Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand). This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.

- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.

- You will obtain the author’s permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage. http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form
Pathways to Literacy and Transitions to School: 
Enabling incorporation and developing awareness of literacy

Lavinia Tina Tamarua

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of: 
Doctor of Philosophy in Education 
The University of Auckland 
December 2006
Abstract

This study examines children’s development and incorporation of literacy expertise across multiple sites and the transitions to school by four Māori preschool children, their whānau (families) and their teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This study is embedded in a Kaupapa Māori framework of understanding and explaining teaching and learning processes across multiple sites of learning for children whose practices reflect ways of being and acting Māori. Descriptions of teaching and learning processes are also explained utilising a co-constructivist theoretical framework. These descriptions and explanations focus on the psychological processes of learning and development that children, whānau and teachers’ engage in their practice.

A two phase case study design was employed that examines the teaching and learning processes of literacy across multiple sites. The first phase provides qualitative data that describes and explains how the different sorts of literacy and language activities are co-constructed by whānau and children. The ways by which literacy activities are constructed are inherent in parents ideas about teaching and learning reflected out of their diverse pedagogical practices. The distinct pedagogical practices also highlight the multiple pathways to learning that children developed and experienced in becoming an expert. This study also reported the influence of early educational settings as alternative and multiple contexts by which learning is organised and constructed. The different contexts provided families with specific ideas and practices about the teaching and learning process.

The second phase of the study provides descriptions of how children’s literacy expertise was incorporated into classroom literacy and language activities. This phase of the study examines how teachers provided opportunities by which children’s literacy expertise was incorporated into classroom activities. This study reported incidents where incorporation of children’s level of literacy expertise was enhanced while other children’s literacy expertise was discouraged in classroom activities. The significance of the reported differences of incorporation was provided from teacher’s ideas and beliefs about children’s literacy expertise upon entry to school. The study showed how teacher’s ideas reflected the way that they organised and constructed literacy activities. Teacher’s ideas also reflected their awareness of the diversity of children’s literacy expertise. The earlier phase of this study examined the multiple ways and multiple contexts by which children
learn and develop literacy expertise. Incorporation of children’s literacy expertise into classroom activities was determined by the degree to which teachers made connections that resonated children’s expertise. This was also determined by teacher’s instructional practices in the context of the classroom environment.

The implications of this study make important contributions to pedagogical practices for teachers in classroom environments. The descriptions and explanations reported in this study highlight the complexities of teaching and learning for children of diverse cultural and language communities.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my four children, Tanelle, Kharn, Callan and Victoria who have shared and endured this remarkable journey with me and to the memory of my parents, Nooroa Tamarua and Ngamako Pene Ashby. Your presence has continuously sustained my wairua. Te whānau whānui, thank you as always for being there when I needed your wisdom, guidance and support, ngā mihi arohanui ki a koutou katoa.

There are so many friends that I would also like to say thank you. In particular, heartfelt thanks to my supervisors, Professor Stuart McNaughton and Dr Margie Kahukura Hohepa who have been my mentors and ‘kaitiaki’ during the supervision of this thesis but also throughout my University career. Your guiding expertise and professional advice has always been encouraging and supportive. I am deeply indebted for your gracious generosity. Thanks go to; Professors Graham and Linda Smith and the Māori Education staff, at the University of Auckland who supported my University teaching and research career since 1990. It has been a privilege to have begun my University journey here and learning from the best Māori and non-Māori academics throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ka nui te ihi, ki a koutou katoa.

There are so many other people for whom I am grateful. To Eve Coxen and colleagues of the Research Unit for Pacific Education (RUPE), at the University of Auckland. Thankyou Eve, for your continued support, the ‘corridor’ discussions and for providing me with a space to write, especially while completing this thesis. Thanks to Elaine McCulloch and the staff of the University of Auckland Crèche (during 1986 to 2000). To Cynthia, Pam, Dawn, Fiona, and Debbie and also to Janene from Banardos who took wonderful care of all my children. Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou!

Huge thanks go to the many friends and colleagues who have made this journey possible and bearable. I would especially like to thank my dearest friend, Margaret Kempton Smith, Kerry and their children Henry, Stella and ‘baby’ Eleanor who were brave enough to put up with me before, during and at the completion of this thesis. Your generous spirit and endless support will always be remembered.

A big thankyou to; Yvonne Rongo Culbreath and your two boys Sonny and James; to Linita Manu’atu, and colleagues of the Pasifika Educators Network group, (AUT); to
Mere Kepa and sister Kini; to Shelley McDonald and Pauline TeKare (WFRU). Thankyou to Ngahiiti Faulkner and te whānau o Te Roopu Akawhiri; Jane Bone, Desma Cornhill, Marlene Olguc, the teaching team from the MFLP programme (Sharon Alderson, Elisa AhLam, Faalataga Misikopa) and colleagues from the School of Education: Te Kura Mātauranga, (AUT); to our kaumatua the late ‘Pop’ Davis, Tui O’Sullivan, Maaki Howard, Ngamaru Raerino and te whānau o Horotiu, (AUT). Thankyou to Bernadine Vester, Robin Houlker, Moana Whaanga and all the staff at COMET. Thankyou all for your constant companionship, hours of stimulating conversation and the moral support to keep one sane during such a journey. Tēnei te mihi, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

I would like to thank the following organisations for funding assistance received from; Fletcher Challenge Education Trust, the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the Research Unit for Maori Education (UOA), the Research Unit for Pacific Education (UOA), and the Woolf Fisher Research Unit (WFRU).

Finally a very special thank you to the children; Mary, Mark, Theresa and Hona, their whānau and their teachers who contributed and participated in this study. I thank you so very much with all my heart for allowing me to come into your homes and your classrooms, to share your kai and your passion for education and to share your stories. Your belief and confidence in the development and completion of this study made this journey a most rewarding and humbling experience. Tēnā koutou i a koutou manaakitanga mai, hei konā mai me te arohanui, ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Matua, Tama, Wairua-Tapu, me ngā Anahera Pono, me Te Mangai hei tautoko aianae, ake nei, Āmine.
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements** ............................................................................................................ iv

**Table of Contents** .............................................................................................................. vi

- List of Figures .................................................................................................................. xiv
- List of Texts ...................................................................................................................... xv
- List of Tables.................................................................................................................... xvi

**Chapter One** .................................................................................................................... 1

**Introduction and Overview** .......................................................................................... 1

- The Scope ......................................................................................................................... 1
- Developmental Approach ................................................................................................. 2
- Parents’ Ideas and Practices ............................................................................................. 3
- Teachers’ Ideas and Practices ............................................................................................ 5
- Two Processes: Incorporation and Awareness Overview .................................................. 6

**Chapter Two** .................................................................................................................... 10

**Theoretical Framework** ............................................................................................... 10

- Educational Differences ................................................................................................. 13
- Cultural Continuity/Discontinuity .................................................................................. 14
- A Critique ......................................................................................................................... 18
- Literacy and Language: A practice perspective ............................................................... 19
- Social Context and Literacy Development ...................................................................... 21
- Literacy Experiences ........................................................................................................ 22
- A Socialisation Model of Literacy .................................................................................. 23
- Multiple Pathways in Literacy and Language Use .......................................................... 24
- Family Perceptions of Literacy Development .................................................................. 26
- Parents’ Beliefs and Expectations .................................................................................... 27
- Principles of ‘Ako’ - Teaching and Learning ................................................................. 28
- Links to ‘Whanaungatanga’ - Familiness ......................................................................... 29
- Transitions before School: Early Childhood Education .................................................. 30
- Transitions to School via Multiple Pathways ................................................................. 32
- Fostering Children’s Literacy at School ......................................................................... 35
- Teachers’ Beliefs and Expectations .................................................................................. 36
- Rationale for the Study ................................................................................................. 37
Two Predictions......................................................................................................................................38
Outlining the Research Base..................................................................................................................38

Chapter Three..................................................................................................................................41

Research Methodology .................................................................................................................. 41

Rationale .............................................................................................................................................41
The aim of the study..............................................................................................................................42
A Cultural Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................................43
Participants .........................................................................................................................................43
Children and Families .......................................................................................................................44
Teachers .............................................................................................................................................44
Schools .............................................................................................................................................45
School A.............................................................................................................................................46
School B.............................................................................................................................................46
School C.............................................................................................................................................47
Setting of the Study.............................................................................................................................48
Data Collection Procedure..................................................................................................................48
The Home Observation Phase:............................................................................................................49
Home Observations..............................................................................................................................49
Procedure..........................................................................................................................................49
Parent Interviews.................................................................................................................................49
Preliminary Interviews .........................................................................................................................50
Post Parent Interviews.........................................................................................................................50
Home Diaries ......................................................................................................................................51
Home Audiotape Recording................................................................................................................51
Children's Writing and Drawing Products ........................................................................................52
The Classroom Observation Phase: ....................................................................................................52
Classroom Observations .....................................................................................................................52
Classroom Data Collection Procedure...............................................................................................53
Schedule of Observations ...................................................................................................................53
Classroom Videotaped Sessions..........................................................................................................54
Classroom Audiotaped Sessions..........................................................................................................54
Measures ............................................................................................................................................54
School Entry Assessment Measures..................................................................................................55
One Year Assessment Measures........................................................................................................56
Teacher Interviews.............................................................................................................................57
Ethical Considerations.........................................................................................................................57
Confidentiality....................................................................................................................................58
## Challenges and Limitations

- Case Studies
- Validity of Data Collection
- Validity of Parent Interviews
- Validity of Teacher Interviews
- Validity of the Researcher

## Chapter Four

**Beliefs and Practices**

(a) Family Practices of Literacy Development

### The Parents’ Views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Whānau Characteristics</th>
<th>Mary’s Whānau</th>
<th>Mark’s Whānau</th>
<th>Theresa’s Whānau</th>
<th>Hona’s Whānau</th>
<th>Beliefs Before School</th>
<th>(a) General Aspects of Teaching/Learning</th>
<th>Educational Choices</th>
<th>Learning and Teaching</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Types of Writing at Home</th>
<th>Children Writing at Home</th>
<th>Storytelling</th>
<th>Types of Stories Shared at Home</th>
<th>Children’s Favourite Stories</th>
<th>Benefits of Storytelling</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Early Childhood Education and Community Services</th>
<th>Attendance at a Childcare Centre</th>
<th>The Role of Early Childhood Education</th>
<th>Expectations and Concerns about Early Childhood Education</th>
<th>Community Educational Services</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

viii
(b) Parents’ Beliefs, Expectations and Concerns about the.................................85

Transition to School ........................................................................................................85
- The Transition from Home to School...........................................................................85
- Adaptation to School......................................................................................................88
- Children’s Learning After Going to School.................................................................89
- The Impact of School Learning on the Whānau..........................................................92
- Children’s Learning Over Their First Year at School....................................................93
- Parents’ Expectations About Their Role and the School Role.......................................94
- Summary.......................................................................................................................96

(c) The Teachers’ Views..................................................................................................98
- Generic Knowledge ......................................................................................................99
- Diversity in Emergent Literacy ......................................................................................99
- Language Abilities .......................................................................................................102
- Specific Knowledge.......................................................................................................105
- Conventional Reading Knowledge ...............................................................................105
- Conventional Writing Knowledge ...............................................................................106
- Family / Community Activities....................................................................................108
- Collection of Data........................................................................................................109
- Planning and Teaching................................................................................................111
- Summary.......................................................................................................................113
- Overall Summary........................................................................................................113

Chapter Five ..................................................................................................................115

Family and School Connections:.................................................................................115

Descriptive Analysis of Four Transitions ......................................................................115
- Introduction ................................................................................................................115
- Classroom Activities as a Frame of Reference...........................................................115
- Whānau Characteristics ...............................................................................................116
- Child One: Mary ........................................................................................................117
- Literacy Activities at Home ........................................................................................117
- Early Childcare Experience.........................................................................................119
- Transition to School....................................................................................................119
- A Classroom Writing Activity .....................................................................................119
- A Whole Class Writing Activity ..................................................................................125
- Participation Patterns....................................................................................................126
- Teacher and Parent Awareness ....................................................................................132
Assessment Data Results.................................................................................................................... 184

1. First School Entry Check at 3 Weeks .......................................................................................... 185
   (a) Self Portrait and Name Writing................................................................................................... 185
   (b) Development and Adaptation to School................................................................................... 186

Social Development ............................................................................................................................ 186

Listening and Speaking....................................................................................................................... 187

Reading.................................................................................................................................................. 187

Printing.................................................................................................................................................. 187

Story Writing ........................................................................................................................................ 187
   (c) Initial Alphabet Check – Letter Identification (LID) .............................................................. 188
   (d) Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC)................................................................................................... 188
   (e) Written Language........................................................................................................................... 189

First Assessment Summary ................................................................................................................ 189

2. Second Data Assessments ............................................................................................................. 190
   (a) Letter Identification (LID)........................................................................................................... 190
   (b) Written Vocabulary Test (WRVOC).......................................................................................... 190
   (c) School Entry Assessment (SEA)................................................................................................. 190

Concepts About Print (CAP) ............................................................................................................ 191

Tell Me/Ki Mai .................................................................................................................................... 192
   (d) Written Language .......................................................................................................................... 192

Second Assessment Summary ........................................................................................................... 192

Child Four: Hona ................................................................................................................................ 194

Literacy Activities at Home ............................................................................................................... 194

Early Childcare Experience................................................................................................................ 194

Classroom Writing............................................................................................................................... 195

Whole Class Worksheet Activity....................................................................................................... 195

Teacher Collaboration ........................................................................................................................ 197

Developing Shared Goals for the Writing Task ................................................................................. 201

Peer Collaboration in Writing............................................................................................................ 206

Reading to the Whole Class ............................................................................................................... 209

’Waiata’ .................................................................................................................................................. 211

Peer Collaboration in Reading ........................................................................................................... 212

Assessment Data Results.................................................................................................................... 213

1. First School Entry Check at 3 Weeks .......................................................................................... 213
   (a) Self Portrait and Name Writing................................................................................................... 214
   (b) Letter Identification (LID)........................................................................................................... 214
   (c) Reading Assessment...................................................................................................................... 214
   (d) Writing Samples.......................................................................................................................... 215
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 A socialisation model of early literacy development...........................................................39

Figure 5.1: Classroom story writing exercise (Feb ’99) ................................................................. 120

Figure 5.2: Development of writing expertise at home – Mary producing a card for mum, dad and brother Joegen (Sept ’98)................................................................................................................. 122

Figure 5.2a: Combining writing expertise and drawing during literacy activities at home (Dec ’98) ........................................................................................................................................................................... 124

Figure 5.2b: Combining writing expertise and drawing at home (Dec ’98) .................................. 124

Figure 5.3: Construction of classroom story writing with picture (Feb ’99)........................................ 127

Figure 5.4: Construction of classroom story writing with picture (Feb ’99).................................... 129

Figure 5.5: Developing a writing format using rhyming words – literacy activities at home (Dec ’98) ......................................................................................................................................................................... 131

Figure 5.5a: Developing a writing format – literacy activities at home (Dec ’98) ....................... 131

Figure 5.6: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Oct ’98) ........................................ 144

Figure 5.6a: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Oct ’98)...................................... 144

Figures 5.6b: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Nov ’98) .............................. 145

Figures 5.6c: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (May ’98) .............................. 146

Figures 5.6d: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Nov ’98) .............................. 148

Figures 5.6e: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Dec ’98) .............................. 149

Figure 5.7: Developing writing expertise at home (Aug ’98).......................................................... 154

Figure 5.7a: Writing conventional letters at home (Feb ’99)......................................................... 155

Figure 5.7b: Developing writing expertise at home (Oct ’98)......................................................... 155

Figure 5.8: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Sept ’98)........................................... 156

Figure 5.8a: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Sept ’98) ........................................ 157

Figure 5.8b: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Dec ’98)........................................ 158

Figure 5.9: Inclusion of family members names in writing activities at home (Aug ’98) ............. 159

Figure 5.9a: Inclusion of family members names in writing activities at home (Aug ’98) .......... 159

Figure 5.10: Mark’s personal story writing exercise during a preschool visit (March ’99) .......... 165

Figure 5.10a: Personal expertise in story writing during a preschool visit (March ’99) .......... 166
Figure 5.11: Personal expertise in story writing during a preschool visit (March '99) .................. 166
Figure 5.12: School assessment task - Self portrait and name writing (March '99)............... 174
Figure 5.13: Literacy activities at home (Oct. '98)................................................................. 176
Figure 5.14: School assessment task - Self portrait and name writing (Nov '98)............... 186
Figure 5.15: Incorporating writing expertise during a game at home (Sept '98)........ 188
Figure 5.16: School assessment task of a personal story writing exercise (Dec '98)......... 189
Figure 5.17: School assessment task of writing vocabulary (Feb '99)................................. 191
Figure 5.18: School assessment task of writing expertise (Feb '99)................................. 193
Figure 5.19: School assessment task - Self portrait and expertise in name writing (Nov '98) .... 201
Figure 5.20: Developing story writing expertise in a classroom language activity (Nov '98)...... 209
Figure 5.21: A classroom writing activity (Dec '98)............................................................. 216
Figure 5.22: A classroom story writing activity (Dec '98)...................................................... 216
Figure 5.23: School assessment task of self portrait and name writing (March '99)........ 217
Figure 5.24: A school assessment task of a printing activity (March '99)............................. 220
Figure 5.25 A school assessment task of a story writing activity (March '99)................... 220
Figure 5.26: School assessment task of a story writing activity (March '99)................... 221

List of Texts

Text 5.1 Home Diary entries of literacy practices at home (Oct '98)........................................ 117
Text 5.2 Home Diary entries of literacy practices at home (Dec '98)........................................ 118
Text 5.3: Home Diary entry: Explanation and construction of Mary's card (Sept '98)............. 123
Text 5.4: Home Diary entry: Development of writing expertise in home activities (Oct '98).... 125
Text 5.5: Home Diary entry: Developing a writing format (Dec '98)........................................ 130
Text 5.6: Home Diary entry: Developing reading expertise (Oct '98)........................................ 134
Text 5.7: Home Diary Entry: Developing reading expertise (Oct '98)..................................... 135
Text 5.7a: Home Diary Entry: Developing reading expertise (Nov '98).................................. 135
List of Tables

Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Students at SCHOOL A (Decile 1) ................................................46
Table 2: Ethnic Composition of Students at SCHOOL B (Decile 3) ..................................................47
Table 3: Ethnic Composition of Students at SCHOOL C (Decile 2) ..................................................47
Table 4: Children's Scores on Literacy and Language Measures at 6,0 years of age ...................... 223
Chapter One

Introduction and Overview

The Scope
The aim of this study is to examine early literacy experiences at home and the developmental transition to mainstream schools for Māori children, the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The transition to school for some Māori children pose a theoretical and educational ‘problem’ because in some respects their home and cultural knowledge may be unsupported at school and families may be less familiar with the school system than other families. Transitions to school are major developmental events and the way in which families and children experience shifts across settings can mean educational disparities begin to be accentuated. Transitions are therefore a site for analyzing the making and solving of educational problems.

Issues fundamental to this argument are identified in educational differences in achievement that occur when transitions to school are not so well matched for some children, especially children from minority groups. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, differences in school literacy achievement have been identified in children on entry to school by ethnicity and by school type (Literacy Task Force, 1999). Specifically, Māori and Pacific Island children, especially in low decile schools, have been found to perform lower than other children on conventional school literacy tasks. Results from the New Zealand national data from School Entry Assessment showed significant differences on measures of concepts about print and story retelling (Gilmore, 1998). The disparities in literacy instruction have been especially noticeable where some children have made progress over the transition to school (McNaughton, 2001) making literacy achievement more obvious for some children and less obvious for others. Processes that are similar to ‘Matthew Effects’ operating within classrooms (Stanovich, 1986) have the capability to either impede or accelerate learning, contributing to widening differences in educational achievement. A major goal of this study is to explore the transition process for Māori children from home to school and the continuity of knowledge and practices across settings, to identify how these generative or degenerative processes take place.
Developmental Approach

A co-constructionist theory of development (Valsiner, 1988) is employed to explain the psychological properties of learning and development related to the transition. The co-constructionist view maintains that children develop forms of expertise through personal action as well as through the guidance of others. Literacy development reflects learning through the child’s social, cultural and personal practices. Concepts from Rogoff’s (1990) socio-cultural models of learning and development, in particular the process of ‘guided participation’ in literacy activities at home and school, are employed to understand how the processes occur. Understanding teacher-child relationships in the classroom and the way in which children are ‘apprenticed’ into literacy activities lead to a focus in this study on the importance of participation patterns occurring in diverse contexts.

Embedded within the contemporary developmental theories proposed are connections to and explanations from Kaupapa Māori principles of teaching/learning. Kaupapa Māori philosophy can be described as “the philosophy and practice of being and acting Māori” (Smith, 1992). In particular, describing and explaining the processes of teaching/learning of literacy taking place in the classroom and in the home environment in the context of ‘being and acting’ Māori. This lens helps identify in what respects settings might be well or poorly matched.

The theoretical framework adopted in this study makes two major predictions. The first is that there are multiple pathways that children progress along during early developments of literacy. The second is that connections between home, early childhood settings and school provide multiple contexts in which literacy learning takes place. Together these predict an outcome that developmental conditions, in particular activity settings, can either enhance or discourage progress across the transition to school and across settings (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1993).

An important theme that emerges from this study is the need to describe and explain how family socialisation practices shape and create opportunities for children to develop literacy in the home. It is argued that literacy is deeply embedded in the culture of the family and community as an activity (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Within this context literacy becomes socially constructed through the social mediation of others. Children take an active role in making sense of their environment both independently and through negotiating and collaborating with partners that are more skilled.
At home for instance, the child’s actions are co-constructed with others through social and cultural processes that influence the way an activity is organised. Reading storybooks to children can provide channels for development through the structure and format of the activity (see Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Wolfgramm, 1991). Ninio & Bruner (1978) for example, described a mother reading picture books to her child as having a predictable sequence with a ‘routinised’ format. The format the mother used directed the child’s attention to a picture that included a query, followed by a response, while the child was invited to look at a picture and respond by labeling it. In the process, both the mother and child’s role changed due to the predictable format structure. The notion of ‘activity’ is used to describe participation structures and guidance (McNaughton, 1999) and an aim of this study is to understand the role of the child in the act of constructing and co-constructing literacy related activities within the home environment.

Parents’ Ideas and Practices
A further theme in this study is the nature of parents’ ideas about learning and development in general and how parents prepare and structure literacy activities in particular. The ideas held by parents are often implicit but are at times explicit as well and can influence the way in which literacy activities at home are organised, structured as well as guided (Rogoff, 1990). Parents’ develop theories about a task, which may be embedded in everyday life, but these theories are experienced and reflected in the goals that are intended for an activity. The development of parents’ ideas subsequently contributes to children’s expertise (McNaughton, 1995). In particular, this study focuses on parents’ ideas and theories that contribute to children’s expertise in learning through participation structures that drive literacy tasks.

Along with parents’ ideas about the nature of children’s expertise and guidance in activities are ideas parents hold about education. Research has shown that many Māori and Pasifika parents are strongly influenced by the advice and decisions of schools in a belief that professional educators are experts in learning and development (see; Kempton, 1994; McNaughton, 1995; Tamarua Turoa, 1995). On the other hand professional practices may mean parents’ roles at school for instance, can be constrained to be responsible for helping teachers do their jobs, and in return schools are responsible for showing parents how to do so (Auerbach, 2001). Yet other influences exist from local early family intervention programmes such as HIPPY (Home Intervention Programme for Preschool Youngsters), which give parents specific guidelines, resources and
instructions on how to carry out school-like activities in the home. Parents become sensitized to doing what is ‘best’ by following firstly their personal beliefs, expectations and experiences they know work. Secondly, parents are influenced by pedagogical ways of relating to specific school literacy tasks that inform their interactions with children. Therefore, parents actions when engaging in literacy tasks at home with their children are based on ideas, beliefs and expectations derived from various sources. It follows that an important area to study is parents ideas in relation to their role in guiding their children’s teaching/learning and the influence that schools and professional educators have on their ideas when they carry out a literacy task. For that reason home and school connections become important sites where parents and teachers ideas influence learning and development.

Parents may construct ideas about how children need to learn basic forms of conventional school-based learning before school. They may incorporate into home activities, school-based practices that they believe will prepare children towards school, such as teaching them to write their name (Tamarua Turoa, 1995). Some families from ‘minority’ groups have supported and recognised the importance of conventional literacy for their children in an effort to change their status and to encourage their children to gain a better education (Auerbach, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987). These ideas are promoted through early childhood education settings and community services that provide intervention home-based programmes encouraging families to participate in literacy related activities. For example, the aim of the Anau Ako Pasifika programme in Aotearoa/New Zealand was to encourage parents to participate in their children’s education but also to develop and increase awareness in parents of their role in supporting their children’s education (Mara, 1995). Other programmes, such as the HIPPY programme transfer skills and practices of specific school literacy tasks to enable families to engage in structured and formal activities (BarHava-Monteith, 1998). Part of the common goal these programmes share is transmitting school literacy tasks through the vehicle of the family (Pihama, 1997). There has been a great deal of criticism of these types of programmes as compensatory education that are seen to work by maintaining structural inequalities of families of low ethnic minorities (Au, 2000). In other ways, intervention programmes have challenged parents’ perceptions to learning and development. Sometimes they may incorporate ideas and strategies that they believe may better inform their knowledge about learning so that they are better able to support their children’s education (McNaughton, 1995).
In keeping with a developmental approach to the analysis of home-school connections, this study investigates the transition to school process experienced by each of the participants; children, parents and teachers. Developmental changes take place within and across settings. The transition process can be described as a major developmental change taking place in the form of shared activities and in interpersonal relationships with others in specific contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As the child enters the classroom social adjustments are already being made to the unfamiliar environment with a teacher and new peers. Included in this argument is the claim that successful transitions to school involve a transformation of a child’s ‘past learning’ through to ‘new learning’ in a new context (Clay, 1991). That is, children’s earlier literacy experiences at home if well connected with school practices can resonate with learning patterns children engage in at school. Through a mix of previously learned practices and problem solving the newly required practices at school, children develop strategies that are more appropriate to knowing what to do in an activity. Children learn to problem solve each new task as it is presented to them, attempting to determine methods that work given the choices they can draw from. In its focus on the transitions and translations children undergo as they enter school, the study describes the process of developmental change for children in the actions and strategies they employ to problem solve.

**Teachers’ Ideas and Practices**

Consistent with the need to analyse parents’ ideas is the need to explore teachers’ ideas and expectations about formal classroom learning. For example, the traditional concept of ‘readiness’, assumes there are specific forms of literacy expertise that children are expected to have when they enter school and before they have experienced formal classroom instruction. Given what research findings say about the diversity of literacy skills children gain during their preschool years, Clay (1991) argues that children will be at different points in the literacy process, suggesting that they enter school following ‘multiple developmental pathways’ over the transition to school (McNaughton, 1999). Hence, the idea of ‘readiness’ is problematic, because if children arrive at school from ‘different pathways’ then it follows that, learning may result from different forms of interacting with different forms of knowledge and skills, different patterns of progress can occur even though the expected outcomes might be similar (Clay, 1998). One dilemma is that when children’s learning becomes confined to formalized teaching through classroom instruction they are unable to ‘keep in step’ with the prescribed sequence of learning (Clay, 1991). Opportunities for children to learn given the diverse
forms of expertise with which children enter school become restricted when forms of teaching/learning remain constant. The curriculum channels development under the pedagogy of school instruction which means development is constrained, at least in part, by what the curriculum requires.

From this analysis comes an emphasis on the ideas and beliefs teachers hold about what is valued and channeled through classroom instruction. Teachers’ ideas and expectations about the kinds of literacy expertise and learning children bring to school vary between teachers, part of which may reflect a teacher’s experience at the New Entrant level and perhaps to a greater degree, teacher’s awareness of diversity in literacy pathways. Some teachers for instance may value the development of conventional literacy over the less conventional experiences with what some children are more familiar. This belief may develop from school curricula that promote some activities and reduce the likelihood of other activities taking place (McNaughton, Phillips & MacDonald; 2000).

**Two Processes: Incorporation and Awareness**

In this study two concepts are introduced to explain the instructional processes by which teachers might connect with children’s out of school knowledge and skills. The two processes are termed enhancing incorporation and building awareness (McNaughton, 2002). Making connections between children’s out of school expertise and new expertise involves these two processes. Teachers are able to connect with children’s knowledge and expertise to the degree to which they enable children to make sense of new tasks they confront. Familiar ways of acting can become integrated into the new activity structures. Building on what children are already familiar with involves the transfer of learning (McNaughton, 2002), including transferring strategies, and knowledge associated with activities from one situation to another (Galda, Cullinan & Strickland, 1993). For example, a strategy that may be useful in one activity may also be applied in another activity, like pointing to words while reading.

Thus, the process of building upon what is familiar in one event involves incorporating this into a new and initially unfamiliar event in order for new expertise to be mastered. The idea of making connections also engages both participants (child and teacher) in constructing relations between events and this necessitates clear and explicit communication. Effective teaching and learning requires a high degree of shared understanding about the task, features and functions of instruction and goals
It is important to this study to understand teacher’s ideas about classroom instruction and how they might perceive effective teaching practice given the social and cultural diversity of children who enter school at the New Entrant level. The particular focus of this thesis is teacher’s ideas and beliefs specific to the teaching of Māori children. Many Māori families for instance, recognise teaching/learning practices that are embedded in the principles and philosophy of Tikanga Māori (customary practices). The basis of Tikanga that is investigated in this thesis emphasises teaching/learning values and practices that Māori families who strongly identify as ‘being’ Māori recognise and understand to be Māori. That is, values and practices that are recognised as characteristically Māori (Metge, 1984). The thesis explores this issue as part of understanding and recognizing these practices and how they might be reflected and constructed in literacy activities at home and school.

