Sometimes people write, like, I like Godzilla, or I like my dog but they never tell us why! And you did that. I like cats and dogs because" (3/2). Expanding their sentences was a point that Karen talked about often. Karen also took the opportunity while she had the floor to comment on the size of Maha's spaces in between words, suggesting she leave a two-finger space rather than just one in order to make it easier to read.

Karen made two teaching points after April shared her entry on 3/2. Right after April shared and before she called on anyone, Karen told her to hold her journal to the side next time to make it easier for herself. Then as soon as April said she was ready for questions Karen asked, "Why did you put the line under the picture like that on both pages?" April responded, "Um because um so I know to draw down there, or write the letters down there instead of write them up here (and down there)." Karen paraphrased, "So you were organizing your paper weren't you? That's nice. I saw some other people doing that. I'm glad that you're doing that April." This was another teaching point
Karen often referred to with individuals or the class - keep the writing separate from the picture.

In the 3/15 Sharing transcript Karen made the teaching point, based on Gabi’s difficulty in reading her entry, that you should practice reading your entry before sharing with the group. Karen pointed out, based on Franny’s sharing, that your picture should match your writing.

One question Karen asked in both transcripts was whether the entry was true or make-believe. Gabi asked this same question in the transcripts. Children also commonly called attention to the fact that someone who was sharing forgot their name or date, both daily requirements to be included on the journal page.

Differences across the Journal Sharing context transcripts. The differences across the two primary data Journal Sharing transcripts are described in this section.

Karen’s focus on evaluating Syd’s ability to “point left to right and top to bottom” (3/2) was an unusually explicit, directly-stated focus for Karen in the sharing sessions and there were no similar evaluative interactions in the 3/15 transcript.

Also, Karen’s lengthy focus on Franny doing so much work on her own was unique to the 3/15 transcript. This
was not usually a topic that Karen addressed during the Journal Sharing context.

Discussion of findings for the Journal Sharing context. Children's comments and questions during Journal Sharing were often similar to Karen's such as the one mentioned above where Gabi asked whether an entry was true or make-believe. This is an example of the Vygotskian idea that children internalize the language that transpires interpersonally.

The recurring comment from students, "I like it because you didn't scribble and you took your time" dated back to the third day of school. Karen's intention at the start of the school year was to look through children's journals daily and decide on a teaching point or two for the next day. After the second day of school Karen looked through the journals and chose Alex's journal to show the group the next day. When Karen showed the group Alex's journal she said, "Look at Alex's drawing. Did he just scribble or did he take his time?" (Field notebook 1, p. 32). Karen's words were influential as students repeated this phrase many times in their responses for the rest of the school year. Students said, "I like it that you didn't scribble and you took your time."
The other part of Karen's talk that was reiterated by students was related to management issues such as asking students to sit flat and quietly. Karen did a lot of this sort of talking during this context and so did students who were sharing. While students in the sharing chair called on peers who were raising their hand, they didn't involve themselves with ending turns. That was Karen's realm. A lot of Karen's talk was about turn-taking. This is consistent with Steinberg's (1985) finding that teachers of young children "spend much time and effort on what they consider to be appropriate turn-taking behavior" (p. 159).

Karen's talk involving teaching points was not taken up by children either. Karen was the only one who made those points. Maybe students sensed that such talk was not expected of them. Karen did not often respond to the content of children's journals during the group Sharing time. While she encouraged children to respond with connections or questions, her agenda was to use the sharing time to make teaching points and keep it running smoothly.

The fact that Karen usually responded to each child who shared is consistent with Cazden's (1985) finding that "most teachers make some response - either a comment or question - to each Sharing Time narrative" (p. 183).
Cazden found that teachers' responses to students during sharing time ranged along a continuum. At one end the teacher gave enthusiastic appreciation or expressed understanding with a simple comment or question for more information. At the other end of the continuum the teacher reacted negatively or shifted the topic to one she valued more. While there were occasions when Karen simply responded to the child's meaning, more often she shifted to a topic that would serve a didactic purpose such as when she asked Maha if she had used a one or two finger space between words.

The Journal Sharing context has the least number of text units per minute among all the contexts. The earlier (3/2) Journal Sharing transcript had only 4 text units per minute and the later one (3/15) had 7 text units per minute. Considering that 14 children spoke during the 3/2 transcript and 7 during the 3/15 one, suggests that when there are less text units per minute, the teacher talks less and the children talk more.

Advantages of the Journal Sharing context. One advantage of the Journal Sharing context was its predictability for students. They had their established routine and seemed to be able to improvise on a standard
script daily, asking questions that the rest of the group were prepared to answer. This predictable atmosphere might have supported students in feeling comfortable and in control.

This predictable context provided an audience for the children's journal entries. They had opportunities for informal responses to their work during the journal writing time as they shared with other children, but sitting in front of the group was treated as a special occasion by everyone in the class.

Disadvantages of the Journal Sharing context. Since only the 4 or 5 children whose names were posted shared each day, there was not the opportunity for sharing by others who might have wanted to share with the group.

Also, the routinized atmosphere of this context stood in the way of children's careful thinking and listening. Children's responses often seemed to just follow the expected pattern of asking one of a small group of typical questions such as, "Could you read it to us?" This question was asked twice of Maha on 3/2 which indicates that the second child to ask that question was not listening very carefully.
Conclusion

Each context had discrete characteristics that led to the production of different kinds of talk and text (Van Dijk, 1999). In the Concurrent Conferencing context there were a variety of interactions; perhaps a larger variety than in the other contexts. Still, children came to understand this context as a predictable entity even though it was different than the Targeted Conferencing routine. Children talked freely among themselves as they worked in the Concurrent Conferencing context. I was focused on helping students fulfill their journal requirements and then getting on to choosing a project. I nudged them forward and attempted to keep them working on appropriate tasks. This was the result of my interactions tacitly adapting to the expectations of the situation since I wanted to support students in accomplishing the classroom requirements. Due to the style of the Concurrent Conferencing context, the teacher was accessible to many students.

In the Targeted Conferences Karen used a predictable and efficient framework to support students in writing a sentence in their journals. Students were familiar with this routine and responded to her questions, getting their
sentence down on the paper. Karen used many of the same discourse patterns in this context as she did during the Mini-Lesson. This seemed to help students be more successful in both contexts in the sense of knowing what was expected of them. Another possible benefit to these predictable contexts is that they freed children to take risks in other areas of their writing and thinking. In the Targeted Conferencing context the teacher was available to one student at a time which made her inaccessible to the rest of the class during the conferences.

In the Free Choice context children explored materials, defined their own projects and worked at their own pace. There was the relaxed feeling that students did not have to finish anything specific so I could interact with them following whatever tangent they initiated. I did have my own agenda about how materials were to be used but I was also interested in what children's ideas were for using the materials. The Free Choice context was unique in that it was the only context not related to journals. It was also unique in that both children and teacher spent a lot of time focusing on materials and chatting leisurely. The focus on materials was due to the wider assortment that was available in this context than in the others.
In the Mini-Lesson context, students were usually attentive and participated in the writing of the group message. They were successful in this context in part because of its close resemblance to the Targeted Conferencing context, as mentioned above. This was the context where Karen delivered most of her teaching points. It was also the context with the largest concentration of text units per minute (see Table 4.1). This density of text units shows that Karen was the most actively engaged with the children during this context which included keeping everyone’s attention as well as making teaching points.

In the Journal Sharing context, children were also familiar with the routine and participated according to both the explicit and tacit rules of the situation, raising their hands to be called on by the child who was sharing and listening as Karen made teaching points about the sharer’s entry. This was also a relaxed atmosphere where students had the opportunity to respond to each other’s work, explaining the difference in the number of text units per minute between this context and the Mini-Lesson. Even though Karen emphasized teaching points and management in both contexts, children had more of a chance to talk at
their own pace during the Journal Sharing context than during Mini-Lessons.

I described the five contexts in detail in this chapter in part to provide a foundation for understanding the other two dimensions, focus and position, which are analyzed in the next two chapters.
Chapter 5

THE DIMENSION CALLED FOCUS

My second research question is, What is the focus of teachers while supporting writers? In analyzing the ten primary data transcripts I identified five foci. They are Management, Writing Act, Conventions, Materials, and Meaning.

In what follows I define, analyze and give examples for each focus and its categories. I also do a cross analysis of the foci and the contexts in which they occur. The analysis is followed by a discussion of findings. Numbers in parentheses in the text refer to the number of text units unless otherwise indicated. I capitalize the first letter of the names of the foci, their categories and subcategories throughout the text. Foci, categories and subcategories are bolded the first time I refer to them in the text. Subcategories are italicized throughout. If the first mention of categories or subcategories is in a list, they are not bolded or italicized. The bolding and italicizing will be the first time they are mentioned alone. Foci, categories and subcategories are capitalized only when they’re used as the name of the focus, category or subcategory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1</th>
<th>Matrix of Foci and Contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contexts→</strong></td>
<td><strong>Foci and their categories (below)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concurrent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Targeted</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules 66/5%</td>
<td>38/12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines 25/2%</td>
<td>23/7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior 117/9%</td>
<td>2/1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Act 195/14%</td>
<td>13/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting 20/1%</td>
<td>59/18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing 141/10%</td>
<td>13/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's Abilities 34/2%</td>
<td>41/13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions 537/39%</td>
<td>5/2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds 117/9%</td>
<td>19/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters 133/10%</td>
<td>6/2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter sounds 33/2%</td>
<td>6/2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words 132/10%</td>
<td>6/2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Boundaries 55/4%</td>
<td>19/6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Layout...</td>
<td>19/6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials 121/9%</td>
<td>3/1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC chart 13/1%</td>
<td>10/3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils 43/3%</td>
<td>35/11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s book 23/2%</td>
<td>1/3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 27/2%</td>
<td>11/9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelopes ... 15/1%</td>
<td>78/24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning 303, 22%</td>
<td>27/8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific 211/16%</td>
<td>14/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General 63/5%</td>
<td>15/7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1 lists the foci, their categories, numbers of text units, as well as the percentages of the text units in each context. For example, the 38/12\% in the box at the intersection of the Concurrent Conferences context and Management focus indicates that the 38 text units that are coded as having a Management focus in the Concurrent Conferencing context are 12\% of all the text units (320) in the Concurrent Conferencing transcripts.

The underlined words in the first column are the five foci and each focus' categories are listed underneath it. Names of some of the categories are shortened so they fit on the table. The percentages next to the number of total text units for each focus and its categories are the percentages of the total number of text units (1364).

Focus on Management

There are 208 text units in the Management focus or 15\% of the total number of text units. This focus includes classroom expectations during the five contexts that serve as primary data. These expectations were also in place at other times in the school day. They were usually well known to everyone in the class and had been talked about on many occasions throughout the school year. The Management
categories are Unwritten Rules, Routines, and Appropriate Behavior.

**Management: Unwritten Rules**

*Unwritten Rules* were referred to on several occasions in this classroom and were well-known to everyone even though they were not written down. The text units in this category were grouped together because they came up often but were not routines (the next category) in the sense of occurring at regular times. The category of Unwritten Rules has 66 text units, 32% of the text units in the Management focus and 5% of the total text units.

In thirteen of the text units in the Unwritten Rules category, Karen or I focused on children occupying themselves with a writing-related activity while waiting to conference with us. For instance, Karen told the children waiting for her at the conference table, "You can be drawing or writing or reading. I don’t want you to be here doing nothing. I’d like you to use this time while you’re waiting for me" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

In eighteen other text units in this Unwritten Rules category, we focused on what was supposed to be included in the journal entry each day (name, date, picture, writing). A typical text unit was when I said to Syd, whose journal
entry included a picture and writing but not her name and date yet, "There's two more things you need to put on here. Do you remember what they are?" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences).

Other Unwritten Rules include the children: pointing to words while reading them, holding their writing to the side while reading to the group during Sharing time, being quiet during quiet writing time, and making appropriate choices after finishing their journal. The Unwritten Rules are all literacy related.

Cross Analysis of Unwritten Rules with Context

Most of the text units coded in the Unwritten Rules category occur during the two journal conferencing contexts. In the Concurrent Conferences, the Unwritten Rule focused on the most was the requirement for the children to include their name, date, writing and drawing on the daily journal page. I focused on this more during the 3/8 Concurrent Conferencing transcript than the 4/13 one. In the Targeted Conferences, the Unwritten Rule focused on the most was for the children to be occupied while waiting for a conference.
Only two Unwritten Rules text units occurred during the Free Choice context, four appeared in the Mini-Lesson context and seven during the Sharing context.

Management: Routines

The 25 text units in the Management category called Routines represent 12% of the Management text units and 2% of the total text units. Routines generally occurred on a daily basis at specific times and were well-known to everyone in the class. Routines include the children storing their journals in book boxes or Karen ringing a bell to call for the classes' attention.

Other Routines included Karen checking whether or not students needed more time for their journal work or the class cleaning up at the end of journal time and Free Choice. The Routine that occurred almost daily towards the end of the journal writing time was when Karen either rang the bell herself or asked a student to ring it and then asked, “How many people are finished? How many people would like three more minutes of writing and drawing time?” After the children raised their hands in response to Karen’s questions she usually concluded, “You’ve got it. Three more minutes” (3/15 Targeted Conferences).
Another Routine, Show What You Know, occurred at the end of the Mini-Lesson and before students began work in their own journals. They lined up, walked individually up to Karen who was sitting next to the large journal page that had just been composed by the group during the Mini-Lesson, pointed to something they knew, such as a word or letter, and said it out loud to Karen. Karen usually circled the letter or word that each child pointed to. Then students went off to get their journal and find a place to sit for journal time. While Show What You Know didn’t occur every day, when it did occur, it had a routine-like quality with expectations that were well-known to everyone.

Cross Analysis of Routines with Context

The Routines category text units occur most frequently in the Targeted Conferences (14 text units). These text units show Karen ringing the bell during journal time to signal the end of quiet writing, calling the class' attention to ask if they needed more time to finish their journals, or telling the class it was clean-up time. The next highest occurrence of Routines text units is in the 4/8 Free Choice transcript (4 text units) and the 3/2 Sharing transcript (4 text units). The text units during
the Free Choice transcript focused on the clean-up routine that always took place at the end of Free Choice. The text units during the Sharing transcript show Karen facilitating turns to share by asking the group to give the sharer a round of applause.

Management: Appropriate Behavior

The largest number of text units in the Management focus is the category of Appropriate Behavior with 117 text units, which represent 56% of the Management text units and 9% of the total text units. The text units in this category involve students' movements, whether around the classroom or raising their hands. Listening is included as an Appropriate Behavior. Most of the Appropriate Behavior text units are coded in the Turn-Taking subcategory (72 text units) but they also include gross motor movements such as moving appropriately around the classroom.

The Turn-Taking text units include Karen or me asking interrupters to wait, calling on students during Mini-Lessons and facilitating turns during Sharing. An example from the 4/13 Concurrent Conferences coded in this Turn-Taking subcategory is when Brandon called for my attention and I responded by saying, "One second." This text unit is unusual in that it didn't involve much movement but since
most of the Turn-Taking text units involved the movement of raising hands, I kept all the Turn-Taking related text units together in one subcategory.

The 45 text units in this Appropriate Behavior category that were not coded as Turn-Taking included us focusing on movement in small groups, curtailing inappropriate behavior, working on appropriate writing-related activities and paying attention during Mini-Lessons and Sharing times.

The text units in the Appropriate Behavior category are the least directly related to writing of all the text units even though they took place during writing times.

Cross Analysis of Appropriate Behavior with Context

Appropriate Behavior text units were found in all of the five contexts but most are in the Sharing, Mini-Lesson and Free Choice contexts. This pattern is the opposite of the first two Management categories (Unwritten Rules and Routines) which have most of their text units in the conferencing contexts.

There are four text units in the Concurrent Conferencing context in which I asked students to wait after they called for my attention and three others where I redirected children’s actions such as asking students to
move around on the floor so I could be in closer proximity to the students with whom I was conferencing.

In the Targeted Conferencing context there are two text units in which Karen let students know either that she would conference with them next or that she would not have time to conference with them that day. In the one text unit involving a child bidding for her attention Karen said, "I‘m working with the conferencing kids. I don’t want to be interrupted" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

The 3/15 Free Choice transcript has only two text units in the Appropriate Behavior category while the 4/8 transcript has 17 text units. In several of these 4/8 transcript's text units I was focusing attention on one student who was particularly rambunctious that day.

The text units in the Mini-Lesson context coded in the Appropriate Behavior category (23) usually show Karen inviting a student to 'come on down' to add a letter to the group writing after s/he suggested the next letter and had the class' and Karen’s approval. There are also several text units related to children raising their hands appropriately to volunteer a letter. In the 4/7 Mini-Lesson there are three text units in which Karen is asking for the group’s attention.
With more than twice as many Appropriate Behavior text units as the Mini-Lesson context, the Sharing context’s 49 Appropriate Behavior text units show Karen orchestrating the group’s behavior to facilitate the smooth running of the Sharing session. She usually told the group there would be one or two more connections or questions for the sharer and then signaled the end of that student’s turn by saying, “Let’s give (the student’s name) a round of applause.” Karen usually followed this sentence by announcing the next person on the list to share.

There are also several text units in the Sharing context in which Karen reminded the group or specific students to sit properly and listen. Three of the text units in the 3/2 Sharing transcript show Karen disciplining one student.

Discussion of Findings of the Management Focus

Considering that the 208 text units in the Management focus are only 15% of the total number of text units suggests that Karen and I did not have to focus primarily on Management during the writing contexts. One explanation for this is that students had a good understanding of the class expectations so we were able to focus on other areas.
Another explanation for this low percentage of text units is that we placed such a strong value on interacting with individuals about their writing that we turned our attention away from Management issues when possible and expected the rest of the class to behave appropriately so we could concentrate on the focal student. Karen's attention did not often wander away from the student she was conferencing with unless the noise level in the classroom was high.

In all contexts except Sharing, we focused on Management about 10% of the time. In 90% of the text units we focused our attention on the four other foci in all contexts except for Sharing. This finding of how little we focused on Management is similar to Larson's (1995b) finding in the kindergarten class she studied in which the teacher did not tell other students who were participating peripherally in the interchange she was involved in to be quiet or to work alone. Instead the teacher actively tolerates these utterances. This is crucial to the process of socially-mediated learning and in the assisted performance of student movement in their zone of proximal development (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). This tolerance response was commonly used by the teacher as a strategy that assists her in accomplishing her goal of completing the dictation of all the participants...[and] serves to socialize the students
to accepted behavior during writing and to the appropriate times and methods for gaining access to the teacher...the teacher has explicit and implicit rules for gaining the floor and by ignoring the inappropriate attempts, she socializes the students to her preferred methods of entry. (pp. 289-290) While our "tolerance response" suggests that our agenda was to continue work with the child we were helping and to socialize students towards acceptable behavior, there are other explanations as well. While the teacher in Larson's study was open to involving other students because she knew that knowledge would be distributed and shared in this way, we were not operating with that understanding. Our focus was more on one child at a time so we tolerated some interruptions in order to be able to concentrate on the student with whom we were working.

One explanation for why I focused on the Unwritten Rule of including all the required parts of the journal page in the 3/8 Concurrent Conferences transcript is that I was eager for Syd to finish her journal and go on to the book project she had started the previous day. Several text units involve my interactions with Syd about these requirements. Also, students did not generally find the transition from journal to project an easy one and I might have been trying to help her make that transition.
We did not focus a lot on Routines in part because they were clearly understood by the class so writing times ran smoothly. The reason why most of the Routines text units are in the Targeted Conferencing context is that Karen was in charge of the daily routines such as keeping her eye on the clock to decide when to clean up from journal writing time. Even the few Routines text units in the Free Choice context originated from Karen who let us all know it was time to clean-up for lunch.

*Turn-Taking* is a large subcategory in Management's Appropriate Behavior category. This is to be expected in a kindergarten class where students are being socialized to life in a classroom. So if the 72 *Turn-Taking* text units are subtracted from the total 117 text units in the Appropriate Behavior category, we did not focus on behavior very much outside of the *Turn-Taking* text units.

The figure that is unusual is the 58% of the text units from the Sharing context coded as Management since all the other contexts have about 10% of the text units with a Management focus. One reason for this large percentage of text units is that even though the sharing student was the one to call on students raising their hands to comment, Karen frequently made sure the turn-taking in
the group did not bog down. Another reason for this prevalent focus on Management during Sharing is that the Sharing time was right before recess so the class was excited to go outside to play and needed reminders from Karen to focus on the child who was sharing.

Focus on the Writing Act

There are 195 text units in the Writing Act focus, which is 14% of the total text units. The Writing Act is defined as the various elements the writer is involved in when engaging in the writing process. The Writing Act text units show Karen and me supporting students in getting started, persevering with their writing, or completing the daily journal entry and beginning on a project. Included in the definition is the child's ability as a writer. For these kindergartners the act of writing involved many processes that mature writers take for granted such as deciding on the next word or letter, getting the letter down on the paper, rereading in order to remember what was being written and considering what to write next. The Writing Act text units divide into three categories: Starting, Continuing and the Child's Abilities.

When Karen and I focused on the Writing Act we were usually helping students to get a short piece of writing
down on paper. In a sense, the child was apprenticed to us, learning what writers do in order to get their ideas on paper. There are rare instances of a focus on the writing process in the broader sense, when we focused with students on such things as revising or editing, but for the most part we focused on enabling students to get a simple idea down on the page.

Karen or I talked out loud about the Writing Act in ways that young children might not have access to as they watch the silent processes of adult writers. There are a few text units that involve the drawing act but most text units involve primarily a focus on writing.

Writing Act: Starting

There are 20 text units in the Starting category, which is 10% of the text units in the Writing Act focus and 1% of the total text units. In this category we usually asked students to get started on their writing such as when I asked Rebecca what she was going to write next. When Rebecca told me, "It is a beautiful house", I responded by saying, "OK, go ahead and start" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). While most of the text units in this category show us telling students to start writing in this direct way, another group of text units show us asking
students to get started in less direct ways. For example, I remarked that Syd had all her journal requirements fulfilled and then asked, "Do you want to get going on your Barbie book" (4/13 Concurrent Conference)?

There are no text units coded in the Starting category that focus on drawing. In all text units we focused on either writing or generally getting started on a project such as a book the child was writing.

Cross Analysis of Starting with Context

Text units coded as Starting are most prevalent in the Concurrent Conferencing context (13 text units). Most of the four text units coded as Starting in the 3/15 Concurrent Conferences involved me asking students to get started on their writing in a direct way while in most of the nine Starting text units in the 4/13 Concurrent Conferences I asked students to get started in more indirect ways. There are no Starting text units coded in the Free Choice or Sharing contexts and only a few in the Targeted Conferences (3) and Mini-Lesson (4) contexts.

The Writing Act: Continuing

There are 141 text units in the Continuing category, which is 72% of the Writing Act text units and 10% of the total text units. There are three ways we focused on
children Continuing with the Writing Act. These subcategories of the Continuing category are: Rereading (63), Planning (52), or Persevering (26).

In the **Rereading** subcategory of Continuing, Karen or I led students in reading what they had just written, usually in order to proceed with the next writing, such as when I said, “Let’s just remember about it OK? Let’s just read what we have so far” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences).

Another group of text units show us reading what the child had written such as when I looked on Rebecca’s paper and read, “This is my house’’ (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). The rising intonation of my voice indicates I expected Rebecca to say what she intended to write next.

In the Targeted Conferences Karen often invited students to read their writing with her. For instance, she said to Leah, “Let’s read it” or “Here we go” (3/15 Targeted Conferences). Both of these invitations were immediately followed by Karen and Leah reading together the few words that had been written so far.

In the **Planning** (52 text units) subcategory of Continuing, we focused on what children would do next in their writing such as seven text units in the 3/15 Targeted Conferences when Karen simply asked the student she was
writing with, "What's next?" In other text units in the Planning subcategory the teacher focused on less immediate concerns than the next letter or word, such as when I said to Syd, "So you think about what you want here on page 4" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences).

We either asked students about their plans or talked out loud about our own plans. An example of the latter kind of text unit is from the 4/7 Mini-Lesson when Karen demonstrated how writers write ideas down quickly and then go back to fill in more letters later. She said, "And I know there's something else that I want to finish-" In this instance she was showing students her planning process.

There is only one text unit in the Planning subcategory in which we focused specifically on drawing. I asked, "Are you going to make a picture that goes with your story here Miguel" (4/8 Free Choice)?

The next subcategory of Continuing is Persevering (26 text units). There are a few text units during the 3/15 Targeted Conference transcript when Karen tells students to "Go ahead." She says this in reference to writing down the next letter. There are also text units in which I focus on children persevering with their work in less direct ways
such as when I tell Dan, "Let me know when you're ready OK" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences)?

