A Guide for Instructors and Teacher Study Groups

To accompany

Children's Language: Connecting Reading, Writing, and Talk

by Judith Wells Lindfors

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Introduction

This guide offers suggestions for using C*hildren's Language: Connecting Reading*, *Writing*, *and Talk* with pre- and in-service teachers in university courses and teacher workshops. In providing these teaching ideas, I draw heavily on my 27 years as a professor of language and literacy at The University of Texas (Austin). I identify five continuities between children's oral language development and their literacy development. Children come to kindergarten with impressive oral language competence. My assumption is that our literacy instruction is most effective when we build on this competence, grounding our literacy instruction in continuous language acquisition processes.

Each language continuity that I identify in the text gets its own chapter: authenticity, meaning-orientation, collaboration, apprenticeship, and individuality. In each chapter, I describe the course of development of the focal language aspect (from oral into written language development), and I provide literacy examples from the K/1/2 children I have been working with since 2001 (as a volunteer) at the Kozmetsky School, the charter school at SafePlace, Austin's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survival Center.

The guide suggestions accompanying each chapter of the text fall into two categories. The goal of those in the first category (*Building Understanding: Going Deeper*) is, as the name implies, to help students deepen their understanding of the concepts presented in the text. Suggested activities in this category invite student reflection, probing, inquiry, and exploration (e.g., keeping a reflective response journal, analyzing transcripts of young children's read-aloud discussion, examining a young child's written text). Suggestions in the second category, *Building on Understanding: Moving into Classrooms*, are classroom-based. Some of these involve students in carrying out guided observations of young children's reading, writing, and talk; others engage students in creating or adapting literacy activities for children in their own classrooms. In either case, the students will be building on their understanding of literacy development as a continuing aspect of children's language development.

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Building Understanding: Going Deeper

GETTING STARTED

As you begin using this book with your students, you might want to consider some long-term structures such as the ones shown in suggestions #1 and #2 below.

1. Response Journal

Have your students keep a reflective response journal as they read this book. The writing could be done out of class and/or in class (e.g., you provide 10–15 minutes at the end of one class period each week for journal writing). The purpose of this journal is for the student to reflect on the ideas and issues she is encountering in the text and in class. Presumably, you will read the students' journals periodically, either in whole or in part (e.g., students put a paper clip on the selected entries they want you to read). Your reading can

- Give you a finger on the pulse of the class. You may find promising ideas/reactions in the journals that you can bring into class discussion ("Reading your journals this week, I find that some of you are thinking about/wondering about/bothered by . . .")
- Give you the opportunity to engage in a private (written) dialogue with each student.

These purposes—for the student and for you—can only be achieved if you do not evaluate the content of the journals. You might want to give some course credit (perhaps 5%?) for the completion of the writing, but no grades for the writing itself. (How do you put a grade on a student's thoughts?) If you choose to write responses to the students, try to be dia-

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logic, not evaluative, so the students won't tailor their writing to elicit your approval. Try for responses such as, "I think a lot about that, too," or "I wonder if your student teaching experience will help clarify this for you," or "I can see you're thinking hard about this complex issue," or "Are you finding any connections here with your own early school experience?"

2. What Do Good Readers Do?

Before students begin reading this book, you might want to have them, as a group, generate a list of answers to the question, "What do good readers do?" Be sure to keep a copy of this list for yourself because you'll come back to it when the students complete the book and you compare their list with one generated by 1st graders. One way to elicit the original set of responses is simply to ask the question and write the students' answers on the board. But you might get a better list (and maximize participation) if you have the students respond individually first, then in small groups, and finally as a class. For example, give each student a 3 × 5 card on which to write three responses to the question. Then have the students share their responses in small groups (three or four students) so that the students can extend their original ideas. Then move to compiling as comprehensive a list as possible on the board.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. What Is Language?