Overview

Following this first chapter introducing the issues central to this thesis, Chapter Two outlines the theoretical and research perspectives that have contributed to the predictions the study makes. The first prediction proposes that there are ‘multiple pathways’, ‘multiple routes’ to development (Clay, 1991; McNaughton, 1995). The second prediction is that developmental connections can be tracked between home and school in the multiple contexts in which literacy development takes place. It assumes that effective teaching and learning enables the incorporation of family literacies into classroom activities and the degree to which awareness is developed in classroom tasks. This chapter provides the theoretical and empirical basis to the set of research questions.

The research questions are explored with four Māori preschool children, their whānau and classroom teachers who shared literacy experiences, their cultural beliefs, ideas and expectations concerning the developmental transition from home to school in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The methodology used in the research is described in Chapter Three. It contains a description of the tools and methods used to analyse literacy taking place in the home and at school. Given the context and cultural sensitivity of this study, interactions of
children and families were recorded in the home using a variety of methods. Each family kept a diary to record and describe reading and writing activities at home. As well, families collected samples of children’s writing and drawings that were produced at home or were part of an activity produced elsewhere. To capture any reading and storytelling events at home, families were given the choice to record this using audiotape. Two families agreed to audiotape these events. In the classroom, teacher-child observations were conducted in each child’s classrooms. Methods of direct observation were used that were sensitive to each teacher and the children during classroom activities. These were complemented by teacher interviews.

Chapter Four reports the interview findings of parents and teachers beliefs and practices about literacy. These results are presented in three sections. In the first section a description of whānau demographic information are introduced including a description of children’s involvement in early literacy experiences. Following these descriptions parent discussions of ideas about family literacy experiences and practices are discussed. The focus of the questions in this section elaborates the importance of literacy and the expectations that parents held about literacy prior to school. The second section of this chapter presents the findings of parent’s ideas, beliefs and expectations about transitions to school. These discussions provided information related to parents beliefs, concerns and expectations about literacy and education. The third section to this chapter presents the findings from the formal interviews with teachers. This information provided an analysis of teacher’s views and expectations relating to literacy awareness.

Chapter Five reports the findings of four case studies. Each case study provides background information about the children, their whānau, teachers and schools who participated in this study. It presents an analysis of classroom literacy activities, which are described in detail providing connections to literacy experiences at home. Formal New Entrant Assessment data are also presented at the end of each case study. This data provides information about children’s expertise in conventional school literacy and language activities upon entry to school. At the end of this chapter, observation survey data for all children at six-years of age are reported. These results provided information about children’s developmental progress over time within the classroom context. At the end of this chapter an overall summary of children’s literacy and language expertise is presented. The summary reported evidence of the processes enabling incorporation and building awareness.
The final Chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical and research interests outlined in Chapter Two. Theoretical implications and contributions of the research findings are proposed along with limitations and recommendations for similar research.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines theoretical and empirical research into the social and cultural processes through which children develop literacy expertise. Specifically, this chapter sets out the theoretical bases for two predictions, firstly about multiple pathways to learning and development and secondly, about developmental connections that determine effective transitions. The latter involves an examination of the processes of incorporation and awareness.

Initially, the chapter sets out a common explanation for the educational differences that are obvious for many minority children in formal educational settings. Differences in children’s literacy achievement are shown to be particularly significant for Māori and Pacific Islands children (Literacy Experts Group, 1999). The literature that shows how connections for some children have been well matched while others have experienced degrees of ‘mismatch’ from informal to formal educational settings (Metge & Kinloch, 1978). These differences that children have experienced across settings identified in the research discusses the transitions that children experience from home to school settings (Cazden, 1988; McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990). The chapter examines concepts such as ‘deficit’, ‘cultural difference/mismatch’, and ‘cultural continuity/discontinuity’. These theoretical ideas are often used to explain inequalities in children’s educational achievement. The explanations are shown to have a number of problems.

Some of the weaknesses in these concepts are addressed through socialisation models of development that analyse the transition to school in terms of activities and participation structures. Two major predictions are derived from this theoretical base. As stated previously, the first prediction this thesis proposes is that children experience multiple pathways to learning and development (Clay, 1991; McNaughton, 1995). This prediction assumes that children’s expertise is developed by the many learning contexts that they might experience prior to school. Each setting influences children’s expertise in literacy and language activities. How this expertise might be transferred across settings is determined by how well the connections between settings are matched.
Solutions to other difficulties in the existing analyses of the transition to school are found in a second prediction, which proposes that developmental connections to children’s expertise can be tracked between home, other early educational contexts and school. This prediction assumes that effective teaching and learning is determined by the degree that children’s literacy expertise is incorporated in classroom activities. It also assumes teaching and learning is determined by the degree by which children develop an awareness of classroom tasks.

For example, there have been a number of studies that have described what happens when children experience some form of cultural continuity/discontinuity (Cazden, 1992; McNaughton, 1995; Wood, 1998). Where disparities have existed in the educational sector, outcomes for some communities have been devastating. For instance, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, historically ‘cultural discontinuity’ has been argued to have detrimental consequences for many Māori families socially, educationally and politically (Jones, Marshall, Morris Matthews, Hingangaroa Smith, & Tuhiwai Smith, 1995). Māori children for example, were ‘disadvantaged’ in the schooling system for having a language and culture that ‘differed’ from the predominant Pakeha (European) society (Simon, 1990). The low educational performance of Māori children within this structure was described as due to a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge (Pihama, 1997). The establishment of Te Kohanga Reo (Māori preschool language nests) in the early 1980’s was a response to the ‘failure’ of Māori children in mainstream schooling system and recognition of the loss of Māori language and culture. In addition to Te Kohanga Reo, other alternative teaching sites over the last decade have been set up to continue to maintain and revitalise Māori language and culture that is self determined (tino rangatiratanga) for Māori by Māori (Smith, 1990). The philosophy by which teaching and learning occur within these sites is based on Kaupapa Māori. Under these conditions Māori families and children may very well be engaged in similar pedagogy and practices in both the home and school contexts (Cazden, 1988; McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990). The current study then examines Māori pedagogy in the context of family activities and how this might provide a strong form by which to identify cultural relationships and practices occurring in families and classroom environments.

The chapter raises important issues for understanding what happens in home environments and the different sorts of literacy and literacy practices. A socialisation model of literacy development is developed to critically examine the ways in which
children develop literacy and language expertise given their cultural practices at home (McNaughton, 1995). The model plus the attendant research descriptions contribute to investigating the phenomenon of multiple pathways to literacy and language development in specific contexts, the social and cultural dynamics of family practices and the view that literacy and language activities are co-constructed (Valsiner, 1988). This model provides a view of describing the ways in which children and families construct activities together given their social and cultural contexts of learning.

The chapter examines how children’s literacy and language expertise is developed within classroom activities given their diverse social and cultural experiences. The socialisation model contributes to providing explanations of the different sorts of activities and practices taking place in the classroom (McNaughton, 1995). In particular, the chapter discusses descriptive and theoretical arguments linked to the view that learning and development are co-constructed (Valsiner, 1988) through the way activities are selected, arranged and deployed in school settings (McNaughton, 1995). The chapter introduces the idea of activities as the primary unit of analysis, and the property of versatility. Versatile activities can be determined from the form of an activity or in what the teacher and learner generally do together to complete the activity. Versatile activities can also be determined by the different roles that the activity accomplishes for the teacher and learner. In other words, “the ways in which the teacher and learner engage and use knowledge and the things that can be learned from the activity” (McNaughton, 2002, p44). Similarly it introduces the concept of a wide curriculum to explain the notion how activity systems can support diversity of experience in classrooms. Two processes, incorporation and awareness are proposed to show how children’s expertise is resonated within activities. The chapter examines how teachers might be able to capitalise on children’s expertise by using different patterns of guidance and instruction to achieve similar school literacy and language outcomes (Clay, 1998). Following this argument, the theoretical literature that explains teachers’ awareness of children’s diverse literacy expertise is introduced.

There are gaps also in our knowledge of how children’s literacy and language expertise develop across multiple settings and how developmental connections determine effective transitions through specific processes of incorporation and awareness. The thesis contributes to showing why the two proposed predictions are important and how social
and cultural processes create and in some cases don’t create opportunities for children’s literacy expertise to become incorporated into activities.

**Educational Differences**

In Aotearoa/New Zealand inequalities in the educational achievement of children continue. Since the early 1990’s educational differences have become more evident for Māori, in high levels of inequality and poorer educational outcomes (Jones, Marshall, Matthews, Smith & Smith, 1995).

It has been found that increasing ethnicity, language and socioeconomic diversity is related to low literacy achievement levels (Wilkinson, Freebody & Elkins, 2000; Au, 2000). International research on children in primary schools from low-income and minority families have shown they tend to be less successful at reading (see Allington, 1980; Whitehurst, 1994; Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda & Brody, 1990) and writing (Juel, 1988). Thus the general explanations for low progress suggest that readers and writers from culturally and linguistically minority groups are likely to continue to make low progress unless one of two things happens. One is that teachers recognise students of different cultural backgrounds, their different values, and different ways of learning. The problem not only involves teacher-pupil disparity but disagreement and misunderstanding of knowledge between classroom teachers, children and their families. Or else, families change practices to better match the practices of schools.

The Literacy Experts Group in Aotearoa/New Zealand identified children with poor school literacy skills as being more likely to come from lower socio-economic groups, which were generally likely to be Māori and Pacific Island children (Literacy Experts Group, 1999). Children who attend low decile schools\(^1\) in Aotearoa/New Zealand classrooms have been reported to show lower educational achievement levels on tasks of conventional literacy knowledge upon entry to school (McNaughton, 2001). Achievement differences become more apparent between Māori and Pacific Islands children in these schools. Significant differences reported by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) survey showed

---

\(^1\) Schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand receive a rank from 1 to 10 according to indicators of employment and income levels of the local communities and proportions in the school of Māori children (from the indigenous culture) and Pacific Islands children (from first or later generation migrant families of the Pacific Islands). Decile 1 schools have high proportions of Māori children and / or high proportions of children from Pacific Islands and have communities with the lowest income and employment levels.
disproportionately large variations in reading achievement levels in Aotearoa/New Zealand in comparison to overseas results (Elley, 1992; PISA, 2000). The situation for Māori children is similar to that for minority children in the United States. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) conducted in the U.S. indicated a widening gap of literacy achievement between students of diverse backgrounds and mainstream groups remain (Au, 2000).

The education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand operates by a national governing body constructing policies that reform and implement educational practice while policies at the local school level concentrate mostly on the management structure of the school. The current New Zealand Government education strategy plan has endorsed recent policy developments to raise the educational achievement levels for all students, and to address disparities that exist in student achievement (Learning Media, 1998). There have been several initiatives. For example, one initiative to raising the achievement level has been to address ways to ‘close the gap’ between minority and other students by improving information that has come from school assessments. The decision was based on responses from the Green Paper, *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*, which was released in May 1998. The Green Paper helped shape a set of new policy decisions based on the development of an effective assessment package to enhance children’s learning in schools. Schools use assessment tools to monitor and identify learning problems early. Assessments allow teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and learning programmes and parents would have current information on their children’s progress in comparison to national data (Learning Media, 1998).

More generally, the Literacy Taskforce group was set up in 1998, to advise the Government how to implement its goal of having by 2005, ‘every child turning 9 able to read, write and do maths for success’. This group along with the Literacy Experts group also provided advice through a range of recommendations. They included a concern for professional development and pre-service education and the need for a strong research base on effective teaching.

**Cultural Continuity/Discontinuity**

Early research and theories that explored issues to explain educational inequalities were informed by studies of language development (Bernstein, 1972; Labov, 1973; Tizard & Hughes, 1984). The ideas and assumptions that emerged from these studies formed
‘deficit’ and later ‘cultural difference’ perspectives of language that minority groups used and limitations in language were seen as creating a barrier to the thinking and learning that is needed to fully function in a society.

The work of Bernstein (1972) was used to argue that children from lower class minority families had an impoverished language. Working class families were said to acquire and use a ‘restricted’ language code, characterised by a limited and condensed language, lacking specificity, context dependent and a language that was deficient in interpersonal communications. While middle class families were observed to use an ‘elaborated’ code which was more complex, individualistic, precise, particular and capable of expressing specific reactions. The use of a ‘restricted’ code was seen as the reason why so many children from working class families failed in the education system. Compensatory programmes in the United States were set up for minority working class families by placing the responsibility to achieve middle class language skills with families. These programmes were not always successful because working class families were seen to lack appropriate parental skills, practices and resources. Whereas the school success of children in middle class families was promoted when their home literacy practices closely resembled classroom practices along with parental involvement in fostering their children’s literacy (Auerbach, 2001).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand research highlighted other issues of discontinuity for Māori children. This showed the importance of understanding the meaning of language and culture in families and the impact of educational policy in determining classroom practice. Judith Simon’s (1984) research for example, found that there were common viewpoints held by Pakeha (Anglo/European) teachers of Māori children. The Pakeha teachers’, regardless of their “…good intentions” sometimes were seen to work against the interests of Māori children (p.133). Teachers’ views were partly caused by their not having a shared understanding of the child’s culture, values and perceptions. The research discovered for example, that teachers’ perception of Māori children who entered school with limited language and learning skills would have difficulties adjusting and fitting into classroom practices. Teachers’ low expectations of Māori children’s educational performance in school suggested that Māori children were disadvantaged, having inadequate family backgrounds, which are linked to having educational problems. Given the negative stereotype of Māori children’s learning and fuelled by a self-fulfilling
prophecy of poor student performance, these assessments as described by Simon’s study tend to ‘stick’ to children until they demonstrate otherwise (Simon, 1984).

Cazden (1988) identified two perspectives to explain the way in which children are both culturally different and may be treated differently from others in classrooms. Teachers may employ ‘differential treatment’ perspectives towards low progress students in which they differentiate instruction intending to accelerate low progress but the instructional differences may at times reinforce, even increase, inequalities of knowledge and skills that are present as soon as a child starts school. The differential treatment that some students receive may be the result of Cazden’s second perspective she refers to that of responding to ‘cultural differences’. From this perspective, Cazden noted that teachers would be better served if they considered the cultural differences of students’ linguistic experiences as they enter school. For example, the language spoken between a parent and child at home may differ significantly from the language that takes place between a teacher and child in the classroom. Teachers have expectations about talk occurring in the classroom and control what is spoken, by whom and for how long. At home, what is spoken by the child is more spontaneous and unplanned, which is usually supported by the parent (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Moreover, different patterns of talk can occur reflecting different socialisation practices.

Rather than deficient language per se, Cazden argued that the structured features of talk at school may disadvantage some children by hindering their participation in language activities with which they are unfamiliar. The effects of this cultural discontinuity limits children being able to connect home experiences with school requirements (Cazden, 1988). For instance, sending reading books home from school for some families may in fact create problems related to knowing how best to read with their children that they believe might be appropriate to school practices and expectations (see Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1993; McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990).

Creating more effective connections for children from diverse cultural backgrounds can be seen then as an issue of cultural continuity (Turoa, Wolfram, Tanielu & McNaughton, 2002). The reading of books in homes for instance can serve specific purposes and functions that may have similar features and patterns of reading in various settings (McNaughton, 1995). In particular, for many families where reading is a part of the family practice in which there is a strong religious presence, connections between
home and church reinforce literacy activities and take place in environments that complement each other (see Johnstone, 1995; Tagoilelagi, 1992; Wolfgramm, 1991). Thus, cultural continuity may occur for some children whose reading experiences at home reflect similar reading experiences in the classroom. For example, reading stories at home can have similar features to school based reading especially where the text given is familiar and easy to read (see McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990).

The two perspectives – ‘differential treatment’, and ‘cultural difference’ – to which Cazden refers, reflect in part the social inequalities and stereotypes that are embedded in the institutional and ideological beliefs found in the wider society. Schools therefore, are seen as sites that uphold the processes of one dominant group to maintain power and control through the presence of cultural capital. The concept of match/mismatch therefore has relationships with Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of cultural capital, which recognises inequalities in society and explains how education reproduces the social and political ideology of a society. In a sense, the continuity of maintaining ideas and beliefs that one culture holds throughout society comes at the expense of marginalizing other cultures.

Bourdieu’s argument emphasised that schools favour certain kinds of capital, which become accessible and recognised by a majority of families in society. Some families for instance, recognise which resources are necessary for developing their children’s literacy learning prior to going to school. Families are able to capitalise on these resources and make informed decisions that build their knowledge and understanding about how schools and classrooms function in assisting their child’s learning. The entry to school for some children then becomes less disruptive especially in literacy development where some children make successful connections while other children make slower progress (McNaughton, 1995).

Using these perspectives, the failure of Black ‘minority’ children in reading achievement in the United States has been argued to result from a mismatch between the language and literacy practices that are present at home and the language and reading practices used in schools (Ogbu, 1988). The mismatch of Black children’s dialect at home and with the language in reading texts in school interfered with the children’s acquisition of reading skills. Attempts have been made to use Black dialect in texts and in the classroom however this has not led to improvements in reading achievement among Black children.
(Ogbu, 1988). More recent studies and theories have emerged that have considered what happens when children’s views about ways of learning are different from those that take place in classrooms, and where a series of mismatch occur at the level of literacy practices (Au, 1993; Cazden, 1987).

A Critique

There are problems with the continuity or matches argument that have been identified in the literature. The cultural ‘discontinuity’ difference view in much of the contemporary educational literature attempts to explain why some children ‘succeed’ while others are described as ‘failing’ (Jones, Marshall, Morris Matthews, Hingangaroa Smith, & Tuhiwai Smith, 1995). This can be particularly marked for indigenous families where a ‘mismatch’ exists between family literacy practices and school based literacy learning. However, one problem in the argument is that all children may experience some form of social or cultural discontinuity during transitions and the literature is not very clear as what counts as significant ‘discontinuity’ (Hemphill & Snow, 1996).

Secondly it is difficult to ascertain from the literature what processes and systems actually contribute to or underlie the connections for families, children and teachers across settings. One view of the continuity approach assumes that teaching and learning at school can be more effective if better connections were made between family literacy practices and school based literacy learning. This thesis examines processes of literacy instruction at school in creating continuity or ‘building on the familiar’ to show how literacy instruction can be enhanced (McNaughton, 2002).

A third problem is that there is little research that either descriptively or experimentally demonstrates how to optimise or modify the continuity through consideration of cultural and linguistic practices. One notable exception is Au (1993), and Tharp and Gallimore’s (1988) research. They showed that modifying classroom discourse patterns to include the culturally preferred style of talk that indigenous Hawai’i in children spoke could enhance comprehension instruction. But there is some suggestion that such changes may have limited sustainability (McNaughton, 2002). That is, there is limited knowledge of the processes of the continuity effects on learning and how this might explain different types of discontinuity experienced by different cultural groups. One problem with the match/mismatch idea is that it sees culture as a single homogenous normative type. Educators should consider therefore how literacy practices can be introduced that
“…identify, emphasise and articulate preferred values, beliefs and practices of the culture to which targeted families belong” without undermining them (Hohepa & McNaughton, 2002, p.206). Clarifying family, child and teacher processes that contribute and optimise continuities between settings are needed.

**Literacy and Language: A practice perspective**

Children’s learning and development within their social and cultural environment can be explained from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978). Vygotsky’s theory placed considerable emphasis on the child’s social interactions that lead to higher forms of cognitive development. This theory emphasised the social and cultural context where learning and development are constructed with more mature persons in children’s natural social contexts. Vygotsky’s theory recognised that the interactions the child engaged in with more competent others have the potential to enhance learning within various contexts. A concept that Vygotsky introduced to explain how this learning happened refers to children’s potential learning through a ‘zone of proximal development’ (zpd). Finding out children’s individual differences is possible by establishing through a range of various tasks what the child can do alone independently and what the child can learn given the appropriate guidance and support. This difference defines the course of future development. It was through Vygotsky’s theory that children have come to be seen as developing expertise in an activity through the assistance of others in the context of their culture (Berk, 2001). Vygotsky’s (1978) theory therefore, is a particularly important theory above other traditional cognitive theorists in understanding cognitive development in children’s social and cultural contexts by which they live, especially the transition from home, early childhood settings and into school.

The early studies that concentrated on ‘deficit’ oriented perspectives were inadequate in explaining the disproportionate school failure of minority children. Research emerged that explored issues on social and cultural differences (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1978), differential treatment (Allington, 1980; Stanovich, 1986), classroom discourse (Cazden 1988), and social forces that reproduced social inequality and cultural capital (Bordieu, 1977; Bordieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). However, sociocultural approaches to research that investigated language and literacy use in social and historical contexts (Resnick, Levine, & Behrend, 1991; Resnick & Resnick, 1977; Tabors & Snow, 2001) have focussed more specifically on learning processes and differing participant and communicative structures at home and at school. Tabors and
Snow (2001) contrast the relationship between language and literacy in the home and school as contexts where children are exposed to literacy differently. Snow argues that poor reading performance of working class children at school is not the result of scarce literacy materials in the home as early research proposed. Instead she suggests that at home, literacy is contextualized, drawing on knowledge that is shared between parent and child while at school many literacy activities are highly ‘decontextualized’. Preschool children develop literacy skills through exposure to highly contextualized information with very little evidence of children having to deal with decontextualized information. Snow argues children’s failure to achieve in language or literacy activities at school may be related to difficulties of coming to understand the use of and comprehension of decontextualized information. She suggests that the academic success of an older child is probably associated with the child having mastered skills of literacy and decontextualized language use (Snow, 2001).

Another explanation closely related to Snow’s argument explores the idea of ‘situated learning’ (Wood, 1998). This idea suggests that what is learned depends heavily on how that learning takes place within particular physical and social contexts. For instance, the skills and knowledge that children acquire during everyday practices and activities at home sometimes fail to ‘transfer to school’ because teachers fail to make learning relevant to those activities with which the child is familiar (Wood, 1998). More importantly, learning is immersed and highly contextualised, in specific knowledge domain practices (Cazden et al, 1996). The processes of what is learned at school may serve different purposes and are embedded in different activities and practices (Wood, 1998). Hence, in relation to Snow’s argument mastery in literacy practice by older children for example is acquired in the social and cultural practices that children come to recognise experience and process in the context in which learning is situated (Cazden et al, 1996).

Scribner and Cole (1978) have argued that literacy practices occurring within a community are specific to the cultural context. Unlike Snow’s (2001) research that contrasted literacy in the home with literacy in school, the seminal work of Scribner and Cole (1978) examined the everyday literacy practices among the Vai people of Liberia who acquire literacy independent of schooling. Their research with the Vai people concluded that the social and cultural patterns of the environment in which children acquire literacy have a major impact on the cognitive attributes of their skills and the
application of these skills. Scribner and Cole’s (1978) research showed the significance of the forms and purposes that literacy take, and underpins a view of literacy as a practice. Children who practice literacy skills through informal learning, experience contextualized or real life learning. The uses of literacy and the cognitive measures practiced by the Vai people were ‘goal-directed’ and influenced by being ‘culture-specific’ in the activities known to the community. Hence, literacy has differential effects on children’s cognitive skills, depending on how it is practiced in different social contexts. Children, who practice forms of the conventionalised learning in schools, acquire skills that can be quite different from home, are more decontextualised in that they contain conventionalised abstract ways of thinking and learning.

**Social Context and Literacy Development**

Given this view, the social and cultural contexts for development are important determinants of the psychological processes that influence children’s learning and development. In particular, family socialisation practices influence the developmental transition to school for children especially in the transferring of literacy skills to school. The nature by which children develop expertise in literacy development can be related to the social context in which children engage in developing literacy-based activities. Literacy development encompasses specific “…ways of reading, writing, ways of talking, ways of learning and ways of knowing” that are recognised as developing from complex cognitive relationships occurring within cultures (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphill, 1991, p175). Family environments are complex and multilayered contexts where family socialisation practices influence the ways in which children construct literacy. Children develop diverse reading and writing skills by actively constructing through personal as well through guided participation with significant others (Rogoff, 1990).

Recent advances in literacy research have included investigating the social aspects of literacy and examining children’s perspectives of literacy development in home settings and into school (Gee, 1990; Graves, 1984; Ledger, Smith & Rich, 1998). Conducting research from the child’s perspective during the writing process for example, has been popular from the work of Donald Graves and others. Graves argues that “…for too long we have purported to understand child behaviours in writing without an extensive bank of observations based on children actually engaged in the writing process” (p.19). He maintains that researchers have attempted to draw conclusions about the nature of the
writing process without considering observations of children in the act of writing (Graves, 1984). This has implications for this research especially examining the various learning styles and practices that children experience within specific learning environments and specific activities that can contribute to understanding how their cognitive world is structured (Berk, 2001) in becoming an expert.

The social context channels written language through socially constructed activities. Complementing this idea of the social embeddedness of children's constructions within complex contexts is the concept 'self construction' where children become culturally socialized by discourse patterns and routines evident through family participation. Like print, the messages contained within a discourse are activated through recurring interactions with family members. For example, everyday conversations are opportunities where informative ‘chat’ between children and family takes place in a wide range of social discussions and interactions. Mealtimes for instance, provide occasions for children in some families to become involved in conversation with the company of other family members. Casual conversations create the vehicle to socialize children into becoming members of their family while also being an agent to invite children to participate in an activity (Miller, 1994), through such events as, learning the appropriateness and use of language in personal story telling (Miller, Wiley, Fung & Chung-Lee, 1997). Research on everyday language uses also signals how children are developing literacy and language expertise is a function of the social and cultural practices within the family context.

**Literacy Experiences**

Research has identified that the context in which children experience literacy influences their perceptions and understandings of literacy concepts. For example, Heath (1983) illustrated in her classic study how two contrasting communities utilised literacy experiences. The black working class community of Trackton synthesised print as an integral part of day-to-day life. Reading for example was nearly always set in a context of immediate action. Books were not common in these homes, instead reading came from everyday social interactions. The community commented that to be successful in their community they learned to read “…what they needed to know before they went to school” (p.233). In comparison, the white working-class community of Roadville observed reading to be a highly valued activity where books played a significant part in the children’s lives. Parents consciously encouraged their children to practice reading in order that they might learn to ‘do it right’. According to Heath (1983) neither the
children of Trackton or Roadville were well prepared for literacy practices of school because the practices learned in their home community were very different from that occurring in school. Most often children’s literacy knowledge had not been recognised or valued by the particular school.

What counts as valid literacy depends on what is recognised and accepted within particular communities. Emergent literacy taking place within specific contexts and from specific communities demonstrates that children become exposed to different understandings and literacy practices specific to their social and cultural environment. Thus, schools can be seen as communities and as such have their own assumptions and values about literacy learning.

In addition to literacy development and the effects this has for children at school, examining the application of literacy skills in families extends our understanding about the context in which literacy events take place and interactive processes occurring. For instance, Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model explains the child’s home environment and the impact this has on the child’s development. Connections between settings provide the child with opportunities that enhance or constrain development.

A Socialisation Model of Literacy
A socialisation model of literacy development can describe the nature by which children come to develop expertise in literacy activities at home as well as in other contexts. McNaughton’s (1995) socialisation model of emergent literacy views development as occurring through complex and dynamic exchanges children experience in families. The model employs sociocultural and co-constructionist ideas of learning and development to describe literacy development within specific contexts (Valsiner, 1988). The model describes how children actively construct literacy in particular ways by being socialized through social and cultural practices such as those of the family. Learning and development are co-constructed as children are exposed to multiple forms of guidance with significant others and through their independent explorations. Families organise literacy activities by selecting, arranging and deploying specific activities which children actively build upon making meaningful connections (McNaughton, 1995). This perspective stresses the child as a ‘social being’ rather than a ‘lone scientist’ (Bruner & Harste, 1987). In other words, children develop expertise by being guided through social as well as cultural interactions with families, peers and teachers.
Following the development of literacy at home, the transition into school creates a major developmental change for children, families and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A traditional constructionist approach would explain the developmental processes that children experience primarily through personal processes. According to that perspective children independently build upon knowledge by exploring their physical and social environment. That is, children are actively constructing their knowledge of the world (Wood, 1998). Learning and development are separate entities where development is the dominant process. Development follows predictable, sequential stages once the child has refined and improved their existing knowledge structures and gained the competence as a learner. Development is mostly internally controlled rather than being directed and socially constructed.

This particular approach does not acknowledge the central role of cultural and social processes yet we have argued earlier that these are very significant in understanding children’s development in emergent literacy (McNaughton, 1995). This traditional approach is problematic also because it limits our knowledge about how best to optimise development to acceleration along a single sequence. The theoretical ideas that focus on the role of culture in combining human development and human nature (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983) are better suited to understanding “…how persons and cultures construct each other” (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995, p.4) particularly in emergent literacy, and therefore better suited to planning how to optimise dependent on the transition to school.

**Multiple Pathways in Literacy and Language Use**

Literacy practices taking place in the home environment have received considerable attention from research (Sulzby & Teale, 1987; Sulzby, Teale & Kamberelis, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Research has been carried out on many aspects of children’s developing literacy skills at home but less on understanding the processes by which children become experts in literacy (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995). For example, reading stories to children at home can provide narrative and stylistic structures and formats similar to those features that children also encounter through early educational settings. These structures become more familiar to the child especially through those activities heard during oral storytelling and conversation events that take place during family gatherings. They provide links into family history, culture and identity (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995).
Children’s early literacy experiences in the home environment are channeled through a range of familiar activities that become personal activities. Very young children may experience print through play, such as a child exploring alphabet blocks or through conversations or hearing stories read to them (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Children develop important messages and concepts through hearing and writing stories. Studies have shown that during collaborative peer interactions, children’s conversations focus on negotiating meaning, labeling written objects, relevant to developing and understanding written language in the context of their activities (Neuman & Roskos, 1991). The recurrence of children’s participation in activities like informal conversations involves meaningful negotiating. These types of dialogic exchanges encourage the child to participate in the telling and retelling of personal stories. They enable children to make sense of their world. The cultured language that children experience in their social environment reflects the close and complex relationship between oral and written language development (Sulzby, Teale & Kamberelis, 1989). From this perspective, biliterate children experience access to different and varied social and cultural worlds through multiple language use.