Included in the Persevering text units are 8 instances when we encourage children to extend their writing. Karen emphasized the importance of expanding ideas throughout the year in both the primary and secondary data. An example from the 3/15 Targeted Conferencing transcript is when Karen told Leah, "So next time, after you write your first idea, pretend I'm sitting there with you and I would say, Why do you like to do this or why do you like that and put your next idea in on your own, OK?"

There are three Persevering text units in which we focus on pictures. These are brief references such as near the end of the 3/9 Mini-Lesson when Karen said that she needed to sign her name to the demonstration journal page she had just written in front of the group, "and I need to go back and add more ideas to my picture."

Cross Analysis of Continuing with Context

Most of the Continuing text units occur during the conferencing and Mini-Lesson contexts. Continuing text units occur in 13% of all the text units in the Concurrent Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts and in 11% of the Targeted Conferences text units. Continuing text units are
found infrequently in the Sharing (4%) and Free Choice (5%) contexts. In the following sections I do a cross analysis of the three subcategories of Continuing with the five contexts.

In the Concurrent Conferencing context I asked general questions to lead to the child rereading what was written such as, “What did you write so far?” (3/8). I also simply read the words written on the child’s page. In the 4/8 Concurrent Conferences I used the word ‘let’s’ 4 times when I asked to hear what was written such as, “Let’s just read it together again” (4/13).

When I focused on Planning in the Concurrent Conferences I usually asked students about their plans such as when I asked Brandon, “You’re ready? Brandon what’s your book going to be about?” Brandon replied, “Cats” (4/13 Concurrent Conferences).

Three of the six Persevering text units in the Concurrent Conferences show me setting up some accountability for students to persevere on their own and then show me their work later. In one unusual text unit, I suggest a student persevere in the writing process by reading his writing to a friend in order to get help. This was unusual because we did not usually focus on what is
commonly known as the writing process in terms of drafting, getting response from peers or teacher and revising.

While the Targeted Conferencing context includes many text units that show Karen supporting students in moving forward with their immediate writing such as, "What do you need to put next?" (3/15), there are also text units coded as Continuing with the Writing Act that were offered in the form of advice for the future. Five of the text units in the 3/15 Targeted Conferencing transcript involve Leah, a child who often received words of encouragement to continue writing on her own since she tended to seek adults or wait for our nudges before continuing. The text unit used above as an example of the Persevering subcategory of Continuing provides an example of Karen’s future-oriented advice about Continuing as she suggested to Leah what to do next time on her own.

There are a few instances of Karen using the words ‘let’s’ and ‘we’ in the Continuing text units. In one of these instances Karen said, “Let’s write something and we’ll go back and see if we want to make some changes.” This is an unusual text unit because it refers to revision which we didn’t usually mention.
Rereading is a regular focus in the Targeted Conferences context. There are twice as many Rereading text units in the Targeted Conferences as in the Concurrent Conferences. In the 3/15 Targeted Conferences transcript, nine out of the 53 text unit conference with Dan are coded as Rereading (17% of the focus of that conference). Similarly, in the 4/13 Targeted Conferences transcript, 9 of the 77 text unit conference with Jack are coded as Rereading (12% of the focus of that conference). Karen used the word 'let's' several times as she invited students to read with her what was written so far.

Most of the Planning text units in the Targeted Conferences context, especially in the 3/15 transcript involve Karen focusing on the immediate next writing. Seventy-one percent of the Planning text units in this context involve a focus on 'what's next?' compared to 45% in the Concurrent Conferences context.

When Karen focused on Persevering she either told students to "Go ahead" (3/15 Targeted Conferences) or encouraged them to add more to their writing. There were a few times when she asked students to persevere in paying attention such as during the 4/7 Mini-Lesson when she told
the group, "Watch how I write. I want you to help me with my writing."

There are more than twice as many Continuing text units in the 4/7 Mini-Lesson (20) than the 3/9 one (8), because the 4/7 Mini-Lesson was all about continuing and not getting stuck as you are writing. Karen talked out loud as she demonstrated how writers write down their best approximations and then later go back to add more letters to words. In one text unit she said, "I don't know what else is in here. I don't want to get stuck. I want to keep going" (4/7 Mini-Lesson).

In the Mini-Lesson context Karen asked the group to reread with her in order to focus their attention on the text they were writing together. For instance, in the 3/9 Mini-Lesson Karen said, "OK', here we go. Let's read it again and see what we have. Galaxies are gigantic. Read with me."

Karen focused on Planning in several text units during the 4/7 Mini-Lesson when she demonstrated some of the thoughts a writer has while composing including decisions about what to do next. Karen engaged the children by asking them questions. When she finished writing she said, "Let me go back. Am I finished? Am I finished now?"
When the focus is *Persevering* during Mini-Lessons, there are a few text units which are similar to those in *Planning*. Karen summed up her lesson on how to persevere when you are not sure about some of the spellings: "Do you see what I did? Why did I put these lines in here today? That’s the important point of the lesson. Why did I do that, April?" When April responded, "If you don’t know the letters just put the lines in and then think about it a little bit later", Karen reiterated, "Yeah, keep going, get your exciting ideas down and do what you said, OK’ think about it later. Thank you April" (4/7 Mini-Lesson).

There is only one *Rereading* text unit during the Free Choice context. In the 4/8 transcript I invited Miguel to read with me the dictated passage I had just written for him.

While there is only one text unit in which I focus on *Planning* in the 3/15 Free Choice transcript there are six in the 4/13 one in which I ask children about their plans. There is only one *Planning* text unit in the Free Choice context when I focused on 'what’s next?' which was more common in the conferencing contexts.

There are three text units in the Free Choice context in which I focused on *Persevering*. In one text unit, when
Miguel asked for some paper to make a book I reminded him about the book he had started the previous day, asking him to persevere on that one.

There are few Continuing text units in the Sharing context. Three of the four of these text units are coded as Rereading. In the Sharing context these text units are less about the child's immediate writing, as they are in the conferencing contexts, and more to point out the usefulness of rereading what has been written. For example, in the 3/15 Sharing transcript, Karen used the fact that Gabi got confused in reading her text to the group in order to point out that if writers reread their writing they are better prepared to share.

There are no Planning text units and only one Persevering text unit in the Sharing context.

Writing Act: Child's Abilities

There are 34 text units in the Child's Abilities category, which is 17% of the Writing Act text units or 2% of the total text units. These text units include Karen or me commending students about their writing work, their quantity of writing, or the fact that they had written on their own. An example of Karen commending a student is from the 3/15 Targeted Conferences transcript when she said
to Dan, "And that's the whole thing! Everything you knew! How did you know this?" When Dan responded, "Thinking'", Karen said, "Yeah, cause you were thinking and listening. Everything you wrote we needed! That's excellent."

There are no text units where we commended a child's abilities as a drawer. They all focused on writing or children's general good work.

Cross Analysis of Child's Abilities with Context

Most of the Child's Abilities text units are during the Targeted Conferencing context (19). There are only 5 Child's Abilities text units during the Concurrent Conferencing context and 7 text units during the Sharing context. There are few Child's Abilities text units in the Free Choice (2) and Mini-Lesson (1) contexts.

In the 3/8 Concurrent Conferencing transcript there is only one text unit where I focused on the Child's Abilities. I told Rebecca that I saw her working and thinking about her writing. In the 4/13 Concurrent Conferencing transcript there are 4 text units in which I focused on children's abilities.

Most of the Child's Abilities text units in the Targeted Conferencing context involve Karen's positive comments to individuals at the end of their conference.
Five of the text units show Karen telling the child that s/he did most of the writing with only minimal help from her. At the end of the 4/13 transcript Karen had brief interchanges with three girls about their entries for that day and in each case, her response pointed out their abilities.

In the Free Choice context there are only two Child's Abilities text units. I remarked to April about what a good learner she was as she drew and then shared my enthusiasm with Seth about the quantity he wrote.

There are text units focusing on children's abilities only in one Sharing transcript (3/15). Five of these seven text units involve Karen pointing out that Franny did a lot of drawing and writing and most of it on her own.

Discussion of Findings of the Writing Act Focus

When we focused on the Writing Act, we made visible for students those processes which writers with more experience take for granted. There are a few isolated text units that refer to typical aspects of a more mature writing process such as revising or extending ideas. For the most part though, in the Writing Act text units, we supported students to get a sentence on the page by using
strategies such as rereading and continually considering the next letter, word or idea to add.

The Concurrent Conferencing context has the largest number of text units focused on Planning. One possible explanation for this is that as a researcher and not the teacher in charge, I did not have the responsibility for the whole class but rather was taking my time in interactions with individuals around their writing and had more opportunity to ask students about their plans.

There are more text units in the Targeted Conferencing context coded as Rereading (30) than Planning (17). Because of Karen’s conferencing style of meeting with one student for an extended period of time before meeting with another student and because she felt some pressure to meet with as many students as possible each day, her focus seemed to favor helping students write their message down as efficiently as possible so she could work with other students. Karen emphasized rereading which appeared to serve the purpose of maintaining students’ focus on the task at hand and propelling them forward. Planning can take a back seat to rereading when pressed for time. Planning is expendable or can be de-emphasized if the goal is to efficiently help as many writers as possible to get
their daily sentence written. Rereading is a priority if the goal is to keep a young writer engaged with the immediate writing act.

Relative to the category of the Child's Abilities, I find it interesting that there are several text units in which Karen told children they had done very well and wrote mostly on their own although in most cases, Karen had helped them quite a bit. Karen seemed to be planting the seed that they were capable, independent writers so they would believe that of themselves the next time they had an opportunity to write on their own.

It is also interesting to note in the Child's Abilities category, the few text units in the Concurrent Conferences where I commended April and Leah for their good, independent work. These were prevalent issues throughout the year with these two girls as Karen and I both tried many strategies to help them to be independent, successful writers. Like Karen in the Targeted Conferences context, I was trying to create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), hoping that if I talked about children's positive abilities, they would live up to these words.
One reason for the low number of Writing Act text units in Free Choice is that children seemed to initiate more in this context and Writing Act text units were usually teacher initiated as we nudged children along.

In sum, when we focused on the Writing Act, most of the text units are in the Continuing category as we used a variety of strategies to sustain students through their daily writing of a sentence or two. This might indicate that students were having a hard time persisting on their own or it might mean that we wanted to quicken their pace through the writing. We focused less on Starting with writing which might indicate that students were generally successful starting on their own. Our focus on Child’s Abilities might have served an element of fantasy (Litowitz, 1993) sometimes as we boosted children’s self-image and gave them positive images of themselves as writers.

Focus on Conventions

Conventions has 537 text units which is 39% of the total text units. When we focused on Conventions our primary concerns were on the graphophonic system and whether or not to leave spaces in between words. The Conventions focus breaks down into six categories: Sounds,
Letters, Letter and Sound reference in the same text unit, Words, Word Boundaries; and a miscellaneous category including Punctuation, Page Layout, One-to-One Matching, Writing and Picture Relationship and Grammar. These categories indicate which conventions we focused on during the five writing contexts. In the following sections I underline the parts of text we were focusing on.

Conventions: Focus on Sounds

Included in the 117 text units (22% of Conventions text units; 9% of the total text units) in the Sounds category are 79 occurrences of the word 'hear' as in questions such as, "In, what do you hear for in" (3/15 Targeted Conferences)?

Other than using the word 'hear' to indicate the focus on Sounds, the word 'sound' was used 12 times. For example in the 3/15 Targeted Conferences Karen said to Dan, "Usually there kind of sounds like the doesn't it?"

There are 88 times when the focal word (the word we were helping the student to spell) was enunciated slowly and repeated one or more times. In these instances there are a variety of sentence types in which the focal word is embedded. Usually, the repeated or enunciated word was accompanied by the question, What do you hear? or something
similar to it. In all of these instances, the focal word was said once 29 times; twice 39 times; and thrice 14 times. There are 4 repetitions of the focal word 4 times and two instances of 5 repetitions. These repetitions occur within one text unit.

There are 11 times when, in addition to asking what the child hears, the focal word is accompanied by a few words in the sentence that it is embedded in such as, "Because they have. What do you hear for have" (3/15 Targeted Conferences)? In these instances, the focal word was usually enunciated slowly by Karen or me. We also stressed the part of the word we were focusing on.

There are 12 instances when the enunciated word is said without an accompanying question or phrase. In these instances, I interpret the enunciated word as including the implied question, What do you hear? Two examples are, "in: in:" or "drea:m drea:m drea:m" (4/13 Targeted Conferences). Five times the focal word is said alongside words from a line of the alphabet chart such as the following two text units when Karen is helping Jake write the word dream. "Car' Dream. Dinosaur' Dream. Egg' Dree-" and "Dinosaur and dream. They sound the same" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).
There are 18 text units that involve the teacher asking the child what else is heard. For instance, "What else do you hear in roars" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences)? Going back to add more letters to a word after writing down one letter as a placeholder is a strategy that was demonstrated and talked about in several Mini-Lessons. In the 4/7 Mini-Lesson Karen said, "Go back to those words where I might know some more sounds."

There are 8 text units during the Targeted Conferences in which Karen asked students to stretch the word out in order to hear more sounds. A few consecutive text units which demonstrate what Karen meant by stretch the word and also show how the alphabet chart was used is when Karen explained these to Betsy during their first conference together when Betsy was new to the class. "In my classroom, Betsy, I don’t want the kids to go, yuh, yuh, yuh. I would like them to use the whole word and say it again and again. Pretend the word is a piece of bubble gum and we stretch it. Liːke. Pull it out of there. Liːke. Now let me show you this tool. What do you hear for like? Do you hear kangaroo?...Ladybug" (3/15 Targeted Conferences)? After the first occurrence of the word like in this quote, Karen demonstrated how to put your fingers
to your mouth and slowly move them away from the mouth in a pulling-like motion, miming pulling a piece of gum out of your mouth.

There are five instances when we approached the issue of what is heard by connecting to another word. For instance, I said to Syd, “You want to write my and that’s like the beginning of m:onster, m:y. Do you hear how they start the same way” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)? There are 6 times when we ask what a child hears at the beginning or end of a word and 4 times when we commend a child for hearing the correct sound.

There is one text unit in which Karen demonstrates a mnemonic device for remembering which letters represent which sounds. She had shared this device with the class on a few earlier occasions to help students remember the difference between the sh sound and the ch sound. Karen was leading the class in writing much and they had M-U-C so far. She was calling on students to add the last letter but they had not suggested H yet. Karen said, “Be careful, it’s not this one, it’s not sh. It’s chuggah chuggah choo choo” (4/7 Mini-Lesson).

Across the three contexts that include text units coded with a Sounds focus, there are eleven different ways
that text units are worded. Most of these text units contain the focal word followed by the question, "What do you hear?"

**Cross Analysis of Sounds with Context**

The Targeted Conferences (14% of text units in that context) and Mini-Lessons (15%) have the largest percentages of text units coded in the Sounds category. This is in contrast to the Concurrent Conferences that have 5% of the text units with a Sounds focus or the Free Choice and Sharing contexts that had no text units with this focus.

There are instances in the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts when Sounds was the focus for several text units in a row.

**Conventions: Focus on Letters**

There are 133 text units in the *Letters* category which is 25% of the text units in the Conventions focus and 10% of the total text units. When we focused on Letters we usually confirmed a letter suggested by a child to spell a word s/he was writing or asked what letter came next.

Also, there are 12 text units in which we told the child the needed letters. For instance, "The R's first...you put your A next OK?" or "It has an N in it like
There are questions and hints to help the child get to the needed letter in the Targeted Conferencing context that are not present in the Concurrent Conferencing or Free Choice contexts. The two text units in which Karen focused on letters in the Sharing transcripts are unusual, in that
Karen added some information about letters as she clarified confusions about the day of the week or the next person to share on the posted Sharing chart.

**Conventions: References to Both Letters and Sounds**

There are 33 text units (6% of Conventions text units; 2% of the total text units) that include **References to Both Letters and Sounds** in the same text unit. Examples are, "It sounds like an E maybe?", "I hear an N over there too" and "How could we turn that C into the chuh sound" (4/7 Mini-Lesson)?

**Cross Analysis of References to Both Letters and Sounds with Context**

Most of the text units that include both letter and sound references are from the Targeted Conferences (14 text units) and Mini-Lesson (12 text units) contexts.

**Conventions: Focus on Words**

There are 132 text units (25% of Conventions text units; 10% of the total text units) in which we focus on **Words**. Usually we focused on Words in order to support students in spelling them but sometimes we talked about qualities of a word or patterns across words. Twenty-eight of these text units include the focal word in a phrase, sentence, with a question or with the word repeated. For
example, "I like my two flowers, how do you write _I_?" or "Show me _there's_" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

Sixteen text units include commentary about the word such as 4 instances related to the length of a word and commentary on compound words. There are several instances of focusing on the words _the_ and _they_ and how they are spelled similarly such as, "I just wanted to show you that _the_ and _they_ are almost like cousins, they start exactly the same" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

Word-related strategies are demonstrated and suggested 8 times. One strategy is, to find out the spelling of a word, look at a previous time it was written.

Cross Analysis of Focus on Words with Context

Most of the Word category text units occur during the Targeted Conferences (74) and Mini-Lessons (32). There are 19 text units during the Concurrent Conferences and 7 in the Free Choice context. Across the four contexts that have text units coded in the Word category, there are 31 different ways we focus on words. This is a much larger variety than when we focused on Sounds or Letters.

In the Concurrent Conferencing context there are three text units coded in each of the following four ways I focused on words: 1) pointed out the strategy that the
spelling of a word could be found in a previous writing of the word; 2) talked about the word such as its length or that it was a compound word; 3) repeated the word the child was asking for; and 4) compared the word to another word.

In the Free Choice context there are two text units that show me using the first two strategies listed above for the Concurrent Conferences. Unusual among all the Word focus text units are two in the Free Choice context where I simply read the child’s word and one text unit where I ask Seth how he learned to spell a word.

Of the 74 text units in the Targeted Conferencing context in which words are the focus, there are concentrations of 6 or more text units in the following ways words were focused on: commending or confirming a child’s spelling of a word (12), using a comparison (11), asking the child, “How do you write (the word)?” (8) and, asking, “Can I write it for you?” (6). This last group of text units occurs only in the Targeted Conferencing context.

Similar to both conferencing contexts, the Mini-Lesson has text units where children’s spellings of words are confirmed or commended. Characteristic of the Mini-Lesson context are eleven text units where the word is said in its
sentence or alone accompanied by a question such as, "How
do you write (the word)?"

Conventions: Focus on Word Boundaries

There are 55 text units (10% of Conventions text units; 4% of the total text units) in which we focus on whether or not to leave a space between letters to show Word Boundaries. Sixteen of the 55 text units are a question offering a binary choice such as, "Do you put it next to it or leave a space?" Fourteen times we use a directive statement to tell students to leave a space (or not). Eight of these include more information such as, "Inside. That will be the same word. You don’t need to leave a space" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

There are 8 times we remark on the child’s knowledge about Word Boundaries. When Karen asks Jack, "Are you going to leave that space?" she follows that immediately with, "Good, you did! That’s excellent. You didn’t even think about it, you just left that space" (4/13 Targeted Conferences). Eight times we offer a confirmation, such as, "Mm hm, a space in there" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

Cross Analysis of Word Boundaries with Context

Most of the text units with a Word Boundaries focus are during the Targeted Conferences (34) and the Mini-
Lessons (16). There are 3 text units during the Concurrent Conferences, 2 during the Sharing context and none in the Free Choice context. While most of these text units in the 3/15 Targeted Conferencing transcript consist of the two-part question ("Do you put it next to it or leave a space?"), there is only one two-part question in the 4/13 Targeted Conferencing transcript. While there are several instances of the two-part question related to Word Boundaries in the 3/9 Mini-Lesson, there are no text units focusing on Word Boundaries in the 4/7 Mini-Lesson.

Conventions: Page Layout, Punctuation, One-to-One Matching, Word/Picture Relationship and Grammar

The last category in the focus on Conventions has 67 text units which is 12% of the Conventions text units and 5% of the total text units. This category includes a focus on the various conventions listed in the heading above.

In the text units related to Page Layout, we focus nine times on where on the page to write. Two times the focus is the use of lined paper and one is related to orientation: writing left to right and top to bottom.

Three Page Layout text units show Karen focusing on a consideration of where there would be room on the page to write. For example, early in Karen and Franny's 3/15
Targeted Conference Karen pointed to a place on Franny's paper and said, "What do you say we go over here and do it?" Then, later in the same conference she said, "Is there going to be room?" When Franny answered, "No" Karen went on to say, "Yeah, let's go over here."

Twelve text units show a focus on **Punctuation**: five on periods; two on commas; one on an exclamation mark; and four on upper-case letters. Three of the upper-case letter text units are from the 4/7 Mini-Lesson. Karen said to the group, "And the first letter in a new sentence, we need upper case." Later in that same Mini-Lesson Karen said, "And Sunday's the name of a day of the week. Should it be lower-case or upper-case?" Several students in the group responded, "Upper." Immediately after that Karen said, "Upper-case, just like on the calendar. 'In fact, I'll use that, S-U-N, S-U-N."

There are five text units with a **One-to-One Matching** focus. For instance, "OK let's make your fingers match. Your fingers got a little bit ahead there. Let's start with I" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

Seven text units involve a focus on **Grammar**: two text units about using the apostrophe mark for a possessive and 5 on plurals.
Another convention included in this category concerns the **Relationship of Words and Pictures on the Page** (22 text units). Students were asked to keep their writing separate from their picture or to make sure their picture and writing were topically related. Karen encouraged students to decide whether to put their writing or drawing on the top half of the page and to draw a line across the page to help keep the writing and drawing separate. Karen said to Betsy during the 3/15 Targeted Conferences, "You see how Dan’s putting a drawing down here and writing up there? You might want to do that in the middle of your paper too...and then decide, will the picture go here? Or the words? We’ll put pictures on one side and words on the other so they don’t get all mixed up. OK?"

**Cross Analysis of Page Layout, Punctuation, One-to-One Matching, Word/Picture Relationship and Grammar with Context**

Twenty-nine of the text units in this category are from the Targeted Conferences, 13 from the Mini-Lessons, 15 from Sharing and 10 from the Concurrent Conferences. There are no text units with this focus during Free Choice. Most of the text units across the contexts where these text units are present focus on **Page Layout** such as deciding
where to write so there is enough room and *Relationship of Words and Pictures on the Page*.

Across the contexts there are very few references to *Punctuation*. There are three text units referring to question marks during the 3/8 Concurrent Conferences, 2 references to apostrophes and 5 to periods in the 4/13 Targeted Conferences. The only other *Punctuation* reference is during the 3/9 Mini-Lesson where there are two references to commas and 5 text units that involve adding an S to make a word plural.

**Discussion of Findings of the Conventions Focus**

What stands out related to the Conventions focus is the large number of text units. There are 537 text units (39% of the total text units) which is about twice as large as any of the other foci. While the Conventions focus in this study involves more than phonics, the majority of the Conventions text units are related to the letter-sound relationship. This finding is reminiscent of Dahl and Scharer (2000) who found that "a substantial portion (45%) of the phonics events coded...occurred in the writing program" (p. 588). This suggests that a considerable amount of the phonics instruction in the classrooms involved in the Dahl and Scharer study transpired during
their writing programs. Barrs (1998) also contends that phonics study often takes place during writing time.

Karen told me on several occasions that her primary goal was to help her students become independent writers. Her actions seem to demonstrate her belief that to be an independent writer, one needs to have a lot of knowledge about conventions. The large number of text units that focus on Conventions show Karen working hard to attain her goal and give students information and experience in writing words in sentences as conventionally as possible.

Within the Conventions focus the categories with the largest numbers of text units are Letters (133), Words (132), and Sounds (117). It makes sense that we would have focused the most on these categories since these are the most tangible building blocks in getting words down on paper. There are several text units in the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lessons in which Karen asks students to "stretch the word" in order to hear the sounds. This was a popular strategy, mentioned by several students in an end-of-the-year interview. This strategy was also used frequently by the teachers in Dahl and Scharer's (2000) study.
When I read the Conventions focus text units in their naturally occurring sequence in the transcripts I found seventeen instances where Conventions are the focus for more than 6 consecutive text units. With the other foci, there are isolated instances of foci extending for 2-5 text units but Conventions stands alone for having six and more text units in a row. This is expected given the large number of text units in this focus but still it is striking to see the focus on Conventions maintained over so many text units. The large number of text units in the Conventions focus indicates it was an important priority in this classroom. This belief is supported in considering the consecutive text units focusing on Conventions.