Before students read this chapter, have them generate, as a group, as many responses as possible to the question, "What is language?" When I do this with my students, I encourage them to just call out anything they can think of—no raising hands, no getting called on—just shout it out. Getting momentum going and keeping it going is important in this activity. (I find it helpful to have a student write the suggestions on the board. If I do the writing myself, it interrupts the momentum. I need to focus fully on encouraging more ideas . . . and more . . . keep it coming.) The more contributions, the better, but you'll need at least 20. When the students have exhausted their ideas, read the entire list out loud and invite the students to look for clusters or themes—"ones that sort of go together." You're likely to get linguistic, cognitive, social, and aesthetic groupings. But it will be especially interesting if you end up with some

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"leftovers"—items that don't fit comfortably into any of your groupings, or that seem to cross boundaries and fit in more than one category.

CHAPTER 2: AUTHENTICITY

1. Classroom Written Materials

This might be a good time to gather a variety of written materials used in a kindergarten and/or 1st-grade classroom, so that your students can examine them in class for authenticity: Which of these materials are or are not authentic (serving a real language/communication purpose)? How do you know? What particular features are important in your decision? (You can gather these materials yourself, but if your students have access to classrooms, they can be the ones to provide the materials.) Each student can select one item that she thinks is a particularly good example of an authentic or inauthentic text, and support her choice. The items can be grouped accordingly. There will probably be disagreements here, and students may raise challenging questions such as, "When a child is just learning to read and write, why isn't it OK to use pedagogical (not real) material?" You are not going for consensus here, but trying to help students think more deeply about authenticity and its implications for literacy instruction. It might be interesting to group the items that students disagree about, and consider them further. You could suggest that this issue would perhaps be one that students would want to write about in their journals (if they are keeping reflective response journals). Remind the students that they will make selections in their own classrooms for their own children, and that no two teachers would make the same set of choices. The hope is that they will take the feature of authenticity into account and make well-considered decisions.

2. *Tigress*

Before the students read Chapter 2, read the book *Tigress* (Dowson, 2004) aloud to them in class. Then, when they come to class after having read the chapter, you might want to structure a discussion around the *Tigress* transcript on pages 19–22. When I have my students respond to a transcript, I find it helpful to give each student a copy, divide them into groups of three or four, give each group a tablet of post-it notes, and invite them to note their observations on the post-its and stick these on

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the transcript where the notes apply. Then, when we come together for whole-group discussion, the students are able to make quite specific observations and contributions. It is impossible to know in advance where such a discussion will lead, but it's likely that the students will come away with an appreciation of the depth and range of students' responses to authentic texts. (Some of my students prefer to talk about the adult, especially to criticize: She should have said this; she shouldn't have said that. You may find it challenging to keep the main focus on the children's talk.)

CHAPTER 3: MEANING-ORIENTATION

1. Survey: Learning to Read and Write

Outside of class, have your students ask several (maybe three) adults this question: "How does a young child learn to read and write?" The student writes down the gist of these adults' responses, being sure to remember that the respondent will probably give more than one explanation and may even give several explanations that seem contradictory. The student records them all, whether or not they "make sense." Students bring these responses to class, where you'll accumulate them, perhaps by writing them on the board so that the class can share them and look for patterns. It is important to get all responses out, and also to tally the repetitions of particular responses: Listing the variety reveals the range, and tallying the repetitions suggests the dominant views in this small sample. You can focus on questions such as, "In your sample, what are the dominant views of how children learn to read and write? Where do these notions come from (maybe)? What patterns do you see? What surprises do you find here?" (Other survey question possibilities might be, "How do you think an adult can help a young child learn to read and write?" or "Do you think it is harder for a child to learn to speak her language or to learn to read and write it? Why?")

CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATION

1. Predictable Books

If your students carried out activity suggestion #3 for Chapter 3 (p. 18 in the next section of this guide), they can use the material from that activity (predictable books, observation notes) in this one. If they did not