The constructivist position argues that children learn to write in pre-determined developmental progression. Certainly, children in general move from experimenting with scribbles to producing correct spellings or stable strings of letters that closely represent more conventional forms of written language (Garton & Pratt, 1997). This can be seen in the progression towards learning to write their name or parts of their name. In the process of becoming a writer, very young children hold quite immature concepts about written language. They are often observed moving back and forth using different forms of writing, such as using a continuation of similar forms in a piece of writing. But, children also learn that their writing skills can be transferred to other activities and these can occur within the context of another literacy activity, such as drawing accompanied by signing their name or signing a birthday card. The evidence is simply that, children’s writing expertise is transient, in that it comes and goes in fleeting moments and that children view writing as representing many forms as they constantly move across the various forms of writing. Moreover, specific skill and understandings arise in particular contexts of use such as writing ones name. Therefore it can be argued that the developmental sequence reflects invariant properties of a writing system as well as commonalities in socialisation activities. Children’s early experiences of writing are inclusive of reading and other language based activities that take place during writing.
activities (Sulzby, Teale & Kamberelis, 1989), since research has identified that reading, writing and oral language develop concurrently and interrelatedly (Teale & Sulzby, 1989).

Families provide children with opportunities to explore and discover literacy and language-based activities through a wide range of experiences which creates multiple pathways. Through their play and explorations children are forming and creating hypotheses that they test with their own knowledge and information in figuring out literacy concepts and their use (Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1982). In the process, children are both independently constructing knowledge and collaboratively constructing their knowledge through interactions with their parents and other more expert members of the child’s environment. Through interactive and independent hypothesis testing, children gradually make connections from activities that become familiar to building new bridges towards more effective understandings (Rogoff, 1990).

Children’s experiences also describe how families socialize their children into literacy related activities. This has significance on parental perceptions, beliefs, values and knowledge about how literacy occurs and what develops (Goodridge & McNaughton, 1994). In particular, family perceptions about literacy development may differ from the views and perceptions held by some educational professionals.

**Family Perceptions of Literacy Development**

Research has argued that for many families a ‘knowledge gap’ and understanding of children’s literacy concepts exists that needs bridging (see Hemphill & Snow, 1996). This is especially so as children make the transition into school that marks the commencement of their formal learning (Cullen, 1998). The barriers for families have been shown to occur when they are confronted with school knowledge and practice that are incongruent with what they do at home. Families may experience a sense of helplessness and isolation because their understandings of literacy are that which is highly valued and is an integral part of their family practice which may not be valued by others (Baker, 1996). This leads to reasons why some families may be reluctant to become involved in their children’s early literacy development because of the perception by families of what is acceptable in schools.

If minority families come to understand the value of their knowledge of literacy practice as being worthy and valued in the context of schooled knowledge they may reduce their
fear of becoming involved in their children’s learning. Parents assume that there is a correct and right way for their children to develop literacy skills according to their knowledge and belief about schools. On the one hand this can be related to parents having confidence in professional expert knowledge and on the other hand they may feel and become intimidated by authority and status of a professional (McNaughton, 1995). However, parents who apply this information will be perceived as being a ‘successful’ parent. Their enthusiasm and motivation towards participating in the development of their children’s literacy may reflect the marginalised values of the dominant group (Auerbach, 1989). The significance of parental beliefs in development carries the implication that it is important for families to demonstrate pedagogies that allow them to affirm, tell and retell their own knowledge. This can be linked to the way in which power, knowledge, political and cultural tensions preside in school ideology (Giroux, 1987). In other words, it dictates how one should think, live, and act with regard to schooling.

There has been a tendency for research in Aotearoa/New Zealand to portray Māori families as (apparently) disinterested or even uncaring in their child’s education (Curtis, 1992). The expectations and values that families propose towards literacy and educational concerns vary from culture to culture and generation to generation. Meek (1991) acknowledges changes that occur in literacy over time but that there are also different literacies in use at the same time.

What is evident from a developmental perspective is that families provide a critical link between children’s literacy knowledge and schooled knowledge (see Scribner & Cole, 1978). As well, the bulk of evidence suggests that families are very interested in their children’s learning (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphill, 1991). This has important implications for the sorts of expectations that parents hold towards their children’s learning and development. In this respect, it is anticipated that this research will tease out family cultural values, beliefs and perceptions about education. Specifically, this research will examine the impact and views of parents beliefs and expectations towards literacy and learning both in the home and school environment.

Parents’ Beliefs and Expectations
The ideas and beliefs that parents hold towards literacy development provides important connections to and questions for family practices around literacy tasks at home. Their practices reflect the expectations and ideas they hold about education in general, and also
Parents have ideas about carrying out literacy activities and the form that the activity will take by deciding and choosing how and what sorts of activities to arrange, deploy and organise. The structuring and arrangement of activities identify how children develop expertise through independent, collaborative and ambient experiences they encounter (McNaughton, 1995).

Parents’ ideas, emerge out of personal experiences with children or through the task of parenting (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). The literacy activities encourage children to generate and construct theories about learning developed out of the structure of their physical environment, the social arrangements and social interactions children encounter within their environment (Eldering & Leseman, 1993). Social and cultural values are mediated in the child’s environment to which learning is organized and arranged so that children pick up on relevant information from experienced members of their community especially their parents (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Rogoff, 1990). The theoretical view maintains that parents are actively constructing and reconstructing ideas and beliefs that shape children’s development of literacy expertise through family social and cultural practices.

Local research (Goodridge & McNaughton, 1994; Kempton, 1994; McNaughton, Kempton & Turoa, 1994; Tamarua Turoa, 1995) has examined parental ideas and beliefs about children’s early developments of literacy in the home environment from a number of diverse cultural communities (eg. Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Pakeha). The studies have provided strong evidence of the different views parents can hold regarding appropriate forms of teaching and learning, for example in this view of ‘readiness’ in children’s preparation for school (McNaughton, 2001). Their beliefs and expectations about teaching and learning are guided and are embedded in their cultural practices. This can be recognised in the teaching and learning processes that are predominant for many Māori families.

**Principles of ‘Ako’ - Teaching and Learning**

The principle of ‘ako’ is based on traditional Māori methods of teaching and learning. The Māori word ako literally means ‘to teach and to learn’ (Bishop & Glynn, 2000). There is no defining of each word as a separate concept, which is very different from the Western interpretation of both words teaching and learning (Metge, 1984). A similar
concept, akonga Māori has been used to also mean Māori learners and refer to a preferred Māori way of teaching and learning, which relates to traditional as well as present modes of everyday Māori learning (Smith, 1987). These concepts and along with others that are used to describe Māori teaching/learning practices are not homogeneous to all Māori but are traditional concepts that are practical and can be applied in multiple and varied ways within the actual context. Traditionally, Māori teaching/learning went hand in hand and integrated both theory and practice in formal and informal learning settings. Learning can be understood as a gradual process that emerges from practical learning experiences to maturity (Hemara, 2000). This learning process reflects similar socially constructed learning theories of development of children being scaffolded within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). However, in Māori tradition every person is recognised as a learner together throughout the process. Some people are recognised to be more learned through their experiences and responsibilities so that the “…balance of mana (prestige) is maintained and encouraged” through a process that is reciprocal between both learner and teacher (Pere, 1994, p54).

**Links to 'Whanaungatanga’ - Familiness**

There are strong links between Māori teaching/learning practices and the significance of group oriented learning and reciprocity. Teaching/learning experiences demonstrate learning taking place within the nuclear and extended whānau (family) where everyone who participates learns something new (Hemara, 2000). Both ako and akonga are based on methods of preferred Māori pedagogies that are embedded within the practices of whanaungatanga (Metge, 1984).

The composition of the Māori whānau has a collectivist or societal orientation rather than containing solely or primarily individualistic properties (Pere, 1983). Makereti Papakura (1986) described the traditional social organization of Māori culture centred around the people rather than the self. She explained that the Māori individual thought only of his people, and was absorbed in his whānau, just as the whānau was absorbed in the hapu (sub-tribe) and the hapu in the iwi (tribal affiliation). Individual learning is not excluded from the composition of whānau but is an essential characteristic of teaching/learning embedded in the everyday events that occur within the whānau, which is encouraged (Hohepa, McNaughton & Jenkins, 1996). Interpersonal skills play a vital role in the development of family socialisation practices. The responsibilities of each whānau member incorporates the view that teaching/learning is very much dependent
on each member of the whānau to nurture and support one another in a reciprocal manner. The inclusiveness of other whānau members is recognised through the process of reciprocity and exchange of knowledge and responsibilities that is shared by the group. Traditionally Māori children are taught from a very young age that their existence within the whānau and community relies on their ability to co-exist with others. The tuakana-teina (older-younger) relationship expresses this type of learning especially between older and younger siblings. For example, a fundamental principle of the practice which Te Kohanga Reo (Māori preschool language nest) operate and organise activities is that children learn about whānau responsibilities of sharing, caring and working together (Hohepa, McNaughton & Jenkins, 1996).

Transitions before School: Early Childhood Education

Families are not the only context within which children become socialized in literacy activities. As a secondary site for learning and development, early childhood settings provide opportunities by which children develop situated expertise in literacy concepts before they enter school (McNaughton, 1995).

A perspective by which to conceptualize contexts that influence children’s learning comes from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (1979). This model describes the significance of learning and development children experience across settings through reciprocal relationships that enhance or inhibit their learning and development. The ecological theory influences children’s learning and development within a complex system of multiple levels of environmental influences surrounding the child. At the most inner concentric level (microsystem) activities and interactions take place in the child’s immediate environments and affect their learning directly (Berk, 2001). For example, going to an early childhood setting for many children, can be met by anxiety and apprehension for some and yet joy and pleasure by others. According to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory, developing conducive relationships within each setting will help foster and ease the child’s development and learning. Developing relationships between settings to further enhance and strengthen relationships and the child’s learning within different settings are determined throughout the mesosystem. At this level, the transitions between home and other educational settings become significant in fostering development. According to Bronfenbrenner, “…the developmental potential of a child rearing setting is increased as a function of the number of supportive links between that setting and other contexts involving the child or persons responsible for his or her
care...” (p.847). It is at this level that also determines whether connections between one setting are well matched or not (McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990). The influence of sociocultural and ecological perspectives can be identified in the discourse and pedagogy of the early childhood curriculum document, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Early childcare education that many children experience prior to school has major developmental implications for children’s learning. Some children may experience quite different and distinct pedagogical practices in an early childhood centre from the practices in their home environment. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, pedagogical practices and curriculum in early childcare are provided by the early childhood curriculum document, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Te Whāriki as a central metaphor is described as ‘a woven mat’ for all to stand on developed as an inclusive bicultural curriculum framework for children during the early years. The Principles and Strands defined in Te Whāriki, provide a useful theoretical framework by which to view children’s learning and development. Traditionally, Māori used the Whāriki as a place where extended family gathered to talk, tell stories, and to laugh. The construction of the Whāriki involved a complex interweaving and crossing of flax fibre strands to strengthen and support the Whāriki. This description provided an analogy of the interweaving of multiple perspectives on practice that the curriculum document Te Whāriki provided, to guide and support early childhood programme development, which is in contrast to the compartmentalized approach of traditional Euro-Western theories of development (May & Carr, 1996). Te Whāriki is inclusive of interrelationships through teaching and learning that is child-centred and child-oriented and inclusive of the ‘people, places and things,’ in the child’s environment. In this way, Te Whāriki supports and encompasses diversity, described as the “…sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development” (Ministry of Education, 1996; p.10).

The philosophical and pedagogical basis of Te Whāriki emerged from a Māori immersion curriculum philosophy. Cultural features of Te Whāriki are inclusive of four distinct dimensions to development; tinana, wairua, whatumanaawa and hinengaro (physical, spiritual, emotional and cognitive), which are fundamental to the learning of the Māori child (Hohepa & Royal Tangaere, 2001). The curriculum document, Te Whāriki is presented in a dual parallel approach written in Māori and English. Sociocultural and ecological theories of learning and development sit comfortably and complement Māori theorising and explanations about learning and development. However, these Euro-
Western perspectives are not the same and should not be assimilated to become like Māori theories of learning and development.

Te Whāriki integrates a holistic philosophy that empowers the child, includes family and community perspectives and encourages positive relationships as children learn and grow. One of the principles in Te Whāriki that recognises diversity is the importance of family and community (whānau tangata). This principle holds an important link to including the multicultural perspectives of individual communities and the integration of family practices. Accordingly, children’s learning and development will be positively fostered if the well-being of a child’s family is well supported and culturally respected by maintaining strong connections to the ‘child’s world’ (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Building on the skills and knowledge that children bring into an early childhood centre enhances links to activities families engage with their children and which are essentially an integral condition that maintains the child and adult working together to create a shared understanding (Batt, 2001).

Where the relationships and roles of participants are similar, developmental processes are enhanced that add to making transitions across settings more beneficial for the child. Similarly when these activities become embedded into the everyday family activities they become a part of the socially-constructed and individually-situated practical accomplishments that take place within the context of shared experiences (Taylor, 1998). Children’s constructions evolve within and across different settings and contexts featuring socialisation practices specific to each environment.

The diversity of early childhood education services that families can choose from provides diverse developmental pathways that impact on the quality and knowledge of children’s literacy prior to school. As well, teachers’ and parents’ perceptions and ideas around early literacy development play a significant role in the way children come to understand these concepts, especially during the transition to school.

**Transitions to School via Multiple Pathways**

The transitions into school for many children might also include learning taking place across multiple sites of learning that not only include early childcare settings but might also include church settings or marae. This suggests that children may experience different educational and learning practices that may be wide and context specific to each
setting. It further suggests that the multiple pathways by which children develop literacy expertise in one setting may be complicated further where children have experienced transitions across more than one educational setting prior to school. The expectations and emphasis of learning within each setting may feature different philosophy and curricula prescriptions with learning specific to that setting (Turoa, Wolfgramm, Tanielu & McNaughton, 2002). For example, overall the philosophy held by many early childhood centres advocates the opportunity for children to freely choose activities in a child-initiated environment (Ledger, Smith & Rich, 1998). The type of learning that is emphasized within a particular centre may vary between each centre depending on the philosophy by which a centre is based. This can be seen in the broad focus of learning from centres such as, Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Te Kohanga Reo as well as Pacific Island language nests (Ministry of Education, 1996). Each centre has a focus on different styles of learning that might differ greatly between settings.

In comparison to the early childhood curriculum – Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework is the foundation policy document that covers teaching, learning and assessment prescribed for all students in all New Zealand schools. The schools curriculum identifies principles for learning and teaching programmes based on the premise that the individual student receives all the essential learning, skills, attitudes and values that students require. Students’ progress is assessed and measured against learning outcomes to assist with planning more effective use of resources to foster student achievement and success (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The transition to any new educational environment therefore can be seen as being a challenge that marks success for some children’s cognitive and developmental progress but can also be a major deterrent for other children as well. This can mean for some children a deliberate shift in pedagogical, social and cultural practices that differ from the child’s learning. This could also mean that the context by which learning occurs can be described as having specific ‘cultural scripts’ that underlie a practice within a given context (Rosenthal, 2000). The accommodation of ethnic minority children’s transition into schools for example, has been critically undermined and misunderstood. The interpretation and perception of children’s ‘cultural scripts’ in literacy can be misrepresented and de-valued by conventionally literate educators because knowing the value of their own work sees them fail to recognise the value of other minority groups’ literacies (Olson, 1986; Rosenthal, 2000).
In the case of Māori elective bilingualism to regenerate a language, the disparities become apparent for children who are bilingual and biliterate and who enter school without the effective support to maintain their progress (Baker, 1996). Biliterate children, who learn to communicate in a minority language at home and develop literacy acquisition in the majority language at school, may have less chance of their minority language surviving. Reinforcing and extending the oral transmission of the minority language from home into the connecting settings would complement a child’s learning. It may further encourage a stronger sense of self-identity, self-esteem and a child’s “…world-view of one’s heritage culture” in greater depth (Baker, 1996; p.323).

Although this issue is not being investigated in this thesis, one could also argue that having two languages could in fact complement each other through the transfer of knowledge of one language across to the other (Baker & Hornberger, 2001; Cummins, 2000).

Evidence has shown that the transition from a full immersion language nest to mainstream school for some Māori children has had devastating effects for maintaining their fluency in the Māori language (May, 2001). The transition to school process limits and reduces opportunities for children’s development because there might be less shared understanding and continuity of ideas between the child’s cultural experiences and ideologies held by the teacher (McNaughton, 1995). The transition process also signals that for many Māori children entering school there are alternative pathways to literacy learning. This suggests that the patterns and practices that are distinct to each environment that the child becomes immersed within influence his or her development and learning. The different patterns and practices found in each setting also have different developmental properties associated with them that become more obvious especially when children make the transition into school (McNaughton, 2001). This study will describe and examine the transitions that children experience prior to school since the research already mentioned has indicated that transitions might not favour some children’s learning because of the different learning processes and skills evident in specific contexts. When a child’s skills or expertise are challenged and do not match the skills and expectations of another environment, learning for that child may become difficult.
Fostering Children’s Literacy at School

The emphasis of learning once children enter mainstream school, tends to be orientated towards learning literacy and numeracy skills in a teacher directed environment. Learning in this instructional setting may ignore or may be incompatible with what children have already previously learned (Goodman, 1988). It could also be argued that as children enter school educators may find it more difficult to establish a common agreement about whether or how to foster children’s understanding of literacy awareness (Clay, 1998a).

The question here is whether teachers can capitalize on children’s expertise given the multiple forms of literacy experiences that children may encounter prior to school (McNaughton, 1995; Turoa, Wolfram, Tanielu & McNaughton, 2002). To capitalize on children’s different literacy understandings, teachers require an awareness of the diverse ways by which children learn within activities. That is, understanding children’s previous early educational experiences and the processes and goals by which children come to complete a task can add to a teacher’s awareness of what a child can achieve within an activity. Awareness needs to be based on knowledge of the way that children develop expertise through the multiple avenues and systems of learning (McNaughton, 1995). This is dependent on whether or not teachers recognise and make connections to children’s expertise as they enter school.

Earlier it was argued that for children of different ethnic backgrounds the different sorts of developmental goals children become immersed in are determined by underlying ‘cultural scripts’ that guide family and educators’ beliefs about practices of learning. Some traditional social ‘cultural scripts’ may be characterised as being more collectivist or inter-dependent, while many Western cultures reflect individualistic and independent ‘cultural scripts’. Therefore, while children may experience more than one kind of transition during their early educational years before school, children’s developmental goals are those valued by the educators and socialisation agents specific to their setting. Therefore, children’s learning and achievement reflect individual or independent ‘cultural scripts’ that are specific to a particular learning environment or cultural community (Rosenthal, 2000).

Embedded in the notion of ‘cultural scripts’ are teachers’ ideas and their expectations they hold about children’s learning. In particular, what are teachers’ understandings and
goals for children’s learning, especially children from different cultural backgrounds and where do these ideas come from?

**Teachers’ Beliefs and Expectations**

The ideas and beliefs that teachers hold towards teaching and learning can be linked to understanding how teachers develop theories of learning and development relevant to their professional role (McNaughton, 1995). The constructs of teachers’ beliefs are partly influenced from pre-training programmes where ideas and philosophies are determined by a curriculum that underlies their professional practice (Spodek, 1988). Teachers’ theories also have been found to emerge out of their personal beliefs about teaching and children’s learning. For example, there is evidence that teachers have clear understandings of their roles according to the setting in which learning takes place (see McLachlan-Smith & St. George, 2000) and that teachers’ theories combine personal beliefs as well as their professional role about what constitutes being an effective teacher. In other words, what teachers do in the classroom reflect their knowledge as a professional expert, which is in part determined by curriculum-based knowledge. Further, teachers base their knowledge and understandings of teaching and learning on what they know, which are mostly intuitive, deeply engrained cultural beliefs or ‘cultural scripts’ (Olson & Bruner, 1996; Rosenthal, 2000) that guide their teaching practice (Richards & Lockhart, 1995).

The way in which teachers guide a child’s learning therefore is in part driven by internal cultural assumptions by what has been termed as a ‘folk pedagogy’ (Olson & Bruner, 1996). The notion of a ‘folk pedagogy’ suggests that a teacher’s understanding about the nature of the learner in part drives the assumptions and theories behind any learning and teaching. This is a “…direct reflection of the beliefs and assumptions the teacher holds about the learner” (Olson & Bruner, p.10, 1996). Teachers’ assumptions and theories about learning may be so deeply engrained that they may become difficult to replace or modify when teachers encounter learning that may be different than their own, requiring new theories of learning. This may be elaborated more through interactions with children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In an early study, Basil Bernstein (1972) examined how teachers’ beliefs that become rooted in their programme are reflected through their practice and pedagogy. Bernstein found teachers’ beliefs underlying an early childhood programme in England had an
invisible pedagogy that was more consistent with middle-class family beliefs and in conflict with working-class family beliefs regarding children’s understanding of learning and expectations of learning. The study highlighted that the middle-class children's home experiences were being well supported by the teachers’ ideologies and practices that were similar to the families. This created a more effective learning environment for their children that were well matched with learning at home. Whereas, the working-class children experienced less continuity of ideas from the children’s home experiences and more conflict, which was incongruent from their teachers’ ideas. The ideology that teachers created in their classroom environment was reinforced by their views and expectations of the sorts of learning that the teacher’s believed were good for children to learn and also what is educationally more effective.

**Rationale for the Study**

The present study developed from earlier research, which focused primarily on the sociocultural and developmental processes of Māori preschoolers learning to write their name (Tamarua Turoa, 1995). It was apparent from the earlier findings there were similarities between families but also that each family had very distinct methods and ways of approaching this particular activity based on their family’s beliefs and cultural practices. The present research aimed to provide a deeper understanding of those social and cultural processes that contribute to children’s literacy development and expertise within families that have been identified where transitions to school have not been so well matched (Goodridge, 1995; McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990). Specifically, this study aimed to understand how the social and cultural processes affected children’s learning and development across the transition to school. A major characteristic of these processes will be the teaching and learning practices that feature strongly for many Māori families. The research set out to analyse family socialisation practices to understand how this might impact on literacy and language activities at home and during the transition into school. The study then examines how processes at school enable generative or degenerative processes to develop.

Descriptions of reading, writing and language activities are explained from the child’s perspective of what is constructed using a co-construction framework to explain general psychological properties of learning and development (Valsiner, 1988). These descriptions will show how literacy and language activities are constituted. The focus in analysing these activities is to feature participation patterns and the processes that
apprentice children’s expertise into activities (Rogoff, 1990). Specifically, the goals and ideas that families and teachers hold about literacy activities will inform the research of the sorts of guidance provided by more expert participants (family, teachers and peers). The features will demonstrate how children’s expertise emerges out of the interactions and by whom.

Classroom descriptions are used to investigate how literacy and language activities can enable children to engage quickly and effectively within classroom activities given children’s knowledge and expertise as they entered school.

Two Predictions
The study employs two predictions about children’s learning and development. The first prediction proposes that children experience multiple pathways to learning and development (Clay, 1991; McNaughton, 1995). This prediction assumes that children’s expertise develops through the many learning contexts that they experience prior to school. Each setting influences children’s expertise in literacy and language activities. How this expertise might be transferred across settings is determined by how well the connections between settings are matched.

The second prediction proposes that developmental connections to children’s expertise can be tracked between home, other educational contexts and school. This prediction assumes that effective teaching and learning is determined by the degree that children’s literacy expertise is incorporated in classroom activities. It also assumes that effective teaching and learning is determined by the degree by which children develop an awareness of classroom tasks.

Outlining the Research Base
The thesis has so far provided descriptions and explanations about how literacy happens in multiple sites of learning, illustrating multiple forms of literacy. These explanations can be drawn from the socialisation model of emergent literacy (see figure 2.1) based on a view that learning and development are co-constructed by significant members of a child’s community (McNaughton, 1995). Patterns and processes of development can be examined from family literacy practices through ambient, joint and personal activities and it is from these numerous kinds of activities that children develop situated literacy expertise, through joint co-construction.
Similarly, the socialisation model is also a useful framework by which to see comparable sorts of patterns and processes occurring in secondary sites of socialisation, such as in schools. Classroom environments provide opportunities for the presence of co-construction to develop out of ambient, joint, and personal activities. Again, situated expertise can be determined through the deployment, selection and arrangement of activities that the teacher employs. The classroom activities that teachers and children engage in together might also be constrained and controlled by their participation. These might be defined according to participants’ roles and expectations (as teacher and learner), or constrained by curriculum knowledge, or controlled according to what and how something is learned (McNaughton, 2002). This study will show how learning and development in home and school contexts can be explained utilizing the socialisation model of emergent literacy as a dynamic and complex relationship.

Figure 2.1 Socialisation model of early literacy development.

![Socialisation model of early literacy development](source: McNaughton (1995))

Descriptions of literacy taking place before school and in addition, to what takes place in classroom environments is discussed. These descriptions form the bases and contribute to the limitations of the continuity approach. This perspective is challenged by the argument that effective transitions are possible and that children’s literacy expertise that
develops across multiple sites of learning might be enhanced or discriminated. This can be illustrated by two concepts – incorporation and awareness – that this study introduces.

The concepts, incorporation and awareness elaborate the process of continuity. An important critique of the continuity argument is how teachers and children can make more effective connections in joint activities that are ‘unfamiliar’ to becoming more ‘familiar’ (McNaughton, 2002). The process of incorporation occurs by building on what is ‘familiar’ in one activity and incorporating this into another ‘unfamiliar’ activity to enhance more effective and successful connections to children’s development of literacy expertise. The process of awareness occurs once children become aware of the goals and rules of different classroom activities.

The process of incorporation and awareness can be understood as transference of knowledge or providing ‘bridges’ from un-known to new learning (Rogoff, 1990). The transference of knowledge also depends on the discrimination of information or ‘unlocking’ previously learned knowledge from activities and the awareness of incorporating these experiences into new activities (McNaughton, 2002; Turoa, Wolfgramm, Tanielu & McNaughton, 2002). An important point that this study makes and one that counter argues limitations of the continuity approach is that children can develop an awareness of expertise from their out-of-school knowledge into classroom activities.

What this study proposes is that children’s literacy expertise is developed across multiple contexts of learning. Secondly, this study proposes that developmental connections to children’s literacy expertise can be incorporated into classroom literacy activities and that effective teaching and learning is possible by the level that children develop an awareness of classroom activities.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Rationale
This study involved a detailed descriptive analysis of the developmental transition to school for a small group of Māori children and their families. A case study design involving four children and their families provided contextualized descriptions of family social and cultural practices. The co-constructionist theory of development (Valsiner, 1988) along with connections to and explanations from Kaupapa Māori (Smith, 1992) philosophy contributed to describing the development and practice of children’s literacy and language expertise through personal, joint and independent activities at home and at school (McNaughton, 1995).

The developmental significance of previous descriptions of literacy processes and practices in children’s home environment and the transitions into school shows there are multiple and diverse pathways to children’s learning prior to school (Clay, 1991; McNaughton, 1995; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Research has explained how family socialization and cultural practices contribute significantly to the construction of children’s literacy and language expertise before school (Goodridge, 1995; Heath, 1983; McNaughton, 1995). A major contribution of previous research is in the descriptions of how literacy and language activities are featured in participation structures and guidance, creating opportunities for children to construct and co-construct literacy expertise (McNaughton, 1999). Descriptions of parents’ ideas about learning and development show how literacy activities at home are prepared, structured and organized (Rogoff, 1990). Furthermore, research has recognised that parent’s ideas and the theories they hold about the nature of a task are strongly influenced by external socialization agents and educators as the experts in contributing to teaching and learning processes (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Kempton, 1994; Tamarua-Turoa, 1995). This study therefore argues that children’s literacy and language expertise emerge from multiple social and cultural pathways across multiple contexts prior to children’s transition to school.
However, there is little research that plots how the practices in schools create processes which impact on the transition to school. To examine the transition, one needs a developmental description of literacy and language practices at home complemented by a close analysis of classroom teaching practices. The teachers in the present study are those that happened to be the teachers of the children when they went to school. They were teaching in decile 1-3 schools\(^2\). The descriptions from each classroom help to elaborate the nature of the processes of incorporation and awareness (McNaughton, 2002). Teachers’ ideas and beliefs about children’s literacy expertise were assumed to be influenced by their diversity awareness. From this viewpoint, the significance of teachers’ awareness of children’s literacy expertise is in how it influences the way teachers select, arrange and deploy activities (McNaughton, 1995). In addition, what, how and when teachers carry out activities can also determine different instruction styles seen during collaborative learning situations. There have been a number of studies that have examined collaborative, joint problem solving situations to explain participation structures and to understand what happens during these interactions (Rogoff, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). These ideas and teachers’ construction of literacy activities influence the ‘cultural scripts’ that teachers use to theorise about the learner and about teaching and learning as part of their professional practice (Olson & Bruner, 1996; Rosenthal, 2000).

**The aim of the study**

The aim of this research was to describe family literacy practices taking place in four Māori families and to describe the developmental transition to school and processes of classroom practices. Descriptions of family literacy activities were based on analyses of three literacy and language activities. Specifically the activities were reading to children, guiding children’s writing and telling/retelling narratives. The descriptions aim to show how the activities were constituted, in particular the goals and ideas participants hold about the activities, the patterns of participation, the features of the guidance provided by more expert participants (family members) and the kinds of expertise that emerged

\(^2\) Schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand receive a rank from 1 to 10. The decile rankings of a school is a measure of socio-economic level that has been calculated by the Ministry of Education using census data for the school contributing area. The measures are rated from 1-low, 5-middle, and 10-high. The socio-economic status of an area can determine the ethnic composition of a school, consequently reflecting the ‘clientele’ in an area. Decile 1 schools for example, have high proportions of Māori children and / or high proportions of children from Pacific Islands and have communities with the lowest income and employment levels.
through the activities. Three literacy and language activities were chosen to enable a close focus of family literacy practices and processes.