Related to the Convention of keeping the picture separate from the writing and making them consistent thematically, Dyson (1982a) conducted a study with kindergarten writers where she found that the drawing and writing was "mostly (62.5%) intermingled on the page and not related thematically" (p. 365). Dyson’s finding suggests that this convention is not something kindergarten children are doing naturally. While we have good intentions to support kindergartners in moving towards
standard conventions, we must also consider what makes sense to them.

Table 5.1 shows the number and percent of text units in the 5 contexts compared to the overall number and percent of Conventions text units. The 537 text unit figure which is the total number of Conventions text units is 39% of the total text units (1364). The Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferences have higher percentages than the overall average percentage across contexts (65% and 60% respectively), while the Concurrent Conferences (22%), Sharing (18%) and Free Choice (4%) contexts have less than the overall figure. The high numbers during the Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferences indicates that focusing on Conventions was a priority for Karen since these were the two contexts in which she was present.

That the Conventions focus is so low in the Free Choice context suggests that students were less interested in Conventions than the teachers since students often took the lead in Free Choice.

Focus on Materials

When we focused on Materials, we attended to the tools that writers use. There are 121 text units with a Materials focus which is 9% of the total text units.
Material's categories are: the Alphabet Chart; Writing and Drawing Utensils; Student-Made Books; Paper; and a miscellaneous category that includes Envelopes, Labels and the Stapler. Due to the small number of Materials text units, I discuss the cross analysis for all the categories together rather than immediately after each of the categories as I did with the previous foci.

**Materials: The Alphabet Chart**

There are 13 text units in the *Alphabet Chart* category which is 11% of the Materials focus text units and 1% of the total text units. The Alphabet Chart (see Appendix C), or ABC chart as it was usually called by students and teachers, was printed on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch piece of paper for all students and was housed initially in their book box and later, in their writing folder. It was used during journal writing time. On several occasions Karen asked children to get their alphabet chart to help them think about letters needed in words they were writing.

Most of the text units which demonstrate Karen using the ABC chart with children are coded in the Conventions focus in the Sounds category. The ABC Chart text units coded in Materials are more focused on the ABC chart itself such as having it out when writing or one unusual text unit
Materials: Writing and Drawing Utensils

The largest number of text units (43; 36% of the Materials text units; 3% of the total text units) in the Materials focus is in the Utensils category. During the journal writing contexts students used only pencils and crayons. During Free Choice there was a wider range of Utensils available such as pens, colored pencils and markers of various sizes. There was also a lot of talk among the children and between the children and me about Utensils during Free Choice.

While talk about Utensils was common among students during the conferencing contexts, talk on this topic between students and teachers was not usual in the conferencing contexts unless there was a problem being worked out regarding Utensils. For instance, during the 3/8 Concurrent Conferencing transcript, there are several text units in which I negotiate with a few children about using the pens I had in my pocket. Jake had my pen and I said, "You know, I, um, I actually need to use my pen, so you're going to need to use a pencil, Jake. Sorry."
During the Free Choice context there is a lot more talk about Utensils especially as I responded to children’s exploration of them. For example, in the 4/8 Free Choice transcript Rebecca pointed out that one of the markers was dry. I responded, “Oh that’s too bad. I guess they must have gotten old so if that one doesn’t work-” I was interrupted by Franny who said, “This one’s not old.”

**Materials: Student-Made Books**

In the Materials category of **Student-Made Books** we focused on the book the child was making. These 23 text units (19% of Materials text units; 2% of total text units) occurred either after students completed their journal entry and chose to make a book or during Free Choice. These text units usually concern the various pages in the student’s book such as when I asked Syd during the 4/13 Concurrent Conferences, “Which is the first page to the book? Which is the very first page?”

**Materials: Paper**

The 27 text units (22% of Materials text units; 2% of total text units) in which we focus on **Paper** include references to a variety of kinds of paper such as post-it notes, paper in the journal, paper for making books, scrap paper and shiny paper. The shiny (glossy) paper was one of
the varieties available during Free Choice and was very popular.

A typical Paper focus text unit from Free Choice shows me trying to understand what Miguel is asking: "Do you want some paper to write a letter? You want some shiny paper?" Franny helped me out by saying, "He wants his book" (4/8 Free Choice).

**Materials: Envelopes, Labels, Stapler**

The last category in this Materials focus consists of 15 text units (12% of Materials text units; 1% of total text units) that include a reference to Envelopes, Continuous-Feed Computer Labels which were used mostly for making name tags during Free Choice or the Stapler. The following text unit is one of a few consecutive text units in which I explained to Betsy how to use the continuous-feed computer labels because she wanted to make a name tag: "OK, yeah, first write it on there and then take it off because if you take it off it'll be too sticky" (4/8 Free Choice).

**Cross Analysis of Materials with Context**

Most of the Materials text units occur during the Free Choice context and these involve primarily a focus on writing and drawing Utensils (29) with a secondary focus on
Paper (17). While the text units coded as Materials in the 3/15 Free Choice transcript show me focusing mostly on Utensils, the 4/8 transcript's text units show me focusing on Utensils (16), Paper (16), Envelopes, Labels, Stapler (13) and Student-Made Books (6).

The context with the next highest number of Materials text units is the Concurrent Conferences. The largest Materials category in the 3/8 Concurrent Conferencing transcript is Utensils (8) while the 4/13 Concurrent Conferencing transcript has the most Materials text units in the Student-Made Books (12) category and no text units in the Utensils category.

During the Targeted Conferencing context the Alphabet Chart is the largest Materials focus category. The text units involving Utensils in the 3/15 Targeted Conferencing transcript are the last three text units in the transcript about cleaning up crayons on the floor. The three text units in the 4/13 transcript coded as Utensils are addressed to one child about using an editing pen.

There are no Materials focus text units in the Mini-Lesson context and the one Materials text unit in the Sharing context is unique because it is the only text unit focusing on a child's journal.
Discussion of Findings of the Materials Focus

While we focused very little on Materials, the context where we focused on them the most, Free Choice, is the context where a variety of materials were available. In the Free Choice context, children took the most initiative which suggests that Materials was an important focus for students. As the text units in the Free Choice context indicate, children had a lot of questions and comments about materials as they had time to explore and use them. Dyson (1993a) points out that given a range of materials, children will "initially explore each available medium without any intention to symbolize" (p. 23). Knowing this, we can provide opportunities for young children to explore materials according to their own agendas without imposing our own ideas for how they should be used.

There are several text units in the Free Choice context in which children asked for materials they did not have names for and this provoked clarification and discussion. Talk about materials was not usually part of the conferencing contexts partly because only crayons and pencils were available, and perhaps also because journal time was not intended as a time for exploration but as a focused time to complete a journal page. Children might
have been talking about materials during the conferencing time when they were not conferencing with us but these conversations are not part of the transcripts.

The quote in the ABC Chart analysis section above in which Karen told Jake his ABC chart was hard to read because he had colored it in so dark is an indication that some children did not find the ABC chart useful in the same ways as Karen hoped it would be for them. Across the primary and secondary data children did not often use the chart unless they were reminded by Karen or me.

Another indication of children’s perceptions about the ABC chart comes from the end-of-the-year interviews that are part of the secondary data. When I asked children what the ABC chart was for, several of their answers indicated confusion or that they did not find it useful. For instance, Syd’s response to my question was that the ABC chart was to keep in your writing folder.

The text unit showing me negotiating with Jake over the use of my pen is an example of several interactions from a time period when I usually carried pens in my pocket and loaned them to students when they asked for one. I realized it was disruptive to the class as some students’ attention was focused on acquiring one of these pens from
me rather than concentrating on their journal writing. I stopped my practice of loaning pens but students' interest in using different utensils demonstrates their fascination with a variety of materials.

Another interpretation of these writing utensil issues comes from a finding in Lysaker's (2000) study. She considered the literacy support she gave a young student from a relational perspective and one theme that she found was important to their relationship was sharing objects as well as sharing meaning. When the student borrowed her pen it seemed to be connected to sharing consciousness which was essential to the scaffolding process that went on.

The Student-Made Books focus has text units only in the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts. This suggests that while making a book after completion of the journal requirements was an option, it was not an emphasis in the Targeted Conferences. In several of the Student-Made Books text units I use language such as "let's" or "we" which indicates that I might have sensed children needed a lot of support and I was inviting them into a partnership with me. Perhaps this support was needed because a focus on Student-Made Books was not part of the mainstream focus in this class.
The Paper and Envelope, Label and Stapler categories are similar to the Utensil category in that children seemed interested in exploring, asking questions and using these Materials in a variety of ways.

One last note about the Materials categories is a reflection on my role in interacting with children around them. As the adult present in the two contexts where Materials were focused on the most, I saw myself as controlling at times and involved with my adult-centric ideas of how certain materials ought to be used. In one of the Free Choice transcripts that is part of the secondary data, Brandon was using the continuous-feed computer labels to make long roadways. He was also using the waxy paper that the labels were on as part of his construction. My field notes indicate that my first feeling was one of disapproval that he was using the labels inappropriately but I later realized he had invented a novel use for them.

Focus on Meaning

There are 303 text units with a Meaning focus. This is 22% of the total text units. I define Meaning here as sense or purpose. When we focused on Meaning related to sense, we were intent on wanting to understand. When we focused on purpose, our agenda was using writing for a
specific reason. The Meaning text units divide into three categories: 1) Specific Meaning; 2) General Meaning; and 3) Doing Something Meaningful With the Writing.

**Meaning: Specific Meaning**

There are 211 text units (70% of Meaning text units; 16% of the total text units) in the category where we focus on the student’s Specific Meaning. I define specific meaning as having some particular content. These 211 text units divide further into 3 subcategories: 1) Specific Oral Meaning, 2) Specific Written Meaning, and 3) Specific Picture Meaning.

There are 86 text units in the first subcategory where Karen or I engage with the child’s Specific Oral Meaning. In the 3/15 Free Choice transcript Gabi told me she liked to do something that I did not quite grasp. I asked, “What do you like to do?” Gabi rubbed the pencil eraser and said, “I like to rub them. It feels so good, ahh.” I then said, “I never heard of that before.” Within this subcategory there are 5 text units showing the teacher focusing on the child’s nonverbal meaning.

The second subcategory includes 87 text units in which the teacher focuses on the child’s Specific Written Meaning. During the 3/8 Concurrent Conferences Syd told me
about her picture and read the letter string underneath it. "The girl is wearing tightrotes." I responded by laughing and asking, "Is she wearing tights?"

Within the **Specific Written Meaning** subcategory are 30 text units that show the teacher focusing on what will be written. For example, in the 3/15 Targeted Conferences transcript, Karen encouraged Leah to add to what she wrote so far. Leah had written, "I like to go to Eegees" to which Karen asked, "OK what do you like to do at Eegees or what's your favorite? Let's write one more idea about Eegees. Why do you like to go to Eegees?" When Leah answered, "Cause they have good, they have good icies", Karen responded, "Just write that."

There are 38 text units in the third subcategory where we focus on the student's **Specific Meaning in their Picture**. For example, when Willis shows me his picture I say, "Oh wow! I see those lasers coming out. And is this arrow here to kind of show that the laser's going in that way" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)? Within this subcategory there is 1 text unit in which we focus on what will be drawn.
Meaning: General Meaning

The General Meaning category includes text units in which our focus is on something nonspecific or unknown. This category has 4 subcategories. The first three subcategories of General Meaning are the same as the three Specific Meaning subcategories (Oral, Written and Pictures). General Meaning has a fourth subcategory which is a focus on the Journal Page or Project.

The General Oral Meaning subcategory of General Meaning, has 15 text units. Five of these text units show the teacher responding to a child’s request for attention. In these instances the teacher did not know yet what the child was intending to say. There are five General Oral Meaning text units in the 4/7 Mini-Lesson transcript in which Karen asks students to make suggestions for what to write as a group that day.

The General Written Meaning subcategory of the General Meaning category has 18 text units. The teacher does not yet know what the child has written and asks about it. For example, I say to Brandon in the 3/8 Concurrent Conferences transcript, “Brandon’ what did you write in your journal today?”
The **General Picture Meaning** subcategory of the General Meaning category has 7 text units including one text unit in which the teacher focuses on what will be drawn. A text unit which shows me focusing on a child’s picture in a general way is, “OK, let’s hear about that picture. That’s a very interesting picture you’ve got there. Why don’t you tell us about it” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). Even though I am looking at the picture and probably have some ideas about it, I will not know the specifics until Willis tells me about it.

The **General Journal Page or Project Meaning** subcategory, of General Meaning has 23 text units. Sixteen of these text units show the teacher initiating contact with a child usually focusing on the child’s journal page. For instance, at the beginning of a conference with Sami, Karen says, “OK Sami, let’s hear about your work” (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

**Meaning: Doing Something Meaningful with the Writing**

There are 29 text units (10% of the Meaning focus text units; 2% of the total text units) in the **Doing Something Meaningful with the Writing** category. In this category I usually gave the child a suggestion for something s/he could do with the writing beyond writing the journal page
because it's the daily requirement. Eight of these text units involve Willis and me interacting during the 3/8 Concurrent Conferences about writing his joke down and covering up the answer with post-it notes in order to keep it hidden from students who might share the joke with him.

Eight other text units involve Franny during Free Choice focusing on a letter to her dad, a letter to her friend and a picture/gift for her dad. There are three text units that show me encouraging students to share their writing with their friends. Other text units involve Miguel writing a letter, and Betsy making me a nametag and asking students to write their names on a paper so she'll know everyone's name.

Cross Analysis of Meaning and Context

Table 5.2 lists the three categories of Meaning in bold in the left column. Italicized in the left column are the subcategories listed under the categories. For example, the Specific Meaning category is listed in the left column. The 211 in the same box indicates the total number of Specific Meaning text units. In the box underneath that, are the three subcategories of Specific Meaning: Oral, Written and Pictures. Next to the name for
each subcategory is the total number of text units. This pattern repeats across the five contexts.

Table 5.2 shows that in the Concurrent Conferences there are about equal numbers of Specific Oral and Written Meaning text units and about half as many in the Specific Picture Meaning subcategory. While the Concurrent Conferences have less text units in the General Meaning category, they follow the same pattern as the Concurrent Conferences text units in Specific Meaning's subcategories.

The primary Meaning focus in the Targeted Conferences is on Specific Written Meaning and not on Picture Meaning at all either specifically or generally.

Free Choice has most of its Meaning text units in the Specific Oral Meaning subcategory and almost as many Specific Picture Meaning as Specific Written Meaning text units.

The Mini-Lesson context has few text units with a Meaning focus and most of them are in the Specific and General Oral Meaning subcategories.

There are few Meaning text units in the Sharing context and most of them are coded in the Specific Written Meaning subcategory.
There are text units coded in the Doing Something Meaningful category only in the Concurrent Conferences and Free Choice contexts.

Table 5.2
Matrix of Categories and Subcategories of Meaning with Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Totals</th>
<th>Concur-</th>
<th>Target-</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
<th>Mini-</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>303/22%</td>
<td>119/37%</td>
<td>44/9%</td>
<td>111/50%</td>
<td>16/7%</td>
<td>13/13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Oral 86</th>
<th>Written 87</th>
<th>Picture 38</th>
<th>Oral 15</th>
<th>Written 18</th>
<th>Picture 7</th>
<th>Journal/Project 23</th>
<th>Doing Something Meaningful 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>63</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral 15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written 18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal/Project 23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Something Meaningful 29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Findings of the Meaning Focus

It is notable to compare the varying amounts of text units focused on Meaning across all five contexts (Table 5.2). The average across all the contexts is 22%. During the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts I focus on Meaning in 37% and 50% of the text units in those contexts, respectively, while during the Targeted Conferencing context there is a 9% focus on Meaning. This
low number is related to the preponderance of the Conventions focus during the Targeted Conferences.

The higher numbers of Meaning focus text units during the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts are possibly related to the fact that I did not have Karen's responsibilities for managing the class and fulfilling school district requirements. I had more time to show interest in students' meanings.

I was at first surprised at the low percentage of text units with a Meaning focus during Sharing time (13%) because I would predict that Karen's invitation to ask questions or make connections about the journal page during Sharing would invite a Meaning focus. The low number of Meaning focus text units during Sharing is probably due to the large number of text units in the Management focus (58%). Also, even though Sharing time was generally focused on the meaning of the child's journal page, the discussion of meaning was undertaken mostly by students with each other. It was Karen's talk that was coded and she focused more on interjecting instructional points and keeping the flow of the group moving.

The Specific Oral Meaning subcategory text units are concentrated in the Concurrent Conferencing (28) and Free
Choice (38) contexts with fewer text units in the Targeted Conferencing (8) and Mini-Lesson (9) contexts. A similar pattern is evident in the Specific Picture Meaning subcategory, except these text units are only in the Concurrent Conferences and Free Choice contexts.

Perhaps Karen wound up engaging less with children's specific oral meaning because her agenda was primarily to help students write a journal entry. Additionally, Karen’s aim was to support children in writing more, as evidenced by the large percentage of text units in which Karen focused on what would be written next (77% of the Targeted Conference’s Specific Written Meaning focus is involved with what would be written next). This agenda did not leave much time to engage in talk around children’s specific meaning or about their pictures.

When Karen did focus on Specific Oral Meaning it was very brief. For example, when Karen was writing with Betsy during the 3/15 Targeted Conferences, Karen asked, "What do you hear for like? Li:ke. Li:ke." When Betsy responded, "I like the deers but I can’t draw that," Karen said, "OK. Right. Let’s stay on target. I like deers too though." The last sentence, "I like deers too though" was coded in the Specific Oral Meaning subcategory. Similar to this
one, the few examples of Karen focusing on Specific Oral Meaning are very brief.

These examples demonstrate that Karen’s primary focus was in supporting students to get writing down on the paper. Further evidence is that when her focus was on the child’s Specific Meaning, she usually asked a question mainly to elicit more writing.

Perhaps there are fewer text units in the General Meaning category during the Targeted Conferences than the Concurrent Conferences or Free choice contexts, because Karen was more specific with children in order to meet with as many children as possible. She knew that in addition to deciding exactly what to write with each child, she would also need to spend a considerable amount of time helping the student get his/her writing down. Rather than asking general questions which tend to be open-ended, inviting lengthier responses, she more typically got right to the point of deciding what specifically to write with each child.

In the few text units that focus on the category of Doing Something Meaningful with the Writing, I usually took the lead. This suggests that children might need demonstrations of ways that writing can be used for a wide
range of meaningful purposes. It is also possible that the children were talking among themselves and considering their own meaningful uses for their writing and drawing. Another possibility is that we were so focused during journal time on supporting students to get some writing down on the page that there was little time available to talk about meaningful uses for writing. Perhaps there were other times in the day when meaningful purposes for writing were addressed.

Conclusion

There are five foci that are evident in the primary data in this study: Management, Writing Act, Conventions, Materials, and Meaning. Overall, Conventions is the predominant focus with Materials being focused on the least.

The profile of the various foci in the Concurrent Conferences is similar to the Free Choice context. Free Choice is unique among the contexts in having the largest percentage of Materials and Meaning focus text units and the least percentage of Conventions focus text units.

While there are similarities in amounts of text units across some of the foci in the Concurrent Conferences and Free Choice contexts, the Concurrent Conferences context
also has similarities with the amounts of Targeted Conferences' foci. This finding points out that the journal conferencing contexts had consistencies across them.

The Mini-Lesson focus profile is very similar to the Targeted Conferences focus profile. The Sharing context is unique among the contexts in its large number of text units with a Management focus. There are surprisingly few Meaning focus text units during the Sharing context. Clearly, Karen's agenda for the children during Sharing, to ask questions and make connections about the journal page being shared, was different from her own agenda which was primarily management and making teaching points.

In the next chapter I analyze the third dimension, Position. Positions are analyzed in part by a cross-analysis with the Foci. I return to a discussion of the Foci again when I consider the implications of these findings for classroom practice in the concluding chapter.
Chapter 6
THE DIMENSION CALLED POSITION

My third research question in this study is, "What positions do teachers take while supporting writers?" In analyzing the ten primary data transcripts to consider our various positions as we helped students with their writing, I conceptualized four positions: Follower, Leader, Informer and Director. Each of the 1,364 text units was coded twice, once for the teacher's focus (discussed in Chapter 5) and once for our position as we were involved supporting students.

Position refers to the stance Karen or I took in relation to the students as we interacted with them in writing contexts. Positions are determined primarily by our language. I chose to use the term position rather than role based on Davies and Harré's (1990) assertion that position "helps focus attention on dynamic aspects of encounters in contrast to...role (which) serves to highlight static, formal and ritualistic aspects" (p. 43). I am interested in the dynamic aspects of teachers' interactions with students.

In what follows I define and give examples for the four positions and their categories. I also do a cross
analysis of the positions with the two dimensions analyzed in the previous two chapters, context and focus. The analysis of each position is followed by a discussion of findings. In this chapter, as in the previous one, names of positions, categories and subcategories are bolded the first time they are mentioned (after they are initially listed) and the first letters of their names are capitalized throughout. Subcategories are italicized throughout. When the names are just used in a sentence, but not to name the position, category or subcategory, they are not capitalized or italicized. The first letters of the names of the five primary contexts and five foci are also capitalized throughout.

Table 6.1 is a matrix of the positions and contexts. The positions are listed in the first column and the contexts are listed in the top row. Shorthand versions of the conferencing contexts' names are used in the tables to conserve space (i.e. Concurrent rather than Concurrent Conferencing Context). The numbers in parentheses in the first column are the total numbers of text units in each position. The percentages in the first column are the percentages of the total text units (1,364) for each
position. The top row includes the total text units in each context.

The percentages in each column were calculated by dividing the number of position text units in that context by the total number of text units in that context. For example in the box at the intersection of Follower with Concurrent, 102/32% means there are 102 text units coded in the Follower position in the Concurrent Conferences context. These 102 text units are 32% of all the text units (320) in the Concurrent Conferences context.

Table 6.1
Matrix of Positions and Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concurrent Choice</th>
<th>Targeted Lesson</th>
<th>Mini-Less</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follower (301/22%)</td>
<td>102/32%</td>
<td>122/54%</td>
<td>46/9%</td>
<td>12/5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader (617/45%)</td>
<td>138/43%</td>
<td>55/25%</td>
<td>266/54%</td>
<td>134/60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informer (134/10%)</td>
<td>15/5%</td>
<td>7/3%</td>
<td>58/12%</td>
<td>39/17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director (312/23%)</td>
<td>65/20%</td>
<td>40/18%</td>
<td>122/25%</td>
<td>39/17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 (below) lists the positions (in the left column) and the foci (in the top row). The numbers in the top row are the total number of text units for each focus.
Table 6.2  
Matrix of Positions and Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Follower Position

The child takes the greatest lead in the **Follower** position (301 text units; 22% of the total text units). Rather than Karen or I taking the initiative in the interaction, which is usually the case in the other three positions, we respond to the child's lead in more or less active ways. In the Follower position, we are not usually working closely in writing production with the child. We respond briefly, expressing enjoyment, puzzlement or interest. We are nudged by the child to respond.

There are five categories in the Follower position: 1) Expresses a Personal Response; 2) Responds to the Child's Questions, Comments or Nonverbal Behavior; 3) Asks Questions; 4) Compliments; and 5) Reflects Back to the Child.
When our stance was one of expressing a Personal Response (42 text units; 14% of Follower text units; 3% of total text units) we usually reacted briefly to children's writing, drawing or actions. These responses include several instances of "Wow!", "Ooh" or a brief laugh. These exclamations were either expressed alone (14) or accompanied with some commentary about our response (10). There are also instances (18) in this category when our Personal Response was a commentary with no exclamation such as when Gabi told me that she likes to rub pencil erasers because "it feels so good." My personal response was, "I never heard of that before" (3/15 Free Choice).

In the next category of Follower we Respond to Child's Questions, Comments or Nonverbal Behavior (89; 30% of Follower text units; 7% of total text units). When I refer to this category in what follows I shorten the name to Responds to Child... Our brief responses are to children's talk or actions. In this category, we were not usually engaged in leading students to write something down.

In the subcategory, Responds to Children's Questions (23), we give permission to something they are asking (4) such as when Miguel asked if he could write in my field notebook. I responded, "OK, go ahead, that's fine" (3/8
Concurrent Conferences). Responding to children’s bids for our attention (9) is also in this subcategory. When students bid for our attention by calling our name we typically responded, “What?” or “Yes, (child’s name)?” The ten other text units in which we responded to children’s questions show us answering these questions briefly. For example, when Brandon was curious about the different colored post-it notes he asked, “How come there are different colors of those?” I responded, “It’s just they come in different colors” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences).

When we *Respond to Children’s Comments* (46) our responses are either minimal (19) or expanded (27). An example of a text unit coded as a minimal response is when Rebecca told me she found the word beautiful. I responded, “Alright” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)! An example of a text unit coded as an expanded response to a child’s comments is when April told me that when she takes her finished journal home she would write on the back of it and then bring it back to school to share. I said, “Alright, and I hope I can be here to see it” (4/13 Concurrent Conferences).