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carry out that activity, you might want to have them do so now, so that they will have actual "data" to use in class: observational notes on two children's interactions with predictable books. The focus in Chapter 3 was the child's expression of meaning in his reading of a predictable book: The focus was on what the child did. Now the focus shifts to the help the text offers, specifically, "What features of the book you used with the child seemed to be enabling—seemed to help him read the text?" The discussion is likely to include (but not be limited to) repetition, rhythm, rhyme, language structures that draw on a child's language knowledge (e.g., the two-part pairings in *Gossie*), story structure, world knowledge (e.g., colors and numbers), illustrations, and format (visual arrangement). When a particular feature is identified by one student, you might then want to have other students show examples of that feature in their texts, the purpose here being to suggest the range of ways in which a particular feature is used in predictable texts. The topic of individuality gets its own chapter later (Chapter 6), but it might be a good idea to remind the students that just because an enabling feature (from the adult's point of view) is "there," doesn't mean that a particular child will "use" it. One never knows which features of a text will be salient to a particular child—which features will support her and draw her in to a text. With this reminder from you, your students may be able to provide examples from their data of enabling features (from the adult's point of view) that their child appeared to ignore.

CHAPTER 5: APPRENTICESHIP

1. Kenny: Before

Before the students read this chapter, you could have them work on Kenny's "Dragon Teacher" transcript (see Figure 5.1 on p. 66). When I have my students focus on examples of children's writing, I find it helpful to give each student a photocopy of the child's written text to study on her own for 5 minutes or so, then join with several other students to share observations, and finally bring the students together for a whole-class discussion. You might provide focusing questions such as, "What does Kenny know about written language? Where do his invented spellings come from—what strategies/knowledge is he using? How do you know?" (Note: If you do organize this activity in three phases—individual, small-group, whole-group—you may want to move among the groups during

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the small-group phase, eavesdropping or joining momentarily to get a sense of what is going on in the group interactions so that you know where some of the interesting ideas/observations/questions are and can draw on this in the whole-group discussion.)

2. Kenny: After

After the students have read the chapter, you might want to focus on the "Dragon Teacher" text again, this time asking students to assume that this is a text that Kenny will revise and edit for publication. (This assumes that your students are familiar with writing workshop.) Now the focus is on the opportunities this text might offer for guiding Kenny in a teacher-child writing conference toward conventionality in his writing. Guiding questions might be: "What strengths of this piece would you point out to him? How?" (Encourage students to try not to respond as a dispenser-of-judgment ["This is good."], but as an interested reader: "I really got drawn in where you said . . ." or "Boy, this is some mean teacher you got here!") "What three things would you focus on with Kenny in revising/editing this piece? How would you do it? Why would you choose these three (e.g., usefulness, presence of patterns, frequency)?" Give the students (individually and/or in small groups) a few minutes to make their choices before you move to whole-group discussion.

3. Literacy Across the Curriculum

This chapter has pointed out a range of connections in Kenny's literacy engagement: connections of talk and writing, reading and writing, observing and performing, text and context. This might be a good time to move into a larger world of literacy "connections": literacy across the curriculum. Two articles that can help you do this (both in Lindfors & Townsend, 1999) are

> "Inquiry in the Kindergarten," in which the teacher (Patti Seifert) describes her kindergartners' individual science research projects

and

> "Letters Home" (by Rebecca King), a series of six actual weekly letters that this K/1/2 (nongraded) classroom teacher sent home to parents, briefly describing the children's activities of the week.

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The students' reading of either or both of these pieces could be the focus of a class discussion or a written response in student journals. Because writing is private, the students might express concerns in writing that they would hesitate to voice in the more public forum of discussion (e.g., "We read this great stuff that these experienced teachers do and it just makes me feel overwhelmed. I feel like I'll never be that good." Or, "This is all well and good, but the fact is the kids' test scores are all that matters in the school where I'm doing my student teaching."). You might want to pull recurrent themes from the students' written responses and address these in class ("I see that some of you are thinking about/wondering about/ concerned about . . .").

CHAPTER 6: INDIVIDUALITY

The suggestions below bring closure to the continuing structures of Chapter 1 (Suggestions #1 [Response Journals] and #2 ["What Do Good Readers Do?"]).

1. Reflections on Reflections

If your students have been keeping response journals as they have read *Children's Language: Connecting Reading, Writing, and Talk*, they could now look back over all their journal entries and write a final reflective entry/essay. One way to structure this would be to tell them to read over and reflect on their entire journal before the next class, and then, when they come to class, you will give them time in class (perhaps 15 minutes?) to write their final entry. Encourage them to think especially about new questions and issues that they now have after having engaged with (and around) the text in and out of class. You will probably want to write each student a response to this final entry.