Similarly, the descriptions of classroom activities focused on the same three literacy and language activities of reading to children, guiding children’s writing and telling/retelling narratives. The intent here was to analyse these activities in terms of goals, ideas, participation, and interactional features of guidance and expertise. In addition, the focus for the classrooms was to examine how classroom activities facilitated children to engage quickly and effectively in classroom activities, given the expertise they brought with them to school.

**A Cultural Theoretical Framework**

A characteristic of families explored in this study was the connection between practice and their cultural identity. The research was located within a Kaupapa Māori framework based on Māori philosophy and principles (Marshall, Peters & Smith, 1990). Smith (1992) comments that the theoretical positioning, which relates to being Māori, presupposes that the validity and legitimacy of Māori is taken for granted. Therefore, the survival and revival of Māori language and Māori culture is imperative, and that the struggle for autonomy over cultural well being and over ones life is vital to Māori survival.

The understanding of family social and cultural practices ultimately needs to be grounded in cultural frameworks and here these are the theoretical foundations of Māori cultural teaching and learning practices.

The methodology involved extensive consultation with whānau (family) members, teachers and schools and the communities within which this research is located. Also, one of the challenges of this research is understanding the process of how the information will be disseminated while maintaining control over the contents of the research. It is anticipated that a copy of the completed thesis will be given to each family and the teachers who participated in this study.

**Participants**

The main participants in this study involved the four children and their whānau (family), their teachers and schools that each child attended. There were also informal discussions with three of the children’s (Hona, Mark, Mary) kindergarten teachers that contributed to
understanding children’s preschool educational experiences outside of the home. Discussions with children’s early childcare teachers were provided voluntarily during visits or contact made by the researcher. The fourth child (Theresa) participated in a home based intervention literacy programme called HIPPY (Home Intervention Preschool Programme for Youngsters) prior to school. A preliminary description of each participant is given in the next chapter while a full description of the children and their family is provided in Chapter Five at the beginning of each case study along with a summary of preschool experiences.

Children and Families
A network sample of four urban families (in the Manukau region of Auckland) were approached through a network sample and was invited to participate in this study. Each of the participants identified themselves and their whānau (family) as Māori. Two routes for contacting families were used. One was via a kindergarten and the second was through personal contacts. In each case the families were invited to participate with a personal approach (kanohi ki kanohi) and by establishing whānau connections (Bishop & Glynn, 2000). Formal protocols of informed consent and information to participants were obtained as required in the ethics procedures for research by the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee (see Appendix A, p.281). When first contacted the children were aged approximately 4 years and 6 months.

Initially, eight families were recruited into this study. The attrition of four families occurred during the early data collection phase in this study. Two of the families had relocated and two families declined participation in the study due to personal family circumstances. The remaining four family’s participation in this study provided in depth case studies describing four transitions.

Teachers
Consent to conduct this research in each of the children’s classrooms was granted through permission by the school principal of each school and in two cases communications with the associate principal (see Appendix D, p.288). Individual meetings were arranged with the school principal, associate principal (in two schools) and the teacher to discuss the thesis proposal and consideration of the school and the teacher’s participation in the study. In one school, two teachers participated in the study.
A teacher profile schedule was collated of all four teachers to provide information about teaching experience, teaching qualifications, ethnicity and language/s spoken (see Appendix E, p.291). The four teachers in this study were Pakeha (Anglo European) and spoke English in their classrooms. The teachers of Theresa and Mark (Mrs Muriel and Mrs Gabriel respectively) had many years of teaching experience. Mark’s teacher had at least 15 years teaching experience and Theresa’s teacher had been teaching in the same area for over 30 years. Theresa’s teacher mentioned that the ‘clientele’ of the families living in the surrounding area over this time had changed dramatically. When she first started teaching in this area, she recalled the ‘clientele’ shifted from teaching children from professional households to children who live in some cases below the poverty line. She commented that a teacher must be flexible in her teaching when ‘dealing’ with children from so many different backgrounds.

Hona’s and Mary’s teachers (Mrs Dee and Ms Kay respectively) were relatively new teachers (less than 5 years experience) to the teaching profession. This was Mrs Dee’s second year teaching at the school while having taught briefly elsewhere outside of this area and her first year teaching at the new entrant level in this school. This was Ms Kay’s first year of teaching at school at the new entrant level. It was also her first year of teaching here in Aotearoa/New Zealand since she recently graduated from training college in Australia. Each teacher had a basic Primary teaching qualification.

**Schools**

In general, the schools were typical of other primary schools in the Manukau region. The core literacy programmes in these schools were consistent with descriptions of beginning literacy programmes adopted by New Zealand schools in general (e.g., Smith & Elley, 1994; 1997). Language-based reading and writing activities are promoted from when children enter school on their fifth birthday using teaching frameworks supplied by national resource material (e.g., Learning Media, 1996). Self reports by literacy leaders in a recent study of the decile 1 schools in the area indicated that the standard components of guided reading, shared book reading, independent reading and process writing were present (Timperley, Robinson & Bullard, 1999).

Tables 1, 2 and 3 have been configured below to show the breakdown of ethnic composition and the designated decile ranking for each school in this study. Following
each table is a brief description according to the highest ranked ethnic group and lowest ranked ethnic group total of children that attended each school.

As already mentioned, the three schools that contributed to this study ranged between decile 1-3. They have been identified throughout the study as; school A, school B and school C (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 below).

School A
School A had the lowest number of children attending this school with a roll of 401 children. This school was ranked as a decile 1 school using the Ministry of Education Socio-economic Indicator scale. The ethnic composition breakdown by male and female was higher across all ethnic groups in comparison to NZ European/Pakeha children. The highest total number of children attending this school was Samoan children (n=125) closely followed by NZ Māori children (n=100). In comparison to the other two school populations approximately 99% (n=397) of the total number of children who attended school A, identified belonging with a cultural group other than NZ European/Pakeha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ Māori</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


School B
School B was the largest school in this study with a roll of 633 children. It was ranked a decile 3 school according to the Ministry of Education Socio-economic Indicator scale. A noticeable difference with this school was the high presence of children identified in the NZ European/Pakeha group (n=206), followed by n=151 children identified Māori and n=114 Asian children. Overall, the combined total number of children n=427, (68%) that identified belonging to a cultural group other than NZ European/Pakeha
collectively show they exceeded a large proportion of NZ European/Pakeha children attending school B.

### Table 2: ETHNIC COMPOSITION of STUDENTS at SCHOOL B (Decile 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island Māori</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ/European/Pakeha</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ Māori</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>325</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**School C**

School C was the second largest school in this study with a total roll of 626 children. This school was ranked a decile 2 by the Ministry of Education Socio-economic Indicator scale. The largest total number of children that attended school C was NZ Māori (n=168). A total number of (n=142) NZ European/Pakeha children was the next highest group (n=120), followed closely by Asian (n=120) and Samoan (n=106) children. Overall, the total percentage of children at school C who identified belonging to a cultural group other than NZ European/Pakeha was 77%.

### Table 3: ETHNIC COMPOSITION of STUDENTS at SCHOOL C (Decile 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island Māori</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFAT and Foreign Fee Paying Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European/Pakeha</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ Māori</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokelauan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>337</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting of the Study
The study was situated in an urban community that has become known as a ‘well-researched’ population throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand. Within this region live a multi-ethnic group of families most of whom unfortunately are referred to as minority, low income families, reflected in designated low decile ranking for schools. These families have contributed resources to research within the field of education and to many other areas of social concern. Any progress to improve the needs of these families is extremely slow and may at times appear insignificant in comparison to other communities’ achievements (Timperley, Robinson & Bullard, 1999).

A particularly strong demographic issue for this study was the location in which this research was situated. The area was well known for the transience of families. Movement of families across and within the community was common. Reasons that families moved had to do with housing costs, loss of employment and over crowded housing by additional family members. This made recruitment of families a concern for this study.

One of these difficulties for the researcher in recruitment of families was to ascertain where some families lived in relation to where their children were being sent to an educational setting. In some cases the educational facility was located on the other side of town from where the family lived.

Data Collection Procedure
The home and classroom data were collected using a variety of research methods and procedures. The home data included semi-structured interviews with caregivers, self report diaries, audio recording and collecting children’s writing and drawing samples. Classroom observations included video and audiotape recordings, structured interviews with teachers as well as informal discussions, field notes and collecting samples of children’s writing and drawing products. Children’s school entry assessment data were collected from the school records. Achievement data on children’s literacy and language progress were administered and collected near the end of each child’s first year of school. A description of both home and classroom data collection procedures is given below.
The Home Observation Phase:

Home Observations

The collection of information from children’s home environments relied on the participation by each family. The method used to collect data was discussed and negotiated with each family prior to data collection. It was considered more appropriate that families take control of collecting data that they chose to share and include in this study, maintaining a less intrusive procedure than having a researcher observe family activities.

Procedure

Visits to each family were arranged at regular intervals every 3-4 weeks prior to school during 1998. These visits included conducting a preliminary interview session with caregivers as well as informal discussions that added to the scope of the data already collected and for the researcher and families to have open discussions in general about the study. The visits also included collecting any diary and audiotape recordings by families. Visits continued intermittently with the families throughout the duration of children’s first year of school. These visits were to conduct follow up interviews with caregivers to discuss the transition to school process as well as their children’s progress. The researcher of this study conducted all communications and meetings with families and children in their homes. In addition, the researcher collaborated and engaged in discussions with the primary caregiver of each family (ie. three mothers and one grandmother) about the data collected and the study in general.

Parent Interviews

Initially at the beginning of the research project an informal meeting was held with each caregiver at either their family home or at a selected venue that caregivers chose. Two visits to conduct semi-structured interviews were made at the family homes of Mark and Theresa and two more (Hona and Mary) were conducted through the kindergarten centres. The initial meeting was to introduce and inform families of the study. Once both researcher and families had established a closer rapport and familiarity about the researcher’s role and the family role in the study dates were arranged to organise further interview sessions. All interviews were carried out with the children’s primary caregiver. In each of these families Mary, Mark and Theresa’s mother and Hona’s grandmother were interviewed.
Two sorts of interviews were conducted with each of these caregivers. The first preliminary semi-structured interview was carried out to establish the range of literacy activities that occurred in family practices and other settings. The second semi-structured interview was carried out with the same caregivers after their children had been at school for approximately one month. The post interview schedule determined family beliefs, expectations and concerns about the transition to school process. Both interview schedules are described in detail (see Appendix B, p.284-286).

**Preliminary Interviews**

During the first home visit a semi-structured interview was conducted in the homes of Mary, Mark, Theresa and Hona with their mother and grandmother respectively (see Appendix B, p.284). There were core questions about children’s literacy experiences at home and in other settings, references to bilingual experiences, and parental beliefs and ideas about learning. In addition, it was an opportunity to talk to these parents more about the study and more importantly to meet their children (and any other family members) participating in the study.

This information was analysed to generate descriptions of the kinds of literacy activities that families engaged in with their children. The information also provided valuable information regarding parental beliefs and ideas about education in general as well as the sources of these beliefs. Descriptions of the data also contributed to understanding social and cultural practice in which families engaged and family goals for how they organised and structured literacy activities at home.

**Post Parent Interviews**

A second semi-structured interview was conducted with families approximately a month after their children had started school. The interviews were conducted with the children’s primary caregivers (ie. Mary, Mark and Theresa’s mothers and Hona’s grandmother). This interview schedule contained questions, which sought an understanding about the transition to school process for families (see Appendix B, p.286).

Questions were based around understanding the transition process and especially parents and children’s adaptation to the school environment and learning. Parent beliefs and ideas about learning at school and sources of these ideas were probed. Questions also
included parental roles in guiding and supporting their child’s learning, their expectation about their children’s learning and their contributions to the school culture, if any.

The data were analysed to ascertain the characteristics of parent beliefs and ideas about school processes, and their children’s learning.

**Home Diaries**

Recording events at home such as keeping a diary can be used to measure the variety of social participants in home-based literacy events (Pellegrini, 2001). The use of diaries in this study also allowed caregivers to keep a record of when children participated in any literacy activities, specifically reading, writing and storytelling. Diaries recorded with whom children participated and the various sorts of literacy activities children experienced. The maintenance of recording activities in the diaries was the responsibility of each family. Parents were asked to keep a daily record of events, which was to be filled in near the time of the event or at the end of each day (see Appendix C, p.287).

Keeping diaries was not always seen as an appropriate method by which families were able to maintain consistent recording of all literacy events. Caregivers commented that keeping a daily record of events was difficult given their busy daily schedules. Maintaining consistent data collection varied between families. Therefore, a more suitable timetable was negotiated with families by which to record literacy events on a consistent basis. For example, Mary’s mother and Theresa’s mother preferred to record events every 2-3 days rather than on a daily basis. Hona’s grandmother disregarded maintaining diary entries because she felt more comfortable having the opportunity to discuss events rather than write down this information.

**Home Audiotape Recording**

Data were collected in homes with audiotape recording equipment. Audiotaped sessions were included in this study to capture any telling/retelling of narratives. This included bedtime stories, reading to the children for leisure, telling of stories by a family member, which included family ‘yarns’. These were later analysed for the type and kinds of narratives families told. These stories were later compared to the narratives at school. The use of an audiotape was provided for caregivers to carry out taping narratives with their children. Mark’s mother and Theresa’s mother agreed they would use the audiotape while Mary’s mother and Hona’s grandmother declined their use. The former two
families stated they felt confident using this method because they were already familiar with the use of audio equipment.

There are cultural reasons why some families, in this case Māori families would be reluctant to participate in these forms of data collection. Their reasons have to do with preferences for narrative or discussion as a basis for developing agreement. This method was consistent with the way other Māori families have preferred to share information, that is, through discussion. The preference by Māori to narrate their story is inclusive, holistic and culturally appropriate because it allows them to “…select, recollect and reflect on stories within their own cultural context and language rather than in the cultural context and language chosen by the researcher” (Bishop, 1996, p.24). It is more difficult and impersonal to discuss meaningful cultural experiences through the use of some research tools that cannot capture the essence of an intended message.

**Children’s Writing and Drawing Products**

Caregivers collected all products children had written or drawn at home or products the children had completed in other childhood settings. These were examined for developmental changes and the range of literacy skills children engaged in both at home and through other settings. In particular, it was important to understand children’s emerging awareness of literacy through writing and drawing and the relation both these forms had to each other. For example, drawing has been recognised as a medium that influences children’s writing and vice versa (Kempton, 1994). The products were also analysed to establish any family cultural connections found in their writing or drawings.

**The Classroom Observation Phase:**

**Classroom Observations**

Piloting of the audio and video equipment was conducted in each of the children’s classrooms prior to observations beginning. This was also necessary so that the other children in the class could become familiar with the presence of the audio and video equipment as well as the presence of the researcher in the classroom.

The four classrooms had a typical daily routine of morning news, alphabet work and in one case worksheets, writing (involving teacher modeling, text writing sometimes in the process writing format and conferencing) and reading (reading to children, shared reading, and guided reading). Because of these features, the classrooms can generally be
considered to be employing a ‘wide’ curriculum that has at its core text rich activities (McNaughton, 2002).

**Classroom Data Collection Procedure**

A combination of videotaping, audiotaping, teacher interviewing and field notes was used to capture classroom activities. Children’s entry school assessment data was collected from school records and their achievement data was collected at the end of the children’s first school year. These provided permanent products for later analysis. The researcher carried out all classroom observations and structured interviews with each teacher except conducting the final school assessment measures. A trained independent researcher carried out the final assessment for all children. The role of the researcher was as a non-participant observer except during structured teacher interview sessions and during informal discussions held with teachers at various times during classroom visits and sometimes while being invited to the school staff room to share morning tea.

**Schedule of Observations**

Observations were conducted across the three designated schools. Once the principal of each school had given approval and introductions had been established with each child’s teacher, an arranged visiting schedule was negotiated with each teacher when classroom observations would begin. Classroom observation visits began as close to the child’s birth date or the child’s first or second day at school. Sometimes this was difficult to determine because one of the children (Hona) did not begin school until nearly two weeks after his birthday. Upon enrolment his caregiver (grandmother) did not have a birth certificate to confirm his date of birth. Observations continued for up to six months. Each child was visited at school at least three times a week during the first month of observations and then twice weekly.

Observations took place during all morning language activities. The purpose of the observations was to sample reading and writing activities and any activity of oral narratives (typically story telling or retelling). During these visits, the videotape was present during each literacy or language activity following the child’s actions and interactions with the teacher and peers.
Classroom Videotaped Sessions
All classroom observation sessions of children participating in any reading, writing or oral language activities were videotaped by the researcher. Observations would begin in the morning after the teacher read through the daily notices. Most classrooms had a routine, which they generally followed daily. These may have included, morning news (sharing time) as a whole group or in small groups, alphabet recitation (either from the classroom board or individual prepared cards), writing exercise (began as a whole group then individual tasks), reading (either whole group, small group or individual tasks).

Along with each videotaped session, field notes were recorded on an observation schedule that provided general descriptions of the class environment, descriptions of the activity, and any other notable aspect occurring in class or about the activity.

Both the videotaped sessions and field notes were critical to the qualitative analysis of this study. In the descriptions reported in this study, the classroom observations selected as a frame of reference to describe relationships between classroom experiences and those outside of school that were analysed using the classroom activities as the unit of analysis.

Classroom Audiotaped Sessions
In some instances audiotape equipment was used during some teacher-child exchanges and peer interactions. These recordings were to capture individual and small group conversations. In particular, any incidents where children were reading (group or individual), telling or retelling narratives, and any activities where children engaged in conversation with other peers. These provide descriptions about how children devise strategies to problem solve through interactions with other peers.

Measures
An important goal of this study was to describe how children’s expertise before school became part of (or did not become in part of) the classroom activities. This meant assessing children’s conventional school literacy expertise upon entry to school as well as their achievement at the end of their first year. Two sets of assessment data were collected near the beginning of the year, when each child started school and again towards the end of their first year.
School Entry Assessment Measures

Children’s school entry measures were derived from each school’s assessment record. Schools carried out school entry assessments normally between 4-6 weeks approximately after children had begun school. Two of the children (Hona and Theresa) began school late in the school year (November, 1998) and were presented with a first school entry assessment at 3-4 weeks after they began school. They both received a second school entry assessment at approximately 4-5 weeks later in the new school year (February – March, 1999).

The measures used by each school varied across schools. Each school had developed their own broad set of literacy assessment. The administration and collation of assessments also varied across schools. In two schools teachers carried out the observations of their children while in the third school a head teacher was involved.

The measures of literacy and language assessments used in this study are standard measures that are used throughout many New Zealand schools to determine children’s emergent literacy. The schools in this study used some aspects of the standard literacy measures or they modified parts of these assessments. Measures from the School Entry Assessment (Learning Media, 1998) procedure were used by one school along with their own oral language assessment. In this school, the Tell Me (RETELL) assessment measure from the SEA (1997) procedure was used. This assessment provides measures of children participating in listening to an unfamiliar story, which they have to retell to an audience. Children are scored for comprehension, sentence complexity, vocabulary, organization (story coherence), expression and content. Another school conducted a Junior Oral Language Screening test (J.O.S.T). This measure was offered through the Special Education Service (1994) and provided teachers information on children’s oral language. The teacher used this measure to test children whose oral language was of concern and/or scored poorly on the Record of Oral Language. Children were assessed on vocabulary, pragmatics (social language) and grammar. The focus here was on children’s expressive language development. Scores vary depending on the individual, therefore there are no expectations for a total number of correct items. Most of the items are based on normed tests in the 4:6-5:6 year levels. The test results are to inform the teacher how best to develop an oral language programme. The third school in this study used a combination of both the SEA (1997) and the J.O.S.T (1994) language measure.
Other literacy measures included Clay’s (1993) Observation Survey of Letter Identification (LID), Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC) and Concepts About Print (CAP). The Letter Identification (LID) test measures a child’s ability to identify a letter by, letter name, letter sound or a word with the first letter sound. The test includes 54 upper and lower case letters, and some with alternative letterforms. The Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC) test measures writing vocabulary by recording the number of words a child can write within ten minutes. Each correctly spelt word scores one point. The Concepts About Print (CAP) test, which is also part of the SEA (Learning Media, 1998) kit, measures children’s early knowledge of written texts in directionality, one to one correspondence, and some language concepts (eg. back, front, letter and word). There are 24 graded items, the most difficult item is for children to identify changes in a word and the letter order in sentences.

**One Year Assessment Measures**

The second set of school measures assessed children’s literacy expertise and progress after a year at school. It was decided to carry out the second series of assessments using a standard set of measures that would provide a profile of children’s literacy and oral language progress. This decision was also based on the need to analyse children’s developmental progress after a year since some schools did not carry out this assessment. A trained observer who conducted all the observations during morning visits carried these out. Achievement data in literacy was derived from the standard tests of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) of Letter Identification (LID), Hearing and Recording Sounds (H&RS), Concepts About Print (CAP), Word Recognition (WORD) and Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC).

The Hearing and Recording Sounds (H&RS) measure samples children’s phonological knowledge and the ability to record letters or sounds heard in words. The observer dictates a sentence, which requires the child to write what they can hear in the words. An accurate response is given one mark per sound, with a total score of 37. An additional measure of generalized word recognition – the Burt Word Recognition Test was collected (BURT – Gilmore, Croft, & Reid, 1981). The Burt Word Recognition Test (BURT) measures word recognition. The BURT has been normed for New Zealand children and its standardised feature becomes relevant at the age of six.
Also, oral language measures were collected using the Tell Me test from the School Entry Assessment measure (Learning Media, 1998) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). The Peabody Picture Vocabulary test measures receptive language. This test is not normed for New Zealand however it has been used extensively by other similar studies here in Aotearoa/New Zealand (see Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002).

**Teacher Interviews**

Formal structured interviews were conducted with each teacher during the first month after each child started school. An interview schedule was available for the researcher to discuss the extent of teacher diversity awareness of children’s literacy expertise upon entry to school (see Appendix F, p.292). Questions were based around two sorts of ideas, firstly teachers generic knowledge was requested about the sorts of literacy and language skills children enter school with. This information provided descriptions of teacher beliefs and ideas on literacy and learning and their expectations of what learners ought to know. The second set of questions focused on specific teacher knowledge about the (target) child’s literacy expertise, family/community knowledge and the way teachers obtained this information. This data was analysed to provide descriptions of teacher diversity awareness of children’s literacy expertise as well, knowledge of what each teacher knew of children’s family practices. The interview data also probed teachers understanding of their instructional practice, especially around being set to incorporate children’s literacy and cultural expertise into classroom activities.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research has conformed to the *University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee* procedures that were granted for the duration of the thesis.

Informed consent was obtained from each child’s caregiver, teachers and schools to participate in this study. This included sending out written information participation letters to the four families explaining all aspects of the research that would affect their willingness to participate. Written consent to participate in this study was also sent out to the principal or assistant principal of each school where a full explanation of the study was presented giving details of the schools involvement, and that of the teacher and the child being followed to school. All participants had been offered the right to discontinue participation in the research at any time (see Appendices A, p.283, and D, p.290).
Confidentiality
Each family, school and teacher was offered the right to the concealment of his or her identity on all information collected during the course of this study. Families gave their consent for their children’s first names to be published in the research. A pseudonym has been used for each of the teachers. In respect to any written reports, informal discussions that eventuate out of this research, participants also have the right for privacy of their identity and the information contained in this study. The dissemination of and access to the research findings will be negotiated with the families, teachers and schools who participated in this study. Their input during this project helped guide the researcher, confirming and validating claims individual members offered. It is more “potentially empowering” (Bishop, 1996, p.45) for families, teachers and schools to constitute their control and exertion as a part of the research process. Upon the completion of the study each family and the teachers who participated in this project will be acknowledged and given a copy of the bound research.

Challenges and Limitations
There are limitations and challenges associated with any research especially the methods used in studying culture (Bakalevu, 1996). In all aspects of this study the researcher has attempted to anticipate any challenges and limitations at the outset in the planning of this study to minimise their effects. As a Māori researcher, sharing common cultural experiences and more importantly reporting on one’s own culture has its advantages but can also be a setting for tensions. The obvious advantage is that the researcher has insight into ways of ‘doing’, and in many cases ways of ‘being’ that distinguish how a person approaches, plans and makes contact with the people whom they are intending researching. Within this framework, researching Māori and being a Māori researcher involves a deeper critical understanding of how one positions themselves as researcher and those being researched (Mead, 1996). Acting in a non-participant observer role takes the involvement of this researcher from being an ‘insider’ as belonging to that community and being familiar with that community’s culture to one of being an ‘outsider’, where the information obtained and written is carried out in a manner that is consistent with the role of researcher belonging to an academic institution (see Bakalevu, 1996).

The organization, collection and reporting of the data created challenges for the researcher. This was especially challenging in the analysis of cultural meanings in
everyday activities in regards to what constitutes a cultural identity frozen at a particular point in time and concretized within particular activities (McNaughton, Kempton & Turoa, 1994). As an ‘insider-outsider’ researcher we assume that cultural meanings developed from literacy activities for example, can be validated to provide accurate interpretation of the variety of expressions families portray. It is important to the researcher that the information collected be accurately reported. This involved extensive consultation and checking of interpretations with the families and teachers.

Case Studies
The case study approach provided a detailed and full picture of each individual child, their families and teachers through interview structures, informal discussions and test scores. The strength of this method is that the case narratives provided a rich descriptive insight and understanding into the processes of development by which the children became expert in literacy. The information that families and teachers contributed to this study provided insights into the multiplicity of factors that affected children’s literacy expertise. However, researching culture through this method should not assume that the conclusions that emerge out of this study apply to anyone other than the persons being studied. In particular, making theoretical preferences and conclusions from the outcomes of this study were limited to those being researched, for that reason there may be a tendency for bias in the observations and interpretations when reporting especially as this researcher shared some common cultural understandings.

Validity of Data Collection
There were issues to do with the validity of the data collection process that emerged out of the decision to enable families to participate in this process. One of the briefs of this study was to include families in the research process as much as possible therefore, it was decided they be given a choice to carry out data collection within their home environments. This also meant there were aspects of the data collection process that could not be fully controlled by the researcher. To counteract this problem, regular visits were planned to monitor and discuss their progress and the data that they were collecting. Sometimes instructions had to be clarified and re-established during each visit so that families became more confident of what was required in the process. It was also important that clarification of any part of the data collected be exposed through the interview process conducted by the researcher.
Validity of Parent Interviews
One of the more successful approaches used in this study for collecting information from families, came out of the interviews. The semi-structure interview approach was set up for each caregiver to discuss freely and to display personal thoughts and ideas that resembled a way they think in everyday life. In all cases, the researcher was able to expand on caregiver’s ideas to get a broader picture within a relatively concise time. The information gathered included personal experiences of present and past events, descriptions relevant to children’s literacy experiences and in particular reference to cultural practice.

However, there were limitations to the use of this approach in the accuracy by which families reported incidents, events and personal experiences. Some families showed inconsistencies in remembering events given the size and inclusion of the extended family that also lived in the same household. The interpretation by the researcher regarding any family comments and opinions required constant clarification from families so that the information given at interviews did not underestimate what families wanted to say because in some cases families found it difficult in expressing themselves. One of the major advantages of conducting the interviews with families was that the researcher shared common cultural associations. This added a closer working relationship and understanding and in many instances of familiar cultural experiences and practices. Sharing similar cultural understandings, as mentioned previously can incorporate bias in the interpretation of the results.

Validity of Teacher Interviews
In comparison with the teacher interviews a formal structured approach was used. The advantage of this method was that it had a predictable structure that allowed interview schedules to be prepared into set questions. This eliminated the problem where questions may have become phrased incorrectly. As well, the interview process was a lot shorter and more appropriate in carrying out the interviews given the busy daily schedule and availability of all teachers.

Validity of the Researcher
A major issue that lay before the researcher in understanding the processes and practices of classroom teaching given the researcher is not a trained teacher. The trial video sessions discussed earlier, took place in each classroom to ensure firstly that the children
become familiar with the researcher and use of all audio and video equipment. Secondly, during the trial phase, the researcher also gained valuable insight albeit briefly, through observations of teacher interaction and practice that provided guidance into the routine of each classroom. In particular, an important outcome for the researcher was becoming familiar with the literacy and language routine. This was arranged and organised differently by each classroom teacher, however the content knowledge was consistent across all four teachers. This information added to the researcher's understanding of classroom practices and in particular to teaching practices occurring within each of the observed classrooms of this study.
Chapter Four
Beliefs and Practices

(a) Family Practices of Literacy Development:
The Parents’ Views

Introduction
This chapter describes parents and teachers ideas and expectations. For the parents, this was firstly about children’s early literacy experiences prior to school and then about children’s transition to school. The ideas presented here elaborate on the importance of literacy in each of the children’s homes and their development of literacy expertise. Parents ideas described here were drawn from recorded diary entries and personal discussions about their experiences and expectations of literacy development. Following these descriptions of parent’s ideas, this chapter leads on to provide descriptions of teacher’s views of children’s development of literacy expertise.

Research studies describe how parent’s theories are based around personal experiences and personal expectations about learning and education (Goodnow & Collins, 1990). Within the framework of co-constructionist theory, parent’s implicit and explicit understandings of learning and development were found to emerge from various social and cultural sources (Valsiner, 1988). These belief systems reflect family practices. They show how parents actively construct and reconstruct activities and sources of learning for their children.

The information presented in this chapter focuses on two sets of interview discussions with parents. Preliminary discussions were held with families at the beginning of the research to get a general idea of the sorts of things families did around literacy. Post interview discussions were carried out with families between four to six weeks after their children had begun school. Briefly, the questions during this interview focused on their beliefs, ideas and expectations they held about literacy and learning and whether or not connections between home and school had been successful.

The responses from families discussed in this chapter were divided into three broad categories. Firstly, discussions with parents about family literacy practices prior to school
were intended to gain a better understanding how families operated and organised literacy activities. Questions focused mainly on what they as a family engaged in together with their children at home. These included, the kinds of things they did while reading, writing and storytelling to their children. Also, the amount of time allocated to these activities. Defining what families understood about literacy was examined to determine how families perceived literacy as a practice. Their explanations sought to generate parent’s beliefs and expectations about learning in general for their children before and after they began school.