An example of a text unit when we *Respond to Nonverbal Behavior* is when Karen began her conference with Jake. She
said, "Thanks for waiting for me" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

The next category in the Follower position is **Asks Questions** (35). In this position, we asked questions because we were either curious (24) or confused (11) rather than because we were trying to lead students forward with their writing. An example of a question asked because of curiosity is when Brandon is browsing through my field notebook. I asked, "What do you think? Is that interesting" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences)? An example of a question asked because of my confusion is when Jake is asking me for some white paper. I was not sure exactly what he wanted or why he wanted it so I asked, "Do you want to make a book" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)?

The next category of Follower is **Compliments** (79). Our Compliments are either **Child-Oriented** (41) or **Product-Oriented** (38). In both of these subcategories we either compliment specifically or nonspecifically. I chose to group this category in Follower rather than Leader because in this category we were not immediately engaged in leading children to produce writing. We usually stepped aside from our engagement to say the compliment and then we went back to the close engagement of working together with the
specific purpose of leading children with their writing. There are some text units in which we complimented as well as confirmed. I coded these with the Confirms category in the Leader position since when we confirmed something the child said, we were leading him/her. These combination Confirms/Compliments text units can't be separated since they usually include only one word, such as “Good’” (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

When our Compliments are in the Child-Oriented subcategory, our focus is more on the children than the work they are producing. For example, when Dan knew that he needed to leave a space before writing the next word, Karen said, “You’re doing good with your spaces. You know how to do that, just like Leah” (3/15 Targeted Conferences). This was coded as a specific Child-Oriented Compliment because the content is named in the text unit. Thirty-five Child-Oriented text units are specific and six are non-specific.

The Product-Oriented subcategory of the Compliments category is aimed at a product rather than the child. For example, after Seth read a joke he wrote I said, “That’s great” (3/15 Free Choice). This is a nonspecific Product-
Oriented Compliment. Twenty-three Product-Oriented text units are specific and fifteen are nonspecific.

The last category in the Follower position is **Reflects Back to Child** (56). We reflected back to the child by Echoing their Words (33), Reading their Work (19) which includes talking about their picture and Reiterating Conference Events (4).

When we **Echoed their Words** we didn’t have an apparent agenda to lead the child to more writing or to continue with their work. It was a simple echoing as if we were just demonstrating our presence. For example, when I was talking to Miguel, Franny said to me, “I wrote my name twice and I’m done.” I repeated back to her, “You wrote your name twice and you’re done” (4/8 Free Choice). In some instances the echo seemed to serve as a placeholder while the teacher was thinking of what she wanted to say next. In the above example, after echoing Franny’s words I asked, “Is this going to be a letter for your dad?”

When we **Read their Work**, we read what children had written, said what we saw in their picture or said what they had accomplished so far in their journal for that day. When Miguel was telling me about his picture I said, “I see your sun” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). As in the Echoing
their Words subcategory, this might have served as a placeholder because the next thing I said to Miguel was, “And is this the moon over here?”

The last subcategory in the Reflects Back to Child category, includes 4 text units showing Karen Reiterating Conference Events to the child with whom she had just conferenced. These 4 text units represent a typical way that Karen ended conferences with students as she said what they had done and also wrote some of what she said in her record book. One example is, “I’m going to write down you did some writing on your own and we did some team writing” (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

Two-Way Cross Analysis of Follower with Contexts

This section includes a two-way cross analysis of the categories of the Follower position with the five contexts. This cross analysis is depicted in Table 6.3. The first column in Table 6.3 lists the categories of the Follower position and the top row lists the contexts. The numbers in the boxes represent the text units at each intersection. For instance, the number 19 in the box at the intersection of Free Choice and Personal Response, means that 19 text units in the Free Choice context are coded in the Expresses Personal Response category of the Follower position. The
totals in the bottom row are the total number of Follower text units in each context. This number is divided by the total number of text units in the context which gives a percentage representing the percentage of Follower text units in each context. The contexts are arranged in order from high to low percentages of Follower text units.

Table 6.3
Matrix of the Categories of Follower with the Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
<th>Concurrent</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Mini-Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal response</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to child...</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks questions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflects back to child</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower Totals</td>
<td>122 /224</td>
<td>102 /320</td>
<td>19 /104</td>
<td>46 /492</td>
<td>12 /224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=54%</td>
<td>=32%</td>
<td>=18%</td>
<td>=9%</td>
<td>=5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information in the matrix reveals that all the categories of Follower have the most text units in the Free Choice and Concurrent Conferences contexts except for the Compliments category. Most of the Compliments text units are in the Concurrent and Targeted Conferencing contexts.
Two-Way Cross Analysis of Follower with the Foci

This section provides a two-way cross analysis of the categories of the Follower position with the five foci.

Table 6.4
Matrix of the Categories of Follower with the Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Follower text units=301</th>
<th>Meaning (162)</th>
<th>Materials (44)</th>
<th>Conventions (41)</th>
<th>Writing Act (36)</th>
<th>Management (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal response</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to child..</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks questions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects back...</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories of the Follower position are listed in the first column. The numbers in parentheses in the top row are the numbers of Follower text units that are also coded with that focus. For example, there are 162 Follower text units coded with a Meaning focus. The percentage in the bottom row of each column of Table 6.4 is the percentage of the focus in the total Follower text units. For example, 54% of the Follower text units have a Meaning focus.
Most of the categories of Follower have the highest concentration of text units also coded with a Meaning focus. The category with a different pattern is Compliments which has high concentrations of text units almost equally in the Writing Act, Conventions and Meaning foci. The focus with the least number of text units in the Follower position is Management (18).

**Three-Way Cross Analysis of the Follower Position with Contexts and Foci**

As mentioned in the two-way cross analyses, most of the Follower position text units are also coded with a Meaning focus. Most of these text units are in the Free Choice and Concurrent Conferencing contexts.

In the Follower position, the largest group of text units with a Writing Act focus is in the Compliments category. These text units occur mostly within the Targeted Conferences.

Also in the Follower position, the largest group of text units with a Conventions focus is in the Compliments category. These text units occur in the Concurrent and Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts.

The largest group of text units in the Follower position coded with a Materials focus is in the category of
Responds to Child.... These text units occur mostly in the Free Choice context (20).

Notable also in the three-way cross-analysis is that while the Mini-Lesson context only has 12 text units in the Follower position, 8 of these text units are in the Reflects Back to Child category and 7 of these 8 text units are in the Conventions focus. When we followed the child’s lead in the Mini-Lesson context, it was usually related to a Conventions focus.

Discussion of Findings for the Follower Position

The categories within each of the four positions fall roughly along a continuum of Karen or I being more or less directive in our stance towards the child or children with whom we are working. In the Follower position we are least directive when we express our personal response. Here we are usually surprised by something the child said or did and respond quickly with no apparent predetermined agenda to get the child to do something.

Next on the continuum (slightly more directive than the Expresses Personal Response category) is the category, Responds to the Child’s Questions, Comments or Nonverbal Actions. Our responses are clearly driven by the child’s initiation and the immediateness of our responses preclude
intentions we might have had to move children forward in their work. Our responses are called forth by the child's agenda. Dyson (1984a) points out that "the most helpful teacher response to early writing efforts would...be to accept whatever writing the child produces, respond to any written message, [and] answer the child's emerging questions" (p. 270). We took these stances in the Follower categories that are on the least directive end of the continuum.

The categories of Asks Questions, Reflects Back to Child and Compliments are on the more directive side of the continuum than the two categories named above. These three categories are closer to the next position, Leader, in that we were more directive in our intentions. We had more of an agenda to get children to do some writing. Figure 6.1 shows this continuum.

Figure 6.1
Continuum of More or Less Directive in the Follower Position

| Least Directive | --- | | More Directive |
|-----------------|-----|---------------------|
| Personal        |     | Responds to         |
| Response        |     | Asks                |
|                 |     | Reflects            |
|                 |     | Compliments         |
|                 |     | Child...            |
|                 |     | Questions           |
|                 |     | Back...             |
In any of the categories of Follower we had the option of whether or not to respond to children. We were more likely to respond when we valued what the child was saying. While this was true, the spontaneity of our tone of voice in the Follower text units suggests that the children were usually the ones calling forth our responses.

In addition to the continuum across categories there were also continuums within categories where we were more or less directive. For example, in the Responds to Child’s Questions, Comments and Nonverbal Behavior category, we were being more directive when we responded to the child’s nonverbal behavior because we were initiating the response rather than being called to respond by the child.

The data from the analysis of the Follower position provide a view of what the children in the class valued. Since the Follower position is the one in which the children took the greatest lead, we were usually responding to something the children initiated. Therefore the predominant foci in this position give us a window on the children’s preferred foci. The fact that the largest percentage of the Follower text units, 54%, were coded with a Meaning focus, suggests that the children in this class were more focused on Meaning than the other foci.
Considering that we focused on Conventions 14% of the text units in the Follower position but considerably more in the other positions suggests that 14%, or approximately 1 in 7 text units, is an indication of the amount of interest that children had in Conventions. If so, our much larger focus on Conventions in the positions where we took more of the lead probably felt out of balance to the children who had other priorities about what they wanted to focus on in their writing.

Perhaps children focused less on Conventions than they might have because our focus on Conventions was so large. Schickedanz and Sullivan’s (1984) finding that parents often instruct by responding to children’s requests for help and that most requests are spelling related support my conjectures. Children show their interest and curiosity about conventions when given the chance to initiate.

The Follower position was the only one of the four positions where students had opportunities to get responses to their leads. Given that overall, 22% of the text units were coded in the Follower position and that students did not take the lead in all of the Follower text units (e.g., in the Compliments category), students were not often in the lead in this classroom. My findings about the few
opportunities students had to initiate and be responded to by us, is similar to Wells' (1981) finding that in schools there is less chance than at home for children to take the initiative with language-learning activities. When children do initiate in school, there is less response than at home.

Searle (1984) points out that Bruner's original intention for adults' scaffolding of children's learning was to support them in their own (the children's) intentions. If teachers are not often in the Follower position, they are not often following children's own intentions for what they want to accomplish. Behrend, Rosengren and Perlmutter (1992) contend that an important component of scaffolding is that it allows the child to be in control and be "the primary regulator of her own behavior" (p. 91). These are arguments for the importance of taking the Follower position as we support learners.

The Compliments category in the Follower position, has a different profile than the other categories. It is the category where the child takes less of a lead because we chose what to compliment. I contend that when we complimented, we consciously or unconsciously were paying attention to what we valued. In this data, we complimented mostly the Writing Act and Conventions.
Related to the Compliments category, in the Child-Oriented subcategory we complimented more specifically (35) than nonspecifically (6) while in the Product-Oriented subcategory the difference in numbers between specific (23) and nonspecific (15) Compliments was less striking. Perhaps we were using the language of our compliments to boost our students’ self-esteem and point out specifically their capabilities.

The Follower position is unique among the positions in that the children had the greatest opportunity to take the lead. We were not in the Follower position often, especially in some of the contexts. This is probably a realistic reflection of the positions teachers take in classrooms today as they feel pressures from many sources to accomplish a lot with their students and don’t feel like they are able to take time to follow their students’ lead.

The Leader Position

The Leader position has 617 text units which is 45% of all the text units. In this position we are usually engaged in producing writing with one child or the whole group. We take the lead by acting to guide and focus the child because we have an agenda for accomplishing a specific writing goal.
There are five categories in the Leader position: Commands, Focusing Moves, Offers/Suggests, Confirms, and Clarifies.

In the **Commands** category (44; 7% of Leader text units; 3% of all text units) we used directive language, usually to guide children to continue with their writing. Eighty-two percent of the Commands text units include the word 'let's' such as, "Let's stretch out the word snow and see if there's anything else in it" (4/7 Mini-Lesson). These commands differ from the ones that will be described in the Director position, in that when we used directive language in the Leader position, we intended to include both the child and ourselves. For instance, in the above example, Karen and the children all stretched out the word snow together. In the Director position, Karen might have used the same words, "Let's stretch out the word..." but it would have been clear to everyone involved that she intended the children to say the word without her. The Commands category is closest to the Director position on the directive continuum I discussed in the Follower position.

The next category in the Leader position is **Focusing Moves**. This is the category in the Leader position with
the largest number of text unit (291; 47% of Leader text units; 21% of total text units). When our talk is coded in the Focusing Moves category we intended to steer the child towards a specific action. This category includes three subcategories. We either: 1) Ask Focusing Questions (69); 2) Ask Known-Answer Questions (140); or 3) Reread what has been written so far either alone or with the child (82).

Most of the 69 text units in the Focusing Questions subcategory are in the form of a leading question. A dictionary definition of leading questions is that they are, "phrased to elicit a desired response" (Morris, 1969, p. 743). For example, when I shared a published book on slugs and snails with Ben and felt he had taken enough time browsing in it, I wanted to steer him back to work on the book he was writing. I asked, "Ben, does this book-looking at this book make you think you might want to get back to your snail book? Your slug book" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences)? Right after I said that I put the slug book he was writing in front of him.

Nine of the sixty-nine Focusing Questions text units show us asking a question as an opening to the interaction. For example, as Willis sat down on the rug where I was having conferences, I said, "Willis’ here you are’. What
can I do for you? Why did you come down to the rug?” When Willis responded, “Cause” I asked, “You want to have a meeting” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)?

The next subcategory of Focusing Moves, **Asks Known-Answer Questions** has 140 text units. The Known-Answer Questions text units are either structured in a binary format (23) such as, “Do you put it next to it or leave a space?” (3/15 Targeted Conferences) or are pseudo-open questions (117). The pseudo-open question is one in which we know the answer we would like the child to come up with but the wording of the question is open-ended. For example, when I was taking dictation from Franny I was about to write the word sunflower when I said to her, “What do you hear for the first letter? Ssss.” Franny said, “S” (3/15 Free Choice).

**Rereads** (82) is the next subcategory of Focusing Moves. In this subcategory we read what was written so far either with the child or alone in order to lead to the next word to write, or we said the few words already written and the next word that needed to be written. As children completed writing each word of their sentence, we continually reread the unfolding text with them.
Occasionally we said the word the child was in the process of writing by itself.

When we said the word the child was going to write, most of the time we said that word slowly, enunciating some of the sounds in the word. When Syd was writing *I love my cats*, she had already written *I love my*. I read *I love my* in an effort to help Syd focus on the next word she needed to write. I commented on the fact that Syd was putting her fingers on the page to help create a space before writing the next word and then I said, “Cat tuh tuh cats:.” Syd said, “C, S’” (4/14 Concurrent Conferences).

**Clarifies** (79; 13% of Leader text units; 6% of total text units) is the next category in the Leader position. When we clarified we were asking for information that we needed in order to continue to lead children with their writing. The subcategories of Clarifies are 1) *Asks for Information* (41) and 2) *Checks, Verifies or Reminds* (38).

The first subcategory of Clarifies is **Asks for Information** (41). The *Asks for Information* text units are different than those in the Follower position when we asked questions. In the Follower position we asked questions simply because we were curious or confused. We were not engaged with leading the child in writing. In the Leader
position we asked questions that helped us decide on our next move in leading the child.

An example from the subcategory *Asks for Information* is when Karen was working with Jake. They read together what Jake had written so far and both Karen and Jake finished saying the sentence even though the ending hadn’t been written yet. Karen said, “I like my arrow. Sometimes I dream about it.” At the same time Jake said, “I like my arrow. Sometimes I dream about my arrow.” Then Karen asked her clarifying question to get the information she needed in order to know how to proceed with Jake. “Oh you want to say *my arrow*?” When Jake nodded yes, Karen said, “OK, let’s do it. What do you hear for *my*? Mmy” (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

The other subcategory in Clarifies is *Checking, Verifying or Reminding* (38). This subcategory is similar to the *Asks for Information* subcategory but the questions are usually less involved in the immediate writing act. These questions serve the purpose of guiding the child to stay focused and involved. Examples include several text units during the Sharing context when Karen asked students if they wanted to share that day. Another example is when I asked Syd if she had her alphabet chart. When she said
no I asked her, "Do you know what that is, looks like? OK" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). Syd’s response would impact how I proceeded in my interaction with her.

The next category in the Leader position is **Offers/Suggests** (65; 22% of Leader text units; 5% of total text units). The text units in this category show the teacher putting forward an idea for consideration. We propose an idea or form of assistance to the child.

There are 30 text units in the **Offers** subcategory. Half of these text units show Karen offering to write a short word, a letter or a few letters for a child. For instance, when Jack was writing, *The lion is inside the tiger’s cage*, he had already written, *The lion is in*. Karen asked, "What do you hear for side?" When Jack said, "D" Karen offered, "Mm hm. *Can I put the rest in the middle too?*" Jack said, "Yeah" to which Karen said while she wrote, "There’s actually an S-I. You put your D there and there’s a silent letter at the end. Do you know what letter can be there" (4/13 Targeted Conferences)? Karen’s italicized words above make up the **Offers** text unit.

There are 35 text units in the **Suggests** subcategory. When we make a suggestion we are giving the student an idea for something s/he might do. Suggestions are different
from offerings in that when we suggest, we are proposing that the child do something and when we offer, we are offering to do something for the child. In my conference with Willis I make several suggestions about writing his joke on the back of his page and hiding his answer with post-it notes. One of these text units is, "OK, Willis, I was thinking, if you could fit your answer underneath here', then we could, it would be like a secret answer, you like that idea" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences)? Students had the option of whether or not to follow through with our suggestions but in most cases there is evidence that the student followed our suggestion without question.

The next category in the Leader position is Confirms (138; 22% of Leader text units; 10% of total text units). When we confirmed we responded to a child's attempt, saying it was correct. We either confirmed Specifically (53) or Nonspecifically (85).

When we confirmed Specifically we named what we were confirming. For example, Karen and Dan were in the middle of writing the word, space. Dan had already written S-P-A. When Karen asked, "What do we hear at the end of space:?" Dan suggested, "S?" Karen's response was, "There's another way we can write <S>. There's two letters. Can I show
you? These two letters, C, E' sound just like <S>.”
Karen’s next words were coded in the Confirms Specifically subcategory. She said, “So S is an excellent guess” (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

Confirming Nonspecifically usually took the form of “Alright”, “Mm hm”, “Thanks”, “OK” or sometimes an enthusiastic, “Yes!” or “You got it!”

As discussed in the Follower position section, there are 12 text units that could have been coded as both Confirms and Compliments. The example above where Karen told Dan that S is an excellent guess is one of these text units. I decided to code text units such as these in the Confirms category since we were acting more in the Leader position than the Follower one.

The text units in the five Leader position categories show us working closely with students to help them generate some writing. The Leader text units are similar to each other in that they all show us engaged in a focused endeavor guiding children.

Two-Way Cross Analysis of Leader with Contexts

This section is a two-way cross analysis of the categories of the Leader position with the contexts.
### Table 6.5
**Matrix of the Categories of Leader with the Contexts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mini-Lesson</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Concurrent</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>6/3%</td>
<td>22/4%</td>
<td>11/3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5/2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing Moves</td>
<td>84/38%</td>
<td>129/26%</td>
<td>57/18%</td>
<td>8/8%</td>
<td>13/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20/4%</td>
<td>33/10%</td>
<td>7/7%</td>
<td>19/8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers/Suggests</td>
<td>3/1%</td>
<td>23/5%</td>
<td>19/6%</td>
<td>3/3%</td>
<td>17/8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms</td>
<td>41/18%</td>
<td>72/15%</td>
<td>18/6%</td>
<td>6/6%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>134/224=60%</td>
<td>266/492=54%</td>
<td>138/320=43%</td>
<td>24/104=23%</td>
<td>55/224=22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first number in each box in the bottom row in Table 6.5 is the total number of Leader text units in the context listed in that column. This number is divided by the total number of text units in the context (second number) which gives the percentage of Leader text units in each context. The other percentages listed in each column are the number of text units in the Leader categories divided by the total number of text units in the context. The contexts are arranged in order from high to low percentages of Leader text units in the contexts. The five Leader position categories are listed in the first column.

All five categories of the Leader position have high concentrations of text units in both conferencing contexts. The Targeted Conferencing and Mini-Lesson contexts have
high concentrations of text units in the Focusing Moves and Confirms categories.

While Free Choice is the context with the least percentage of text units coded in the Leader position, most of the Leader text units in Free Choice are in the Clarifies and Offers/Suggests categories.

**Two-Way Cross Analysis of the Subcategories of Focusing Moves with Context**

This section presents a two-way cross analysis of the subcategories of the Focusing Moves category with the five contexts. I include this cross-analysis because there are so many text units in the Focusing Moves category.

Table 6.6
Matrix of the Subcategories of Focusing Moves with the Five Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mini-Lesson</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Concurrent</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focusing Moves</strong></td>
<td>84/38%</td>
<td>129/26%</td>
<td>57/18%</td>
<td>8/8%</td>
<td>13/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focusing Questions</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known Answer Questions</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reads Over</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first row of numbers in Table 6.6 repeats the information about the Focusing Moves category from the
previous table while the three rows below it include information about the number of text units in the subcategories of Focusing Moves.

The Mini-Lesson and Targeted Conferences contexts have a similar pattern: most of the text units are in the Known-Answer Questions subcategory, with the Reads Over subcategory having the next highest number of text units.

The Concurrent Conferences context has a different pattern than the Mini-Lesson and Targeted Conferencing contexts in that the Known-Answer Questions subcategory has the least number of text units while the Focusing Questions subcategory has the most. The Free Choice context has only 13 Focusing Moves text units, but the relative concentrations of text units in its subcategories is similar to the Concurrent Conferences context.

Two-Way Cross Analysis of Leader with the Foci

This section presents a two-way cross analysis of the Leader position with the five foci.
Table 6.7
Matrix of the Categories of Leader with Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing moves</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers..</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifies</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>334/617=54%</td>
<td>116/617=19%</td>
<td>102/617=16%</td>
<td>34/617=6%</td>
<td>31/617=5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The columns in Table 6.7 are arranged from the highest to lowest percentage of Leader position text units in the five foci. The percentages in the bottom row were calculated by dividing the total number of Leader text units in the focus (the first number in each box of the last row) by the total number of Leader text units (617).

Over half of the Leader text units also are coded with a Conventions focus. This is the largest number compared to the other foci. Meaning and Writing Act are in the mid-range and Materials and Management have the least percentages of text units also coded in the Leader position.

When our focus was Conventions, the largest number of text units was coded in the Leader position category of Focusing Moves and then in the Confirms category. When our
focus was Meaning, Focusing Moves is still the largest category but Clarifies has the second largest number of text units. Focusing Moves is also the largest category in the Writing Act focus but Commands is the second largest category.

Offers/Suggests is the largest Leader position category in the Materials focus with Clarifies the second largest. Very few text units coded with a Materials focus are in the Commands and Focusing Moves categories and no text units are in the Confirms category.

The Management focus has the most text units in the Focusing Moves and Clarifies categories.

Two-Way Cross Analysis of the Subcategories of Focusing Moves with Foci

This section presents a two-way cross analysis of the subcategories of the Focusing Moves Category with the foci.
Table 6.8
Matrix of the Subcategories of Focusing Moves with the Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focusing moves</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing Questions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known-Answer Questions</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads Over</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from this table that Karen and I made our Focusing Moves in different ways depending on our focus. When our focus was Conventions we usually asked Known-Answer Questions. While there are considerably less text units in the Meaning and Management foci than the Conventions focus, the predominant subcategory of Focusing Moves in these foci is to ask Focusing Questions. When the Writing Act was our focus the largest subcategory of Focusing Moves is Reads Over. There is only one Focusing Moves text unit in the Materials focus.

Three-Way Cross Analysis of the Leader Position with Contexts and Foci

This section presents a three-way cross analysis of the Leader position, contexts and foci.
Table 6.9
Matrix of Categories of Leader Position and Foci including Information about the Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conventions 334</th>
<th>Meaning 116</th>
<th>Writing Act 102</th>
<th>Materials 34</th>
<th>Management 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Targeted-11</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Concurrent-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing Moves</td>
<td>Targeted-98</td>
<td>Targeted 15</td>
<td>Concurrent-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-61</td>
<td>Concurrent-14</td>
<td>Targeted-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggests</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Targeted-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms</td>
<td>Targeted-65</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free Choice 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-34</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free Choice 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free Choice 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free Choice 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Config contexts-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9 recreates some of the matrix shown in Table 6.7 but adds the dimension of context. The bolded contexts are those that have the largest numbers of text units at the intersection of focus and category of Leader. The contexts that are not bolded have the second largest numbers of text units with that focus. For example, when
the focus is Conventions, the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lessons are the two contexts with the largest number of Focusing Moves text units. Also noted (bolded and numbers in a larger font) on this table are the cells with the fewest text units.