2. Returning to "What Do Good Readers Do?"

If you had your students respond to this question at the beginning (Chapter 1, suggestion #2), you can now have them return to this question. Show them their original set of responses. Is there anything they want to add or to change at this point? Then, after making any suggested modifications, show them the responses of Carol Avery's 1st graders to the similar question she asked them at the end of the year (Avery, 2002,

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pp. 319–320). After telling the children, "You are all good readers," Avery asked them, "What do you do that good readers do?" Read over the children's list and if possible, post it side-by-side with your students' responses (e.g., write the two lists on large sheets of newsprint and tape them next to one another on the wall). Comparing the two lists will doubtless draw on a wide range of observations from your students, and the discussion may go in a variety of directions. Some fruitful guiding questions—invitations—might be:

- What surprises you on the children's list?
- As you look at each of the 24 responses, what do they suggest about the kinds of literacy engagements Avery has provided? (These children respond as they do largely because of the reading experiences they have had in this classroom.)
- Do you see evidence of authenticity, meaning-orientation, collaboration, apprenticeship, individuality on this list? Where?

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Building On Understanding: Moving into Classrooms

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Identifying Language Forms and Purposes

The distinction between form (what we say or write) and function (the purpose for which we say or write it) is an important one. We tend to think of every utterance as a single entity. It isn't. Two elements are always present: (1) our actual expression (a string of words, signs, sounds), and (2) the communication purpose we are carrying out (e.g., asserting, denying, requesting, inquiring, empathizing). In this activity, students will be focusing on

- The distinction between form and function (actual expression and communicative intent)
- The variety of functions/purposes young children carry out in their communication
- The variety of ways young children express these communication purposes (i.e., the variety of expressive means they use to request, inquire, reject, and so on). For example, children constructing in a big block area might request a block (function) by saying (form) any of the following:
  Could ya hand me that?
  I want that one.
  Gimme that (will ya?)
  How 'bout this one?
  That one will be OK.
  Give it here.
  That's the one I need.

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Give each student five or six 3" x 5" cards on which she will write her observations of one or several 5-/6-year-old children. The assignment is to observe the selected child or children in an informal setting (e.g., playing in the dramatic play/housekeeping area of a kindergarten, playing on a public playground, eating lunch). On each card, the student will write (1) something the child said (an exact quote), (2) what the student felt the child was trying to accomplish by saying it, and (3) context (a brief description so that the student can recall the speaking event later). The students bring their cards to class and you structure a discussion around this experience: "Let's see the whole range of communication purposes the children carried out. What were they *doing* with their talk?" List these, being sure to use verb forms (e.g., rejecting, joking, teasing, contesting, or to reject, to joke, to tease, to contest). "Now let's see the range of ways that the children expressed each of these communication purposes." As you do this, it should become clear that virtually any form—declarative, interrogative, imperative, even gesture—can be used to carry out any communication purpose. It's important that the purposes be stated as verbs: "The purpose was to *verb*" (to persuade, to justify, to assert) or "the child was verbing" (persuading, justifying, asserting). (I sometimes have to push my students to stay with simple verb forms, as they often prefer to give a description instead. The point here is that saying something is *doing* something, and verbs—*to verb/verbing*—capture that. Thus, "He was requesting" is preferable to "The first child was trying to get the second child to give it to him.") If all goes well, your students will leave class understanding that young children's language is, as they might say, "awesome."

2a. A World of Print: Part One

Have your students bring to the next class things they read *other than* books (e.g., T-shirt, grocery list, clothing label, menu, e-mail, recipe card, street sign, telephone message). They can bring the actual items, a list of items, or a mix. The purpose is to increase students' awareness of the pervasiveness of print in the world in which the young child lives. Whether the child comes from a "literate," bedtime-story-reading family or not, she is not new to written language when she enters school. Invite some sort of sharing in class, possibly compiling a list on the board of every example of print the students have brought.