Secondly, in an attempt to better understand the significance of pre-school learning and parent’s knowledge of other local community services, parent’s beliefs and expectations about these settings was considered. Finally, families were asked whether or not they were active speakers of te reo Māori at home and how they might support maintaining their children’s cultural identity both at home and school.

**Whānau Characteristics**

**Mary’s Whānau**

At the start of these observations Mary was 4:6 years old. She lived with her parents, an older sister (aged 7 years) and younger brother (aged 5 months). Mary was the middle child in this whānau (family). Her father was employed full time as a maintenance person. He had no formal preschool experience. He attended high school to form 5 (year 11). No formal high school qualifications were gained. Her mother was a full time caregiver at home. She did not attend any formal preschool learning. She attended high school to form 4 (year 10), where no formal high school qualifications were gained. This decision to be at home with her children was a commitment to their learning and educational needs as well as providing childcare. This commitment included helping out at Mary’s kindergarten, attending kindergarten trips, providing guidance and preparing Mary for school, as well attending with her older child on school outings and participating in classroom activities where ever possible.

Information from the interviews indicated this whānau maintained very close links with their extended whānau and identified strongly with tikanga Māori (Māori traditions and customs). Both parents identified being Māori and participated actively with their extended whānau. Mary’s mother commented that her mother always made sure that they (her brothers and sisters) participated in hui (formal and informal gatherings) on
their marae (place of belonging). She stated how this was extremely important in understanding her own identity and belonging. She also added it was even more important now she has children in teaching them where they come from, and understanding their whakapapa (genealogy).

**Mark’s Whānau**

Mark was the younger of two children, his brother was two years older. Both his parents were in employment. His father was employed as a machine operator. He had no formal preschool experience. He attended high school to form 5 (year 11) where he was expelled with no formal high school qualifications. Mark’s mother was employed part-time as an assembly line operator during the evenings. She had no formal preschool experience. She attended high school to form 6 (year 12). She gained a New Zealand School Certificate Qualification pass in the subject Art.

Characteristics of Māori identity were recognised by this whānau. Both Mark’s parents recognized the importance of ‘identity’ and knowledge of where they ‘belong’, their cultural connections. His father was of Italian heritage and his mother identified being Māori. Mark’s mother expressed how important it was for her children to be able to identify at least some of their whakapapa, or genealogical links and relationships with extended whānau. It was emphasized that her children know “…where they come from and who they are” in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. She explained that they would travel back to her kainga or home land where she was raised by her parents amongst her grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins as a child, in a small rural settlement. These infrequent visits enabled her children to experience some of the more traditional ways and values of ‘being’ Māori that she was very keen to share and encourage with her children. Another reason for encouraging the children’s cultural identity was because visits back ‘home’ became less frequent. This was greatly influence by the parent’s decision to move away from their small community to a larger city for employment. Mark’s mother discussed that maintaining their Māoritanga was becoming harder given that they no longer visited her communal home very often.

Mark’s mother discussed that one way she has tried to sustain and encourage a connectedness for her children with their Māori identity was through sharing stories of her experiences as a child growing up in a remote rural settlement that she belonged. She acknowledged that many of her stories were based around traditional family morals and
values that reflected traditional family practices of living with many extended whānau. Storytelling by Mark for example, was often heard by her parent’s and grandparent’s. Mark’s mother felt storytelling was a good teaching tool.

**Theresa’s Whānau**

Theresa was the eldest child in her family. Her younger sibling was 6 months old at the time of observations. Theresa started school when she turned 5 years of age which was approximately six weeks before the end of the school year. Theresa started back at school in the New Year.

Theresa’s father was working as a labourer at the start of the research. He had no formal preschool experience, and attended high school to form 4 (year 10). He left high school with no formal school qualifications. Her mother began part time evening work as an assembly line operator toward the end of Theresa’s fourth birthday. She had no formal preschool experience. She attended high school to form 6 (year 12) where she left with no formal high school qualifications.

Both Theresa's parents identified being Māori but stated they were not that knowledgeable about their Māori cultural heritage. Theresa’s mother commented that because both she and her husband were ‘raised in the city’ they didn’t have a significant amount of knowledge of their extended whānau or how to maintain connections and understandings to their Māori culture. She further commented that her parents didn’t engage in discussing ‘things’ Māori and somehow ‘lost contact’ with many Māori traditions. However, she discussed the importance and responsibility that she had as a parent raising her children to know some aspects of their genealogy and of being Māori. She mentioned that she was very keen to learn more of her ‘Māori side’ and whakapapa so that she could teach her children about their origins. She stated that this was one of the reasons that she enrolled her youngest child into an early intervention programme because it was based on a marae, a place that she said made her feel comfortable and would enhance her knowledge of Māori culture. She also recognized it was being targeted and maintained for Māori families and being run by Māori personnel. She mentioned that she was encouraged that these sorts of programmes were available to help young families but was also skeptical of their outcome because she had never heard of the programme.
Hona’s Whānau

A feature of Hona’s learning was that he had experienced several transitions across a variety of environments. Hona was the oldest child in his family. He lived between his extended whānau and his mother. When this research was conducted he was living with his nana (grandmother), grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and his biological sister. Hona also had several step brothers and sisters who were residing with his mother elsewhere. Hona’s nana described the type of work she did as kaiaraha te reo Māori, or someone to support and guide the teaching/learning of the Māori language. She was employed as kaiako (teacher) at the local Intermediate school. She spent a considerable amount of her time committed to supporting and sharing the philosophy and practice of Tikanga Māori with her whānau as well as within the community. Hona’s grandfather was employed as a truck driver. This was an occupation that he had been involved in for most of his working life. Hona’s mother had a hearing disability and was on a disabilities benefit and fulltime caregiver to Hona’s other siblings. She had attended a kohanga reo (full immersion Māori language nest) for nearly 3 years during her preschool years. She attended mainstream schooling to complete her formal education until form 5 (year 11). She left school with no formal high school qualifications. The only known information regarding Hona’s father is his cultural identity of Nieuan and Cook Islands.

A major characteristic of Hona’s learning experiences at home was the strong presence and inclusion of whanaungatanga (familiness). The significance of the concept whanaungatanga is seen in the acceptance and responsibility that each member of the whānau has for one another (McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990). The commitment and obligation to nurture and support each other has been viewed as vital for the progress and survival of the whānau (Pere, 1982). Within Hona’s diverse learning environment the presence of extended whānau members was a natural part of his early years. Multi-generation participation by whānau was a common feature of Hona’s preschool experiences at home. Hona’s nana recalled occasions where his aunty would read or sing songs with him, or other occasions hearing stories from his grandad that emerged from his travels as a truck driver. The inclusion and acceptance of family members to participate in the learning/teaching and nurturing roles involved not only older members but younger members too. Hona’s nana described many instances of the older ‘kids’ looking after the ‘younger children’ and the reversal of these roles. In particular, this type of interaction displayed tuakana-teina relationships or teaching/learning between younger and older members of the whānau and across generations.
The importance of whānau was evident during a research visit to the family home by the researcher. Upon arrival at the family home, the researcher was informed that the whānau were celebrating the presence of their new baby home from hospital that morning. It seemed more appropriate for the researcher to share this occasion with the family rather than carry out with any formalities to do with the research. Hona’s nana explained that since her youngest daughter had come back home with her new baby, she felt more secure knowing that she, along with extended whānau, was able to help her daughter take care of her baby.

This incident illustrated two important features of family lifestyle to which Hona was exposed. Firstly, it showed the importance and value of whanaungatanga, especially the coming together of the whānau to nurture, support and guide those less able to take care of themselves such as a new baby. Secondly, the event illustrated the inclusion of multi-generational family members that participated in the child rearing and socialisation of younger members as a common cultural feature of this family. The participation of family members contributed to Hona’s cultural identity of ‘being and acting’ Māori through the teaching and learning embedded within everyday family practices.

**Beliefs Before School**

Parents’ responses to reading, writing and storytelling activities taking place at home were discussed. Questions relating to parents general ideas around literacy were asked followed by specific issues relating to each activity. The questions have been grouped according to general ideas about literacy and specific ideas relevant to each of three target activities.

There were two general questions each whānau was asked which were intended to find out firstly, the sorts of “things” that families engaged in at home with their children and the people who participated in the activities and secondly, how much time was spent in these activities.

Overall, all families participated in a wide variety of literacy related activities at home. Families reported their children participated in reading books together, writing letters, or preparing birthday cards, drawing, and watching video and/or TV programmes. Other activities included games that required children to either write or read bits of information as part of a play activity, like playing schools, shopping or checkout games like being at a bank.
(a) General Aspects of Teaching/Learning

All families reported that during the day most of the care came from the mother. In the case of Hona’s whānau it was the grandmother that cared for the child. She made the comment that although her grandson was living in their household the caring was also shared with the rest of the whānau that lived in there as well. For instance, he would spend much of this time playing and being with his cousins, aunts and uncles. While an aunt would occasionally read or make up stories for him and other extended whānau would take him under their wing and look after his needs. This illustrates the traditional Māori teaching/learning between a teina (younger child) learning from a tuakana (older child) through play and reciprocity, which is embedded in the principle whanaungatanga.

Initially, all parents commented that primarily their time spent with their children involved taking general care of the child rather than deliberately teaching them anything specific. Each parent felt it was part of their duty to take care of the child’s needs first. As Mary’s mother explained “there is no set time doing things”. Instead, parents would say their children would spend most of their time playing with their siblings and cousins. Parents also commented that within play activities there were more implicit forms of learning taking place. For example, two parents spoke of school as a popular game to play with siblings and cousins, especially during re-enactments of storytelling. These parents observed that their children were able to mimic and imitate stories heard. As Mary’s mother said while listening to her daughters playing together, “she would read through the story and imitate the story, not word for word but retell parts of the story as she remembers.” Other activities like homework sessions or drawing also contributed to children sharing and participating in the events together. Although some of these events had specific tasks to be completed they also included other members of the family.

Three families also mentioned the role that fathers played in their children’s literacy activities at home. One particular activity that was mentioned by these families was listening to their children reading, or reading to their children. Some reasons that mothers gave included, spending quality time with the children and sharing of homework and caring responsibilities of the children. This was especially important for two of the mothers who worked night shift.

However, deliberate teaching/learning did take place in more structured sessions by parents. That is, parents also conceived of teaching/learning in structured terms.
Theresa’s mother deliberately spent more structured time with her daughter carrying out and monitoring her progress on the HIPPY programme in which she was involved.

**Educational Choices**

Families did not just participate in literacy that was organised and arranged from home activities, they also recognised and arranged for other sites for literacy experiences. Two families relied on external sources and forms of literacy. For example, Theresa’s whānau saw the literacy practice at home as the result of participating in a home based literacy programme for families living in low socio-economic areas. This family was recruited to participate in a home-based literacy programme called HIPPY (Home Instruction Programme for Preschool Youngsters) to provide literacy instruction for their 4-year-old daughter prior to school and during the first year at school. Being the oldest child of two in this household, the family also believed that the programme would have a positive effect on their daughter’s learning once she began school. For instance the mother commented the programme would provide their daughter with structured activities that would help prepare her for school. Spending time on each activity varied between 15 minutes and sometimes up to 1 hour.

The HIPPY programme apparently provided some important experiences from which, as reported in Chapter 4, Theresa, was able to make connections to the way in which activities were organised and arranged in the classroom. For instance, the description of Theresa re-telling a story showed she was able to utilise strategies that were familiar to those she would use in the HIPPY programme. She was able to settle into the school routine very quickly. Her teacher mentioned that she encountered difficulties when she had to utilise her own creative ability to initiate an idea, like writing a story. In a way the instructions used in the HIPPY programme provided explicit instructions and explanations about how each activity were to be carried out. In the classroom Theresa relied heavily on receiving instructions on performing and what to do in the activity. Home and school connections were successful in that Theresa was able to follow similar ‘conventional’ learning that was school based.

The HIPPY programme was set up in New Zealand in the early 1990’s based on a programme already established in Israel that demonstrated to families pre-literacy skills to teach to their children before they started school and during their first year at school. This programme was set up to offer children from disadvantaged family’s improvements
in their language skills and concentration through an instruction programme (BarHava-Monteith, 1998). A report in the NZ Herald (Weekend Magazine, 1996) reviewed the project claiming that the HIPPY programme was encouraging families and their children from becoming another statistical failure. The report suggested that families living in low socio-economic areas were illiterate and language deficient.

**Learning and Teaching**

There were other external services that families relied on to provide literacy skills for their children, specifically teaching/learning aspects of knowledge. For instance, Hona’s whānau argued that attending kindergarten would provide her grandson “much of his learning.” His grandmother described the sorts of learning her grandson would encounter at kindergarten like, “they draw, and learn to write his name, and they do a lot of reading.” She explained that at kindergarten the teachers “give lots of explanations and come across in a lovely way.” In other words, kindergarten was regarded as a place where teaching/learning would provide her grandson with the necessary skills he needed to know to enter school. She also added that she did the occasional “sit down and read routine” with her mokopuna (grandchild) however, left it up to the professionals to provide her grandson with what he needed to learn for school.

In another sense, there is almost a clear distinction that the grandmother considered important when regarding teaching/learning aspects. That is, the relationship between expert (teacher) and novice (student) and where one receives learning such as school. In this case, Hona’s grandmother respected the knowledge and expertise that teachers hold by acknowledging and accepting that her mokopuna will receive the necessary literacy skills when he began school.

At home, an inclusive aspect of teaching/learning Hona’s grandmother considered important was being with whānau that is, playing and interacting with siblings, cousins, and extended whānau members. The importance and integration of both cultural aspects to teaching/learning was part of her responsibility as caregiver to her mokopuna (grandson). The use of the Māori term puukenga often refers to a wise, older person or more knowledgeable person. Used in this context the grandparent has significant responsibility for the care of her mokopuna, which included providing her mokopuna with assorted kinds of knowledge that was specific to the context, and concerned with teaching/learning (Metge, 1984).
Interacting with whānau members was found to be an important aspect of teaching/learning by all families. Within play activities families would observe their children engage in literacy activities with other family members. Sometimes the interactions involved immediate whānau, like parents and siblings but mostly extended whānau would be present and played an important part in shaping the form that literacy occurred in families.

One particular response that was common for all families was the interaction with other children. All families responded that children interacted a great deal more with other children especially with siblings and cousins. It was acknowledged by one parent saying that, “a great deal of activity is spent playing with cousins.” Parents accepted this type of interaction as a normal part of their children’s development.

Playing together was a catalyst for reading or other literacy related activity. For example, Mary’s mother noticed her daughter playing pretend school with her sister. She observed both girls having turns reading and listening to each other as children would in a shared reading session in the classroom. Other occasions where parents recognised their children engage in teaching and learning events occurred in many incidental activities. Mark’s mother described an incident of her son writing letters of the alphabet on bits of scrap paper. She was surprised to find one day that the letters he wrote onto scrap paper were grouped in clusters similar to words. Some were close approximations to words he knew that were written in letter like form. At the top of the page he would write his brother’s name, mum or dad and he would sign his name at the bottom of the page. His mother also stated that his writing would lead him to compose stories which she commented that he “…just likes to write down letters that make up a story.”

Reading

In an attempt for families to elaborate further their knowledge when defining reading and the sorts of reading activities those families participated in together the following two questions were asked; how would you define reading? Secondly, does your child have a favourite story they like read to him/her?

All families considered that reading was important. This included the act of reading books. There were several issues that families discussed when defining reading. First, families described their child’s performance during a reading activity, which involved
several different routines that formed a narrative. For instance, Mark’s mother defined reading through a description about their son’s ability to read by making connections through words and letters he was familiar with into developing a story. His mother described him “looking at the book (words) and looking at the letters and making up his own story...” She regarded his attempts to make up a story as inclusive of his knowledge about words but also his ability to memorise parts of another text when constructing a story. In this manner she recognised his development of creating a narrative out of prior knowledge an essential element to define reading.

Two other parents (Mary and Theresa’s) similarly felt that reading could also develop from making up a story around the pictures in a book. Mary’s mother for example, explained that her daughter would create a story “…by looking at the pictures and telling a story about it...” Her description of inventing a story derived from listening to her older (tuakana) sister reading a school text or other familiar stories that this child enjoyed reading herself. In some cases her mother recalled how she would “mimic” a story as she searched through the pictures in the book. Her mother was quick to add that she hardly read to her children at home instead commenting that she read more at kindergarten. This was partly to do with helping her daughter settle into kindergarten.

Retelling a story was also a familiar event observed by Theresa’s mother. She recognised that reading included listening to made-up stories her daughter would employ whilst using a book to demonstrate the reading activity. It was important for this parent to let her child “just read” with the aid of a prop when demonstrating reading. The way in which Theresa imitated reading was similar to activities she participated in from the HIPPY programme. One aspect of this programme that resembled her actions was closely connected to her ability in retelling a story. As part of the HIPPY activity her mother would read a story followed by questions related to the text. Additionally, the child’s participation included a retelling of the same story. From earlier observations and discussions with Theresa’s mother it was discovered that the retelling event resonated with parallel forms of classroom reading activities. These families felt that the performance of creating and developing a story from describing the pictures or through their own knowledge of words helped define simple acts of reading.

Hona’s grandparent defined reading in terms of “getting children really interested in the story.” A feature she described in capturing children’s interest in reading involved adding
different forms of genre. She illustrated her idea by an event that described her daughter reading to her grandson. She stated listening to her daughter tell a story was like “putting a tune to a story as she read, especially when there were pictures she would make a tune while looking for things in the story.” She explained further, “…to me it sounded like they were playing an ‘eye-spy’ type game with the pictures and what was happening in the story.” Part of this reading activity involved an item knowledge focus through a performance routine of the game ‘eye-spy’. The item knowledge focus was led by ‘wh’ type questions the daughter employed, through demonstration operating the following questions, “where is the cat? … can you see the cat? …what is it doing?” This type of display routine as illustrated in the Ninio and Bruner (1978) study typifies some of the characteristics that also feature what Cazden (1988) describes as a typical classroom initiation, response and evaluation (IRE) sequence. In addition, the integration of making up a story through song and rhyme reflected the different types of genre that are present in some families. In this case the different forms of genre and the display of standard routine questions combine and act as a means of communication in capturing a child’s interest in listening to a story.

Initially all parents agreed that their child did not have any particular preference for any storybook. Comments that echoed these sentiments were, “…no particular favourite storybook she likes,” “…he likes all books,” “…no regular story he really likes,” “…not very interested in any particular book” supported parents’ ideas about their understanding of what they knew about their children’s reading choices. Parents initially felt they had less involvement in reading with their children than they believed other families perhaps read with their children, for example they commented that, “…I don’t read to him every night,” “…not much story book reading at home,” “…I hardly read to them at home.” Mark’s mother stated the reason she did not read to her son every night was because it depended on, “…the time available and how busy we are.” Although all families recognised and suggested that reading occurred, isolating this to specific times and sorts of literature was at times unpredictable and difficult to ascertain.

Two parents (Mary and Theresa’s) indicated that reading was carried out by other members of the family or in other settings such as kindergarten. For example, Mary’s mother commented that she observed her daughter engaging in reading books with her older sister, especially books that were brought home from school. While Theresa’s mother reported that her child enjoyed listening to stories that was recorded on tape with
a follow-along book. She also preferred video as a source of listening to stories that her
daughter enjoyed.

There was a positive spin-off to this research for one parent when asked about choices
of storybook reading. During a second home visit, Hona’s grandmother asked her
grandson to show the researcher a new alphabet book that the child had received. She
encouraged her grandson to read out the alphabet, which he attempted, stopping at the
letter G. It may be that parents were driven by external sources of information in helping
them guide their children’s learning (see Tamarua Turoa, 1995).

Writing
Families elaborated on what they understood about writing, and the kinds of writing
families participated in together. The following questions related to writing were asked:
How would you define writing? What kinds of writing would you or others in this
household do? What kinds of writing does your child like to write?

Three parents defined writing narrowly, referring to conventional ways of representing
letters. This is a part of the developmental process in learning how to write that parents
recognised. For example, parents differentiated between letters that represented ‘writing’
and those considered being ‘scribbles’. Theresa’s mother argued, that writing was
“…being able to write letters correctly. Not like scribbles which is not quite writing.” She also added
that during name writing, “Theresa tries to write letters of her name. She can recognise the individual
letters in her name…” However she also stated that her attempts at name writing were
considered less conventional stating, “…she does a lot of scribble – not quite writing, and it
doesn’t look like the real thing”. Similar ideas were conveyed by Mary’s mother as she
described her daughter had produced “…some kind of letter like forms…” while adding that
“…they may not necessarily be the exact duplicate but still qualify as being acceptable – letter like.”
Therefore writing as perceived by these parents meant producing letters that closely
resembled conventional ways of writing.

Mark’s mother had firm ideas about defining writing in terms of the type of writing that
was suitable at home and at school. She considered “anything” her son attempted at home
as varied forms to learning how to write. This included conventional ways of writing as
well as letter-like conventions and invented spelling. For instance, at home she described
her son “…writing names, even if they were jumbled, letters or stories.” She explained that this
was his way of learning to write although she felt it did not fully represent the conventional way, “...to him it is, in his little way he thinks it is. I try to encourage him and say...that's very good son.” She did point out that at least he would have an advantage when he began school that is, suggesting that he would at least go to school knowing some things about writing. For example she highlighted that “…be does know a lot of letters of the alphabet” and felt assured that he would be able to enter school with some conventional print knowledge.

Hona’s grandmother defined writing according to a child’s gender. She stated that “…some boys don’t write as much as girls”. She explained that “you need to give a lot more to boys, …girls are easier.” She expressed ideas that could be related to societal values and morals about how in this case children are socialised into gender related roles. They may also reflect ideas that may be partially influenced by cultural values and beliefs specific to how an individual behaves in particular situations or circumstances.

**Types of Writing at Home**
All families provided commentary on the kinds of writing they did at home. Writing shopping lists were one of the most common types of writing.

Parents responded that writing taking place at home was also linked to helping or preparing their children across various educational tasks. A great deal of writing at home included helping older children with homework activities or younger ones with tasks set by either kindergarten or educational programme. Some tasks would take up a considerable amount of time, sometimes requiring the parent to sit down with the child to explain and demonstrate parts of the activity. For example, Theresa’s participation in the HIPPPY programme required close supervision by an adult to support and guide her through the various literacy activities. Other school related writing tasks brought home by older children in some of the other families included signing book journals, school trips with consent forms, lunch, and book and stationery orders. Although some of these forms of writing were infrequent they were considered by all parents to be a major source of any writing taking place at home.

There was a deliberate attempt by Mary’s mother to encourage writing skills mostly through the help of an older sibling. Mary’s mother described the relationship between her older daughter and helping Mary learn how to write her name and felt reassured that
she would go to school knowing this skill. This parent recognised her older daughter’s contribution to the task of writing by adding that “…she’s made it much easier for Mary to learn, also by Mary watching and listening to her older sister.” In the past, her older daughter had not experienced as much writing as her younger daughter, saying that “…when Te Aroha went to kindy she didn’t know her abc’s or how to write her name as well as Mary.” She felt having an older sibling at school contributed to the younger sibling writing more through watching and listening, which was expected by her tuakana.

Watching parents writing at home encouraged children to write. For instance, two parents (Mary’s and Hona’s) wrote at home in relation to their jobs. A large proportion of their writing was produced at home and in the presence of other whānau. Mary’s mother was the treasurer for her whānau trust and her task included preparing the accounts prior to each meeting. While she prepared her report her children would also do some form of writing alongside her. The children freely chose a writing activity such as creating a special card for someone or writing a story. She would not interfere with their writing and only offered help if the children requested. It was an opportunity for this parent to complete her writing task without the interruptions from the children.

Hona’s grandmother worked in a bilingual unit that required her to prepare a lot of her teaching programmes at home. The written work was a formality that also became an integral part of her everyday activities. Apart from the formal written work she responded that she “does very little writing of any kind.” A more important aspect of her work was to share her ideas with the help of her extended whānau. This was sometimes in the form of learning a new waiata (song) or haka (dance) where it was important to put into practice what was being proposed, with the help of an audience. Other times making kete (baskets) or piupiu (skirts) with whānau was an integral part of developing her teaching resources.

Computers in the home also served to provide an alternative access for writing. Mark’s mother pointed out that she and her children utilised the computer for writing purposes. The computer was used daily for educational and everyday uses including homework projects, writing personal letters, and for creative activities like making birthday cards, posters or drawing. The two other parents (Mary and Theresa’s) used the computer for work related matters.
Children Writing at Home

Parents were asked to identify and elaborate on the kinds of writing they noticed their child had produced at home. Parents said that their children tended to draw more than write. In some cases writing occasionally followed a drawing, paralleling what takes place during some classroom writing activities. For example, Mary’s mother described her daughter’s passion to draw people, in particular, family members. She stated that “sometimes her drawings included a message such as, I love you.” Other drawings the child drew included signs and various shapes.

Hona’s grandmother stated that “scribble seems to be connected to drawing.” She described her grandchild’s drawings and scribbles in the sense that developmentally drawing progresses from making scribbles. This is also characteristic of an early emergent literacy view (Clay, 1990). She also elaborated further by adding that “he (Hona) writes more at kindy, such as writing his name” in a structured environment. She claimed that Hona drew more than wrote saying, “…he brings a lot of it (drawing) home with him.” Drawing was recognised as a less structured activity whereas writing was a more structured activity that occurred within a particular context.

Storytelling

In an attempt to understand the types of stories that families told the following questions were asked. Three general questions around the sorts of stories, children’s favourite stories and the benefits that stories play in children’s learning were asked: What types of stories does your family share? Does your child have a favourite story they like to hear? Finally, what benefits do you think storytelling has for your child’s learning?

Open-ended questions were directed to families to discuss the role that stories prompted learning. In particular, the way in which families clarified or simplified a message or to teach values and morals. As well, families reported stories that were linked to their identity or whakapapa (genealogy). Such stories began from simple conversations that were linked to reminding children about their cultural identity and ancestry. The accounts of storytelling that took place in families may very well serve to enhance a child’s literacy knowledge.
Types of Stories Shared at Home

The types of stories that families reported ranged from reading a storybook that was either a make-believe, or fairy tale story to those that were connected by personal experiences. Families frequently told made-up stories partly as a way of sharing personal experiences they felt could be expressed better in story form and to keep children amused in an informative way. For instance as a way to pre-occupy the children while waiting at a restaurant Mark’s mother reported “…sitting around as a family in a restaurant telling stories.” This was a common event where the family shared stories often emerging from novel situations. The discussion at the restaurant was led by Mark’s older brother inquiring about visiting their grandparents’ grave sites. He asked, “mum, we haven’t been to see nana and poppa?” Before his mother could reply Mark interrupted saying, “I want to go to heaven in a rocket and spaceship or a rocket and a plane.” His mother looked across at him, while he continued, “I want to go to heaven in a rocket or a plane,” to which his mother quickly replied, “…not just yet!” Mary’s mother also explained that “…conversations that take place in the home about people, places they visit or even things the children hear on the TV… these snippets are connected to real-life experiences.” She said that Mary would draw pictures of the ‘conversations’ they would have together, sometimes creating a story. Dyson, (1993) explained how stories from reality to fantasy merge together as an interplay of intertextual composition that children explore and can emerge out of their creative playful actions.

Photographs were also identified as opportunities for families to create stories of childhood experiences and as one parent stated, making connections to an individual’s whakapapa. For instance, Hona’s grandmother drove trucks for his work. Mounted photos of his travels taken of his destinations were displayed in the living room of their home. This display became a talking point for Hona and his grandfather. Theresa’s mother also discussed similar storytelling experiences where family photos became the focus of reminiscing childhood stories.

Children’s Favourite Stories

During interview discussions it became obvious that questions asked relating to ‘reading a story’ and ‘storytelling’ caused some ambiguity and confusion for parents. For example, two families (Theresa and Mary’s) mentioned a favourite storybook their child enjoyed. Theresa’s mother mentioned her daughter was fond of having the same bedtime story read to her every night. While Mary’s mother reported her daughter had a story that she
had read to her several times before she learnt to read the story by herself. Later, her mother said that her children enjoyed hearing stories that were closely linked to the whānau and in particular hearing about their mother’s childhood. A story that this mother often shared with her children was about their aunty (her younger sister) who had passed away when she was very young. The mother noted that the “…children will usually begin a conversation about where aunty is, general questions surrounding everyday events and from here the conversation turns into an explanation or story.” She further acknowledged that these kinds of events (similar to the ‘conversation’ event earlier) also enabled her children to make links to their extended whānau even though they had never met their aunt.

Watching and listening to taped stories also provided alternative sources in the way families experienced different types of stories. Mark’s mother reported that her son preferred to watch video and listen to taped stories. From these stories she would observe her son pretend play. She described her son, “likes watching a video about a little bear who goes to school. He loves pretending, he pretend plays with his teddy bears … playing with his teddy bear carrying it around and talking to it.”

**Benefits of Storytelling**

There was an overwhelming response from all families that storytelling is an easier way to explain messages that may be difficult to get across. Mark’s mother said, “explanations are easier through a story, children understand what is being said if it is explained carefully and relating to life experiences.” Sharing of personal experiences in the form of storytelling was an easier way to explain to children. Another parent commented that storytelling was “…easy to make-up and tell” especially when children wanted something difficult explained.

Similarly, storytelling was also considered to be an easier way that family values, morals, and beliefs could be taught rather than extensive explanations. For instance, Hona’s grandmother commented about her grandson being “…too young to learn.” She supported storytelling saying that “telling them a story gives them an explanation about why it happens, this is very important.” She felt that telling stories is not only easier and more fun for her grandson to understand but a message or moral can be embedded in the story.

**Language**

As a secondary aspect of this thesis, questions concerning language were asked. Firstly to establish whether families incorporated a second language in the home and how they
might support this language learning. Secondly, to ascertain what their reasons were for maintaining knowledge of a second language especially in connection to literacy related activities. The following questions were asked: Do you speak another language at home? If yes, would you want your child to learn this language? How might you support your child speaking a second language? And, do you anticipate any problems maintaining the learned language?