Discussion of Findings for the Leader Position

One notable finding regarding the Leader position is that of the four positions, it has the most text units (617; 45% of total text units). The contexts with the largest percentages of Leader text units are the Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferences. Karen was often in the Leader position across these two contexts which suggests that being in the Leader position was inherent in her teaching style. It also suggests that her goals for both contexts were similar so she maintained a consistent stance across them.

The smallest numbers of Leader position text units are in the Sharing and Free Choice contexts. While the Concurrent Conferencing context is in the mid-range of percentages of Leader text units among the five contexts, Leader is still the position with the largest percentage of text units in that context just as it is in the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts (Table 6.1).
It is worth noting that I was more in the Leader position in the Concurrent Conferencing context than in Free Choice. Possibly I was fulfilling classroom expectations for what positions were appropriate to take when I was supporting students during journal writing. Still, I was not as much in the Leader position as Karen was during her conferences. This represents our different teaching styles or simply the different ways we chose to support students as they wrote in their journals.

Relative to the foci, Leader has the largest number of text units in the Conventions, Meaning and Writing Act foci. The Conventions focus is overwhelmingly the largest one in this position.

The categories in the Leader position can be arranged along a continuum of more or less directive (Figure 6.2), in the same way as the categories in the Follower position (Figure 6.1). Commands is the category closest to the Director position as we used imperative language to tell students to do something.
The Commands category shows us leading students in strong ways but we set up an illusion of collaboration by our frequent use of "let’s" in this category.

Moving away from the more directive end, next on the continuum is the Focusing Moves category. We usually asked students questions that served to guide them to write the next letter in the next word in their immediate sentence. Even though we were not telling students what to do, they often knew the appropriate next action based on our questions and prompts.

Focusing Moves is the largest category within the Leader position. The large number of text units that show us acting to focus students in various ways suggests that it was necessary to maintain students’ attention in order to support them in starting, maintaining focus on and continuing with their writing.

This raises the question: Why did we need to focus students so much? My secondary data in the form of field
notes suggest that students drew at length in their journals without any focusing or leading from us. Perhaps they felt comfortable with drawing as a means of expression and less comfortable with the writing system so they needed a lot of support to do a little writing. Still, the issue remains, that if we had to lead students to write, they did not often have the opportunity to take the lead themselves. Because I believe it is important for students to take initiative in their learning, I explore this issue further in the last chapter.

Given the large number of questions we asked in the Leader category, it is worthwhile to consider the function of teachers' questions in supporting students. Litowitz (1993), writing about the zone of proximal development, points out that "at first the novice is carried in the task...guided with questions" (p. 185). Our questions in the Leader position might have served this purpose.

It is noteworthy that there are only 35 text units in the Follower category showing us asking students questions. These were very different questions than those we asked in the Leader position. We asked questions in the Follower position because we were confused or curious. Leader questions were asked in order to strongly guide students to
do some writing. The small number of Follower-type questions suggests we lost opportunities to better understand students’ thinking. Nancie Atwell (1987) recommends that “in questioning students, ask about something you’re curious about as an inquisitive human being...focus on the meaning...(ask) open-ended questions that will allow the writer to talk” (p. 95). These are more like the questions we asked as a Follower than as a Leader.

In the Leader position, Focusing Moves category, the largest number of text units is in the Asks Known-Answer Questions subcategory. These text units are mostly in the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts, focusing on Conventions. This suggests that known-answer questions were part of a repertoire that Karen drew on in order to lead students to get some writing on the page. Karen might have found these questions useful because she and the students could be in the predictable rhythm of those questions and feel success at producing some writing, while at the same time she could keep one eye on the multitude of other pressures in the classroom.

Asking known-answer questions allowed us to guide students in producing writing on their own without writing
for them. This was a strategy Karen found useful to support students in getting some writing on the page. Perhaps it contributed to her goal of children becoming independent writers. Ideally students would internalize the questions and ask them when writing alone.

The Known-Answer Questions, those to which we knew the answers, that are prevalent in this study's data (117), have also been identified in other studies (Barnes, 1969; Mehan, 1979; Heath, 1982). Rogers, Green and Nussbaum (1990) contend that these sorts of questions are not necessarily in the best interest of building student knowledge. Instead they "limit students' opportunities to build their own knowledge...signaling the teacher's authority over the students" (p. 83).

We asked a lot more questions in the Leader position than in the Follower one, probably to support our own agendas over those of the students. Dyson and Freedman (1991) caution that while "many pedagogical strategies for writing stress teacher questioning of students...much research has documented how uncomfortable some students may be in situations where adults repeatedly question them" (p. 758).
Another issue related to the questions we asked children in the Leader position, is the wait time we allowed for them to answer. Mary Budd Rowe (1986) points out that "when teachers ask questions of students, they typically wait one second or less for the students to start a reply" (p. 43). Given that most of the questions we asked are in the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lesson contexts and that these contexts have the largest number of text units per minute (see Table 4.1), we were in fact asking students questions at a rapid rate. Also, there are a few text units that demonstrate the short wait time we used such as when Karen offered to spell a word for Franny but then noted that Franny was spelling it on her own (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

The Rereads subcategory of the Focusing Moves category has text units concentrated in the Conventions and Writing Act focus. This makes sense given that the text units in this subcategory show our intentions to lead the child in focusing on the next word s/he needed to write down, which usually involved thinking of the letters.

We seemed to reread with students often in order to help them focus. Part of our agenda in asking students to reread was to support them in reading what they had just
written since many of them were still emergent readers. Also, since we took a lot of the initiative in writing, students might not have felt ownership for what they had written. This would precipitate the need for support in the form of continually rereading their unfolding writing in order to stay involved.

The Clarifies category, fits on the Leader position continuum as less directive than the Focusing Moves category. We clarified with children in order to obtain information that would let us plan our next move. In the sequence of text units in a transcript, Clarifying text units usually preceded Focusing Moves text units. We asked for information and then led students to do something specific like think of a letter needed to spell a word. Especially compared to the Focusing Moves (291) category, there are not many text units in the Clarifying category (79). Perhaps this is because we were so intent on getting students to produce writing that we took as little time as possible to clarify with students, missing opportunities to understand children’s thinking in more detail.

The next category on the Leader position continuum of relative directiveness is Offers/Suggests. These text units fall on the less directive side of the continuum
because students were given a choice. They could have decided not to follow through on our suggestions and in some cases we do not know whether they in fact used our suggestion. For instance, when Seth finished writing his book I suggested to him, "You know, what you might want to do, go find a friend to read it to" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences). As I turned my attention to another child I didn't know if Seth had followed through on my suggestion.

As in most categories the text units within the Offers/Suggests category also fall on a continuum. In this case, the group of text units (15) in the Offers subcategory, showing Karen offering to write a letter, letters or word for a student, probably felt more directive than other text units in this category because when Karen made the offer, students never refused. She made the offer to maintain respect for children's control of their own writing. Karen told me on a few occasions that it was not appropriate to write on children's papers unless we asked them for permission.

Finally, the Confirms category is on the least directive side of the Leader position directiveness continuum because when we confirmed, it was not to move students forward in their writing in an active sense.
Still, students would not usually have continued before a confirmation was delivered by the teacher.

There are a large number of Confirms text units (138) and they seem to be one step in a well-known routine we did with students. That we confirmed nonspecifically (84) more than specifically (54) suggests that confirming became an automatic move in the Leader position. If more text units had been specific confirmations I would consider that we were using the confirmations as a teaching tool to call attention to language by naming it. However the nonspecific nature of most of the confirmations supports my idea that it was an automatically-delivered link that was expected in the student-teacher interaction of working together to get a sentence written.

The Free Choice context has a different Leader position profile than the other contexts. It has few text units in the Confirms category and higher concentrations in Clarifies and Offers/Suggests. In Free Choice we were not engaged in the same routine-like manner of supporting students in ways that were familiar and well-known to everyone in the class.

That the Sharing context has few text units in the Leader position is to be expected since students’ writing
was finished by this time. We were not engaged leading them in writing. The leading we did in the Sharing context, although minimal compared to the other contexts, was focused on Management.

I believe that the kinds of talk we used in the Leader position helped children engage in writing and was supportive of Karen’s goal for students to become independent writers. Using a Vygotskian framework, Berk (1992) argues that “self-regulation is encouraged by a specific type of caregiver-child interaction-dialogue that actively engages the child as a collaborative partner in problem-solving activities that lie just beyond the child’s independent capacity” (p. 25). The routine-like quality of the questions and confirmations we used in the Leader position could be seen as supporting the child in participating successfully since there was a high level of predictability.

On the other hand, there are aspects of the kinds of talk we did in the Leader position that might not have been conducive to children being in control. This issue invites the question, how do we support students to engage in activities that are beyond their “independent capacity” and
at the same time allow them to be in control? I suggest answers to this quandry in the concluding chapter.

Leader has the largest number of text units among the four positions. In this position we interacted closely with students in more or less directive ways to support them in getting their writing on the page. In the next section I analyze and discuss the Informer position.

The Informer Position

The Informer position has 134 text units (10% of the total text units). When we were in this position, we shared information with students. The information was usually related to the issues in the current writing in which the student was engaged. The Informer text units do not fit easily on the same directiveness continuum that I created for the other positions because most of the text units are statements which are offered to provide information; we were not sharing the information in order to guide the child to do something. I divided the Informer text units into 4 categories that show the various ways we conveyed information to students about the writing system. The categories are: 1) Compares (20), 2) Demonstrates (31), 3) Conveys Information Directly (59), and 4) Tells about a Strategy (24).
The text units in the **Compares** category (20; 15% of Informer text units; 1% of total text units) involve the teachers using information the child already knows in order to tell about the new information. Karen used a comparison when she was helping Franny write the word *they*. She said, "See how these almost match? **The** and **they** are the same. If you want to turn *the* into **they** all you have to do is add the Y, OK" (3/15 Targeted Conference)?

The **Demonstrates** category (31; 23% of Informer text units; 2% of total text units) involves Karen and me displaying behavior that we wanted students to emulate. Karen provided a demonstration when she said in the course of writing a sample journal entry in front of the group, "And I don't remember'. I can't think of the sounds right now'. So I'm just going to put a little line in there and go on. I'll come back to that later, but I don't want to get stuck right now" (4/7 Mini-Lesson).

The next Informer category is **Conveys Information Directly** (59; 44% of Informer text units; 4% of total text units). The text units in this category show us providing information in a straightforward way. The Conveys Information Directly category has three subcategories:
1) In the Flow of Writing Together (35), 2) Out of the Writing Flow (9), and 3) While Writing for the Child (15).

When we conveyed information, In the Flow of Writing Together, we were in the process of writing with a child and inserted some relevant information that was related to the task at hand. An example is when Karen was helping Dan write the word of. When Karen asked Dan what he heard for of, Dan replied, "It sounds like up." Karen said, "It does sound like up, but we don't need the U, we need a different vowel" (3/15 Targeted Conferences). In this way, Karen provided the information that Dan needed to think of a vowel and it wasn't the letter U.

There are 12 text units included in this subcategory in which we share some information while at the same time tell the child to do a writing-related action. For example, when Karen helped Sami write the word beautiful, she said the letters as Sami wrote: "So it's B-E-A, which is silent, U-T, we need an I, right in there. Then we need, just squeeze a U right in there, cause it's just U-L (3 seconds) so letters like A and I and U? Those are vowels. Those are the ones we need to learn" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).
The next subcategory in the Conveys Information Directly category is, **Out of the Writing Flow**. These text units show the teacher sharing some information outside of times when she was involved writing with a child. An example from this subcategory is when Al wanted to share during the sharing time and Karen told him it wasn't his day to share. As Al was sitting down, Karen offered some information that might explain why Al thought it was his sharing day. She said, "Thursday. Tuesday and Thursday. They both start with a T" (3/2 Sharing).

We also conveyed information **While Writing for the Child**. We did not take dictation often but typically, as Karen was writing with a child, and especially when the child did not know the answer to one of Karen's known-answer questions about needed letters, she would ask if she could write some of the word. On these occasions, Karen sometimes shared information as she was writing. For example, when Jake was writing the word *my*, he suggested the letter *I*. Karen asked Jake if she could write a letter and as she was adding the *Y* she said, "It sounds like *I* but it's *Y*" (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

The next Informer category is **Tells about a Strategy** (24; 18% of Informer text units; 2% of total text units).
In these text units, we told students about a variety of tactics that writers use to help them as they're writing. An example of a strategy text unit is when Karen gave Betsy an alphabet chart during their first conference together. Karen said, "This can be helping you with some of the sounds that you're not sure of" (3/15 Targeted Conferences). In this text unit Karen gives Betsy information about the purpose of the alphabet chart.

Two-Way Cross Analysis of Informer with Context

In this section I present a two-way cross analysis of the Informer position with the contexts.

Table 6.10
Matrix of the Categories of Informer with the Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mini-Lesson</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Concurrent</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compares</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conveys information</td>
<td>12 (9,0,3)</td>
<td>4 (2,2,0)</td>
<td>29 (18,0 11)</td>
<td>8 (5,3,0)</td>
<td>6 (14,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38/224= 17%</td>
<td>15/104= 14%</td>
<td>57/492= 12%</td>
<td>15/320= 5%</td>
<td>6/224= 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three numbers in parentheses (in Table 6.9) in the Conveys Information category row are the numbers of text units in the subcategories of Conveys Information: In the
Flow of Writing Together, Out of the Writing Flow and While Writing for the Child.

The numbers in the bottom row are the total number of Informer text units in each context divided by the total number of text units in that context which equals the percentage of Informer text units in each context.

In considering Informer's categories and subcategories in relation to the contexts, we made comparisons; conveyed information in the flow of writing and while writing for the child; and talked about strategies, primarily in the Targeted Conferencing context. Demonstrations were provided mostly in the Mini-Lessons.

Two-Way Cross Analysis of Informer with Focus

In this section I present a two-way cross analysis of the Informer position with the foci.

Table 6.11
Matrix of Categories of Informer with the Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compares</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conveys information</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>106/134 =79%</td>
<td>12/134 =9%</td>
<td>6/134 =4%</td>
<td>5/134=4%</td>
<td>5/134=4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the categories of Informer have the largest number of text units with a Conventions focus. Besides Conventions, in the other foci, there is never more than a 6 text unit focus in the categories of Informer with many categories having zero text units at the intersection of focus and category of Informer. The numbers in the bottom row in Table 6.10 are the numbers of Informer position text units in that column’s focus divided by the total number of Informer text units which equals the percentage of that focus’ text units in the Informer position.

Three-Way Cross Analysis of Informer with Context and Focus

When we were in the Informer position our predominant focus in the Concurrent and Targeted Conferences as well as the Mini-Lesson context is Conventions. The Free Choice and Sharing contexts have very few text units in this position. All the categories of Informer have most of the text units in the Convention focus.

Discussion of Findings for Informer

Informer is the position with the least number of text units among all the positions (134; 10% of all text units). This does not mean that we were teaching in only 10% of the text units. Informer is not synonymous with teacher. Informer is defined as imparting information. It is
necessary to take into account all four positions and five foci to have a full view of what we did as teachers supporting young writers. From a constructivist point of view, it is a positive finding that we were not often in the Informer position. Ferreiro (1994) notes that "Piaget used to say that everything we teach children prevents them from inventing or discovering it" (p. 179). Frank Smith (1981b) includes as one of his myths of writing, that it is learned from instruction. Rather, he believes that "the easiest way to learn to write is to see something you would like to say (or would like to be able to say) being written" (p.795).

Considering the results of the two-way analysis (Table 6.9) indicating the contexts with the highest numbers of Informer's categories provides a window on the various styles we favored in the different contexts to convey information to students. During the Targeted Conferences when Karen worked closely with individuals, she seemed to favor using comparisons, telling them about strategies and conveying information while writing for students and in the flow of writing with them.

During the Mini-Lesson context, though, when Karen had the attention of the whole group, demonstrating was the
primary way she imparted information. Karen also conveyed information in the flow of the writing done during the Mini-Lesson.

The text units in the Informer position coded in the Demonstrates category, are predominantly in the later Mini-Lesson transcript. An explanation is that Karen decided to instruct by demonstration during this specific Mini-Lesson. Demonstrating in this way was one of a few different kinds of Mini-Lessons Karen used throughout the year.

There are three categories of Informer during the Free Choice context with zero or one text unit. These categories are: Compares (0), Demonstrates (1), and Talks about Strategies (0). Free Choice was a time when individuals worked on their own projects accompanied by talk. It was not often a time when I imparted information.

While there is evidence of me demonstrating various writing-related activities during Free Choice transcripts such as working on my own book, and making birthday cards or lists, these demonstrations occurred in secondary data Free Choice transcripts (secondary data transcripts are all other transcripts other than the 10 primary data ones).

The Sharing context’s 14% Informer text units, the second highest percentage among the contexts, seem like a
lot since journal sharing was typically a time when children made connections or asked questions about each other’s work. An explanation is that Karen was consistent about making teaching points during the Sharing context, usually in response to each sharer’s journal entry.

The nine text units in which we conveyed information outside the writing flow is not a lot but it is interesting to note that information was shared at unexpected times. It leads me to believe that writing-related information was shared throughout the day beyond the writing times that comprise my primary data sources.

The text units in which we conveyed specific information while writing for the child are mostly in the Targeted Conferences. Even though Karen preferred not to take dictation, she was willing to add letters to words when students didn’t know the correct letter. She typically accompanied this writing with some related instructional talk. It’s surprising that there are more of these “writing for” text units during the later Targeted Conferences (4/13) transcript than the earlier one (3/15) since a primary goal for Karen was to help students be independent writers. One would expect that this goal would lead to writing less for students over time.
On the other hand, as the year went on, Karen may have felt more pressure to reach her goal, so by writing occasional letters for students, she was contributing to their momentum in getting their ideas down on the page. Perhaps Karen wanted children to feel capable so they would take risks on their own.

Showing students strategies seemed to be a good tactic to achieve the goal of becoming independent writers. It's interesting that there are more text units in the earlier (3/15) targeted conference (8) than in the later (4/13) one (2). When I consider Karen's interactions with students during the 4/13 conferences, it seems that in at least two of the three main conferences she had that day, her focus was more on helping students get their sentence down than in offering strategies.

In the 3/15 Targeted Conferences, Karen suggested specific strategies for at least two of the individuals she worked with that day. Instructing about strategies was particularly strong with Betsy who was a new student to the class. Karen was filling her in on some of the strategies other students had been using for most of the school year, such as how to help yourself figure out the letters in words.
There are not many text units in the Strategies category which suggests this was not a primary way we provided information. Perhaps this is because a lot of the instruction showed up in more immediate ways between us and the students around the specific writing they were working on.

Most of the text units in the Informer category include our talk about information in forms that are accessible to kindergartners. That is, we shared information in concrete ways, within on-going writing experiences, connecting to children's previous or immediate knowledge. Dyson and Freedman (1991) note that "in instruction using the zone of proximal development, the adult oversees the construction of an instructional context by establishing references to what the child already knows" (p. 766). This is the sort of informing we did in the text units in the Compares category.

Most of the Informer text units involve giving information during the time children were writing alongside of us with our support, or participating in the Mini-Lesson. We commented on some of the many intricacies of the writing craft at the same time that we supported students in getting their message down.
The Director Position

There are 312 text units in the Director position which is 23% of the total text units. In this position the teacher tells the child to do something in more or less directive ways. My definition of Director is based on a standard linguistic definition of a directive as, "used chiefly to request action" (Greenbaum, 1989, p. 20). When we were in the Director position we used imperative language, asking children to do something directly. There are three categories in this position: 1) Strong Directives (228), 2) Mid-Range Directives (20) and 3) Weak Directives (64).

Most of the Director text units are in the Strong Directives category (228; 73% of the text units in this position; 17% of the total text units). These text units show us telling students to do something in a very straightforward and strong way. The subcategories of Strong Directives are: 1) Unmitigated Commands (158), 2) Let’s Command (31), 3) “Why Don’t You” constructions (13), and 4) Polar questions (26).

When we issued Unmitigated Commands (158) we told children to do something in a direct way without modifying its strength. For example, I said, “Rebecca, work on your
stuff while I’m meeting with Willis” (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). Another example is from the 3/15 Targeted Conferences when Karen and Dan were working together. After Karen complimented Dan, her unmitigated command is, “Go ahead and read on.”

The next Strong Directive subcategory is the Let’s Command (31) in an imperative sentence. When the teacher used the let’s command in the Director position her meaning was usually that the child or teacher would do something alone. In the Leader position the use of 'Let’s' in the Command category meant that the teacher and child continued together. “Let’s read it”, a Director text unit, is an example when Karen fully intended that Leah would read alone and Leah did immediately read, “I like to go” (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

“OK, let’s put this here so I can talk to April” (4/13, Concurrent Conferences) is an example of a text unit in which I carried out the action myself. I immediately followed my directive by moving Seth’s book to the side.

The Why Don’t You subcategory has 13 text units. Our intention is similar to our intention in the Unmitigated Commands text units: to request action on the part of the child. Even though a literal interpretation of “Why don’t
you..." invites a child to respond with a reason for not carrying out the action, in actuality, this directive always resulted in the child carrying out our request. An example from this subcategory is when Karen asked Franny if she had an ABC chart in her book box. When Franny said it was in her cubby, Karen said, "OK, well we’re going to need that, so why don’t you go get that" (3/15 Targeted Conferences)? Franny got up and headed for her book box.

Polar Questions (26) is another subcategory in the Strong Directive category. These questions include the words: would you, could you, can we, can you, can I, or will you. They are intended as a polite request (Greenbaum, 1989). Children never answered no to these questions. We used these polar questions as directives and they were taken that way by the students. For example, in writing with Sami, Karen told her to add a period and “Then would you read the whole story one more time please?” Sami immediately read, “I saw some coyotes. They were beautiful because they were doing something” (4/13 Targeted Conferences).

The Mid-Range Directives category has 20 text units (6% of this position; 1% of the total text units). There are 3 subcategories in the Mid-Range category: Need (9),
Want (9) and Obligation (2). The use of the words need or want in those subcategories implies a directive in that they are used to indicate an action the child has to do. A text unit in the Need subcategory is, "I actually need to use my pen, so you’re going to need to use a pencil Jake. Sorry" (3/8 Concurrent Conferences). A text unit from the Want subcategory is, "I want you to read it and I want you to make it match" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

The Obligation subcategory includes text units in which we indirectly let students know they are supposed to do something. One of these two text units is, "Anybody who’s here should have their ABC chart with them and we’ll borrow" (3/15 Targeted Conferences).

There are 64 text units coded in the Weak Directives (21% of text units in this position; 5% of all text units) category. The text units in this category show us telling students to do specific actions in indirect ways. The subcategories of this position are: 1) Implied in a Statement or Question (17), 2) Permission (16), and 3) Plans (31).

There are 17 text units in the first subcategory of the Weak Directives category, where the directives are Implied in a Statement or Question. An example of a text
unit from this subcategory is when Franny was bidding for my attention. I turned to her and said, "I’m listening to April" (4/13 Concurrent Conferences). This is an indirect way to say, "Leave me alone now I’m busy." An example from the 3/15 Sharing transcript is, "OK Jack, who's next on our list for sharing?" This is an indirect way to say, "Say the name of the next person on the list."

The next subcategory in the Weak Directives category is **Permission** (16 text units). Most of these text units use the words, 'you can', as we give children permission to do certain actions. For example, a text unit from the 3/15 Targeted Conferences is, "Dan and Leah, maybe you can share work with each other while you’re waiting for a turn OK?"

While most of the **Permission** text units use the 'you can' construction, there are three text units that use a 'let me' construction. For example, when Ben is bidding for my attention by saying, "Excuse me Deb’ Excuse me’," I was in the middle of talking to Al. I said, "Excuse me Ben, let me just finish with Al" (4/8 Free Choice).

In the **Plans** (31 text units) subcategory of the Weak Directive category, Karen or I talk about our own plans, the plans of individuals or the group. In keeping with the criteria for the Director position, Karen and I are
implying something we will do or that the children should do but not collaboratively as in the Leader position where we are working together. An example is when I took a marker away from Miguel because I was worried about its odor. I talked about my own plans when I said, "You know, Miguel’ I’m going to put this away because I don’t like the way this smells. I don’t think it’s a good thing for us" (4/8 Free Choice).