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2b. A World of Print: Part Two

Now your students move from #2a above into consideration of how an activity of this kind might work with young children in a classroom. For example, K/1 children might gather and bring to class things they can read (e.g., soda can, T-shirt, Superman doll cape, a board game, DVD label). These items could be assembled into individual books or into a class Big Book. In either case, the children would be making books that they can read. A digital or Polaroid camera would be helpful here: The child could put an actual cereal box label into a book, but he would have to put a picture of a T-shirt.

. . . or . . .

K/1 children might make a class Big Book with a page for each child in the class. Each page would include a picture of the child and his name (this is the reading part—children's names are salient predictable print) and anything the child wanted to include on his page (pictures or actual objects showing what is special to him). One variation on this would be to include a picture of each child holding her favorite book from the class reading area. This would expand the reading opportunity so that children can read not only the individual child's name, but, in some instances, the title of the book the child is holding in the picture as well. If your students are currently engaged in a field experience, you might want to have them carry out an experience like this with children and bring the Big Books or samples of individual books to class for sharing and discussion.

CHAPTER 2: AUTHENTICITY

1. Print Survey

If your students have access to K/1 classrooms, you might have them do a survey of all the perfunctory print in a particular classroom (e.g., show-and-tell turns schedule, class helpers, cubby labels, sign-out sheets, weekly menus). This might be especially effective if the students work in pairs because (1) They are less likely to overlook something than they might be if they were working alone, and (2) they have each other to talk with about what they are finding. As always, the students bring their findings to class

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with them. As they share their findings in class, the students will (I hope) increase their awareness and appreciation of the opportunities perfunctory print offers in (1) range—a host of lists, labels, charts, graphs, and so forth, and (2) power—print that is contextualized in familiar routines and relies heavily on children reading and writing their own (and each others') names, the very thing that young readers and writers do best. (For an example, see the sample page from the sign-out book on p. 29 of *Children's Language: Connecting Reading, Writing, and Talk*.) You might also want to focus on missed opportunities—print routines the teacher carried out herself that she could have (with some modification) included the children in.

2a. Writing for Self, for Others, and with Others: Part One

Divide the students into three groups, each of which will focus on one of these categories of writing:

- Writing for self (e.g., recipes, grocery lists, diary)
- Writing for others (e.g., telephone messages, newspaper articles, ads, song lyrics for CD)
- Writing with others (collaborative writing or dialogic writing, e.g., letter-writing)

Either in or out of class, students will list as many examples as they can of the actual writing that they do in the assigned category (for self, for others, with others). The focus in class will be to take each of these instances of writing that the students say they actually *do* in their own lives, and then devise ways of shaping these for kindergarten and 1st-grade children.

2b. Writing for Self, for Others, and with Others: Part Two

Now have your students select a particularly rich example from each category (for self, for others, with others) and develop it fully for use in K/1 classrooms. For example, in the first category (for self), you might choose reminders. Perhaps you could give every child a tablet of post-its to keep in her desk and help the children make a habit of writing down things they need to remember to bring, do, or tell Mom—notes they could stick on their desks or put in their backpacks. Or you might choose personal journals. How will you make these special—beautiful—for the children? How will you introduce them? What times and places will you provide for the children to write in them? How will you help children move forward in this writing? In the writing-for-others category, a class newspaper might

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be a promising choice. In a kindergarten classroom, this would probably be carried out as a whole group writing effort (probably done on a Thursday), the teacher writing down the children's suggestions (in a sentence or two) of things they had done during the week that they would like to tell their parents about, then typing and printing these contributions on a single page (in large-ish print) for the children to take home the next day. Letter-writing seems to be a compelling choice in the writing-with-others category, as this is such an important and early-understood kind of written interaction for children. Creating an area for writing and mailing letters should be very engaging for your students as they think about materials, about people the children can write to, about how to structure this ongoing activity. (A note about materials: I think it is important that the materials include envelopes. For some (many?) children, the letter seems like a *real* letter if you put it in an envelope. I get small envelopes at Office Max in boxes of 500 (the small envelopes you put money in as a gift) and I get note paper at Tuesday Morning, either in small tablets or long reminder tablets with refrigerator magnets, that I then take apart and cut in half lengthwise.)