The responses from Theresa and Mark’s parents indicated that they did not speak te reo Māori in the home.

Mary’s mother responded that “basic words in Māori” were spoken in the home occasionally by both her parents. Mary’s grandparents spoke te reo Māori more often to the children although mostly “…command words.” Mary’s parents both agreed and stated that “…because we are not fluent in the language we do not suggest that we force our children to learn a second language.” They did suggest that if their children wanted to learn another language that they would support their decision. Mary’s mother commented stating, “…my parents didn’t enforce the language on to us as children.” She felt that there was no reasons to have her children learn te reo Māori. She did say that today her older brothers and sisters have made a conscious decision to go back to night-school learning te reo Māori.

Hona’s grandmother responded to this question favourably saying that “…Māori is spoken in the home occasionally.” She stated that all her other children went through kohanga as well as some of the grandchildren to learn Māori. She also said that she had no expectation that any of her children or grandchildren learn te reo Māori. However she made it clear that she and her husband were competent speakers of te reo and would continue to integrate te reo into their conversations at home with their children and grandchildren. She welcomed the idea that her grandchild “be able to learn a little bit in Māori” which she would fully support.

Hona’s grandmother also recognised the importance of being proficient in the English language as well. As discussed earlier, Hona had attended Kohanga Reo since he was two years old. Her decision to place Hona into a Kindergarten (at four years of age) was for him to gain confidence and proficiency in the English language. She believed that removing her grandchild from the kohanga would not interfere with his language knowledge because she felt he would “…get all he needs at home, that is, his exposure to the
language and experiencing his cultural identity through his whānau.” She suggested that she would support her grandchild’s knowledge of the language by “speaking to him at home” since her grandchild left the kohanga environment. As well she stated that Hona’s mother would continue to dialogue in te reo Māori because she explained how his mother “…treasures her Māoritanga and will be able to maintain the language through the family.”

**Early Childhood Education and Community Services**

Parent responses to understand their involvement in early childhood education as well as other educational services in the community was sought. The following questions were asked: Does your child or have your other children attended a preschool? What do you believe is the role of an early childhood service? What expectations and/or concerns do you have about preschool? Do you know of any other early childhood services in your community? Lastly, how did you find out about these services?

**Attendance at a Childcare Centre**

All families reported that their children attended a childcare centre. Three families (Mark, Mary and Hona) stated that their children attended a kindergarten while another family (Theresa’s) took their child to a playcentre and her participation on the HIPPY programme.

The experiences of enrolling older children into a childcare centre also encouraged families to provide adequate childcare education for younger siblings. For instance, three of the families (Mark, Mary and Hona’s) reported that their older children attended early childhood centres. These varied from kindergarten, playgroup and Te Kohanga Reo. Some of these parents decisions in choosing a pre-school were based on personal experiences and in one family’s case (Hona) the opportunity for their child to become fluent in a second language. Mark’s mother reported they had relocated to the area and were unfamiliar where the closest pre-school groups were. Through the help of a neighbour she was able to take her son to a playgroup nearby.

**The Role of Early Childhood Education**

Parents’ decisions in choosing a pre-school group also reflected their beliefs regarding the role that early childhood education played in their children’s learning. Responses varied from developing social skills to preparation towards school. For this purpose
families made a conscious choice about enrolling their children into an early childhood centre.

For instance, Mark’s mother responded that the role of early childhood services was for “preparation towards school, to help the child prepare for school.” She felt that “kindergarten would provide her son with something … with children he is more open with them, he’s such a shy boy.” Kindergarten would provide early preparation for school as well as help her son develop social skills. Developing social skills was also a priority for Mary’s whānau. Her mother felt confident in her daughter’s ability to go to school knowing pre-literacy skills. She commented that kindergarten would benefit her daughter’s social skills because as she stated “…it was a chance to break her away from me. The environment would help her confidence and security to make friends and to leave my side.”

Some families enrolled their children into multiple educational sites partially to enrich their child’s learning and in preparation for school. This was done also to foster learning with her older children. For example, Hona’s grandmother had enrolled her grandchild into a Kohanga Reo at the age of 2 years of age followed by transferring to a mainstream kindergarten. Her experiences having her older children make the transition from Kohanga Reo into mainstream did not benefit her children. The grandmother believed that providing her grandchild a year at kindergarten would provide a smoother transition into mainstream school.

In addition to attending playcentre, Theresa also participated in a pre-school home intervention programme called HIPPY. Theresa’s mother recognised that the programme would provide “…school like structure programmes to help children develop skills that are necessary for school.”

**Expectations and Concerns about Early Childhood Education**

There was a feeling among families that their major reason for providing early childhood experience was in preparation for school. For example, Mark’s mother had firm expectations about her child’s education and what her child would learn from the setting. She commented that “basically his drawings and abc’s I taught him at home because I didn’t know where a kindy was and I didn’t want him to be behind other children at school.” She insisted on providing her son with the “basic skills prior to school” therefore she would make a conscious and deliberate attempt to integrate literacy skills. Some of these skills she said
were, “knowing how to spell his name and be able to identify the alphabet and how to count.” Her belief was partly driven by the negative social stereotypes that the media and research had reported about the children and families living in the surrounding area where she lived. She stated “…because some children I’ve seen don’t even know the alphabet, mixing with them you can hear and see them don’t know, so I thought my son is going to know.” She was determined to ensure her children succeed in knowing some literacy skills upon entry to school. Her expectations were fuelled by her learning experiences with her first son. She felt she insisted on a much more ‘rigid’ routine of learning with him, which at times was ‘stressful’. With her second son she was more “…relaxed, and laid back.” Perhaps even a bit more confident in her knowledge about teaching her son.

Community Educational Services
Families were asked to talk about what they knew of other early childhood services in their community. Initially, families responded that they had very little knowledge about other early childhood groups within close proximity to their home. It was found from their responses that all families mentioned they knew of a playgroup or daycare that was close to them. Two families (Hona and Mark’s) referred to the local Community Centre as a site where some early childhood learning took place. Other sites that parents mentioned where educational services were located included at church, Te Kohanga Reo as well as the Marae.

Sources of Information
Parent’s mentioned that sources of information about other early childhood services included the Plunket nurse or school dental service. Most parents also reported that information was received through neighbours and friends who had utilised services. They recommended and helped to find the closest early childhood centre. Another parent used the local directory to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau about pre-school education services.

Summary
The findings here show that families participated in a wide range of literacy activities that were influenced from various sources. Parent’s decisions about their children’s participation in certain kinds of literacy activities reflected personal beliefs and their expectations about the importance of their children’s educational learning prior to school. Parents discussed and developed pragmatic views around literacy development
and about how they might ‘prepare’ children’s learning by selecting, arranging and deploying particular activities and supporting their children’s learning through early childhood education services (McNaughton, 1995). Sometimes personal experiences supported the way in which a parent organised literacy activities at home so that they resembled school-based learning. The findings also showed parents’ belief and acceptance of educational professionals to support and guide their decisions. Family socialisation practices contributed to the teaching and learning process that strongly reflected Māori traditional and contemporary social and cultural practices.
Parents’ Beliefs, Expectations and Concerns about the Transition to School

The Transition from Home to School
Three broad questions were discussed with each family, providing a glimpse into each family’s beliefs, ideas and their concerns about what they might expect during their child’s first year at school. Firstly, questions relating to the transition from home to school were asked. Secondly, the learning process and the impact of this learning, and lastly expectations these parents held regarding their role and what they considered to be that of the school were explored.

The following two questions explore parent’s views and concerns about the transition to school and how their child adapted into the school environment. These were; did you have any concerns about the transition from home into school? Also, how well has your child adapted into school?

All four families mentioned that their greatest concern about the transition was their child’s well being. Parents reported common feelings of anxiety as well as expressions of their fears for their child. In particular they were fearful of leaving their child, fearful of their child not making friends, or how their child was going to cope with classroom instructions, to other concerns about their child being bullied by others in the classroom.

For instance, Mary’s mother mentioned that she was becoming more anxious about whether or not her child would be confident to participate in classroom activities because she feared she might be too shy to participate. As well, this parent’s anxiety was increased by her daughter’s reluctance to stay at school all day. She answered her daughter’s concern saying, “…there’s nothing I can do, it’s the law you have to” as part of her understanding of the education system. Concerns were expressed by Mark’s mother who mentioned that she was more worried that another child in the class might bully her child.

Entering school also created anxieties for parents, Hona’s grandmother described school as a "foreign place.” She discussed how nervous she felt for her grandson on his first day of school. But she hoped that her grandson would “fit into school quickly without too much fuss...
because at kindy he settled in very quickly.” She mentioned that at home he was always away playing with other children and had no difficulty being with others. She described her grandson’s first day at school, “…at first he was totally overcome by the foreign look of the classroom and one teacher to all these children. This was a huge step for him.” Part of her anxiety of seeing ‘one teacher’ baffled her because of her association and understanding about early childhood settings that had at least two teachers working with the children. As well, it probably did not reflect her experiences connected to belonging to a large whānau where teaching and learning took place with many others, all of whom are teachers. For instance, at two years of age her grandson belonged to a Kohanga Reo (Māori language nest) where there were many kaiako (teachers) present. Some of the kaiako were volunteer helpers including a kuia (nana) that came to assist in the teaching of the children. In anticipation to help prepare her grandson for mainstream school, his nana placed him into a kindergarten at the age of four years. Even in this environment children were in the presence of at least two teachers working with children and occasionally there may have been one or two parent helpers present. Therefore it was no surprise she reacted with feelings of anguish seeing one teacher in control of twenty-five children.

She also reflected on when her own children went to school and recognised how things have changed. She briefly commented “they no longer have half days, where children finished at 12 o’clock.” For instance, she came to school to collect her grandson at lunchtime only to find out that he had to stay at school the entire day. Part of her anxieties were re-learning and understanding a new school system that was not the same as the one she had experienced.

Leaving a familiar environment, like home and entering a larger somewhat overwhelming environment was for these three children (Hona, Mark and Mary) and their parents potentially traumatic. These parents said that it took their children a little longer to adjust to their new environment. For example, Mark’s mother noted that her son “…loved kindy so much he didn’t want to leave it. He was very close to his kindy teacher.” Another possible reason why the transition may have taken a little longer for Hona, Mark and Mary was that they entered school not knowing anyone else in their class. In contrast, Theresa settled into class without any difficulty because she had an older cousin in her class to enable her to settle quickly. During school visits it was observed that Theresa and her cousin sat together, the older child directing her cousin during activities. Theresa’s close contact
with having her cousin in the same classroom resonated with an event that is familiar for many children. This is especially the case in Māori tradition and for many Māori children to be in the presence of extended whānau who manaaki or take care of another member of the same family or same identity. The other three children (Mark, Mary and Hona) were familiar with this process however did not have the same opportunity of having another close whānau member present in class with them.

Parents also commented about the importance of entering school with some conventional knowledge about reading and writing. Most parents mentioned that their child was entering school knowing at least one or two conventional ways of writing and/or reading, like writing their name or parts of their name. As Mark’s mother stated, “I feel sorry for some of them because some of them don’t even know the alphabet let alone sit down and write an ‘a’.” She was confident that her son had gone to school knowing his alphabet and being able to write his name.

Three of the parents (Mark, Mary and Theresa) regarded having some literacy knowledge was favourable when their child started school. There were other concerns that parents discussed that reflected their expectations about what happens to this knowledge and how teachers conceive it. For example Mark’s mother was concerned that school might make her son lazier from how she taught him to write his name and to learn the alphabet. She explained that “…he knows how to do his name, I taught him how to do the ‘a’ and ‘b’s so I thought he knows how to do his name. I don’t want him to be lazy.” She wondered whether school might hinder his progress in learning how to write, that is, unpacking and undoing techniques and strategies she knew in teaching her son. Part of this concern may reflect that some parents believe that teachers will undo what their child has already been taught and perhaps confuse them as well as parents even more by introducing a new strategy.

Mary’s mother felt confident her daughter was entering school knowing some basic conventional ways of reading and writing. Her concern was whether or not the teacher would be able to recognise what she was capable of producing because at kindergarten her mother commented that “she was too shy for them to see the work she can do.”

Similarly, Theresa’s parent commented that having her child participate on a home instruction preschool programme of literacy skills made her more aware of what her child was capable of producing and perhaps more curious at how she would perform in
similar activities in the classroom given her experience participating on the instruction programme.

**Adaptation to School**

All four families reported that their child had adapted to school extremely well once they had become accustomed to the school environment and the classroom routine. For example, parents reported that this was probably because children were given homework each night, something that parents had to adjust to as well.

Parents also reported that children quickly adapted to classroom instructions by learning what was and was not acceptable in class. For instance, Theresa’s mother commented that her daughter learned very early on in class the rules that determine behaviour. She also reflected how her daughter’s own behaviour at home became constrained (controlled) by school rules. Her mother described an occasion where she almost forgot to give her daughter her hat saying “…she never wants to be told off or anything, like if I don’t have her hat or something she panics, telling me ‘I’ve gotta have my hat, I’m, going to get into trouble’.” Hona’s grandmother felt that having school rules was good for her grandson because it provided structure and discipline for him something which she felt he needed. Therefore perhaps one explanation of why children adapted quickly was that explicit school and classroom rules determined how they were to behave and what teachers expected them to learn.

Once children became more familiar with school and classroom routines, parents were able to notice changes in their children’s behaviour such as becoming more independent and confident in what they did. Mary’s mother responded by saying, “actually she has improved a lot, and I think the break from me, because her being close to me… schooling has helped her a lot” especially in terms of her child becoming more confident in developing new friendships. Theresa’s parent commented on her child’s popularity saying, “…she likes it. She seems very popular with everybody.”

Theresa’s mother also commented that her child adapted relatively easily into school because of knowing someone else in class. Theresa might also have benefited from being at school six weeks prior to the Christmas break, her mother felt this may have contributed to Theresa becoming familiar with classroom routines. Her mother believed that she was ready when school resumed in the New Year. In addition, having a cousin in
the same class provided her with a sense of security of knowing someone more familiar. In the New Year her mother learned that she was given the responsibility as a peer helper. She described this event by stating, “...when she came back to school she was one of the older children to help the younger ones, although she didn’t feel like she was one of the older members.” Giving older children in the class responsibility may be a way in which teachers help younger children adapt more quickly to the classroom environment.

Mary’s mother reported a similar incident about her daughter, who was having difficulty settling into school until another child she knew from kindergarten started soon after she began school. Like the previous parent’s comments, this parent also believed that knowing someone else in class helped her daughter settle into the classroom environment. This parent further explained that introducing younger children into the class had another purpose which was that, “...it makes them older. She’s the older one and they’re the younger ones, just starting and she’s gotta be the older person to look after them.” For this child being a tuakana (older child) was a role she was familiar in performing, a role that she played within her own whānau.

Hona’s grandmother believed that being at school for her grandson gave him an opportunity to make new friends, something she felt was important in helping children settle in a new environment. She also commented that he came to understand that there were certain times when playing was appropriate and certain times when learning took place. At kindergarten and at home he would spend a lot of his time playing, which had concerned her, hoping that once he started school he would learn the difference. Being at school she believed gave her grandson time to balance both activities.

**Children’s Learning After Going to School**

Following the child’s transition into school, questions exploring the impact that learning has had and will have on their child and their whānau were asked. These questions included; what have you noticed in her learning since your child started school? How has this impacted on the rest of the whānau? As well, what do you think your child will be learning this year?

All the parents responded that they have seen lots of changes in their child’s learning since beginning school. For instance, some of their responses included, “…he knows more words,” or “…she reads a lot more” to other comments such as, “…her drawing is very precise,
she keeps everything in the boundary now.” These comments sometimes followed feedback
their child received from being awarded achievement stickers or from teachers’
comments.

Receiving achievement stickers was one way in which parents’ were able to gauge their
child’s progress in learning. For some parents it was important to understand this process
in what activity rewards were being given and in particular why children were being
rewarded. Theresa’s parent discussed stickers her child had received for “star of the week
sticker a few times” for swimming and for writing since beginning school. This parent
elaborated on what her daughter’s teacher mentioned, “…she says she’s improved so much,
which has improved her confidence … another time she got a sticker for something to do with shapes and
numbers, I think she was the only one that got the amount right. To me that was quite good.” She
further reflected that her daughter had increased her knowledge of words, expanded her
vocabulary and gained confidence trying out new phrases by sounding out unknown
words. She also noticed how much more controlled her daughter’s writing had become.
She explained “…she’s always writing things now, like little letters and you can see that a lot of her
words are right and some you can see… it takes some time to figure out what it’s supposed to be but yeah
she’s not doing too badly at that.” Theresa’s mother further commented that having
knowledge of their child’s progress through the receiving of awards gave parents an idea
how their child’s learning was progressing in class.

Parents also discussed ideas around their child’s learning and how teachers conceived this
learning. Mary and Theresa’s parents for example were not so much concerned with their
child’s learning capabilities and felt confident their child entered school with sufficient
literacy knowledge to be able to participate in some of the classroom activities without
too much difficulty. Three, parents (Theresa, Mary and Mark’s) also believed that school
would add to this knowledge. In particular, Mary’s mother pointed out she was more
concerned about how the teacher recognised this learning in relation to the practices the
teacher was more familiar with. At kindergarten for instance, she felt the teachers here
were unable to see what her daughter could achieve because of her shyness and inability
to discuss what she had produced. In comparison, at school she noticed the teacher
awarded her daughter competence stickers for writing she produced which her mother
believed “makes her, encourages her to do more.” Receiving stickers she stated acted as an
incentive for her child to do better, something for her to challenge herself toward. Mary’s
mother explained “…that’s what she’s trying to do, so she’s pushing herself for herself, for her own
reason.” However she also felt that receiving stickers did not really explain to her exactly for what part of the writing she was being rewarded. She knew her daughter was capable of certain writing skills however did not quite understand what other areas of writing she was developing. When asked whether she felt receiving rewards such as stickers was a good incentive to use, she responded, “…yeah, that stickers are for doing good work. But the thing is I don’t know what they’re doing in the classroom. You know how much work they’re getting, I can see how much they’re getting here through homework. But I don’t know how they do things in class.” Therefore, perhaps receiving rewards for work children produce are insufficient without proper explanations to parents about what part of the activity was worth rewarding.

Mary’s mother commented that she excelled in reading. Her mother noticed she was capable of reading independently with confidence. She revealed that when her daughter brought a school book home she would, “read her book to us about three times” only to have the family respond, “…yeah, that’s enough!” Her mother also revealed that if there were no books sent home from school she would ask the teacher if she could get some for her daughter. Obtaining extra books from school also increased her child’s knowledge of words either by herself or with the help of her mother. For example, her mother noticed while her daughter read and came across unknown words was stated in the following comment, “If she is stuck she looks at the picture. She gets me to hide the pictures so she could read it. I cover the picture up and she reads the word.”

Most families also recognised their children quickly became accustomed to routine. For example, all parents recognised that their child read daily at school, which may have been a journal book or poems to read. Mark’s mother highlighted the importance of reading at home daily by checking his book bag and maintaining, “…what ever is in his book bag, we just read it and then mark down, sign it to say that he has read his book. What ever is in his book bag we read it with him.” It was important for this parent to maintain a regular routine of reading and other school related activities especially those that were required to be done at home so that her son could also be competent in literacy at school.

Parents reported how school has impacted on their beliefs and ideas about learning and development and how they can enhance their children’s learning. For instance, during pre-school visits two parents (Mark and Mary’s) reported that they would observe the teacher and how she constructed many language activities. Mark’s mother for example, created a ‘days of the week’ chart and made alphabet fixtures for her son to become
familiar with prior to school. Mary’s mother saw an opportunity to encourage her daughter to develop her writing skills by teaching her how to construct full sentences using capital letters and full stops. At school Mary’s teacher was surprised at how well advanced her writing skills were. Her mother commented and described how surprised her teacher was stating, “…that Mary didn’t write under each word. She said that she could spell the words further down without help, …Mary’s…written it further down but other children write it underneath or some of them would write it together instead of putting gaps.” Specifically, the teacher’s comments related to the way in which this child was able to copy the teacher’s model sentence as a complete sentence of its own and not underneath each word as the teacher had expected.

**The Impact of School Learning on the Whānau**

Mark’s mother affirmed that going to school had not made a huge amount of difference to what her son was currently doing because she believed that attending kindergarten provided her child an introduction into doing some structured work. For example, she stated that “…he’s been doing homework since kindly like his scrapbook … that was homework for him, so he’s really basically, used to it. But he really enjoys reading his stories.” She also recognised school expectations. Many, schools have systems in place that encourage parents to participate in their children’s learning like sending school readers home usually every night which are signed off in a book journal in order for the teacher to estimate that children are reading the prescribed book at home. Mark’s mother also felt it her responsibility to provide as much assistance as possible.

Theresa’s mother gave a similar response that school had not changed a lot of what the whānau already did apart from having to be at school to drop off and pick up her child after school. She commented that getting homework was not as consistent as the homework her daughter received while participating on the HIPPY programme. She further mentioned that “…she’s only had books, we just sit down and do her books … and she has an alphabet thing that we do, like a is for apple, b is for bear. It’s not as much as she got from the HIPPY programme.”

Doing homework was an aspect that one parent had expectations that the school would include more for her child to do at home. For example, Mary’s mother maintained that she wanted her daughter to read on a regular basis stating “…that’s why I go and ask if I could have some books… they don’t until it’s, until the child can read. I don’t know why.” Having an
older child perhaps contributed to her following a ritual of having homework (like reading) on a regular basis. Reading was also shared by the entire whānau. It wasn’t necessarily read with any particular parent but was shared with other siblings as well. Usually, her daughter preferred to read her storybook to the entire whānau, sometimes reading it several times.

Hona’s grandmother said having homework her grandson brought home from school gave the whānau an opportunity to become more involved with his learning. That is, living with extended whānau members contributed to the teaching and learning process for this child. For instance, because Hona lived with his extended whānau, part of listening to this child reading a book from school also involved having whānau members present and at times to participating in the reading process. Usually the child would read his book in front of siblings, cousins, aunts, to who ever were present. They were as much a part of this activity as he was in fulfilling his obligation to read his book for school.

Mark’s mother reflected the differences between teaching her first child and teaching her present child at school. She stated that, “I wasn’t sure how they started teaching them at school. I didn’t know how much to … I didn’t even teach him the alphabet, just to say it but not actually know which letter is which.” She explained with her first child she felt that, “…you’re not sure how much to teach or what you should be teaching them or how much they take in.” Teaching her second child became much easier because of her experiences with her first child. She noted that her second child received more help from a number of sources, which included his tuakana, or older brother and whānau members. She also believed that learning was a part of a child’s ‘natural ability’ that if given assistance would increase. She assured the researcher; “I think that it’s in children, the personality and whether they are going to go further. It’s just a help if the parents follow through with them.”

**Children’s Learning Over Their First Year at School**

Responses by parents to the question of what their child might be learning over the year suggested a mixture of clear goals and some uncertainty about what they expected their children to achieve during their first year at school. When prompted to elaborate their responses, parents expressed definite views on learning. Mark’s mother stated for example. “I just don’t want him to be falling behind that’s all. I would love him to come home and do
his own sentences. By the end of the year he is definitely going to be doing his own sentences – that’s my aim”.

Theresa’s mother answered with uncertainty because the HIPPY programme had already given her daughter a good grounding in reading and writing skills therefore she was unsure what her daughter might be learning in her first year. She stated “I don’t know, just more writing, to do with her writing. Her writing isn’t too bad, sometimes she gets letters back to front kind of thing …but it’s not too bad for just having started really.” She also elaborated that Theresa tended to write a great deal more than before she began school, therefore expects this to improve even more by the end of the year.

Hona’s grandmother simply stated that by the end of the year her grandson would be “learning.” She elaborated by saying, “…he will learn to draw and he will learn to write his name and do a lot of reading.” She also added that a lot of her grandson’s ‘learning’ would encompass a wider aspect of him in relation to his whānau. In other words, ‘learning’ is being a part of an extended whānau within a wider context rather than just school. It consists of him living and experiencing his culture through his whānau.

**Parents’ Expectations About Their Role and the School Role**

Parents were asked to comment concerning their role in relation to the school as well. Also, parents’ expectations they have about their child’s school in general along with the following two questions; what do you see as your role now your child is at school? What expectations do you have about school?

All parents believed that it was expected they contribute to the school life now that their child was at school. For instance, some of the parents responses included, “…going along to school sports day,” “…to help in class with the other children,” “…school trips,” “…helping children with homework,” as well as attending “parent interviews.” Two parents were already in part-time employment, which affected their commitment to be available for many school events.

All parents had a desire to want to learn more about how things are generally done at school and in the classroom. For instance Mary’s mother felt that the only way she would know what children learn at school was for her to find out from the teacher. When asked whether she had approached the teacher herself she responded “no I never really thought.
Just that she said that she will put her onto spelling and I said “oh, yeah”, but she said that they don’t really do that in their first year. See I don’t know that, about what happens at school.” Mary’s mother also wanted more information from the parent interviews other than seeing her child’s work and comments from the teacher such as “…she’s doing really well.” For this parent the teacher’s comment was insufficient in explaining in what capacity her daughter was doing well. She stated “…I wouldn’t know until I’ve compared it to something else, like someone else in the class.” She continued to explain that she already knew how well her daughter was doing commenting, “I know she’s good at what she does but to compare it to a beginner what a beginner is like and what she is like to compare those two, I wouldn’t know”. In particular, Mary’s mother wanted to understand the developmental processes of learning for her child in the classroom and how they are assessed against other children of the same age. Mary’s teacher presented her mother with examples of her daughter’s work and what she was currently writing in class. She commented that her teacher said it was common for children the same age to write an entire sentence together as a long string of letters without spaces between words. Yet this parent reiterated, “…to me I wanted her (teacher) to know that we are interested in what she does. My concern about Mary and her well-being, how she’s coping in class, not about the teacher. Mary first, what the teacher does, second. I want Mary to see that I’m interested in her work.”

Mark’s mother commented that if parents wanted to know how their child was coping with school work and other classroom activities, “…then I think that’s up to the parent to find out.” As well, she considered it the parent’s responsibility for, “the parent to go down and to find out” how better to assist their child in learning. She also knew and could understand the barriers that some Māori families experienced in not knowing how to help their child through the learning process and who to get information from about this learning process. Particularly, she recognised that some parents are quite happy to accept what schools provide and expect of their children. She explained about a little girl for whom she cared after school, one day a week. She stated how she would teach this child the letters of the alphabet and showed her how to write her name. She also demonstrated to the little girl’s mother how to use a simple method of getting her to write her name and learning the alphabet letters. Briefly Mark’s mother explained, “I was showing her mother to do this and to do that … like I was showing her what I do with my children”. She felt she could use this method to teach her other children. She discussed her concern that some parents do not necessarily have the skills to recognise when their children resist learning. For example, she believed that the fate of this child may have been “picked up earlier” if
someone had recognised her struggle to write. She further explained that it wasn’t until the child moved up a class that her mother “…could see that her daughter was flustered and couldn’t do what the other children were doing because of that fact that she didn’t know how to do her letters properly and she couldn’t really write a sentence.” In particular, she acknowledged that there are parents that are disadvantaged in knowing what to do to help their children. Her expectations included “…knowing what teachers do and how they teach them is important for all parents to know and trying to teach their children properly.” As well, her biggest concern toward being a better informed parent was being involved with her son’s learning and any school events that occurred. In addition she stated, “I want to know what’s going on, so I definitely would want to probably go down and ask to sit in his lessons.” This contributed to her belief about how schools can contribute to parents becoming better informed.

Knowing how well your child was doing in class and being a better informed parent was also the concern of Theresa’s mother who commented, “…I wonder about how she is or where she is in the class. I mean whether she is an average student, above average or whatever.” She also felt that because her daughter participated in a home instruction programme that was relatively structured she felt it necessary “…just to know whether the HIPPY programme helped so that I know, did that help in her school work.” Part of her query was prompted by her comments that she was surprised that her daughter received less work from school than she received from the HIPPY programme. When she was questioned whether or not she had asked the teacher, she responded, “I don’t talk to her, I just drop her off and just leave her because that’s what they told me, “it’s better to drop her off and leave them” … I didn’t talk to her much. She always seems so busy with the other children.” In some respects parents perhaps do not see it as their responsibility to question the work of teachers or other professional experts in areas that they may feel less adequately qualified or that it may take up valuable teacher’s time.

Summary
The parent’s views reported here described parents concerns and anxieties about their children’s transition to school and also how they might enhance their children’s literacy learning and development. The results also showed they were actively constructing and co-constructing literacy learning with their children prior to school. Links specifically to Māori concepts and processes, such as manaaki and tuakana-teina, were evident. For instance, parents discussed the importance of having other whānau present to support and manaaki their children’s learning. This was featured strongly by the children and the
way that they tended to relate to one another in the classroom evident of the tuakana-
teina process.

Parents also responded about the impact that school learning had on their beliefs and ideas about learning and development once their children began school. These ideas contributed to the way in which parents constructed literacy activities at home and their expectations about learning in general. Parents discussed the different sorts of literacy activities that their children brought home from school. They also discussed different sorts of literacy practices and strategies that they had observed from the teachers and the classroom activities.
(c) The Teachers’ Views

This section discusses general beliefs and ideas that the teachers held about emergent literacy, in particular what teachers knew about the characteristics of children’s literacy skills prior to school. The question that is addressed is the degree to which teachers understood the diversity of the children’s literacy knowledge and where and with whom these skills developed. It was assumed that teachers beliefs and their perspectives on what individual children knew about literacy would contribute to their teaching practice and hence to the child’s development in learning. The model adopted of teaching expertise also assumes that, teachers have set expectations for and goals held about classroom tasks, for example, the way they select, arrange and deploy activities determines how teachers construct an activity. These ideas and ways of organising the activity complement teacher’s theories of learning and development (McNaughton, 1995; Goodridge, 1995). In the following section descriptions of teacher’s beliefs, goals and their expectations are provided, ranging from general to specific knowledge about children’s literacy expertise.