While the three categories in the Director position traverse the range from strong to weak commands, all 312 of these text units involve us telling children to do something or telling children about something we are doing which impacts what they can do. The Strong Directive category includes text units in which we tell students to do something in straightforward ways. Most of the text units in this category use the sentence construction of an unmitigated command, the directness and strength not modified in any way. The text units in the Weak Directive category are at the other end of the continuum, with wordings that involve implied indirect commands. The Mid-Range category includes text units that are in-between the strong and weak directives.
Two-Way Cross Analysis of Director Position with Contexts

This section presents a two-way cross analysis of the categories of the Director position with the contexts.

Table 6.12
Matrix of Director Categories with Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Concurrent</th>
<th>Free Choice</th>
<th>Mini-Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong 228/73%</td>
<td>30/29%</td>
<td>93/19%</td>
<td>48/15%</td>
<td>28/13%</td>
<td>29/13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Range 20/6%</td>
<td>1/1%</td>
<td>9/2%</td>
<td>6/2%</td>
<td>2/1%</td>
<td>2/1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak 64/21%</td>
<td>15/14%</td>
<td>20/4%</td>
<td>11/3%</td>
<td>10/4%</td>
<td>8/3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46/104 =44%</td>
<td>122/492 =25%</td>
<td>65/320 =20%</td>
<td>40/224 =18%</td>
<td>39/224 =17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentages in the Director category rows are the percentages of that category's text units in that column's context. The proportions of the three categories of Director in each context follow the same pattern as the overall relative proportions in the total group of Director text units. That is, in each context, most of the text units are in the Strong Directive category, least in the Mid-Range category and the Weak category has the second largest amount of text units. The Sharing context has the highest percentage of Director text units among the contexts.
Two-Way Cross Analysis of Director and Foci

This section presents a two-way cross analysis of the categories of the Director position with the foci.

Table 6.13
Matrix of Categories of Director and Foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Range</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>154/49%</td>
<td>54/17%</td>
<td>45/14%</td>
<td>37/12%</td>
<td>22/7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentages in the bottom row are the percentages of Director text units in each focus. This matrix shows that while we used directives from all three categories in the Management and Materials categories, we used mainly the strongest directives in the Conventions, Writing Act and Meaning foci.

Three-Way Cross Analysis of Director with Contexts and Foci

This section presents a three-way cross analysis of the categories of the Director position, the contexts and the foci.
Table 6.14
Matrix of Categories of Director Position and Foci with Information about Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Writing Act</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Range</td>
<td>Targeted:5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Targeted:17 Sharing:15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Free choice:7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>154/49%</td>
<td>54/17%</td>
<td>45/14%</td>
<td>37/12%</td>
<td>22/7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14 recreates the matrix shown in Table 6.13 but adds the dimension of context. It shows which contexts have the highest number of text units in the cells with the highest numbers of text units. Also noted on this table are the total text units in the other cells.

Discussion of Findings for the Director Position

The highest percentages of Director text units are in the Sharing context and the Management focus. In the Concurrent and Targeted Conferences we were about twice as frequently in the Leader position as the Director position. As teachers we led students in their writing with questions and suggestions, and supported their attempts with
confirmations (some of the categories of Leader position) rather than telling them directly what to do.

We might have seen the imperative language of the Director position as more appropriate to use when we focused on management issues than writing ones. Since we valued our interactions around writing, we wanted to deal directly with the behavior and routines in the Management focus in order to give us more time to focus on writing.

That most of the Director text units are in the Strong Directives category suggests we wanted to be as clear as possible with students and use language to lead to immediate action. This was because we had a tacit understanding of kindergarten children's need for clarity and directness. That there are so many strong directives is interesting in light of Lisa Delpit's (1995) ideas that whole language teachers don't use direct language. Data from this study show the teachers using directive language quite a bit (23% of all text units).

The small number of text units in the Mid-Range Directives category indicates that sentence structures that included the words 'I need, you need, I want you to, you should,' were not as much a part of our style as some of the ones in the Strong Directives category.
While the language in the Weak Directives category was more indirect than the other categories, students seemed to understand our intentions and follow our directions.

That we privileged the Strong Directives over the other categories in the Conventions and Writing Act foci (I am not including the Meaning focus here because there are so few of these text units) suggests that we valued these foci highly and wanted to facilitate action related to these foci as directly as possible.

Considering the three-way cross analysis, the highest concentrations of Director text units in most of the foci are in the Targeted Conferencing context. There are not many Director text units in the Targeted Conferences context with a Meaning focus though. Karen might have focused on Management from a Director position in order to be able to pay more attention to the foci she truly valued, Conventions and the Writing Act.

Analysis of Combinations of Positions and Foci

Since each of the 1,364 text units was coded twice, another way to view the data is by considering the combinations of the position and focus text units. Also, the amounts of these combinations were different in the
different contexts. The order of these combinations in decreasing prevalence in the total body of text units is listed here. The full meaning of the information provided is given in the first line with shorthand used in the rest of the list.

1. Leader position focusing on Conventions, 338 text units which is 25% of the total text units (1364)
2. Follower - Meaning, 160, 12%
3. Director - Management, 151, 11%
4. Leader - Meaning, 114, 8%
5. Informer - Conventions, 104, 8%
6. Leader - Writing Act, 101, 7%
7. Director - Conventions, 57, 4%
8. Director - Writing Act, 45, 3%
9. Follower - Materials, 44, 3%
10. Follower - Conventions, 40, 3%
11. Director - Materials, 37, 3%
12. Follower - Writing Act, 35, 3%
13. Leader - Materials, 34, 2%
14. Leader - Management, 31, 2%
15. Director - Meaning, 24, 2%
16. Follower - Management, 20, 1%
17. Informer - Writing Act, 12, 1%
Information about these combinations in each context is listed in Appendix D.

Discussion of Findings for the Analysis of Combinations of Positions and Foci

Almost half of the primary data text units showed Karen or I in the Leader position focusing on Conventions, in the Follower position focusing on Meaning or in the Director position focusing on Management. Additionally, as indicated in Appendix D, there are prevalent combinations in the different contexts. This suggests that children had different experiences in the different contexts. There is further discussion about these combinations in the last chapter.

Conclusion

As I wrote in the introduction to this chapter, the language Karen and I used defined our positions. As Follower our language showed our receptivity to children's initiatives. As Leader we were usually strong guides, asking questions to nudge children forward with their writing. As Informer we provided information and as
Director we spoke from a place of power, telling students to carry out specific actions. One could argue that the teacher was in a position of power in any of the positions. Issues of power are always at play between students and teachers in school settings. I argue that the different positions showed us in varying degrees of power.

In the Follower position our largest focus was Meaning and we were in this position primarily in the Free Choice context. Since the Follower position is the one where the children were most in the lead, I am surmising that children’s primary interest was meaning. The data suggest that children engaged in making meaning with pictures and talk. Karen and I were less interested in making meaning in these ways and were most interested in focusing on writing, especially Conventions.

We favored the Leader position in the journal writing contexts, where we asked children leading questions or known-answer questions to steer them towards doing some immediate writing. Our primary focus as Leader was on Conventions.

While the Informer position was not a primary one in terms of numbers of text units, when we did provide information, our focus was usually Conventions.
It is surprising, given how much we privileged the Conventions focus, that when we were in the Director position we focused more on Management than Conventions. Clearly, we used language differentially depending on our goals. Tacitly or explicitly we decided that when we were supporting students in a Conventions focus we would use the language of the Leader or Informer positions more than that of Follower or Director.

In the concluding chapter I consider the implications for learning that the positions we take and what we focus on influence. As Davies and Harré (1990) write, "There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another" (p. 48). Assuming certain positions as teachers, we position our students as learners. We therefore must consider what positions we choose more or less consciously because of the powerful influence we have over our students' learning lives. Similarly, we must consider the ramifications of our preferred foci especially when it is different from our students' foci.

In the concluding chapter I summarize the dissertation, provide an overall discussion of findings, suggest implications for teachers' support of young writers and recommend further research related to this study.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS FOR SUPPORTING KINDERGARTEN WRITERS

In this chapter I summarize the dissertation, discuss the broad findings, explore the implications and make recommendations for further research.

Summary of Dissertation

My overarching question for this study is: how do teachers support kindergarten students as they write?

The questions that support my deeper understanding of the overarching question are:
1. What contexts do teachers create to support kindergarten writers?
2. What is the focus of teachers while supporting kindergarten writers?
3. What positions do teachers take as they are supporting kindergarten writers?

My theoretical framework for this study is a holistic, socially-mediated, constructivist one. In the literature review I considered the history of kindergarten writing as well as the current political factors that influence our practices. I also reviewed literature about supporting learners in ways consistent with my theoretical framework such as guided participation, scaffolding, the zone of
proximal development, oral language and art. The literature I reviewed about instructional contexts is in the areas of writing conferences, interactive writing, and journal writing.

This qualitative study took place in a kindergarten classroom where I was a participant observer throughout one school year on an almost daily basis during the times of the day when children had writing opportunities.

I conducted a sociolinguistic microanalysis of the data consisting primarily of ten transcripts selected from audio tapes of classroom writing events. Secondary data include copies of children’s journals, field notes, videotapes, and dialogue journals I kept with Karen West, the classroom teacher. Using the Nudist (1997) qualitative data analysis computer program I divided the ten transcripts into 1,364 text units. Through constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) I identified three dimensions in the data: context, focus, and position.

These three dimensions are the framework for the analysis of the data. There are two primary data transcripts in each of the five contexts. The focus and position dimensions are divided into five foci and four positions. The categories of the foci and positions are
listed in parentheses below. The percentage included after each focus and position is the percentage of text units with that focus or position out of the total (1,364) number of text units analyzed. The positions and foci are underlined. Contexts are also underlined and briefly defined.

**Contexts**

**Mini-Lessons**—These were brief, whole group meetings before journal writing time. Karen led the students in composing a sentence or two usually in an interactive writing format (McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000).

**Targeted Journal Conferences**—These were one-on-one conferences during journal writing time conducted by Karen. She interacted with students one at a time through the writing of their journal entries.

**Concurrent Journal Conferences**—These conferences involved me shuttling back and forth among several students as they wrote and drew in their journals.

**Journal Sharing Time**—Usually four students a day shared their completed journal entry with the whole class. The sharer called on other students to comment on the entry.

**Free Choice**—Five or six students signed up each day for the Color, Draw and Write option which was one of several
available during Free Choice. Students used paper and a variety of utensils in projects of their own design. I was present at the Color, Draw and Write table.

**Foci**

(1,364 text units were analyzed)

- **Management**, 15%—(Unwritten Rules, Routines, Behavior)
- **Writing Act**, 14%—(Starting, Continuing, Child's Abilities)
- **Conventions**, 39%—(Sounds; Letters; Letters and Sounds; Words; Word Boundaries; Punctuation, Layout, Grammar)
- **Materials**, 9%—(Alphabet Chart; Writing Utensils; Student-Made Book; Paper; Envelopes, Labels, Stapler)
- **Meaning**, 22%—(Specific Meaning; General Meaning; Doing Something Meaningful with the Writing)

**Positions**

(The same 1,364 text units that were coded for foci were coded for position)

- **Follower**, 22%—(Expresses a Personal Response; Responds to Questions, Nonverbal or Comments; Asks Questions; Compliments; Reflects Back to Child)
- **Leader**, 45%—(Commands, Focusing Moves, Suggests/Offers, Confirms, Clarifies)
- **Informer**, 10%—(Compares; Demonstrates; Conveys Information Directly; Tells about Strategies)
Director, 23%— (Strong Directives, Mid-Range Directives, Weak Directives)

Throughout this chapter I capitalize the first letters of names of contexts, foci, positions, their categories and subcategories. Subcategories are both capitalized and italicized. When I use the terminology of the analysis in more general ways they are not capitalized.

Considering the whole body of text units, it is striking to note the large percentage of text units coded with a Conventions focus and the small percentage coded with a Materials focus. In terms of position, we acted mostly in the Leader position and least in the Informer position.

I conducted two and three-way cross analyses across the dimensions. I also considered which combinations of foci and positions are most prevalent in the different contexts (See Appendix D). Both the purposes of the context as well as the adult present constrained what we tended to emphasize in terms of foci and positions. Children’s experiences in the different contexts varied as a result of those constraints.
Discussion of Findings

In this section I discuss some of the broad patterns in the data. First I discuss the finding that the agendas of the teachers and students were different from each other. Then I explore some of the factors involved in complex classroom interactions that are constrained by both the style of the teacher and the specifics of the context.

Different Agendas of the Teachers and Children

Some of the patterns from the data remind me of Anna Freud's (1974/1930) statement about education: "Step by step education aims at the exact opposite of what the child wants, and at each step it regards as desirable the very opposite of the child’s inherent instinctual strivings" (p. 101). Anna Freud captured the differing agendas of students and teachers in her historical time and experience.

My experience in the kindergarten class was that children usually seemed to prefer making meaning in their journals through talk and pictures rather than writing. While it is possible that children were drawing and talking as rehearsal for their writing, I often noted in my field notes that students seemed to write more to fulfill the requirement than for their own purposes. One of my
observations was that usually when Karen rang her bell towards the end of the journal writing session and asked if students needed more time, many students had not begun writing yet or had only written their name or a few letters. As I walked around the room and glanced at children’s open journals when the bell was rung, there were often elaborate pictures but little writing. The signal of the bell spurred some students to quickly write something before clean-up time, especially if it was their day to share.

Talking during the writing activity was a powerful pull for students. Throughout journal time students talked with each other, to adults in the room, or to themselves, even during the "quiet writing time" when they were not supposed to be talking.

While the data in this study suggest that children and adults had different agendas, the children did not often have an opportunity to take the lead and express their agendas such as preferences for making meaning through talk and pictures. Karen and I were so focused on engaging children in our agendas that it is hard to say whether or not children’s agendas would have been more similar to ours if they had more of a chance to take the initiative.
When Karen or I took the Follower position children's values are revealed by the data since our talk in those text units was usually a response to something children initiated. The three positions besides Follower are ones in which Karen or I took the lead. Therefore, the predominant foci in these positions (Leader, Informer and Director) point to what Karen and I valued.

While the Follower position is the best window I have on what the children valued related to writing, it is not an absolute measure of this since we still had the option of whether or not to respond to children's initiations. Our biases would be especially demonstrated in the Compliments category of the Follower position. We were more likely to compliment what we valued.

As a Follower and especially in the first three categories of the Follower position (Expresses a Personal Response; Responds to Questions, Nonverbal Behavior or Comments; and, Asks Questions), our focus was usually on Meaning or Materials. As Follower, these were our foci because we were responding to something the child initiated.

Seventy-one percent of all the text units coded in the Oral Meaning subcategories of the Meaning focus are in the
Follower position. Ninety-six percent of the text units focusing on Picture Meaning are also in the Follower position. By comparing these Meaning subcategories in positions other than Follower with those of Follower, it is apparent that children were considerably more focused on oral meaning and picture meaning than were the teachers.

There is evidence from both the primary and secondary data that during writing times, the children in this classroom used oral and pictorial meaning-making systems as closely intertwined with their writing. These findings are consistent with other studies concerning kindergarten writers (e.g., Gundlach, 1981; Dyson, 1982a, 1983; Hubbard, 1989; Larson, 1995a).

Students in this study were more interested than the teachers in exploring and talking about the materials available to them. Along with the Follower position, the text units in the Free Choice context, where students had an opportunity to create their own agendas, provide another window on the students' interests. Most of the Materials focus text units are in the Follower position and the Free Choice context.

These findings lead me to conclude that children's predominant foci were Meaning and Materials and within the
Meaning focus, they were especially engaged in making meaning orally and through pictures. These were not the primary foci for the teachers. In the Leader and Informer positions and in the Targeted Journal Conferencing and Mini-Lesson contexts where Karen or I took the greatest lead, Conventions was usually the primary focus. Because there was so little writing time that did not involve adults focusing on conventions, the children's potential interest would be obscured.

When I consider these findings, I have to wonder if students would have been better served if we followed their lead for making meaning through talk and pictures. We might also have supported students' initiative in seeking information about conventions and other facets of writing.

These findings remind me of Mayher, Lester and Pradl's (1983) recommendation that writing development is best supported by first emphasizing fluency, then clarity and lastly correctness. Following this idea, in order to foster kindergartners' writing development we have to invite fluency of both writing, writing-related talk and pictures. Initial fluency would probably entail children's emphasis on their pictures and oral language as shown from
the predominant foci in the Follower position and the Free Choice context.

Overall, the data analysis I undertook in this study shows that students and teachers had different agendas about what they wanted to focus on during the writing contexts. This assertion is complicated somewhat by the amount that our purposes for the contexts and our unique styles as teachers constrained our foci and positions.

Constraints of Context and of the Adult Present

Another finding is that the specifics and purposes of each context as well as the adult present influenced the predominant positions and foci in the contexts. The Targeted Journal Conferences that Karen conducted have a similar profile (Appendix D) to the Mini-Lessons, which she also led, in terms of what she focused on and the positions she took. That is, Karen focused mostly on Conventions (60% of Targeted Conferences' text units; and 65% of Mini-Lessons' text units). The other four foci paled in comparison to the Conventions focus with the Writing Act being the next largest focus in these two contexts (15% and 16% respectively). While the Meaning focus in both these contexts is under 10% of the text units, there is very little or no focus on either Oral or Picture Meaning. Most
of the Meaning focus is on *Written Meaning*. There is also very little focus on Materials in the Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferencing contexts.

The positions Karen took across these two contexts have an even more similar profile to each other than the foci profiles, with slightly more text units coded as Director in the Targeted Conferences context and slightly more text units coded as Informer in the Mini-Lesson context (see Table 6.1).

The similarities across these two contexts where Karen was present might lead one to think that the teacher present had a strong influence on the position and focus profiles of the contexts. This is not the case though in the two contexts in which I was the adult present, the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts. While there are some similarities across these two contexts such as similar numbers of text units coded as focusing on Management and in the Informer and Director positions, the other positions and foci across these two contexts differ.

For instance, in the Free Choice context there are more text units coded as focusing on Materials and Meaning and in the Concurrent Conferences there are more text units coded as focusing on Conventions and the Writing Act.
There are more text units coded as Follower in the Free Choice context and more text units coded as Leader in the Concurrent Conferences.

The differences across the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts reflect that Free Choice was an informal context without the specific requirements inherent in the journal conferencing contexts. The larger number of text units coded with a Materials focus in the Free Choice context is due to the availability of a wider range of materials which precipitated students' expressions of interest and my accompanying responses to their questions and remarks. So even though I was present in the Concurrent Conferencing and Free Choice contexts, the position and focus profiles for these two contexts varied due to the different purposes for these two contexts.

The purposes set for the contexts constrained the adult present. In addition to the discussion above showing how the differences between the Free Choice and Concurrent Conferences influenced what I focused on and the positions I took, the constraint of context is also apparent in the similarities of position and focus profiles in the Concurrent Conferencing (I was present) and Targeted Conferencing (Karen was present) contexts. This is partly
due to our having similar goals for both conferencing contexts. Karen and I both helped students with the writing of their journal entries and probably felt similar pressures to lead students to complete these entries.

While the two journal conferencing contexts shared similarities that impacted our actions, our different styles are evident. There are several differences across the two conferencing contexts, such as a greater Meaning focus in the Concurrent Conferencing context than in the Targeted Conferencing one (see Appendix D for more similarities and differences across these contexts).

Another example of the constraints of context is that while Karen was the adult present in both the Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferences and her presence seemed to influence the predominant positions and foci as discussed above, she was also the adult leading the Sharing context. The Mini-Lesson and Sharing contexts had fewer similarities than those noted for the Targeted Conferences and Mini-Lessons. The Mini-Lesson and Sharing contexts were similar in that in both the whole group was present sitting on the floor facing the front of the room. In order to get permission to speak children raised their hands and were called on.
There were not many similarities beyond these physical ones, however. The two contexts were different in that the Mini-Lesson was a concentrated teaching time when Karen made teaching points or demonstrated different facets of the journal writing process. She usually composed in front of the group, engaging students to think with her about the needed letters and words boundaries. Students were focused on Karen and the large demonstration journal page.

The Sharing context differed from the Mini-Lessons in that Karen was situated in the back of the group during Sharing, and in the front for the Mini-Lessons. During Sharing, the class' attention was focused on the sharing student who sat in Karen's chair in front of the group, and that student's journal page. Students had opportunities to respond at length to each other's journal entries or make other tangentially-related connections. In the Sharing context Karen was predominantly in the Director position focusing on Management. In the Mini-Lesson, Karen usually focused on Conventions mainly in the Leader position.

One can see from the above discussion that while our style and goals in a context influenced the position and focus profiles, the specifics of the context itself also constrained our positions and foci.
Focus and Position Combinations as Another Look at the Teachers' Agendas and Constraints of Contexts

Given the four positions and five foci, there are twenty possible combinations of these two dimensions. A consideration of the prevalent combinations of positions and foci in the contexts offers another lens on the teachers' agendas as well as the constraints of context. It is also a window on how our support was experienced by students.

There are three or four main combinations of positions and foci in each context (See Appendix D). Six combinations of positions and foci have more than 100 text units each. In the three contexts where Karen was mainly involved with students (Mini-Lessons, Targeted Conferences and Sharing), the three main combinations are Leader/Conventions, Informer/Conventions and Director/Management. In the two contexts where I was involved with students (Concurrent Conferences and Free Choice) the main combinations are Follower/Meaning, Leader/ Meaning and Follower/Materials. The similarities of these combinations across the contexts where the same adult was present lends support to the finding that which adult
was present contributed to the unique qualities of each context.

Still, the requirements of the context itself provided further constraint as can be seen by the similarities between the Targeted and Concurrent conferences. In both these contexts, we supported children as they wrote in their journals. Targeted and Concurrent conferences both have concentrations of Leader/Conventions text units that are not prevalent during Free Choice or Sharing.

These findings raise the possibility that children might have had different learning experiences in the different contexts. Almost half the text units in the Mini-Lessons and Targeted Conferencing contexts were the Leader/Convention combination. Students participating in these contexts may not often have had a chance to take the initiative or to focus on meaning and purposes for writing.

While the most prevalent combination of position and focus text units in Free Choice and the Concurrent Conferences is Follower/ Meaning, not all children participated in these contexts. Many children either chose other options or the Color, Write and Draw center was filled by the time the sign-up sheet got to them. Furthermore, only those children who chose to involve
themselves in Concurrent Conferences had that experience. Sometimes there wasn’t enough room at the table for students who wanted to interact with me during this context. Therefore, not all students had the experience of interacting with a teacher who often followed their lead and focused on their preferred agenda of meaning.

The findings discussed in this section, that the positions adults are in and their foci, constrained by the specifics of the context as well as by the differing styles of the adults present, point to the complexities involved in teacher-student interactions.

Implications

How can my findings contribute to what we do in our classrooms with children? My analysis and many hours of observations suggest implications for teachers and teacher educators to consider concerning the three dimensions: context, focus and position. Although I consider these three dimensions separately, they are interrelated and I discuss them in a more integrated way at the end of the implications section.

Implications Related to the Five Contexts

The findings in this study as well as related literature suggest that there are many factors to consider
in planning supportive contexts, putting plans in motion and then adjusting them as we get children's responses to what we have set up. Thinking through the contexts we construct is best supported by using knowledge about child development, effective means of support for learners and the realities of school settings and schedules. Additionally we want to "stay free to dance with the children" (Dyson, 1986a) and be ready to respond and interact on a moment-to-moment basis within the complex context of daily life in the classroom.

I address each context, although the two journal conferencing contexts are combined into one discussion. I provide a brief description and recommendations for each context.

**Mini-Lessons**

In this section are suggestions for mini-lessons and other whole group writing-related formats based on my understanding of the potentials of this context for supporting young writers. The teacher's purposes for mini-lessons in kindergarten classrooms are usually to involve the group in composing a text together and to make teaching points that are relevant to the students.
Tap the power of the group. Having the whole class gathered and focused opens the possibility for generative learning opportunities. A whole group writing session where a common text is composed together can provide a wealth of demonstrations for children at varying ability levels. Ideally, all children feel part of the group and have a sense that they are participating in writing a communicative text.

Schedule the mini-lesson prior to writing time. In the daily classroom routine in this study, the mini-lesson always preceded and was linked to journal writing time so that it often served as a demonstration for that form of writing. This placement of the mini-lesson is a useful strategy for sharing a range of information with students at an opportune time.

Schedule the mini-lesson after children have an opportunity to stretch and make it part of a routine. Karen did not focus often on management during the mini-lesson which suggests that children were well-behaved and focused on the task at hand. The mini-lesson usually took place right after a whole-class bathroom break that entailed a walk to another part of the school, which might have helped curtail restlessness. Also, students knew the
mini-lesson would be short and they would soon get up from the familiar place on the floor and go off to work in their own journals. This predictability could have contributed to children's willingness to cooperate since they knew what was expected.