3. Journals

This might be a good time to focus on different types of journals and the different purposes they serve for developing readers and writers. These would include:

- *Personal journals.* This writing is open-ended and personal—the classic example of writing for self. Many teachers have their children write in their own personal journals every day, typically at the beginning or end of the school day. Children will express themselves in a variety of ways—including drawing, random letters, invented spelling.
- *Class journals.* These journals preserve the children's shared class experiences throughout the year. The teacher typically writes the children's contributions on newsprint and puts the resulting entries together as a record of the year-long journey of this classroom community.
- *Reading response journals.* These offer opportunities for children to respond to books they have read or that others have read to them. These are personal responses, in any written/drawn form. They can be a kind of memory book for children.
- *Wonder journals.* As a way of encouraging children's wondering, some teachers have children collect their "wonders," either in individual

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journals or on a bulletin board where everyone can see them. In either case, these wonderings are regularly shared in some way.

- *Observation journals.* Science activities offer especially good opportunities for children to document their observations of some phenomenon over time. The purpose here is to closely observe and record behavior and/or change (e.g., behavior of a class pet, growth of seeds).
- *Dialogue journals.* These journals, as their name suggests, maintain the back-and-forth, my turn–your turn pattern of dialogue. They are written conversations. The focus is entirely on what the two parties (usually teacher and child) want to "talk" to one another about. Meaning is everything in these journals: The teacher does not correct the child's writing *ever*. With young children, the teacher keeps her writing short, simple, and contextualized (e.g., response to what the child has written/drawn in her entry), as she wants the child to come into reading the entries on her own, over time. (Note: Gillian McNamee has acquainted me with an interesting variation in which the written dialogue is carried out between the teacher and the child's parent. Periodically (once a week, perhaps), the teacher writes a sentence or two in the journal, telling something good that the child has done. The child takes the journal home to his mother [knowing it says something good about him]. After sharing the teacher's entry with the child, the mother writes down something good that the child has done at home. Back to the teacher goes the journal, in the hands of a very proud child.)

CHAPTER 3: MEANING-ORIENTATION

1. Reading for Self, for Others, with Others

You might want to carry out an activity similar to #2a/2b suggested in Chapter 2, but changing the focus from writing to reading. Again, the purpose would be to engage your students in reflecting on their own actual reading experiences, and then designing modifications of these for use with young children.

2. Survey: Children's Books

If your students currently have access to a classroom, you could have them ask three or four of the teachers of young children in their

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school, "What are your favorite books to use with your children? How do you use them?" When the students bring these responses to class, the accumulation could serve as the beginning of a list of possible books for the students' own classroom reading areas, read-alouds, and so on. (Students could continue adding to their lists as the semester proceeds. They should end the semester with good starter lists for their own classrooms.) You will probably want to have these actual books available and provide time for the students to browse: Either the students bring copies of the teachers' favorite books to class, or you provide them so your students can get to know these books and make good choices for their own classroom lists. (Carol Avery's list might be helpful here: Avery, 2002, pp. 478–481.)

3. Predictable Books

Working in pairs outside of class, one student of the pair reads a predictable book to an emergent reader several times and then has the child read it. The partner of the pair watches this and jots down what the child says and does. (This procedure avoids the need to tape-record and transcribe, which would be too time-consuming for this assignment.) Immediately after the session with the child, the partners discuss what just happened and write down any further observations. Then the partners do this again with a different child, switching roles. The students bring the book(s) they used and also their written notes to class. The focus in class might be, "What does the child do that is *reading*?" or "How does the child enter this text—make it her own?" A close examination of the differences between the original text and the child's rendering of it would be very fruitful (e.g., preservation of meaning, revised phrasing, changes in vocabulary) and should reveal that the child is making sense of the text.

4. Big Books: Shared Reading Experience

You might want to bring a collection of Big Books to class, so that students, in small groups, can examine these and focus on the learning opportunities they offer. Switch the books around to ensure that every group gets to see a variety of these books. You'll probably want to pull together some of the groups' ideas in a whole-class discussion. (Not every instructor is comfortable with role-play, but if you are, you could have your students—probably in small groups—role-play teacher engaging children with a selected Big Book.)