A structured interview schedule was administered to each teacher individually. Each interview was taped using open-ended discussion as well as sharing informal conversations with teachers throughout the study (see Appendix F, p.292).

Three sorts of information were gathered. Firstly, teacher’s knowledge and their perspectives in general on what they knew about children’s emergent literacy and children’s language abilities were collected. Teacher’s responses were elaborated to include the dimensions along which children varied from conventional and family/community related descriptions.

The second sort of information collated included more specific knowledge pertaining to each child. Systematic observation and formal testing information about what the child knew upon entry to school were recorded. This recording of information was also gathered about the number of family/community activities in which the child participated in relation to reading and writing.
Lastly, the information that was gathered about the child’s conventional knowledge and the family/community knowledge enabled the interview to identify how this data contributed to helping the teacher plan and carry out their instructions for teaching and learning.

The information reported by each teacher was collated and examined under fewer than three major categories. What follows is a qualitative analysis of teacher responses, reflecting general ideas and beliefs about emergent literacy and their specific knowledge about each child in their classroom. Each teacher has been identified by a pseudonym, Mrs Kay, Mrs Gabriel, Mrs Muriel and Mrs Dee in relation to each child reported in this study.

**Generic Knowledge**
Information relating to teachers general awareness of children’s literacy expertise upon entry to school was probed. Teacher’s responses provided information regarding the range of children’s literacy and language expertise.

**Diversity in Emergent Literacy**
There was a common belief held by teachers in this study that there were wide variations in children’s emergent literacy in the amount and type of literacy they came to school knowing. As Mrs Gabriel stated, “children vary from knowing nothing to having broad literacy knowledge”. She elaborated by saying children ranged between “knowing no letters of the alphabet to perhaps a few”, explaining that this may mean from not knowing how to write their name to perhaps knowing some of their name. Three of the teachers considered that it was very rare for a child to enter school knowing how to write their first name. It was considered more likely a child would know how to produce or recognize part of their name.

But in some ways it was difficult for teachers to actually find out whether or not children could write their names because a default instructional strategy two of the teachers (Mrs Gabriel and Mrs Dee) used was having children trace over the top of their name that the teacher wrote. This teaching strategy perhaps made it more difficult for both these teachers to ‘pick up’ what the child was already capable of producing. Mrs Gabriel only became aware that Mark knew how to write his name when his mother alerted his teacher about her son’s name writing expertise.
Teachers held firm beliefs about how literacy practices were constituted. Teachers believed that having children in their classrooms with diverse literacy knowledge also made their profession as teacher a very complex task. For example, Mrs Gabriel described children in her class ranged from “being unable to hold a pencil or not knowing the front and back of a book” to children who were extremely confident in being able to display some “concepts about reading and writing”. Yet, another teacher (Mrs Dee) observed children who were more knowledgeable with numbers and colours rather than the ‘conventional’ forms of literacy. In this teacher’s mind, children who entered school showing very little ‘conventional’ literacy knowledge were more ‘vulnerable’. She felt that they required extensive and experienced teaching instruction to help them develop their literacy skills. This view was also evident in the comments made by Mrs Muriel who mentioned that even though some children may know some words and letters they usually did not have the ability to “put together coherent sentences” other than knowing words like “to, the, is and maybe writing some of their name”. Each of these comments shows the teacher’s beliefs and ideas about what constituted literacy to reflect conventional features of school literacy.

An aspect that teachers regarded as an important process of preparing children in their first year of school was setting ‘routines’. Mrs Muriel argued that although there were huge variations in what children knew, she believed that they soon enough picked up the ‘basics’ of reading and writing once they understand the ‘routine’. She added “it may take a little longer for some children but eventually, they will get it”. She emphasised that it was crucial for children to develop these skills in their first year at school because she regarded that would set the foundation for later success in reading and writing. It was important that, ‘getting it right’ was critical for this process to work. Part of her philosophy in guiding this belief was to keep in mind that it is not until you discover what skills a child has before knowing how to “expand this knowledge”. As she put it, “all children come to school believing they can read and write”. She saw it as part of her duty as teacher to build on what children already know regardless of how much or how little knowledge they have about literacy. She found that preparing children into a daily ‘set routine’ worked successfully.

One of her language routines, at the start of each school day, for instance, included spelling. She felt that introducing spelling early would enable children to recognise the “very strict routine of maintaining correct procedures” required by not only this activity but also other classroom language related activities as well. Another method she found useful here was having the older children of the class take on the responsibility to lead as role
models for the younger or newer children in her class. She did suggest that although she maintained a rigid routine she believed that unless there was continuity in how activities were performed by children throughout their junior school years, children would quickly lose this knowledge by the time they entered middle school. This teacher also commented that following and incorporating routines into classroom activities was imperative in enabling children to quickly learn what was expected and required of them as language and literacy activities were introduced.

Teachers’ beliefs and knowledge of family/community related activities were probed. Teachers responded by generalising that a lot of the children in their classes attended a church or Sunday school that in some way contributed to their knowledge about literacy. This knowledge was not always verified by teachers about the children’s involvement. Teachers commented that it was difficult for them to ascertain whether or not a particular child attended church on a regular basis, only to suggest that there were large numbers of families living in the area who attended church. It was noted by one of the teachers (Mrs Kay) that the type of stories that children told during ‘morning news’ were mostly ‘church related’. Children began their ‘morning news’ usually discussing an event that the family participated in doing together, like going on an outing. This story would eventually merge into another story normally taken from the Bible or to “talking about going to church”. Sometimes children would revert back and forth across both themes ending with their original story. This description of the story telling has close similarity to a style described as an ‘episodic narrative’ by Cazden (1988). Similar to the narrative styles Cazden described, themes in the stories children gave were not directly and overtly related but kept switching back and forth across the different themes and at times were difficult for the teacher to follow. In particular this teacher found it difficult to understand their ideas coherently. She further explained that this type of story telling was evident from children who were ESL (English as a Second Language) users.

Another teacher (Mrs Muriel) acknowledged that families who had close connections and involvement with their religious affiliations seemed to have positive influence on their children’s learning. Mrs Muriel had come to know many of the families who attended the Brethren order and had developed a good rapport with them about their children’s learning. She said that she found these children were highly skilled in literacy knowledge and that families showed a strong interest in their children’s literacy development. The way the community operated and facilitated learning was through shared knowledge
amongst its members within the congregation. Especially in learning about and developing their children’s literacy skills families would build up close relationships with other members of their community to discuss ways they might enhance their children’s literacy. Mrs Muriel reported that the children’s mother carried out this task. A motivating factor, which helped mothers improve their knowledge and awareness about literacy skills, was participating in school activities and attending parent interviews. They would play an active role in their children’s learning through communications with the teacher. They were also able to extend what they had learned to other members of their community to become better informed about teaching and learning practices of school.

Yet, for two other teachers (Mrs Kay and Mrs Gabriel) it was extremely difficult to develop close links with families and discover ways in which literacy featured. One of these teachers (Mrs Kay) commented that there were “very little signs of home related activity seen by children in class”. She commented that this might possibly have to do with “making little contact with parents” other than when they came to pick up children at the end of the day. This view was also repeated by the other teacher (Mrs Gabriel) commenting that trying to meet with parents was more difficult and quite “time consuming” for teachers. She believed that teachers could understand a whole lot more about children’s literacy skills from parents if they met them on a regular basis.

**Language Abilities**

Similar to the wide variations teachers found in children’s emergent literacy, the most common response given by these teachers to the question about language was the extent that children varied in language proficiency. Most of the teachers stated that children either had very little English or, as one teacher (Mrs Dee) described, quite mature “adult speech”. This teacher also had the view that a child having ‘adult like speech’ was a good indicator that they had spent time in the presence of adults. She described one small child in her class who was able to ‘tune into’ a conversation quicker than other children and assumed that this child has close contact with other adults.

The range of children’s language proficiency that teachers identified also indicated the wide range of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds that understood English as a second language (ESL). All teachers agreed that having English, as their second language affected children’s understanding of being able to read or write. For example, one of the teachers (Mrs Muriel) reported that being able to follow instructions was difficult for
some children to understand if they have English as a second language. This teacher stated that a small child who had not long started school was occasionally left out because he was unable to understand ‘simple commands’. This teacher also commented on his difficulty to “communicate because of his broken English and unconnected sentence structures”. Another teacher commented it was more problematic for some ESL children having “poor oral skills” in listening and comprehending. She also felt that not being able to communicate efficiently affected all areas of being able to read and write adequately.

There were children who were not ESL users that also found following simple instructions difficult. Mrs Dee and Mrs Kay agreed that having ‘good listening skills’ was important in being able to follow instructions. Mrs Dee argued that children lacked ability to express themselves clearly because TV was a major barrier along with parents’ lack of quality conversation time with their children. She felt that “watching too much television or where parents don’t talk or share conversations with their children often” contributed to limited communication skills. This teacher also found it frustrating when she had to repeat instructions several times during an activity because the child either had poor listening skills or did not understand the teachers’ instruction.

Another teacher (Mrs Kay) experienced having two sets of twins in her class, both ESL users. This teacher described their level of English proficiency “very good and had no problems communicating in English”. Children in both sets of twins had a tendency to ‘code switch’ while writing stories. One of the children in one twin pair would write part of her story in her cultural language (Cambodian) and switch back to writing in English. One of the children of the second twin pair would occasionally substitute an English word in her story with one familiar from her own language (Samoan). The teacher would get the children to translate what they had written.

It was also noted by Mrs Muriel that the level of literacy knowledge children came to school knowing today was a lot different from the children she taught nearly 30 years ago. She noticed that the earlier groups of children were “a lot more focused and they were well advanced in pre-literacy skills, whereas the children of today entered school with little pre-school experience”. She recalled that children 20-30 years ago came to school knowing how to articulate language, especially when telling stories. She described their “thirst for new and exciting stories” and that these children had a wider sense of being able to comprehend stories better. As well, she found teaching these earlier children particularly challenging.
because they wanted more “highly interactive activities” like performing a live play. In comparison, she explained that the children she teaches today are taught at a “simpler, basic, ground roots level”.

Unlike the children she had taught much earlier in her teaching career, during story reading for example, she would focus these children on story comprehension. This may at times involve going through detailed explanations of the story and making connections to ‘words, pictures and events’. She explained how she would get the child to expand on their stories when they used the same repeated story openers. She started by asking lots of ‘wh’ questions she wanted to encourage the child to “think about what they want to write and to get them to talk more about what they want to write”. This type of questioning follows the I-R-E sequence of initiating a question followed by a response, which is evaluated or commented by the teacher (Cazden, 1988). I-R-E sequences are teacher directed but can be expanded to get the child to elaborate further their ideas as this teacher is applying, depending on how the third part of the sequence (evaluation) functions. Over time the emphasis of the sequence changes from its supportive structures of teacher-child focus to becoming a child-initiated process (McNaughton, 1995). This teacher recognized children’s developing independence, saying that within a year “these children will have increased their language skills tremendously”. She also believed that by elaborating the child’s message to being able to write “more quality, complex longer sentences” will develop their writing skills further, making writing stories easier.

It was recognized by all four teachers that having ESL children attending their respective schools might be indicative of the area where this study was located. The ethnic composition of all schools included in this study comprised of at least half the number of children identified as belonging to a cultural group other than NZ European/Pakeha.

The information gathered from Tables 1, 2 and 3 (see Chapter 3) shows the ethnic composition of the three schools that took part in this research. Of interest here, are the large number of ethnic groups within each school. Teachers indicated that a large proportion of children entering their classrooms came as ESL learners. The tables tend to support the notion that teachers had to accommodate large numbers of ESL learners in their classrooms. It also raises issues about level of instruction and the delivery of the schools’ programmes to ESL learners. However, this assumption should be viewed with caution because not all children belonging to a cultural group outside of NZ
European/Pakeha are fluent in their cultural language. The breakdown in ethnic composition of children across each school heightens perhaps teachers’ concerns regarding the diverse ‘blend’ of cultures. For example, Mrs Gabriel indicated the difficulty she had in identifying children who were ESL users because of the “little information provided from the enrolment form and more importantly having little contact with parents”. There was a desire by teachers for more information about children entering school especially those who are ESL learners. As Mrs Kay expressed it, she “would want to know if children speak a second language” to assist in planning the type of instruction to give the child.

The information in this section also provided an important source of teacher's general knowledge about emergent literacy and children’s language abilities. This information was coupled with the different sorts of ‘conventional’ and ‘family descriptors’ teachers were able to identify as contributing or failing to contribute to the development of children’s literacy. Following this section is teacher’s specific knowledge about children’s literacy expertise.

**Specific Knowledge**

Teacher’s knowledge about children’s literacy expertise is examined in this section. Teacher’s responses indicated what they understood about school assessment programs their school used. Teachers were asked about the way they identified children’s literacy skills and how this information was used to assist in their planning and teaching.

**Conventional Reading Knowledge**

All teachers were able to identify conventional knowledge the target children brought to reading activities. Two teachers (Mrs Kay and Mrs Muriel) could describe how their respective child was capable of understanding some Concepts About Print (CAP). In addition, they were able to identify that both children knew some letters and sounds of letters once they had undergone the school assessment procedure at 4 to 6 weeks. Both children were able to recognize between 12 and 15 alphabet letters when they were tested on their school entry assessment. For example, Mary managed to identify all 52 letters within 3 months of being tested while the Theresa became proficient 6 months after she was initially tested.
Mrs Dee and Mrs Gabriel indicated that they could not identify what concepts about print (CAP) their respective child (Hona and Mark) was familiar with because as one teacher commented “this actual assessment is not tested or part of their assessment package”. Mrs Gabriel responded by also confirming they did not assess for CAP at her school, however she did observe Mark using some concepts like the front and back of a book, pointing to words and reading from left to right. Both of these teachers reported differences about whether or not children were able to identify letters and sounds of letters. One of these teachers (Mrs Dee) indicated that Hona showed no knowledge of being able to identify letters or sounds of letters. This teacher stated that “when he was tested on letter name and letter sounds he did not know any”. However, Mrs Dee pointed out that Hona was able to recognize his name if written down for him. Mrs Gabriel acknowledged that Mark showed “good knowledge of being able to identify some letters” however during reading “he wouldn’t sound out unknown words”.

Teachers commented on the importance of reading for narrative. That is, teachers acknowledged the way in which their respective children utilized the strategy of reading by pictures when comprehending the text. Mrs Muriel commented how Theresa “…was using the pictures to read the story”. However, she saw this as potentially unhelpful and problematic. This teacher saw this attempt by the child as ineffective because she “did not attempt unknown words”. On the other hand, she stated that reading by pictures could have been more effective in helping the child figure out unfamiliar words. She explained that this child did not have “very good prediction skills, especially when figuring out a word. The child would not attempt to transfer an unknown word with the picture”. Making word-picture connections were perhaps a strategy this teacher considered useful in enabling the child to comprehend the context of the story as well as being able to assume unknown words. Another teacher (Mrs Kay) explained that ‘reading by pictures’ was not always a reliable method because the picture did not always match what the child was reading.

**Conventional Writing Knowledge**

Teachers were able to determine some writing skills for all children. For example, all teachers recognized that being able to write ones name was an important aspect of writing skills on entry. Name writing for one child (Hona) meant knowing how to write and recognize the first letter of his name, to randomly tracing over the rest of his name. Another child (Mark) was taught to trace over his name and although the teacher recognised later (4-6 weeks) he was already capable of writing it without assistance. Two
children (Mary and Theresa) were able to write their name without initial help. One of these children (Mary) combined upper and lower case letters while the other child (Theresa) completed her full name, inverting some letters.

Teachers also recognized and described how children’s writing skills varied, from one child (Hona) “knowing very little about writing, like copying letters randomly over a page of writing” to another child (Mary) who was able to write “simple sentences”. Hona’s teacher also commented that he would invert and mix letters (S) and numbers (#3) into the same text. This teacher had later observed that he would rely on others in the group (at the same table) to write his stories for him. She monitored more closely his attempts to reproduce any writing, especially tracing over written text.

Most of the children were seen to have “good” control of writing. One teacher (Mrs Kay) described Mary as a “confident and mature writer”. This teacher commented that she knew how to spell words and put these words into a complete sentence. The teacher had observed from this child’s first piece of conventional school writing “she had written many words in capitals, she has good knowledge of the alphabet and how a sentence is put together”. This teacher also mentioned that because this child was confident in her writing she would attempt many “bits of writing alone” at times managing to spell unknown words through letter-sound combinations. The teacher further mentioned and showed one of the child’s story writing to the principal approximately one week after she started, who commented how impressed he was with her standard of writing, suggesting that she must receive a lot of help at home.

Yet, for another teacher (Mrs Gabriel) writing stories focused on the form of story writing and comprehension of the text. She described Mark’s writing as knowing “a lot of words for a child at this school. But comprehension of text he’s still to learn, also the structure of sentences and words”. These aspects of writing a story she argued were yet to be developed. She had made these comments after she had read a piece of writing this child attempted on his first day at school. She held a strong belief that the story he wrote was not his attempt because another story the child wrote the next day, she described had “random words and letters, with no sentence structure”.

One teacher (Mrs Muriel) described the developmental progress Theresa had made over the year during story writing. Theresa was observed by the researcher, waiting for the
teacher to help assist to elaborate her ideas while writing a story. As she progressed throughout the year the teacher “prompted her less” enabling her to determine the story independently. Throughout Theresa’s development of story writing the teacher described her making “erratic” progress that was part of developing her independence to story writing.

**Family / Community Activities**

The teachers ideas about what family and/or community activity children participated in were prompted during the interview. Some of the teachers responded with uncertainty toward what the child knew and these links to family or community activity. As noted earlier, a community activity teachers did agree was linked to the child being involved in some church activities. They could only speculate about these children’s involvement because they had little direct evidence.

Mrs Gabriel was unsure of how much of an influence family and/or community activity may have helped Mark other than suggesting the child ‘probably’ attended kindergarten and that he ‘possibly’ received good family support. She based her claims on observing some of this child’s skills in reading and writing. For instance, during reading she recognised he knew how to “point to words” and that he would make use of the pictures while reading. Another feature she felt worthwhile mentioning was his adjustment to school. She commented he was “well behaved, he got on and did the work and was able to settle into a routine quickly”. She considered that these behaviours were important in making the transition into school “a good place to be”. She also determined that “behaving well and listening well” helped children understand the type of work expected at school.

Another teacher (Mrs Muriel) responded with uncertainty when questioned about knowing any family or community activity connected to Theresa. She concluded from her own observations, that this child had experienced some form of early childhood skills in reading and writing. For instance, she recognised that Theresa could write her name and was able to follow the teacher’s instructions without much difficulty upon entry. Similar to the previous comments about ‘routines’, she also recognised this child adapted to the classroom routine very quickly.

Mrs Dee had observed Hona singing and joining in Māori action songs during morning activities in class. She was able to determine that this child knew some Māori words
when he spoke. However, she also felt Hona’s writing progress was more difficult to assess (after 6 months) and “still very early to know” partly because of the little progress he had shown.

Mrs Kay made her assessment on what Mary enjoyed doing in class. She had noticed Mary liked reading and would choose from a wide assortment of books in the classroom. In writing she observed her having a similar enjoyment of this activity as of like reading. Mrs Kay identified her strengths in both reading and writing and concluded that she must have a supportive environment at home and that she probably was able to attend an early childhood center to develop these skills.

Thus far teacher’s ideas and beliefs have been described in terms of what they knew about the child’s specific literacy knowledge both from a conventional and family/community perspective. The following analysis of discussion with teachers provides information about how this assessment data was collected through systematic and formal testing.

**Collection of Data**

All teachers reported systematic and formal collection of data on the conventional knowledge a child had at entry to school. This information was derived from two sources. Firstly, information was provided through the formal school assessment programs administered at approximately 4-6 weeks after the child began school. Secondly, information was gained through teachers’ personal observations and the systematic use of running records.

Two of the teachers (Mrs Kay and Mrs Muriel) often used a ‘running record’ to keep track of a child’s progress during reading. One of these teachers (Mrs Kay) administered ‘running records’ to monitor Mary’s progress at regular intervals from the other children in the class because she showed greater progress in reading within a shorter time span. This teacher would test for Mary’s next reading level by having her read two levels above her current reading level. For these teachers, observing each child and keeping notes they were able to maintain a record of each child’s progress in reading and writing activities.

Systematic data collection by the other two teachers (Mrs Dee and Mrs Gabriel) came from personal observational notes on children’s behaviour and what they were currently able to do in reading and writing activities. For example, Mrs Dee kept samples of
Hona’s work as well as making notes during parent interviews. One of the difficulties she noted related to gathering information from parents was the low turnout during parent interviews. This sentiment was also echoed by Mrs Gabriel, who found it difficult to have the opportunity to talk to parents. This teacher did maintain that she could “usually tell which child had good help at home” and from this observation was able to make judgements about a child’s progress in reading and writing.

Formal testing by all teachers was gathered by means of the school assessment. All schools had variations of an assessment procedure that was partly designed using a ‘standard’ model. Such as, School Entry Assessment (SEA) administered by Ministry of Education or Junior Oral Language Screening Test (J.O.S.T) administered by Special Education Services (SES).

One of the teachers (Mrs Muriel) in this study administered and was familiar with the School Entry Assessment (SEA). She also kept School Entry Checklists to gather information on individual children. This teacher was able to detect which skills the child needed strengthening in reading and writing.

The other three teachers confirmed that children were tested using variations of the Junior Oral Language Screening Test (J.O.S.T). One of these teachers (Mrs Kay) was familiar with what the assessment required because she contributed to the compilation of the test. She found this assessment “extremely good in that it provides teachers with an idea of where and what to give children – like giving extra work or help in language areas”. Two of the other teachers (Mrs Dee and Mrs Gabriel) stated they were unfamiliar with the specifics about “how the test worked” and what it was meant to show because they did not actively participate in putting the information for the assessment together.

Teachers gathered systematic data regarding family/community activities mostly through their own personal observations and information from parent interviews or having informal discussions with parents if the occasion arose. One teacher (Mrs Dee) mentioned that she gained a lot of background information about Hona from another teacher at the school who had taught the child’s mother and siblings. This information proved useful where the teacher was unable to gain enough information from the parents or from the enrolment form. Assessments made by another teacher were based on her observations of what other children at the school would normally be able to achieve. In other words,
determining a ‘standard level’ where other children of the same age were at in either reading or writing served as a measure this teacher found useful.

Formal gathering of family/community knowledge by teachers came from enrolment records. Mrs Gabriel reported that the information from enrolment records provided teachers with some input into finding out about the child’s early educational experiences and also information about their family.

There was a similar feeling held across teachers of wanting more information about a child who attended an early childhood centre. One of the teachers (Mrs Kay) responded “there was no communication with teachers of early childhood”. This teacher wanted to find out more about what children did prior to school whilst attending an early childhood centre. She suggested it would be useful to have a “check list or some work the child had already done that could be sent to school”. Another teacher (Mrs Dee) mentioned similar concerns saying “very little is known – seems a shame that there’s no direct link with other early childhood sites to help fill in the gap of knowledge”.

Concerns by teachers regarding lack of information from enrolment forms remained an issue with teachers. Some of the teacher’s proposed that the forms needed to provide more ‘detailed’ information about a child. For example, one of the teacher’s (Mrs Dee) felt frustrated from not knowing if a child had the proficiency to speak (or parts of) a second language. She also mentioned that at times it was difficult maintaining contact with parents and felt that more information on enrolment forms may reduce some of the ‘unknown’ missing pieces about children’s prior learning.

**Planning and Teaching**

Teachers agreed that the information collected about children’s conventional knowledge on entry to school helped provide useful information about what the child could do and the type of work the teacher should provide. Mrs Kay explained, “if a child doesn’t have good concepts about print, the teacher can set work according to what children don’t have”. Starting from “what the child does not know” was a common belief by all teachers in determining planning and teaching strategies.
In particular, all teachers regarded the school assessment of children’s conventional literacy knowledge vital. One of the teachers (Mrs Muriel) commented that she was able to determine what Theresa was not capable of doing from the information gathered through the child’s assessment results. For example, she was able to detect that Theresa “wouldn’t use her initiative at the best of times but would wait for the information given to her”. This teacher was able to confirm her “hunches and back-up (her own) personal intuitions” about what Theresa needed strengthening to help her work through an activity. She felt Theresa lacked the “transfer of responsibility of using her own initiative”. The focus for this teacher was helping the child through “oracy and literacy”.

Another teacher (Mrs Kay) relied more on the results from the assessment information, which in her mind, was “more reliable than (my) intuition”. She considered this data was very important for helping to plan the future development for Mary in learning literacy skills. It may also mean that teachers regard school assessments as a vital resource of assessing a child’s literacy knowledge utilising a ‘standard’ model.

Information gathered about teachers’ family/community knowledge highlighted how very little knowledge teachers have about what children participate in outside of school. In terms of teachers planning and finding suitable teaching methods to use in their programs, it was felt by most teachers that understanding what children may be familiar doing in other settings might perhaps enhance teachers’ knowledge. But as noted earlier teachers could only speculate whether or not for example children attended church based on their knowledge of the ethnic composition of the people living in the surrounding area.

Mrs Gabriel said she was unfamiliar with any of the child’s background and felt if this information was available it would definitely help this teacher understand this child better. She commented that it “helps to know what they already know, and will help cut out unnecessary teaching time if this information was available”. She also added that it would help teachers know just how much work to plan for each child accordingly.

For another teacher (Mrs Dee) the lack of information caused “lots of conflicting reports on the child, especially their use of language”. She found it difficult to understand children who were ESL for example, when they were trying to communicate their needs. This comment was similar to another teacher’s response (Mrs Muriel) that felt without further
knowledge of a child’s background it was difficult to prepare and plan exactly what the child required to enhance reading and writing skills. For instance this teacher found that the child “needed to be prompted and encouraged to begin writing stories”.

**Summary**

It appears the teachers used the classroom literacy and language activities, and assessments, to develop a profile of children’s literacy expertise. To some extent, their ideas were generic which led them to see the children as potentially knowing some things about literacy. These ideas were constrained by the way teachers’ constructed and co-constructed daily classroom literacy and language activities. Teachers were focused on establishing classroom routines as an important process so that children developed an understanding about how classroom and school activities were carried out. Teachers also believed that continuity in how activities were performed needed to be established within the classroom and school. Teachers acknowledged the wide variations in children’s language abilities upon entry to school. However, teachers knew very little about the families’ activities and the knowledge embedded in these; instead teachers depended on observations of children’s literacy skills in classroom activities.

Specific knowledge about children’s literacy expertise was diverse for all teachers. Teachers relied on the school entry assessment data to inform their knowledge about children’s literacy and language skills. Teachers also obtained knowledge about children’s literacy skills from discussions with children’s parents. All teachers carried out informal systematic data collection on a regular basis to add to their knowledge of children’s literacy and language expertise.

**Overall Summary**

Overall, the findings reported in this chapter described ideas and expectations about children’s literacy experiences prior to school and the transition to school, from both the parents and teachers’ views. Parents’ ideas focussed on sources of children’s literacy expertise, participation structures and family socialisation practices. Parents saw this as contributing factors to their children’s educational learning prior to school. However, parents also described their anxieties and concerns about the process of their children’s transition to school. Teachers held general views about children’s literacy expertise. These beliefs most often came from informal classroom observations and from the school entry assessment data and less frequently from their discussions with parents.
Teachers utilised this information to help construct literacy and language activities in their classrooms.

Descriptions of home-school connections are reported in the next chapter. The descriptions examine the transition to school process and how family literacy and language activities and school activities are incorporated and awareness developed.
Chapter Five

Family and School Connections: Descriptive Analysis of Four Transitions

Introduction
This chapter describes the contributions that families and schools have made towards each child’s development of literacy expertise. The case study design provides a qualitative analysis of the children, families, peers and teachers co-construction of literacy. Three literacy activities, reading, writing and storytelling (narrative), are examined. In addition to descriptions of family and classroom language and literacy activities, there are brief descriptions of children’s early childcare experiences. The descriptions in this chapter focus on the classroom observations. Selected relationships between classroom experiences and those outside of school are analysed using these classroom observations as the unit of analysis. A combination of videotaping, audiotaping, and teacher interviewing and file notes was used to capture the classroom activities. These provided permanent products for later analysis.

In addition, children’s school entry assessment results are reported as well as information of children’s literacy and language progress after a year at school. Achievement data in literacy was collated using the standard tests of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) of Letter Identification (LID), Hearing and Recording Sounds (H&RS), Concepts About Print (CAP), Word Recognition (WORD) and Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC). An additional measure of generalised word recognition – the Burt Word Recognition Test was collected (BURT - Gilmore, Croft, & Reid, 1981). Also, oral language measures were collected using the Tell Me test from the School Entry Assessment (Learning Media, 1998) and using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997).

Classroom Activities as a Frame of Reference
A summary description of each child and their families is followed by a close analysis of the transition to school and literacy activities at school. It is within this combined analysis that the connections between family literacy activities and school activities are examined closely. Descriptions of each family’s involvement in literacy and language activities indicate forms of reading to children, guiding children’s writing and telling/retelling
narratives. The descriptions show how the activities were constituted, specifically the goals and ideas participants held about the activities, the patterns of participation, the features of the guidance provided by more expert participants (family members) and the kinds of expertise emerging through the activities. In each of the four cases the detailed analysis of the first days at school provides descriptions of how the processes of incorporation and awareness were dependent on the attributes of the curriculum with text based activities (McNaughton, 2002). It is argued that the degree to which incorporation was enabled and that awareness was developed depended on the versatility and resonating properties of activities, their frequency and variations as well as the instructional language of teachers and peers. Thirdly, children’s assessment results are presented. The assessment results show children’s expertise in literacy and language activities at 4-6 weeks upon entry to school as well as an overall summary of children’s scores of literacy and language measures presented in Table 4 (p. 225).

**Whānau Characteristics**

A criterion for the recruitment of families for this study was that they identified as Māori and had a preschool child approximately 4:6 years of age at the start of the study. Family identity was an important aspect of this study in analyzing the impact of cultural and socialization teaching and learning practices occurring in literacy and language activities.