Consider if an interactive writing format fits the needs of your students. Kindergarten teacher Jean Hannon (personal communication) feels that regular interactive writing (McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000) sessions might be more appropriate in first grade than kindergarten, in part because she doesn't think kindergartners should sit for very long. She recommends that an interactive writing format be used occasionally in kindergarten when there are compelling reasons for it. She gives an example (Hannon, 2001) of her class finding a frozen dead bird on their playground and deciding to make a list together about what to do with it, using an interactive writing format.

Consider how to include all students in the interactive writing experience. Trish Hill (personal communication) shared that those of her students who entered their kindergarten year with little writing experience did not seem to gain in their writing abilities through their participation in whole group interactive writing sessions.
She worries that those students might have felt inadequate when some of their peers were able to suggest the next letter or the spelling of a word and they were not.

McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas (2000) recommend calling on students to add familiar letters, such as first letters in their names; saying explicitly that the next letter is the first one in his/her name to support that child’s success.

Use current class studies, recently read literature and authentic experiences as content for group compositions. An idea for an authentic experience comes from my field notes. A fire marshall had visited the class and talked about fire safety. The students were brimming with stories and ideas about safety rules. A topic for the group writing that day might have been to make a poster listing fire safety rules that could be posted in the hall where students line up for lunch.

Support generative learning experiences. Dewey (1938) wrote that learning experiences ought to be generative and live on in other experiences. Authentic writing ideas related to immediate class issues can be suggested during the mini-lesson. Teachers can also routinely invite
students who follow through on those ideas to share afterwards.

**Vary the length of group texts and be open to continuing them over a period of several days.** One advantage of this is that the teacher can vary the length of sessions as she monitors students' attention levels or time factors that impact class schedules. Also, composing one text over time creates real reasons to reread the writing and demonstrates the actual process of a writer.

**Use a variety of formats according to the needs of students.** Trish Hill (personal communication) cautions against using interactive writing indiscriminately. In order to choose appropriate instructional strategies she suggests taking students' abilities and dispositions into consideration. There might be occasions when other formats such as a brief review or a role-playing scenario can serve as the mini-lesson.

A shared writing (McKenzie, 1985b) format might be appropriate for some kindergartners since it is less threatening than interactive writing and resembles shared reading which is often a successful strategy in kindergarten. In shared writing the teacher writes in front of the group, talking out loud about her thought
processes while the children watch and participate as the teacher includes them in thinking about the text. Interactive writing has similar features to shared writing but adds the element of the teacher sharing the pen with students who add a letter or word to the group message with the teacher's guidance.

Journals

One purpose for keeping a journal in kindergarten is to give students daily experiences writing and drawing independently. Students can try out in their journals what they observed in the mini-lesson. What follows are suggestions based on the findings of this study related to the common practice of kindergarten journal writing.

Invite children to go beyond journal writing. On one hand, a daily journal writing routine offers a predictable structure for children. They know what is expected of them so they can take risks within the familiar format. Regular practice in writing leads to improved writing (Smith, 1983; Graves, 1983).

On the other hand, if writing in a daily journal leaves little time for experiencing other genres and purposes for writing (Wortman, 1990/1991), then perhaps the journal writing specifics ought to be revised or expanded.
If students have authentic reasons to use other writing genres such as letter writing, there might not be time to write in the journal that day.

Use the journal for varying purposes. Purposes for journals can change throughout the year. Journals can serve to record observations and changes in a class garden or cocoons when students are involved in those experiences.

Branscombe and Taylor (1988) describe a class routine in which members of the group nominate possible journal topics. After discussion, the class decides on one topic that everyone writes about in their individual journals. These are usually important events in the lives of members of the class. This strategy would give everyone a common theme as they go off to write alongside their peers. Then when students meet in the group again, they share their varying points of views on the focal issue.

Students could be invited to write songs, nursery rhymes or well-known poems in their journals. This would provide the opportunity to produce a predictable text that they are familiar with, thus freeing them up to concentrate on different aspects of the writing system than they usually do when composing an original text.
Journal writing in kindergarten is a common practice and our purposes for using it ought to be considered. Are they used because of convenience or can they be generative in supporting young writers with a familiar framework in which to take risks and express themselves with new graphic systems and a range of genres?

Conferences

There are many decisions to make about the specifics of teacher-student writing conferences. The purpose of these conferences is usually to allow individuals to meet with the teacher for support and guidance with their writing. I offer suggestions related to kindergarten writing conferences based on findings from this study and related literature.

Shape the conference to fit the needs of kindergartners. Dyson (1993a), writing about kindergartners, notes that “serious talk during a writing conference with their teacher may be less important than playful and reflective talk during an activity involving writing” (p. 38). A kindergarten writing conference might not look like writing conferences with older writers.

Kindergarten writing conferences ought to involve the social learning context. Children learn a lot by listening
in, watching and talking out loud about their thinking. In this study, when we conferenced with individuals we usually asked other students waiting for a turn to work in their journals or read over what they'd written so far. Learning transpires when children are invited to listen in and contribute to the on-going conference. Interactions beyond the teacher/child dyad should be valued. Larson (1995a) found that when interactions among students are sanctioned, a complex knowledge distribution system is at work among kindergarten writers.

**Use a Concurrent Conferencing structure.** Meeting for an extended time with one child to lead him/her in writing down a sentence in an interactive writing format might not be the best use of our time. One problem with that structure is that it ties teachers up so they are unavailable to others in the class. McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas (2000) specifically state that interactive writing is a strategy to use with the whole class, not with individuals.

In a concurrent conferencing format similar to the one identified in this study, the teacher is available to respond to children who raise questions and to monitor several students at once as they are creating their meaning
on paper. She can also listen to the oral accompaniment of children talking to themselves and others as their work goes on the paper; she can use this information to inform her actions. When a concurrent conferencing format is used a teacher can be available to several students at once while giving them some time to think on their own.

Schickedanz and Sullivan (1984) found that "young children seem to need to be in touch with someone when they engage in literacy events, although the contact may be brief or intermittent" (p. 10). These are the sorts of conditions available in a concurrent conferencing format.

Be available to listen, encourage, demonstrate and answer children’s questions. Hannon (1999) found using dialogue journals with her kindergartners effective, but I wonder how much of the benefit was in the time she was setting aside to talk with individuals, beyond the actual writing of a question in the student’s journal. Hannon felt that the benefit of the dialogue journal was in the out loud talk she did next to the student as she wrote her question. This is a similar demonstration to what students witness in shared writing but is perhaps more meaningful for an individual since the teacher can tailor what she
says toward what she knows about that child. This is another potential format for a kindergarten conference.

Use dictation as one strategy among others in conferences. Demonstrations and talk similar to what Hannon described can accompany the teacher in writing down what the child says. In the kindergarten classroom in which Joanne Larson (1995a) collected her data, the teacher took dictation and then encouraged her students to write on their own as they were ready. There are times when dictation is useful such as when students have complex thoughts they want to write down or when they are in the middle of writing something at clean-up time. It is one strategy to use in a conference and can be the topic of a group meeting or with individuals if students seem to rely on it at the expense of having a go on their own.

Value students' drawings and talk during conferences. Spend time focusing on, valuing, encouraging and discussing children's drawings during conferences. I have found that in kindergarten as well as at other grade levels, teachers tend to privilege writing over drawing. It is important to acknowledge that drawing is an important meaning-making system. As students refine what they want to express
through their drawings they will find their own reasons to also use the writing system.

Dyson (1982a) points out that for youngsters, oral language is intricately connected to both drawing and writing, in that it "may extend upon or specify the meaning of the graphics" (p. 362). Often, students approached me to explain their picture and/or accompanying text. Truly, I would not have understood their intentions without their narration. It was as if their oral language bubbled around their graphic representations and was part of it.

Throughout this study I had the image of writing welling up from deep inside children rather than something we pulled out of them as they reluctantly cooperated with us. Perhaps if we nourish children's inclination to draw that will nourish their deep desire to express themselves in writing.

**Sharing**

A sharing time following journal writing is useful because it allows an audience for students' entries. Whether students are going to have an opportunity to share on a particular day or not, as they come to expect a daily sharing session, they write with an audience's possible questions in the back of their minds.
Consider the routines that develop during sharing time. Some of the same considerations that were mentioned above in the mini-lesson section are true for sharing because they're both contexts where the whole group is assembled. Teachers, alert to how the context is serving learning, have to be vigilant against mindless routines leading to rote responses, even as we seek the familiarity that welcomes risk-taking and participation.

Consider the demonstrations we provide during sharing. Reflecting on our own responses during sharing is useful because teachers provide powerful demonstrations for students. In the class in which I conducted this study, one response that was given by their peers to almost every student who shared was, "I like it because you didn't scribble and you took your time." Those were words that Karen used on the second day of school and students appropriated them for the rest of the school year.

Karen asked students to respond to each other's journals with questions or connections. While she responded occasionally with her own questions and personal connections, she more often made a teaching point. Perhaps students were confused in that they did not see their role as providing teaching points so they did not have regular
demonstrations about how to respond productively with authentic questions or connections. Instead, they reverted back to something Karen had demonstrated earlier and it became fossilized as a class ritual for responding to classmates' journal entries.

**Introduce a variety of ways to share.** One way to keep the sharing context a generative one for learning, and to avoid getting into ruts of unproductive routines, is to try out different ways to share. Then, as the school year goes on, there is a repertoire of ways to share that can be drawn on. For example, at different times it might be useful to share in pairs, small groups or with another class. A strategy used in writing workshop (Graves, 1983) is that students who tried out something that was introduced in the mini-lesson are asked to share. If students communicating with each other during the writing time is sanctioned, teachers might ask students to tell about a friend's journal on occasion.

**Free Choice**

Kindergarten classrooms often have a writing center that is available to students during free choice or other times in the day. These centers are usually stocked with paper and a variety of writing and drawing utensils. The
purpose of a free choice writing/drawing option is to allow students to explore materials and symbol systems in a social context.

Consider the role of the adult who monitors free choice as well as ways to support students without an adult present. In the classroom in which this study took place, there was not a lot of time for free choice so the presence of an adult facilitated children getting materials for projects and cleaning up when it was time to go to lunch. In some schools, volunteers are available and the free choice writing/drawing location might be a logical place to provide the presence of an adult. Early literacy literature (e.g, Schickedanz & Sullivan, 1984) stresses the importance of an available adult as long as the child can maintain a feeling of control.

A brief manual could be written to help volunteers understand the dynamics of beneficial support of literacy development. It could include information about allowing students to explore materials and giving them ownership to explore freely within reasonable limits, as the free choice label implies.

When I visited another kindergarten classroom during the time I was conducting my study I sat at a free choice
Initially I was alarmed that students were using paper freely, making a brief mark and then tossing the paper aside. When it was time to clean up though I saw students sort through papers, placing ones that could be reused in the recycling tub. I realized that the class had an established routine that allowed students free exploration but also a strategy to clean up and develop a consciousness about not being wasteful.

Realistically, in a class with one teacher, children would often work independently and routines would be negotiated so students could succeed on their own at a writing/drawing free choice center. Children may feel more willing to take risks and explore materials freely in the absence of a closely supervising adult.

Consider the purposes of a free choice writing/drawing option. In the face of today's emphasis on becoming literate as early as possible through focusing on phonemic awareness and phonics it might be useful to articulate reasons for providing the free choice writing/drawing option to avoid it being seen as expendable, frivolous play.
Having a writing/drawing option available to kindergarteners is useful in that it gives children an opportunity to experiment with some of their developing understandings about symbol systems. It also gives them a chance to interact freely with their peers to discuss their new ideas. Piaget and Inhelder (1969) asserted that learning is supported as children experience cognitive disequilibrium. He felt that this state of mind was more useful in the presence of peers than with teachers since children could authentically argue with peers whereas children know that teachers have more experience and knowledge.

Being clear about our purposes for the free choice writing/drawing option not only supports teachers in creating a productive learning context but it also provides time and choice for students who favor the modalities of learning that it offers.

Stock a free choice writing/drawing center with materials that are accessible to children. Replenish materials as needed. If children participate in organizing and caring for the materials they will be more likely to use them in responsible ways. The Reggio Emilia schools (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998) provide guidance for
teachers in how to create environments and strategies to help children take care and pride in a wide assortment of available supplies for art and writing projects.

Find ways to invite as many students as possible to participate in a context where they can explore materials and symbol systems for their own purposes. Realizing that many students in the classroom involved in this study rarely had the opportunity to engage with the Color, Draw and Write free choice option suggests that teachers might have to adjust the schedule, the options or the nature of the invitation in order to involve more students.

Summary of the Implications for the Contexts

The different contexts identified in this study served to give students a variety of experiences exploring and learning about new and unfamiliar symbol systems, especially writing. The range of contexts fulfilled a variety of purposes from engaging students as part of the whole group in the Mini-Lessons and Sharing contexts to giving students a chance to work closely with a teacher who guided them in their writing. The Free Choice context allowed students to set their own agendas, exploring freely in the company of an interested adult.
The many complexities involved in considering these implications can be taken into account as teachers engage with learners in day-to-day classroom life.

Implications Related to the Five Foci

In this section I write about the five foci, Management, Writing Act, Conventions, Materials and Meaning, in terms of implications suggested by the findings and related literature. Implications related to the foci are shared below in the same format as those discussed in the context dimension.

Management

Since turn-taking is a major area of Management in this study I center the implications discussion on that.

Reflect on the dynamics of turn-taking routines. Steinberg (1985) found that "the differences between turn-taking behaviors that occur when the teacher is present and those that happen when children are interacting only with each other are striking. Children tended to cooperate while the teacher generally dominated" (p. 159).

Considering Steinberg’s findings and knowing the inevitable power differential that underlies many teacher-student interactions in schools, it is useful for teachers to make their purposes clear when setting up a sharing
context. By clarifying the purposes teachers decide what stance to take. Should teachers use time managing the smooth running of the group or responding to students' writing? While it is possible to do both, spending more time on one will naturally leave less time for the other.

One way to work toward spending less time managing turn-taking, would be to collaborate with students to create small, workable sharing groups that operate independently of the teacher. An advantage to this configuration is that more students get to share every day than in a whole group format. The teacher could visit the small groups as an interested listener taking notes. If she consciously decides to maintain silence as she observes groups, students will expect this stance and maintain their own cooperative interactions. After sharing, students and teacher could reflect on and self-evaluate the turn-taking and other aspects of the session as well as suggest strategies for improvement. In this way, students grow in their ability to participate effectively in the group without constantly being monitored by the teacher.

Establish procedures for getting the teacher's attention. Typically Karen or I asked students to wait while we were working with someone else. When students
demonstrate their desire to have the teacher’s attention it suggests the need to create ways for them to ask for this attention in acceptable ways. In Larson’s (1995a) study, a student put a hand on the teacher’s shoulder as she worked with someone else to indicate a need for attention. This is an example of a sanctioned way to ask for help without interrupting the teacher and being told to wait.

**Writing Act**

The Writing Act involves the teacher focusing on students starting and continuing with the writing act as well as giving attention to abilities as a writer.

*Strive to create contexts that invite children to engage with the writing act so they feel compelled to continue on their own.* When we focused on the writing act in this study we usually took the initiative in nudging children towards continuing with their writing. This finding suggests the questions: Why did adults need to lead children to continue with their writing to such a large extent? Why did children not find the writing event compelling enough to keep themselves going?

In order to help students discover their own motives to continue writing we can support them in finding reasons to write that are meaningful to them. In this way we
direct some of their attention beyond the writing act toward its communicative or expressive functions. For example, teachers can suggest and value opportunities for students to engage with writing projects that could be used for real purposes such as making a birthday card for a family member, a note to the custodian to leave standing an in-process block structure, or a note to help the teacher remember something a student needs. As teachers suggest these sorts of ideas and support students in carrying them out, students will find compelling reasons to continue in the writing act without the teacher's nudges.

Conventions

Conventions is the predominant focus in this study. Most of the conventions we focused on involved the spelling of words students were writing including thinking about sounds and letters. This section includes implications related to conventions based on the study's findings.

Realize that whole language teachers do attend to conventions of language. Those opponents of a whole language philosophy who claim that phonics and conventions are not important agenda topics for whole language teachers might find it surprising that Karen and I, who ground our teaching in whole language learning theory (Jacobson, 1991;
West, 1998) focused on conventions, especially the sounds in and spellings of words, to such a large degree.

Dahl and Scharer (2000) also found that phonics and conventions were important parts of what took place in the whole language classrooms they studied. They noted, "The foundation concepts of phonics were more than a third of the instruction that was coded" (p. 588).

Several researchers (e.g., Chomsky, 1972; Dahl & Scharer, 2000) have noted that young children learn a lot about phonics through writing and this is a point that is worth explaining to parents, administrators and others who look for the place of phonics teaching in a whole language classroom.

Reflect on ownership issues related to conventions. Conventions were much more the teachers' focus than the children's in this study. We found ourselves having to steer children to that focus with leading questions and other means to direct their attention. This leads me to recommend that we should consider the ramifications of the differing interests between child and teacher. We ought to consider what it means for our students' learning when we have to exert a lot of effort to get students to attend to
something. Perhaps it means that students approach learning to write from their own understanding of it.

In our fervor to get children to write a reasonably conventional sentence and in our belief that by supporting them to do this they would become independent writers, we might have missed opportunities to be involved with children's own explorations and questions about written conventions. Their taking the initiative could lead to deeper, more meaningful learning.

Be attentive to children’s understandings about writing conventions. Rather than privileging our adult-centric beliefs in the importance of getting children to write a conventionally-spelled sentence, our time might be better spent following students’ leads as they explore the graphic systems of both drawing and writing in ways that make sense to them. Cazden (1985) contends that "a prerequisite to giving help" is to "take in and understand" (p. 187). Duckworth (1996) emphasizes the importance of teachers "understanding learners' understandings" (p. 83).

Paley (1986) recommends that an important quality for a good teacher is curiosity about children’s ideas and thoughts. Teacher's curiosity and the concomitant time spent listening and interacting with children on their turf
can encourage children to express their perceptions. Understanding children’s perceptions can help us know how to best support them.

Consider the factors that contribute to decisions about how time is spent. As I explained earlier in this chapter, there are several complex constraints on what transpired in the various contexts. Teachers need to acknowledge their constraints in order to decide how to provide the most useful support. One example is to recognize that predominant attention to conventions might come from several sources of pressure such as widely-publicized media reports that kindergarten teachers’ top priority be “preparing children to learn to read” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 179). Parents and administrators ask questions that might have originated in newspaper articles that cite spurious research reports (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998).

When we stop to reflect on these pressures and remind ourselves what we know about developmentally appropriate practices and how learning is best supported, we can act deliberately in the best interest of students, explaining our decisions to interested parties.
Understand the dynamic interplay between invention and convention. It’s important to understand issues of invention and convention in order to best support the learning of conventions. Kenneth Goodman (1988) writes that language development involves learners inventing the systems of language in the “context of social use” (p. 5). Both individual creative invention and convention for the purpose of shared understandings are necessary for learning. There is a dynamic interplay between invention and convention as they move toward equilibrium.

Goodman (1988) points out the difference between the merits of controlling conventions in order to participate in meaning making with others and being controlled by conventions which could result in discouraging invention and hampering growth in language. In the latter, control of learning is taken away from learners, and willingness to take risks is inhibited. The former is supportive of learning, and learners gain “ownership over their thought and their language. They are increasingly empowered” (p. 10). If we focus primarily on correct spelling and other conventions in order to satisfy our adult sensibilities, we are not being supportive of children gaining a sense of ownership in the workings of language.
Plan support carefully based on developmentally appropriate practices and sound learning theory. Making deliberate plans for how we will support students can help us be consistent and act according to sound learning theory.

When Hallie Cirino (2001) responded to five-year-old James' query about the spelling of tree, a word that he had already written on a previous page, James flipped back, found it and copied his previous spelling, R-E-N, for tree. I wondered why she didn't just tell him the correct spelling. After all, she was only working with three children and had the time to jot it down or tell him directly. Then she explained that when supporting students she "refrained from telling them things that might then remove a productive struggle for them" (p. 90).

This explanation reminded me that she was writing in a book edited by Eleanor Duckworth and that all the contributors are teachers acting from their Piagetian learning theory. The "productive struggle" is central to their view of learning--that learners grow and change as their current views of the world are challenged and they need to modify their own theories. It is important for
teachers to articulate their own views of learning and to act consistently based on these views.

Prisca Martens (1996) provides another example of giving support to a young writer that is based on her belief system about learning. When her three-year-old daughter, Sarah, asked how to spell a word, Martens told her that sometimes when she wasn’t sure of a spelling, she made a line as a placeholder and went on. Sarah found this strategy useful and it was one she used to support herself in writing for some time after that experience. If Martens had told Sarah the spelling of the word, she wouldn’t have had a strategy to use. This example reminds me of the old adage, "If you give a man a fish he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime." An implication is that as we interact with students, we ought to respond to their questions with process suggestions whenever possible.

Share with students the reasoning behind the kinds of support we give. If a group meeting is held to talk about why we respond to children’s queries about how to spell a word with, “What do you think?” or “Stretch the word”, children will not think their teacher is mean or lazy but rather that she is responding purposefully. Also, when
students are consistently met with these responses, they internalize them and use them in their own self-talk to support their thinking about the spelling of a word.

Materials

The children in this study seemed more interested in materials than the teachers. This finding suggest the following implications.

Give students opportunities to take care of materials and use them independently. Kindergarten teacher Jean Hannon (personal communication) notes that she came to realize the merits of making materials readily available to her students. She told me she lets her students know she trusts them to make wise decisions and that they would talk as a group if necessary to discuss appropriate uses for materials. When she doesn’t have to control the materials she has time for other kinds of interactions.

Materials should be organized, accessible, well-stocked and replenished when necessary. Sharing control of materials with children can support them in gaining autonomy and responsibility.

We can learn about materials use from teachers who practice the Reggio Emilia Approach (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). They place emphasis on using quality
materials and organizing them in ways that children can share in their ownership and care.

**Be flexible with ways materials are used.** While the alphabet chart that children kept in their book boxes or writing folders was not often used by children, the one affixed to the front of my field notebook was used by both children and me on numerous occasions. This suggests that we ought to be guided by experience so that materials serve a variety of purposes, even in unpredicted ways.

**Meaning**

My findings show that students' main focus was meaning embedded in the talk around their writing and drawing. The teachers were more often focused on the meaning in students' writing than in their pictures or talk. These findings lead me to make the following recommendations.

**Engage with children in talk around their unfolding work.** Spend time on this dialogue rather than on diverting students' attention continually back to the writing. When we focused on pictures in this study it was usually as a jumping off point to move as quickly as possible to the writing. Trusting in the importance of a meaning focus for children will open up opportunities to be available to
support children as they find their own reasons to make meaning through pictures, talk or writing.

One way we can become involved in focusing on meaning with children is to simply engage in a meaningful conversation around their focal topic without a driving agenda to move quickly to writing. We can ask questions to more fully understand what children mean or share our personal connections. Children need to know that writing has purposes that are close to their lives and interests.

**Share ideas with students about how to use their writing in meaningful ways.** We rarely focused on doing something meaningful with the writing. We can suggest possible projects to students that involve authentic purposes as students share their ideas. Then we can support them in undertaking these projects so they experience the joy of communicating for real reasons.

**Summary of the Implications for the Foci**

Given the findings in this study there are implications that are related to the five foci that are discussed in this section. Related to management are considerations about turn-taking since this was the largest group of text units in that focus. While there might be an expectation that turn-taking would be a focus in a kindergarten
classroom where children are learning about school routines, we can reflect on and refine classroom dynamics involving turn-taking in order to best serve learning.

The implication related to the fact that we were involved in a variety of ways of nudging children to continue with their writing, is that we ought to strive to help students find their own compelling reasons to write in order to encourage self-sustaining strategies.

There are many complex issues related to conventions that play out in implications such as how to help students learn about conventions in ways that make sense to them as well as considering the ramifications of the constraints on teachers related to conventions.

Children’s interest in exploring materials leads to the implication that materials ought to be well-organized and available to children.

Children’s displays of interest in meaning, especially in pictures and talk, and teacher’s lesser focus on pictures and talk, implies that we ought to engage with children in making meaning in ways that make sense to them.

Implications Related to the Positions

In this section implications are discussed based on the findings related to the four positions: Follower,
Leader, Informer and Director. While this study allowed me to consider each position separately, in actuality we are constantly shifting among positions. Ken Goodman (1988) suggests that,

> good teaching involves a delicate balance: knowing how much support to give without taking control of learning from the learner...The teacher should be aiming to give enough support to involve learners and to keep them involved in useful learning. When the teacher becomes an active intervenor then the learner loses control and the nature of the learning and what is being learned changes. (p. 14)

It is the delicate balance that we must be sensitive to, as Goodman suggests, by being more of a mediator than an intervenor. A mediator leads by following, ascertaining what learners need and finding ways to provide that and still support learners in taking initiative. As we reflect on our teaching we can ask ourselves if we’re being more a mediator or intervenor in the various positions.