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CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATION

1. Beautiful Books

If your students have access to a K/1 classroom, each one could have a child do several entries (three perhaps) in a "Beautiful Book." Each entry (one page) involves the following:

- The adult writes the child's selected word on a strip of paper. (Be prepared for some surprises. When one teacher asked a child, "What is your word for me to write down today? What word do you want?" the child replied "Dinosaur polka-dotted egg." Of course, the teacher wrote that "word" for the child. Someday, the child will have a different concept of "word", but right now . . .)
- The child copies the word on a sheet of paper and draws a picture to illustrate that word.
- The child either dictates accompanying text that the teacher writes, or else writes the accompanying text herself.

Your students bring these entries to class where the focus is on what children know about language—oral and written—and how they express this. Explore, puzzle, appreciate, wonder . . .

2. Browsing

This might be a good time to have a children's librarian visit your class, bringing many wonderful children's books—a range including predictable books, storybooks, and information books. "Many" and "range" are both important for this activity. (You can be the "librarian" here if you don't have a willing soul available.) The activity begins with the librarian (or you) introducing the books—identifying the categories/types, describing them, presenting one or two particular books from each category in a few sentences. The books are set out in some organized way (probably by category) and the students browse for 15 minutes or so. After this actual engagement, you switch gears, moving the students from *doing* browsing to *reflecting* on browsing as a literacy activity. First, invite your students to reflect on what they just did as "browsers" (e.g., "I looked at books in a couple categories," "I didn't find any books I like in that category so I moved to . . .", "I meant to look at books in different categories but I kind of got involved in one book so . . .", "Several of us looked at the ___ books together", "I heard ___ and ___ laughing over a book so I joined

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them to see what they were laughing at"). Try to elicit what they actually did. Then invite them to reflect on the decisions you made in shaping this activity. "I wanted you to have time to browse today, but notice that I didn't spread out a bunch of books and say, 'Here are some books for you to look at for the next 15 minutes.' In planning this activity, I tried to set it up so there would be:

- Plenty of books for you to explore
- A variety of books to accommodate different interests
- Freedom to choose—to move from book to book
- Sufficient time
- A comfortable, informal setting in which you could browse alone and/or interact with others
- An introduction to this engagement
- An organization that would help you find the books of interest to you
- Opportunity for me to participate as you were browsing (I wanted to see what you got involved with and how).

Can you see anything I did, in the way I shaped this, in order to (try to) achieve each of these goals? Were there enough books for you? Too many? Did you feel overwhelmed? Was there sufficient variety in the books I chose to engage your interest? What would you have liked to find that wasn't there? Was the setup comfortable for you? How could it have been more so?" The purpose is to engage the students in considering the planfulness involved in such an engagement. It should be an easy move to asking "How will you provide effective browsing times for your children?"

CHAPTER FIVE: APPRENTICESHIP

1. One Kindergarten Classroom

Many teachers of young children have a substantial block of time each day when children choose from a range of available literacy activities. In a conversation with me, Rebecca King described some activities that are available to her 22 kindergarten children during daily literacy time. (She is describing the spring semester, after each activity choice has been introduced and is well established.) In addition to

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- *A Listening Center* (Becky reads each book to the children first and then puts the tape and three copies of that book in the center)
- *An inviting book area* with a variety of books
- *A Big Book Center* where friends look at/read their favorite Big Books together
- *A Poetry Pocket Chart*, each pocket containing a strip with a phrase from the poem (or song) of the week. The children put the strips in order, to re-create the poem or song.