In this section I provide implications related to three of the four positions (Follower, Leader, Informer) because these implications are most relevant to my research questions.

**Follower**

The Follower position is the only one in which children were in the lead as teachers took the stance of
responding to them in various ways. The children might have felt ownership in what they were doing as well as our interest and involvement in their agendas when we were in the Follower position.

Be available to children as they explore symbol systems and show us what they need for support. In the Follower position we asked questions because we were authentically curious or confused and responded in a variety of ways to questions children asked or comments they made. These are some of the ways we can be available to children. Being in the Follower position can allow a teacher to gather information about a child’s thinking and intentions which might be different from ours.

Value the Follower position. When a teacher takes a Follower stance, it doesn’t necessarily mean that she is being passive. Being in the Follower position might have allowed a more informed Leader stance as we gleaned information about children’s thinking.

While we are not actively directing or leading children in the Follower position we can be actively listening and responding. We can be present for the child to hear what s/he is saying or to better comprehend her/his
efforts at grappling with understanding. This can inform our decisions for what action to take.

Several writing development researchers and learning theorists (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Dyson, 1982b; Searle, 1984) recommend that teachers support children in ways that are consistent with the Follower stance. In Searle's (1984) critique of scaffolding his major concern is around issues of who is in control of the learning. His vision for an optimal learning environment is that "the active, initiating child stays in control of the language and the experience while the adult operates effectively in response to the child" (p. 480).

In order to enhance and not interfere with literacy development Dyson (1982b) suggests "we must give children the opportunity...to show us what they already know...and we must observe what they do" (p. 679). Ashton-Warner (1963) made a similar point about the importance of giving students the chance to talk, listening to them well and using what we hear to support their agendas, when she wrote, "from the teacher's end it boils down to whether or not...she has the... wisdom to listen to another; the ability to draw out and preserve the other's line of thought" (p. 53).
For teachers engaged with the teaching philosophy developed in Reggio Emilia, Italy, listening is at the heart of the teacher's role but the listening teacher is active, in that she is "fully attentive to the children" and seeks "to follow and enter into the active learning that is taking place" (Edwards, 1998, p. 181). As listener and observer the Reggio teachers aim to understand the learning strategies children are currently using.

Rogoff (1986) argues for a follower-like stance in order for the teacher and student to "find a common ground of knowledge and skills. Otherwise the two people would be unable to share a common reference point and understanding would not occur" (p. 32). Teachers and students understanding each other is important for supporting students through scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) or in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

**Leader**

In the ten transcripts that comprise the primary data for this study, we are most often in the Leader position. In this position we usually led children forward in their writing by making focusing moves such as asking focusing questions or known-answer questions.
Consider if our behavior in the Leader position contributes to or detracts from students' sense of agency. The dynamics of our interactions with students can influence their willingness to engage with teachers and learning. Goffman (1957) writes about the complex factors that can lead to a feeling of alienation in an interaction and negatively impact learning. For example, when a learner's "definition of self is threatened, the individual typically withdraws attention from the interaction" (p. 50). This could be the case when the teacher is often in the Leader position trying to nudge the child toward her agenda with little attention to the child's.

In realizing how often we were in the position of leading children with our adult agenda rather than following their agenda, I must raise the question: Is this in the best interest of children's learning to write? Herbert Kohl (1994) writes about a phenomenon he calls 'not-learning', which he contrasts with failure to learn. In not-learning the learner deliberately chooses not to learn because of challenges to identity or integrity. Perhaps when teachers are in the position of leading children at the expense of following them we challenge their identity and integrity. Kohl found that not-learners
"placed themselves outside the entire system that was trying to coerce or seduce them into learning" (p. 7). In working with not-learners Kohl realized how important free choice and will are in learning. Kohl’s not-learning construct is related to the importance Frank Smith (1981a) places on learners’ willingness or lack of willingness to turn their attention to demonstrations in the environment.

Smith (1981a) writes about the power of demonstrations, engagements and sensitivity in learning. He asserts that we are learning from demonstrations all the time and these demonstrations are not always the ones teachers consciously intend to share with students. Smith further explains that we learn from demonstrations in which we choose to engage. We have to be sensitive to the demonstration in that we have the expectation that we will learn from it; or more precisely, there is an "absence of the expectation that learning will not take place" (p. 111).

Being in the Leader position so often, focusing on conventions, we were demonstrating to children that we did not expect them to voluntarily want to know and apply conventions of language; that we would have to strongly lead them to this learning. Children might get the message
from this that they probably would not want to choose the learning of conventions for themselves because teachers had to so strongly push them in that direction. This could set up a situation of not-learning in Kohl’s thinking or alienation from interaction in Goffman’s terms.

These are important considerations in the learning lives of kindergartners and important for teachers to take into account. The dynamics that are put into play in kindergarten will have repercussions as children continue in school. We have to consider how to position ourselves in relation to learners so we can help them maintain their integrity; so they can explore the writing system in ways that make sense to them. Learners must feel empowered and have opportunities to express their initiative and curiosity in a context with receptive adults.

**Informer**

We were in the Informer position least among the four positions in this study. When we gave information it was mostly about conventions. Also, most of the information was conveyed directly while we were writing with individuals rather than through demonstrations or telling about strategies or comparisons.
Whenever possible, provide information as children need it. Information was usually shared with students in the context of their actual writing. This makes sense with kindergarten children or with any learner, that receiving information is most meaningful when we are at the point of need. It is less appropriate to schedule lengthy sessions to convey information to the group about aspects of the writing system out of the context of their actual writing.

Provide information about many aspects of the writing process. Most of the information we conveyed was about conventions. There is information about other aspects involved in writing that would benefit the novice writer. For example, given children’s interest in materials they would probably be interested in information about them and the information would help them use the materials effectively. Teachers in Reggio Emilia schools provide instruction about using materials and tools. Sharing information about their correct use is delivered “as part of the process of facilitating, supporting, and encouraging” (Edwards, 1998, p. 193).

Use children’s questions and the specifics of the writing process they are involved in as a basis for mini-lessons. In a kindergarten classroom where children are
actively engaged learning about and using symbol systems, there are many occasions when questions arise. Karen remarked to me during the school year that she found herself saying the same things over and over as she conferenced with individual children.

Perhaps an efficient use of our time would be to jot down questions and issues that arise as we interact with individuals and then later take these issues to the whole group to explore, discuss and inform about the workings of our language. This can lead to language study as the group pays attention to text in their environment and conducts research to consider their questions. In ways such as this teachers can inform students while enlisting their involvement.

Follow up to see how children use the information we share with them. An implication related to the findings in the Informer position stems from a constructivist stance. As Duckworth (1979) asserts, it is "the child's own struggle to make sense of the data" (p.302) that will result in the deepest understandings for the child.

Learners do not 'learn' everything we 'teach' them. Drawing on Gruber's concept of 'magical thinking' Emig (1981) points out that "to believe that children learn
because teachers teach and only what teachers explicitly teach is to engage in magical thinking” (p. 21). So rather than be alarmed that we were not in the Informer position often, imparting specific information, we can strive more for being in positions that support learners as they articulate their confusions and work out their states of disequilibrium in personally meaningful ways.

**Summary of the Implications for the Positions**

Being a follower in the classroom allows teachers to understand the learner’s developing understandings and to encourage a sense of agency in the learner as his/her agenda is focused on. If the teacher often assumes a leadership position, the teacher needs to consider whether this stance allows students to take ownership of their learning. While taking a leader position might allow teachers to work efficiently with as many students as possible, teachers must consider whether they are engaging at a pace and in ways that are comfortable and make sense to students.

Implications related to the findings of the Informer position suggest that sharing information with kindergartners as they need it in the course of their writing might be most useful. Also, that the Informer
position has the fewest text units of the four positions, does not mean children were not learning. Children are learning all the time as they actively make sense of their world. I did not share implications related to the Director position because these were least related to my central focus of teachers supporting writers.

While the analysis of the data allowed me to consider the relative quantities of text units in the different positions, these positions flowed into each other and one statement or question as well as the child’s response influenced what we said next. Still, it’s useful to consider the varying proportions of text units in the different positions because this could provide a window into the learner’s experience of the learning context. The positions we take can influence learners’ feelings of empowerment and their willingness to take risks. Along with the multitude of decisions we make everyday, we change our stance moment by moment, as we are met with new situations. Reflecting on the various positions we take can help us refine our teaching.

Broad Implications for Learning

While the findings and implications from this study are specifically related to teachers supporting
kindergarten writers, they are also relevant for preschool and primary grade teachers and learners. Additionally, they can be useful when thinking about the support teachers offer any learner. All learners need to be listened to and to have attention given to their sense of integrity and identity, enabling them to make connections between their learning and their lives. All teachers can reflect on the positions they take in relationship to the learners they transact with to consider how a given stance might influence their students' sense of themselves as learners.

There are many complex factors to take into account when creating contexts that support learning for students of all ages. Also, teachers can consider their primary foci during the teaching day and specifically while they support students. If there is a predominant focus in one area teachers can consider the reasons behind this and make decisions accordingly.

**Recommendations for Related Research**

The findings and implications from this study raise questions for further research. Since the questions in this study are asked from the point of view of the teacher, I am led to wonder, what is the point of view of the child? What new insights will arise if I analyze the data from
both the teacher and child stances? In order to look closely at the contributions of both the teacher and children, I could analyze this data using Eggins and Slade's (1997) Speech Function Analysis to gain a greater understanding about power relationships in this classroom. There are other systems of discourse analysis that could be used with this data or new data that would lead to further and different understandings about the questions I raise.

I could analyze this data considering the sequence of text units. As noted in the Follower section of this chapter, the different positions contributed to each other. For example, when Leader text units occur after Follower text units, we might have been better informed about the child's intentions and thinking.

A study about how children can be supported in their writing development by focusing on their pictures would be significant given the importance children placed on making meaning through their pictures. This study would also further our knowledge about supporting student ownership of their writing. What would occur if we engaged with children in talk around their pictures and did not require them to write? Would children find their own authentic reasons to write? What factors might lead children to add
writing to their pictures? Perhaps the teacher could offer meaningful invitations to write when it seemed warranted but not require it.

Due to the in-depth analysis involved in this study, there were questions I had initially that I did not follow through on. These are questions I would like to know more about and could lend themselves to future studies. One question is, how do teachers revise what they are doing with students as they reflect on what they are doing? The other is, how do the contexts we create, the positions we take and what we focus on impact students' learning?

A study group of preschool, kindergarten and/or primary grade teachers might use the findings from this research to explore the contexts, foci and positions they use to support young learners in their own classrooms. They might reflect on their leader roles in the classroom, and discover to what extent they can shift toward a follower stance. How does teacher as follower represent active engagement and what is its impact on interacting in more informed ways?

To what extent should writing in kindergarten be unique because of the developmental levels and experiences of the students and to what extent is it beneficial to
consider it an initiation, thereby needing to be modeled after the writing education students will experience in upper grades?

Finally, a useful research study would consider how teachers' positions and foci impact children's attitudes towards writing and drawing as well as their development as writers and drawers. This could take the form of a longitudinal study in which students are followed across several grade levels, interviewing them about their attitudes towards writing and keeping track of their development as writers.

Conclusion

There are many complex issues to consider when thinking about how teachers can best support kindergarten writers. There are no easy answers for the best contexts to create, what to focus on, or the best positions to take. Additionally, just as decisions made by the teacher constrain the contexts she creates, there are also constraints on the teacher. By reflecting on the multiple sources of these constraints and pressures teachers can put them in perspective, address them when necessary and stay focused on teaching in ways that are consistent with their beliefs about learning.
As teachers make decisions for the kinds of support to offer students, it is worthwhile to be conscious of complexities. Dyson and Freedman (1991) point out some of the knowledge bases that support teachers in guiding young writers. These include

understandings of the nature of writing and of the developmental challenges inherent in writing (and)... ability to observe in students’ processes and products signs of what students are grappling with and... understanding and ability to make use of the resources available to them in the classroom environment. The most important of those resources are the human ones—themselves and their students. (p. 766)

When we take time to make sense of children’s understandings and unique ways of creating meaning we will be taking a step in offering the most meaningful support possible. Being available to children to listen, answer their questions, demonstrate possibilities, suggest meaningful projects and support them in carrying them out are only some of the many complex interactions that can transpire in a kindergarten classroom as children and teachers work together.

Teachers in many early childhood classrooms in Reggio Emilia, Italy are present for children so they can “catch the ball that the children throw [them], and toss it back...in a way that makes the children want to continue
the game with us" (Filippini, 1990). This metaphor ties together some of the aspects of learning I’ve explored in this last chapter. As teachers we must be sensitive to establishing relationships with our students that will help them feel welcome and interested in exploring our writing system and embracing it for many purposes.
APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Taken from Atkinson and Heritage (1984)

: in a word or at the end of a word means the sound of the immediately preceding letter is elongated

() parentheses in a transcription mean I wasn't sure of what was said. If the parenthesis has nothing in it, it means something was said but I couldn't understand it. If there is something in the parenthesis, it's my best guess as to what was said.

' an apostrophe at the end of a word means a rising intonation

Underlined words or letters are what is being focused on as the teacher and child write together.

These are the transcription conventions that are relevant to the example text units used in this dissertation only.

<s> The sound of the letter is said.
APPENDIX B: TIMELINE FOR THIS STUDY

**Spring 1998:** Karen and I explored the possibility of conducting my dissertation research in her classroom.

**Summer 1998:** I began meeting with Karen to talk about the school year and possible research questions.

**Mid-August 1998-September 4, 1998:** During this two-week period I picked Karen up at her house everyday and drove across town with her to school, stayed in class all day and drove home with her after school; talking together in the car about the beginning of the school year. I took extensive field notes during the school day and interacted with children as they worked and played. I didn’t have a research question at this time because I wanted to be open to this specific context and what questions would emerge and seem compelling.

**September 4 - November 1998:** I had surgery and stayed home to recover, rereading my field notes when I was able and reflecting on them in considering a research topic. Dialogue journaling with Karen started on Oct. 19, 1998.

**Mid-November-December 1998:** I returned to the school realizing I was interested in our interactions with students around their writing and drawing so my field notes focused on this as I considered how to refine my questions. The class moved to the teacher’s lounge at this point.

**Winter Holiday 1998-1999:** I met with Karen and talked to her about my research focus which she was also interested in exploring. Began work on my proposal for the university as well as the school district since it was necessary to ask TUSD for permission in order to conduct the study.

**January 1999:** I submitted my request to do research to the TUSD research office and spent the first day back after vacation with Karen and her class. Formal interview with Karen. Started a regular routine of spending 3 days a week in the classroom during journal time and other writing times as participant observer. Talked with Karen about evolving writing curriculum and continued our ongoing discussion in our dialogue journals about issues related to our interactions supporting students during their drawing and writing. Finalized university proposal and gave copies to my committee.

**February 1999:** Continued to be a participant-observer in the kindergarten classroom 3-5 days/week during writing times. Read over all dialogue journals, transcripts and field notes looking for patterns and emerging categories. Continued dialogue journals with Karen.
APPENDIX B--continued

March 1999: Participant-observer in the kindergarten classroom 4 days/week during writing times. Audio and/or videotaped teacher/student interaction sessions. Read over all dialogue journals, transcripts and field notes using tentative emergent theory to categorize information. Worked on categorizing the new data to test categories. Continued dialogue journals. Scheduled in set time to continue reading on this topic. Made copies of students' journals and other artifacts. Collaborated with Karen to introduce students to writing workshop format and made a space magazine with the class.

April 1999: Continued to be a participant-observer in the kindergarten classroom 4 days/week during writing times. Continued to audio and/or videotape teacher/student interaction sessions. Transcribed a few audio tapes. Continued dialogue journals. Shared information with Myna Matlin as debriefer and Karen as member check, to raise questions and consider where I was going. Planned carefully to collect data during last few weeks of school in May. Made copies of children's work.

May 1999: Stopped going to school early in the month as I reread field notes and composed final interview and writing experiences. Conducted final interviews with students during the second and third weeks of May. Participated in end of the year class events.

June, July, August 1999: Interviewed Karen. Sorted and catalogued all data. Wrote about the various contexts for writing and drawing in the classroom.

September-November 1999: Initial analysis of the teacher's role.

December 1999-January 2000: Revised analysis of the teacher's role using the dimensions of position and focus.

February-March 2000: Learned Nudist and decided on the ten transcripts that would be the primary data for analysis. Input data into Nudist.

April-August 2000: Analyzed and wrote up drafts defining and discussing each position and focus. Shared these drafts with Karen West and Kathy Short.

September-December 2000: Wrote up three analysis chapters which were condensed versions of the previous lengthy write ups of each position and focus. Received feedback from Kathy Short on these chapters.

January 2001-March 2001: Revised analysis with input from Peter Fries.

April 2001-August 2001: Finished writing all chapters.

October 2, 2001: Oral defense of dissertation
APPENDIX C: THE ALPHABET CHART

Note: This alphabet chart was left in a student's writing folder at the end of the school year. The hole in the middle was probably made by the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNSHINE ALPHABET</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>apple</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>egg</td>
<td>f</td>
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<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>goat</td>
<td>h</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>itchy witchy</td>
<td>j</td>
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<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>kangaroo</td>
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<td>n</td>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>puppy</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>rainbow</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>tiger</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>volcano</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x in box</td>
<td>y</td>
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<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>zoggit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: COMBINATIONS OF POSITIONS AND FOCI

The first listing is the combinations of position-focus text units in descending order by numbers of text units. Below, are listings of these combinations in the contexts, also in order from most to least. The capital letters listed with the contexts represent the various combinations. For example, in the Mini-Lesson context the A combination with 45% is the Leader/Conventions combination.

A. Leader - Conventions, 338, 25%
B. Follower - Meaning, 160, 12%
C. Director - Management, 151, 11%
D. Leader - Meaning, 114, 8%
E. Informer - Conventions, 104, 8%
F. Leader - Writing Act, 101, 7%
G. Director - Conventions, 57, 4%
H. Director - Writing Act, 45, 3%
I. Follower - Materials, 44, 3%
J. Follower - Conventions, 40, 3%
K. Director - Materials, 37, 3%
L. Follower - Writing Act, 35, 3%
M. Leader - Materials, 34, 2%
N. Leader - Management, 31, 2%
O. Director - Meaning, 24, 2%
P. Follower - Management, 20, 1%
Q. Informer - Writing Act, 12, 1%
R. Informer - Materials, 6, .4%
S. Informer - Management, 5, .3%
T. Informer - Meaning, 5, .3%

Mini-Lesson: A-45%, E-14%, C-12%, F-10%, D-5%, G-4%, J-4%, Q-3%, H-2%, B-1%, N-1%, R-1%, O-1%, T-.5% (0%-P,L,I,M,S,K)

Targeted Conferences: A-40%, E-10%, C-9%, G-8%, F-7%, D-5%, H-4%, L-4%, J-2%, K-2%, B-2%, 0-1%, P-1%, M-1%, N-1%, Q-1%, I-1%, T-.4%, S-.4%, R-0%

Concurrent Conferences: B-21%, D-14%, A-11%, F-11%, C-7%, H-5%, J-4%, E-4%, K-4%, M-4%, N-3%, O-3%, L-3%, I-3%, G-2%, P-2%, R-1%, T-0%, Q-0%, S-0%
Sharing: C-37%, N-14%, E-8%, B-7%, P-5%, G-5%, L-4%, A-4%, D-4%, Q-3%, J-2%, F-2%, T-2%, H-2%, I-1%, S-1%, O-1%, M-0%, R-0%, K-0%

Free choice: B-34%, I-14%, D-12%, C-8%, M-7%, K-6%, F-3%, O-3%, J-2%, P-2%, L-2%, R-2%, A-1%, N-1%, S-1%, H-1%, E- .4%, T-0%, Q-0%, G-0%

Percentages add up to slightly more than 100% because numbers were rounded up.
APPENDIX E: CODING LIST

There are 1,364 total text units
The numbers after the names of contexts, dates of transcripts, focus and position categories and subcategories are numbers of text units. The dates of the 2 transcripts used for each context and number of text units in each transcript are included.

1 CONTEXTS
  1.1 Mini-Lessons—224
      3/9—95; 4/7—129
  1.2 Targeted Journal Conferences—492
      3/15—248; 4/13—244
  1.3 Concurrent Journal Conferences—320
      3/8—173; 4/13—147
  1.4 Sharing—104
      3/2—53; 3/15—51
  1.5 Free Choice—224
      3/15—54; 4/8—170

2 FOCI
  2.1 Management—208
      2.1.1 Unwritten rules—66
          2.1.1.1 Work while waiting—13
          2.1.1.2 Journal requirements—18
      2.1.2 Routines—25
      2.1.3 Behavior, movement—117
          2.1.3.1 Turn-taking—72
  2.2 Writing act—195
      2.2.1 Starting—20
      2.2.2 Continuing—141
          2.2.2.1 Rereading—63
          2.2.2.2 Plans—52
              2.2.2.2.1 What’s next?—29
          2.2.2.3 Persevering—26
              2.2.2.3.1 Pictures—1
          2.2.2.3.2 Add more—8
              2.2.2.3.2.1 Pictures—2
      2.2.3 Child’s abilities—34
  2.3 Conventions—537
      2.3.1 Sounds—117
          2.3.1.1 More sounds—18
APPENDIX E—continued

2.3.1.2 Connection to known sound—4
2.3.2 Letters—133
   2.3.2.1 More letters—7
2.3.3 Letter and sound—33
2.3.4 Words—132
   2.3.4.1 Known word—16
2.3.5 Spaces—55
2.3.6 Punctuation, layout, grammar—67

2.4 Materials—121
   2.4.1 ABC chart—13
   2.4.2 Writing and Drawing Utensils—43
   2.4.3 Child’s book—23
   2.4.4 Paper—27
   2.4.5 Envelopes, labels, stapler, etc.—15

2.5 Meaning—303
   2.5.1 Specific meaning of children—211
      2.5.1.1 Oral meaning—86
         2.5.1.1.1 Nonverbal meaning—5
      2.5.1.2 Written meaning—87
         2.5.1.2.1 What will be written—30
      2.5.1.3 Pictures—37
         2.5.1.3.1 What will be drawn—1
   2.5.2 General meaning of child—63
      2.5.2.1 Oral—15
      2.5.2.2 Written—18
      2.5.2.3 Pictures—7
         2.5.2.3.1 What will be drawn—1
      2.5.2.4 Journal or project—23
   2.5.3 Doing something meaningful with writing—29

3. POSITIONS
   3.1 Follower—301
      3.1.1 Personal response—42
         3.1.1.1 Exclamation only—14
         3.1.1.2 Exclamation and comment—10
         3.1.1.3 Commentary only—18
      3.1.2 Responds to—89
         3.1.2.1 Child’s questions—23
            3.1.2.1.1 Gives permission—4
            3.1.2.1.2 Bids for attention—9
         3.1.2.2 Nonverbal—20
APPENDIX E—continued

3.1.2.3 Comments—46
  3.1.2.3.1 Expanded—27
  3.1.2.3.2 Minimal—19
3.1.3 Asks questions—35
  3.1.3.1 We’re curious—24
  3.1.3.2 We’re confused—11
3.1.4 Compliments—79
  3.1.4.1 Child oriented—41
    3.1.4.1.1 Specific—35
    3.1.4.1.2 Nonspecific—6
  3.1.4.2 Product oriented—38
    3.1.4.2.1 Specific—23
    3.1.4.2.2 Nonspecific—15
3.1.5 Reflects back to child—56
  3.1.5.1 Echoes—33
  3.1.5.2 Reads child’s work—19
  3.1.5.3 Reiterates what they did together—4

3.2 Leader—617
  3.2.1 Commands—44
  3.2.2 Focusing moves—291
    3.2.2.1 Focus questions—69
      3.2.2.1.1 Openings—9
      3.2.2.1.2 Leading and plans—60
    3.2.2.2 We ask known answers—140
      3.2.2.2.1 Binary—23
      3.2.2.2.2 Pseudo open—117
    3.2.2.3 Reads over—82
  3.2.3 Suggests/Offers—65
    3.2.3.1 Suggests—35
    3.2.3.2 Offers—30
  3.2.4 Confirms—138
    3.2.4.1 Nonspecifically—84
      3.2.4.1.1 With compliments—3
    3.2.4.2 Specifically—54
      3.2.4.2.1 With compliments—9
  3.2.5 Clarifies—79
    3.2.5.1 Asks for information—41
    3.2.5.2 Checking/verifying/reminding—38

3.3 Informer—134
  3.3.1 Compares—20
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