Becky's literacy time choices also include the following:

- *Writing the Room*. A child clips a "Write the Room" observation sheet to a clipboard, and then moves around the classroom, writing down any words he sees that are of interest to him. (The children can also do Reading the Room, in which several children take a pointer and go around the room together, pointing to various words and reading them.)
- *Writing Center*: Unlike writing workshop (which also happens in this classroom), the Writing Center is an open-ended invitation to explore writing, using any of the materials at the center: various kinds of paper, envelopes, stamp pads, alphabet-letter stamps, white board, erasers, different kinds of pens, pencils, and markers.
- *Science Center*: At any given time, the children will find a variety of things—animate and inanimate—in this center. The child takes a "Science Observation Sheet" and draws or writes something she observes in this center.
- *Poetry Center*: Each week, Becky introduces a new poem or song, which she writes on a large sheet of newsprint, laminates, and hangs on a rod. Several children, working together, select one of the laminated poems (or songs), hang it up where they can all see it, and then read/sing it together as they point at the words (using a pointer if possible, because they love pointers).
- *Overhead Center*: Here, the children will find an overhead projector, and poetry transparencies, alphabet letters, and small pattern books that Becky has assembled, with one line of text on each page. The child can select a favorite poem (transparency) or make words with the alphabet letters or illustrate the pattern book, and then project and read what he has created (or selected).

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Your students could consider these literacy engagements in terms of authenticity, meaning-orientation, collaboration, or apprenticeship.

2. Books on Tape

In this activity, your students will make tapes to use in their classroom Listening Centers. (Note: Every time I have done this activity with my students, I have been surprised by how engaging many students find this, and also by how stunning some of the tapes are.) Each student chooses a favorite children's book (storybook or information book) and records herself reading it, indicating with a particular sound when the child should turn the page (e.g., hit a xylophone, ring a small bell, tap a glass with a spoon). You might want to focus on the benefits of a good Listening Center (e.g., providing opportunities for children to listen to favorites again and again as they follow the text, perhaps committing some of these books to memory) or—if the teacher has multiple copies of the recorded book—for children to listen with several friends. You may want to provide a list of all the student tapes, as the students may want to make copies of some of each others' tapes. (You'll also probably want to make copies of the really effective tapes to use as demonstrations if you do this again in the future.)

CHAPTER 6: INDIVIDUALITY

1. Designing for Literacy Engagement

Either individually or in small groups, and either in class or outside, students can design their own (1) classroom reading area or (2) literacy time (45–60-minute daily block of reading/writing engagements). If they are creating their own classroom reading area, you might encourage them to consider questions such as:

- What specific books and types of books will you include?
- What written materials other than published books will you include (e.g., laminated song sheets, child-authored texts)?
- How will you arrange the space?
- What different ways of reading will you invite?
- How will you provide for individual choice?
- How will you provide for browsing?

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- What response opportunities will you provide?
- What kinds of sharing opportunities will you make available?
- What will you do about changing the books? (How frequently? Which ones?)
- How will you introduce the children to new books, extending their familiarity with a range of texts?

If the students are designing Literacy Time, you might want them to reflect on the activities and procedures they are including in terms of this question: "How does your Literacy Time take into account/provide for authenticity, meaning-orientation, collaboration, apprenticeship, and individuality?" (Chapter 13, "Reading Workshop," in Avery, 2002, and the conversation with Becky King [Suggestion #1 accompanying Chapter 5] could support the students' efforts on this project.)

2. Teacher Preferences and Styles

Young children are unique in their individual preferences and styles. So are teachers. At this point, you might want to invite your students to think about their own individuality as teachers. It could go something like this:

A variety of literacy engagements have been mentioned in this book, including the following:

- Read-aloud and discussion (storybooks and information books)
- Reading predictable books (with partner or alone)
- Shared reading (Big Books)
- Book talks (introducing new books)
- Reading/browsing silently on one's own
- Sharing books with friends
- Reading to/with "buddies" from other classes
- Taking a book home every day to read with family members
- Reading response journals (drawing and dictation)
- Writing workshop
- Sign-out book
- Writing letters to others
- Receiving/reading adult's personal notes
- Listening center
- Dictating original stories to teacher and illustrating them

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- Make-the-text game
- Making informal books—dictating and illustrating. (Unlike the books the child writes in writing workshop, these are spontaneous, on-the-spot books.)

Would you choose any of these for your classroom? Which ones? How would you modify/shape/adapt each selected engagement to suit your situation and style?

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