A feature common to all families in this study was the inclusion of other family members beyond the identified primary caregivers who participated in everyday family events and visited the families frequently. Their presence and participation in family activities identified multiparty interactions. In particular, interactions with children demonstrated tuakana-teina relationships often occurring. This is where an older and a younger sibling share, in a reciprocal role, the process of teaching and learning. This process is a feature that is a culturally preferred methodological pedagogy commonly observed in Māori interactions (Smith, 1987). This process is also characteristic of the way in which Māori cultural values and traditions are mediated. It shows the way that families participate in social events, obedience to authority and that children take their directions from other family members, learning to live in harmony. It also shows the way things are done according to the cultural values and traditional cultural scripts of Māori communities (Rokx, 1999; Rosenthal, 2000; Wise & Sanson, 2000).
Child One: Mary

Literacy Activities at Home

The form that literacy activities took at home for Mary reflected the closeness of the whānau. Mary's mother explained they share a close bond with extended whānau members who visited frequently. For example, it was common for Mary and her older sister to have cousins stay over for the weekends or during school holidays. The nature of these interactions between extended whānau members that visited illustrated the dynamic and interchangeable roles characteristic of the tuakana-teina relationship, especially occurring in peer relationships. A great deal of Mary’s confidence in writing and reading activities came from these early play sessions with other family members. There were recorded instances from the home diary for example, where Mary spent a great amount of time in her sister’s company, playing together, listening to her sister read, and sharing in homework sessions (see text 5.1).

Text 5.1 Home Diary entries of literacy practices at home (Oct ’98)
Some of the more overt common activities her mother recorded were helping Mary construct sentences during writing events, shared and personal reading experiences and playing various letter identification games like eye-spy, sometimes at home or in the car during an outing (see text 5.2). Diary accounts also showed her father's participation in literacy events. For example, he would read to the children, usually in the evenings as a bedtime activity. On other occasions he often listened to the children read their school reading text. These activities are analysed in detail in the section that follows. Using the school literacy activities as a frame of reference provides a way of looking for how literacy activities resonated (or didn’t) with classroom activities.

Text 5.2 Home Diary entries of literacy practices at home (Dec '98)
Early Childcare Experience

Mary had attended kindergarten, the same centre as her older sister since she was 3 years of age. Discussions revealed that one of the main reasons why Mary’s mother enrolled her in kindergarten was for Mary to engage and develop social skills in preparation for school. As well, Mary’s mother anticipated that experiencing early childcare would ease the transition into school having prepared Mary in the sorts of classroom activities and routines she believed she would encounter at school. She indicated that at kindergarten “Mary was a quiet, reserved, shy child” explaining that at first Mary found it difficult to interact with the other children or the teachers, preferring to stay by her mother’s side. Her mother would stay with her daughter, sometimes up to an hour to help ease her anxiety of being left behind.

Transition to School

Mary experienced feelings of ambiguity during her transition into school. First, school was seen as a place that would nurture Mary’s learning and secondly it required children to be confident and capable of adapting socially to the classroom environment. During the interview discussions Mary’s mother expressed her concern about how Mary was going to cope socially in the school environment. For four weeks prior to starting school Mary’s mother introduced her to pre-school visits. Questioned whether these visits made the transition a little smoother for Mary, her mother responded saying, “…well…yes” quickly adding “…no, no it didn’t”. Partly she regarded the pre-school visits as helpful in that she believed they were going to familiarize her daughter with her school environment. As well, she regarded the visits as unhelpful in that they did not prepare her daughter for the length of time children are required to spend in school each day. More importantly, her mother was becoming increasingly concerned about how these visits would help her daughter cope confidently while on her own.

A Classroom Writing Activity

This section provides a descriptive analysis of a writing activity taking place in the classroom. The analysis plots the relationship between writing activities taking place between home and at school. Story writing was a core part of the language activities that took place in this classroom.

Mary’s earliest story writing attempts showed her knowledge and understanding of the writing activity as structured in the classroom (see figure 5.1). The story she developed
was a collaborative exercise during which her teacher (Mrs Muriel) helped Mary generate a sentence by asking questions around a special event she recently celebrated, her fifth birthday.

Figure 5.1: Classroom story writing exercise (Feb ’99)

This activity occurred on Mary’s very first day at school. The teacher wrote the following sentence for Mary to copy:

**Teacher**
I had a banana cake with five candles.

Beneath the teacher’s version Mary wrote:

**Mary**
I Had a bANANA Cake witH five CANdles.

A picture of a little girl followed her writing. This can be seen as a versatile activity in several respects. One is that her teacher used the activity to search for indicators of Mary’s existing knowledge and expertise. Mary’s teacher commented on her attempt
noting that she was able to “…spell words, …because many are written in capitals. She knows the alphabet and that a sentence is written together” and not written underneath other words, as the teacher expected.

The versatility meant that the format of this activity resonated with home activities. Discussions with Mary’s mother and the diary recordings revealed that at home, writing stories was a common and familiar activity shared during play sessions with family members as well as extended family members. There were many occasions when Mary and her older sister and a visiting cousin would play ‘school’ or ‘shop’ together. Her mother recalls a time when Mary and her cousin were “writing from a book, …copying something from a book, …writing the whole story”. During these occasions, copying words from a book increased her knowledge about individual words kept apart with a space between them. Her mother was prompted to explain where Mary learned to put spaces after each word. She described her daughter’s success, “…before (prior to school), when she used to write something she knows it’s a separate word, she used to put a full stop … that was to separate each word. That just came about with practice. She learned by Te Aroha (sister)” quickly adding “…although Te Aroha didn’t do it (when she was of similar age)” (see figure 5.2, 5.2a).

This latter observation led her to being almost uncertain about her original belief and understanding that Mary learned from watching her older daughter. She modified that observation and agreed Mary’s expertise had a great deal to do with her own efforts of modeling and practising written words as well as the influence of her older daughter (see text 5.4).
Figure 5.2: Development of writing expertise at home – Mary producing a card for mum, dad and brother Joegen (Sept '98)

Front aspect of Mary’s card

![Front aspect of Mary’s card](image1)

Inside aspect of Mary’s card

![Inside aspect of Mary’s card](image2)
Mary's Card (Sept '98)

Date: 18th

Describe The Activity

Draw a card with Mum, Dad, 1 brother, 2 sisters. Picture is of stars with message in heaven. An angel flies with wings. On the ground, there are four girls if you look at the hair. One of them has dark brown hair, a circle, a star, a heart, and square. There's a picture of cats, one of them have kite on its back. Plus pulling a trolley with wheels and rope on it. All the wording on this card Mary drew on her own except for some you I guided out the letters for her and she wrote it down herself. She drew her card from right to left rather than the other way. The picture she has drawn is now and then within the time frame. Mary knows her alphabet. All I have to do if she can't spell a word is say the letters and she will write it down.

Who was "Fred"

- An uncle & aunt
- Mum, Dad, Sister
- Brother & Mary

Materials:
- Brushes out of branches
- Leaves and tape with her
- Sister and friends: then making their own out of old felt tips and hats.

Note: The text is handwritten and contains details about a card Mary drew, including the names of family members and a description of the card's contents.
Figure 5.2a: Combining writing expertise and drawing during literacy activities at home (Dec '98)

Figure 5.2b: Combining writing expertise and drawing at home (Dec '98)
A Whole Class Writing Activity

The above episode and fig. 5.1 was Mary’s first attempt at writing a story, her fifth attempt in the second week at school shows further Mary’s ability to apply the writing knowledge she gained prior to school. It also describes the strategies she used in ‘figuring out’ how to spell unknown words and known words. The activity began as the first activity had, with the teacher modeling writing. After morning news, Mary’s teacher (Mrs Kay) introduced the story writing routine and a theme was chosen from which a story was developed. The actual construction of the story was modeled and developed by the teacher. When the story was completed a picture was added beneath then Mary’s teacher returned to the story highlighting one of the words. Some word level solving was also
instructed by her teacher during this time. The versatility of the activity enabled different forms of knowledge and expertise to be incorporated from family activities. The following example demonstrates the teacher providing instruction in this activity:

**Teacher**
What date is today? (Pointing to the calendar)

**Child**
calls out Monday!

**Teacher**
(contemplating a story) … I know what to write!…Tonight I am going to…(asks children) …what’s this word? (begins writing the word ‘the’) … Mary?.

**Mary**
… ‘the?’

**Teacher**
Good girl Mary, (continues writing) … Today I am going to the … movies with Mrs C and Mrs W.

(The children and the teacher read the story together, then the teacher draws a picture beneath.)

**Teacher**
What’s this word? (pointing to ‘going’).

In constructing this story, Mary’s teacher had already set the topic that was familiar and personal to her. In many ways, her teacher directed the writing activity with minimal interaction. It has been found that a dimension of structuring lessons this way is so that the teacher provides a kind of format or script for children to follow as they begin independent writing (Richards & Lockhart, 1995). The formatting enabled the children to imitate and construct their own writing. By her deliberate commentary and by highlighting features in the writing such as re-reading the story together or introducing new or known words, awareness of the goals of the activity and the ways of performing the activity might have been further developed.

An analysis of the activity immediately following enable a close analysis of Mary constructing her own personal recount and the participation patterns for the writing activity. Following the teacher’s format, the writing event began with a picture first, then continued with a story underneath.

**Participation Patterns**

At the beginning of this task, Mary’s teacher instructed the children that they draw a picture and write a story beneath (see figure 5.3). This particular event followed on from the teacher’s writing to the whole class. At the start of the lesson, she reminded them to “think about what you’re going to write today”. She also encouraged them to use the word chart
(in the front of the classroom) especially directing children to find words suggesting, “…if you know any of the words... if you don’t know any of the words, how to write the word and you know they’re on the board go and have a look”. Mary like the other children sitting at her table imitated the teacher’s opening sentence, “I am going…”

Figure 5.3: Construction of classroom story writing with picture (Feb ’99)

This writing activity occurred during Mary’s first week of starting school. Her teacher asked for clarification of Mary’s story:

**Teacher**  
What is your story?

**Mary**  
I am going swimming.

**Teacher**  
Do you know how to write ‘I am’?

Her teacher watched Mary confidently write, “I am”. Mary paused as she contemplated spelling the word “going”. Her teacher asked:
Teacher: ‘…going.’ Do you know how to write the next word Mary?

Mary: (She indicates with a nod. She refers to the wall chart to find the word ‘going’ then proceeds to write it in her story. She begins the next word and produces an ‘s’. She pauses and waits for assistance. The teacher assists, reminding Mary).

Teacher: Do you remember in your storybook the word ‘swimming’?

Mary: (She makes several attempts to check back to earlier writing attempts to find the word ‘swimming’).

Teacher: Did you find ‘swimming’?

Mary: (Continues looking. The teacher helps her to locate the page the word is written in an earlier story Mary wrote).

Teacher: Which word says ‘swimming’? Can you show me?

Mary: (Points to the word)

Teacher: Good girl.

Mary carefully wrote out the word to complete her story. When it was finished her teacher asked Mary to read out her story. She read and commented that Mary “produced excellent work”. The versatility of this activity enabled different forms of knowledge and expertise to be incorporated and resonated with family activities. The completed story showed a great deal about what Mary knew about writing, for example, correct spelling and legibility of words, and ‘finger’ spacing between words. As well, she utilised the resources around her to figure out the spelling of a word (see figure 5.3). A passing comment her teacher made was that “Mary is a very confident writer. She will attempt many ‘bits’ of writing alone. Once she understands the workings of doing something she will happily move on to other parts of writing”. In addition, swimming was a high profile event that Mary and her family participated in frequently. This contributed and incorporated Mary’s event knowledge of an activity she could draw upon. The teacher’s knowledge of what Mary could write combined with the resources Mary was able to include in her story was clearly evident in this interaction.

Other classroom writing attempts by Mary demonstrated similar knowledge and expertise in writing (see figures 5.1, 5.3, and 5.4). What is missing perhaps is a contingent response to the story itself, to gain an elaboration and further understanding of the topic.
The activity described above, incorporated many aspects of family activities in writing, from the general framework of writing ‘a story’ to the use of familiar words and phrases as a platform and to specific word solving strategies. Mary’s mother described how Mary would utilize the same words or phrases when writing stories at home. She explained that “she picks the same words over and over again.” Writing familiar words and phrases became common practice while watching and participating in play activities at home. Where she was unable to write a word, she would ask her mother to help. Her mother stated that she “...would sort of break it down into syllables so that she can hear the letters...the spelling.” Therefore observing writing from her older sibling and having the input from her mother to help spell words contributed in the development of her own story writing. Mary’s word level solving resonated further with home activities. In the home diary that Mary’s mother kept of events and products her child produced an occasion was recorded where
Her mother wrote a list of words like, ‘mat, cat, sat, bat’ using the syllable ‘at’ for Mary to ‘practise writing and reading’ (see text 5.4).

Text 5.5: Home Diary entry: Developing a writing format (Dec ‘98)

Her mother wrote that ‘she made one mistake – which was the word ‘at’ she spelt it aat’ that included an extra letter ‘a’ (see figure 5.5). Her addition of the extra letter ‘a’ was in keeping with a search for regularity and the familiar format of maintaining the three letters the other words possessed. The diary entry by Mary’s mother described this event with an account of another spelling attempt with Mary (see text 5.4).
Figure 5.5: Developing a writing format using rhyming words – literacy activities at home (Dec ’98)

Figure 5.5a: Developing a writing format – literacy activities at home (Dec ’98)
**Teacher and Parent Awareness**

The comments of Mary’s teacher show her actively trying to construct knowledge from what Mary demonstrated she could do. There was one part of the writing format however, that Mary hadn’t figured out and it was her mother who helped her become aware of the appropriate way to perform the activity. She was able to do this because she had access to Mary’s writing book through class contact.

Mary’s mother commented on her daughter’s writing format. Since Mary began school, she noted that the stories Mary had written were not connected to what she had drawn claiming, “at first it, wasn’t what she was drawing … the story.” She wandered that perhaps this was part of the writing process, that is, to allow children to draw and write, even if both parts were unrelated. From the classroom visits, she came to the conclusion that her teacher was helping them develop the skill of writing what they had seen and drawn. For example she explained that, “… what she (teacher) is trying to lead them to, is to draw a picture of the story that they are going to write and I think that Mary is only realising that. Because she just kept on drawing a person and writing a story which didn’t fit the picture” (see figures 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4).

She later questioned her daughter about the first personal story writing attempt (her birthday) and why there was no drawing of a birthday cake reminding her, “…cause there was one!” Her mother was concerned about her daughter’s writing style (unrelated story and picture) caused her to query this because Mary needed to get these coordinated for her performance at school. Mary, she said, did not say anything and was not overtly responsive by her mother’s concern. Her interest in her daughter’s story writing style enabled her to recognise an important aspect of the structure and organization of this activity. That is, there is a specific format to writing a story, which includes having a picture that relates to the story.

**Classroom Reading Activity**

Over the first few days at school Mary also engaged in a series of reading activities. The analysis of these activities also focuses on the degree to which classroom activities enabled incorporation to occur, as well the degree to which awareness was being built. Because of the extensive school related reading activities in Mary’s family these are described first in some detail.
Similar to writing, Mary was able to transfer a significant aspect of her expertise from literacy activities at home into the classroom. Mary attributed her reading skills to the support she had received at home. Having a tuakana (older sister) to ‘model’ and ‘practise’ with and extended whānau (family) had increased her knowledge about books and literacy in general once she began school. Her teacher acknowledged that Mary’s reading ability on entry to school put her beyond the level of the other children in her class. Because of this she shared individual reading sessions with her teacher. The rest of the class shared reading in small groups common to their reading levels.

Like writing, Mary was a very confident reader when she began school. Since the age of four for instance, she had been capable of reading several stories from the ‘Ladybird - Read it yourself’ series and Mother Goose nursery rhymes without much assistance. The ‘Read it yourself’ series are graded readers that begin at level 1, for children who are starting to explore reading with others, continuing through to level 4, an advanced series for the more fluent reader. Her mother considered these books “useful” because they engage the reader by the use of repetition and rhyming words which she felt were an easier way for children to remember not only the story but as she mentioned, “what the word looks like”.

Reading nursery rhymes at home for example contributed to the way in which Mary recognised and memorised familiar words and verses. Her older sister spent a great deal of time reading nursery rhymes with her younger sister (see text 5.6). When Mary’s mother read stories or verses with Mary the episodes were semi-structured in the sense that she would encourage her to point to each word in the book as she read. It also enabled Mary to develop the technique to follow the story by pointing to each word as her mother read to her. Her mother had the expectation for Mary to read three pages of a favourite story book per day (see text 5.7, 5.7a). In this way her mother felt that it would sustain her daughter’s interest in the story without over burdening her with too much reading. However, Mary would insist on reading the entire story without her mother’s approval mostly to finish a book quickly so she could read another. The familiarity and frequency of having verses and stories read to and with Mary at home enabled her to participate in similar reading activities at school.
At home, there were occasions for Mary to read to a family member and vice versa. Her mother remarked that, “...she likes it if someone sits with her while she reads.” Her mother further explained that her reading was based on “...just memory.” She concluded that if she taught her daughter to “...try and point to each word in the book as she says it,” would perhaps allow her to recognise individual words better. Where Mary was unable to recognise a word her mother indicated that Mary had devised a strategy where she would, “...look(s) at the picture” in the text for clues. Another strategy Mary utilised to ‘test’ her word knowledge was to have her mother “...hide the pictures so she could read it. I cover the picture up and she reads the word.” This particular act has become more noticeable once Mary began school. Her mother recognised her daughter’s increase in knowing more “…words” and wanting to read a lot more. For example, a reader she brought home from school was read to the entire family three times until mum intervened saying “…yeah, that’s enough!” to escape another rendition.
Text 5.7: Home Diary Entry: Developing reading expertise (Oct ’98)

10:00 AM
Mary is reading Billy Goat Gruff. I told her to read three pages.

3:00 PM
Mary is reading Billy Goat Gruff.

9:00 PM
Mary is reading Billy Goat Gruff.

11:00 PM
Mary is reading Billy Goat Gruff.

11:00 PM
Mary is reading The Rest of Billy Goat Gruff. She is eager to start Red Riding Hood.

Text 5.7a: Home Diary Entry: Developing reading expertise (Nov ’98)

11:00 AM
Mary is reading The Rest of Billy Goat Gruff. She is eager to start Red Riding Hood.

12:00 PM
Mary is reading Red Riding Hood.

11:00 PM
Mary is reading Red Riding Hood.

11:00 PM
Mary is reading Red Riding Hood.

11:00 PM
Mary is reading Red Riding Hood.
Classroom Shared and Guided Reading

Classroom reading in small groups enabled Mary’s teacher to listen to each member of the group read a small passage from the book aloud. Her teacher also mentioned that it gave the quieter children a chance to participate in small group activities without being overwhelmed by the whole group. Because Mary was at a reading level on her own, shared reading between her and her teacher were observed. A description of Mary engaging in the reading activity with her teacher follows.

Commonly in ‘shared reading’ the teacher will familiarise the reader to the components or characteristics of a text to be read (Smith & Elley, 1997). In Mary’s class this could include discussing the title of the book, the topic, and related concepts or vocabulary. In the following example her teacher has introduced Mary to a new reader. The interaction illustrated collaboration based around event knowledge and vocabulary knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>What is this book about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>The Zoo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>The Zoo, you’re right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(pointing to the title)</em> Can you say this word?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td><em>(nods - pause)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>‘At’ <em>(pointing to the rest of the words)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>‘...The Zoo’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Good girl. Can you say it all together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>‘At The Zoo’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Good girl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interaction was teacher directed through mediating questions that were related to concepts and vocabulary in the text. Mary’s teacher collaborated with Mary in recovering her knowledge about the topic and her lexicon of this word able to be recognised. However, it proved a little difficult for her teacher to be able to identify individual words with which Mary was familiar. For example, she asked Mary if she could “…say the word, ‘at’?” The question posed some ambiguity for Mary as she indicated with a ‘nod’ that she knew how to say the word but didn’t say it. This may reflect unfamiliarity with this rhetorical style. There was nothing in the family data that indicated familiarity with this form of question related to identifying a written word. There was however evidence from the home diaries (see fig. 5.5) that she knew the word ‘at’ and was familiar with the configuration of this word.
Following her pause, Mary’s teacher provided the word. Perhaps she interpreted the pause to indicate that Mary might not have known how to say or recognise the word therefore modelled the word for her. From the video recording her teacher was unaware that Mary had acknowledged through a ‘nod’ she knew that word. Mary quickly figured out the requirement from the teacher’s model (supplying ‘at’ herself) and completed saying the rest of the title without error when her teacher used the rhetorical style again “can you say it all together?” As noted above, very soon after starting school Mary adopted the item knowledge format to test herself or have her mother test her. As noted earlier, the family descriptions indicate she was adept at imitating and inferring rules.

Sharing knowledge about the topic was useful in helping Mary identify the text format but also useful in helping her teacher identify what she knew about concepts around the text. Following on from the previous interaction between Mary and her teacher in this example the focus is around the topic content and connecting each event, in this case the pictures to the story.

Teacher (Opening the book to the Title page) What’s that? Do you know what that is?
(both are looking at a picture of a hippopotamus)
Mary (nodding …. Shrugs her shoulders)
Teacher That’s a hippo … mus. Have you seen a hippo … mus at the zoo?
Mary (unresponsive)
Teacher You have seen a hippo? What else have you seen at the zoo?
Mary (unresponsive)
Teacher Let’s have a look (motioning Mary to turn the page and look at the pictures)
You might see a …? (pointing to the picture of a monkey)
Mary …Monkey.
Teacher Monkey, yeah.
Mary (Turns the page)
Teacher An elephant.
Mary (Turns the page, looking at the picture)
Teacher What is it? What’s in its pocket?
Mary A baby …?
Teacher A baby kangaroo.
Mary (Turns the page)
Teacher And a …?
Mary …Tiger.
Teacher: What’s that one called? *(looking at the next picture)*

Mary: *(Unsure, shrugs her shoulders)*

Teacher: Do you know?

Mary: *(Shakes her head)*

Teacher: It’s a bear.

Mary: *(Turns the page)*

Teacher: *(The teacher pauses from the activity to address the class who are becoming too noisy. Mary continues flicking through the pages of the book. Mary opens to the last page the teacher asks…)*

What’s this one called?

Mary: Hippopotamus.

Teacher: *(repeats)…* Hippopotamus. Good girl.

A similar exchange to the earlier ones with rhetorical questions took place when her teacher asked Mary to label individual animals. But again Mary seemed to infer the format and quickly imitated models that were made available. Through her teacher’s mediation Mary was enabled to develop her self-knowledge of the text through discussion providing Mary with an independent, self-directed strategy to reading. For example it could be seen from the teacher’s initial query about the hippopotamus that although she did not receive an instant response from Mary she was successful later when prompted by the teacher to name the animal.

Mary’s teacher initiated questions and guided Mary through the pre-discussion of the text prior to any formal reading taking place by reciprocating in a turn-taking process. Some of the turn-taking was in response to the teacher’s prompts such as, “you might see a…?” Mary responded with “…monkey”. Or another turn where her teacher asked “and a…?” which Mary replied “*tiger*”. Other turn-taking required her teacher to get Mary to elaborate on a specific detail of the text. For instance, the teacher wanting Mary to identify that there was a ‘baby kangaroo’ in the pocket. Providing Mary with a format in reading and sharing the text helped Mary to quickly recognise the event knowledge and vocabulary during the formal reading.

The following example illustrated Mary applying the routine format of reading the text her teacher previously shared with her.
Teacher: Okay, let's do the reading now. First can you show me the spine?
Mary: (Shrugs her shoulders)
Teacher: Do you remember where the spine is on the book?
Mary: (continues looking at the book, unresponsive)
Teacher: It's here (showing Mary). It holds the book together.
(Mary continues looking at the book, unresponsive)
Teacher: (Turning the page to begin reading) Okay, let's read.
Mary: At The Zoo
Teacher: Good girl. Big loud voice.
Mary: (repeats) At The Zoo (pauses, looking at the next page)
Teacher: Do you know the first word?
Mary: (Shakes her head)
Teacher: …Come
Mary: (continues reading) … and (pauses)
Teacher: …see
Mary: the (pauses) … monkey.
Teacher: Good girl (turning the page).
Mary: Come and see the … (checking the picture) … elephant. (Turns the page)
Come and see the … (checking the picture) … kangaroo.
Teacher: Does that say kangaroo or kangaroos (pointing to the word)
Mary: (Checking)… Kangaroos.
Teacher: Kangaroos! Good girl.
Mary: Come and see the tiger.
Teacher: Good girl.
Mary: (Checking the picture) … Come and see the bears.
Teacher: Good you remembered.
Mary: Have you ever been to the zoo?
Teacher: (Nods)
Mary: What have you seen at the zoo?
Teacher: A hippopotamus.
Mary: A hippopotamus. In the mud?
Teacher: (Nods)
Mary: Good.
her teacher was able to scaffold Mary’s vocabulary until she was confident to continue to read unaided. A strategy Mary found useful for accurate reading was to refer to the picture. Here she was able to continue reading through the aid of the picture. Where this became challenging for Mary was where her teacher highlighted the plural form for kangaroo. Whereas the previous animals were singular two of the animal groups (kangaroos and bears) referred to more than one animal. Mary’s teacher used the familiar ‘say’ prompt (“does that say kangaroo or kangaroos?”) and Mary quickly solved this error. This is mediated problem solving and two possible outcomes are noteworthy. Her teacher had highlighted that it is important to use word level strategies to be accurate, and that it is important to check.

Mary made considerable progress in her independent reading given that it was a new reader. Once the frame was mastered for this simple labelling text, Mary read without interruption and with high accuracy. This perhaps suggests Mary was reading at a slightly ‘easier’ level or that the level of instruction enabled her to perform well at her ‘instructional’ level. This particular type of text was similar to some of the ‘Ladybird – Read it yourself’ readers that Mary read at home dependently. The type of format in the texts was also similar to the school readers. It is uncertain whether the type of interaction and dialogue Mary experienced at home during reading events was similar to that which occurred with her teacher because no audiotapes were made of these by families.

Assessment Data Results
The development of the New Entrant Assessment was compiled through collaboration between the Junior Head Teacher and other teachers of the Junior School Syndicate. Assessments were based around the Junior Oral Language Screening Test (Ministry of Education, 1998).

School Entry Check
Mary’s teacher administered a one-month Entrant Check. The literacy assessment included, ‘Social’, ‘Written Language’, ‘Reading’, ‘Oral Language’ and ‘Motor Skills’. A summary of Mary’s achievement as perceived by her teacher, particularly her literacy knowledge at one month is discussed in detail.
(a) Social Skills
A category of Social Skills is listed which determine a child’s ability in getting along with others and following classroom routines and instructions. The information recorded for Mary shows she was at one month able to ‘work and play with others’, ‘follow routines’, and ‘listens and follows instructions’.

(b) Written Language
The category for assessing children’s Written Language included writing one’s name, story writing and oral language skills in story telling, and an understanding of some Concepts About Print (Clay, 1993). Descriptions of Mary’s competence were recorded at being; ‘able to write (her) own name’, and was assessed to be at an advanced stage in writing where she ‘knows words’ rather than only knowing writing in the form of ‘scribbles’, ‘symbols’, or ‘isolated letters’. Comments written about oral language skills in story telling, observed she; ‘can tell the teacher a story to go with the writing’, and was ‘able to copy under (the) teacher’s work’ instead of ‘on the teachers work’.

(c) Reading
Mary’s understanding and awareness of print and books was assessed alongside; Word Recognition and letter-word concepts. Mary performed competently at knowing the following Reading concepts; ‘can sit for a time and read a book’, can find cover and turn pages correctly’, ‘knows where to start’, ‘has left to right movement’, ‘can identify a word’, and ‘can match one to one’. Other Word concepts she knew included; ‘can match words that are (the) same, eg: here, went, this, we, are’. As well, she ‘can guess a caption for a picture, eg: Here is a house’. In Word Recognition Mary was also able to ‘identify some heavy duty words’.

(d) Oral Language
Oral Language was assessed based along a scale of being ‘very confident’, a ‘confident’ speaker, an ‘average’ speaker, ‘seldom speaks’, to someone who ‘doesn’t speak’. Upon entry to school her teacher recorded Mary ‘seldom speaks’ and again at one month of entry recorded Mary to be an ‘average’ speaker in class.

(e) Language Screen Test
An Oral Vocabulary Language Test (Ministry of Education, 1998) was administered. This test was also modified to include measures that the school sought to assess. The test is
delivered in two sections, one identifies a child’s understanding of Vocabulary. That is, naming ‘body parts’, understanding the use of ‘verbs’, ‘prepositions’, ‘categories’ and ‘functions’. The second section identifies Auditory Memory and Sequencing which have two steps to each part. The Auditory Memory tests a child’s listening skills through instructions by her teacher. At first, two instructions are given followed by a further three instructions for the child to demonstrate. The Sequencing section requires the child to place a picture in the correct order. The first picture the child is shown relates to ‘making a sandwich’ and the second show ‘cleaning my teeth’. Each correct response is recorded. Mary’s teacher if necessary can identify incorrect responses as ‘areas for development’. In this case, Mary achieved a total score of 100% across Vocabulary and Auditory Memory sections in this assessment.

**Assessment Summary**

Upon entry into this classroom, Mary was observed by her teacher as “very quiet, works well.” At one month on entry to school, her teacher’s comments reflected she, “uses known words in storywriting, does not attempt unknown words, beautiful handwriting.”
Child Two: Mark

Literacy Activities at Home

Mark’s mother spent a great deal of time with him before he went to school, and described herself as ‘more controlled and conscious’ in regards to the time spent helping Mark prepare for school. She commented that she was more laid back with her older son Quentin than she was with Mark, stating that she was able to experiment with the teaching process of her older son and she had a better understanding and idea how to apply this knowledge when teaching Mark.

Early Childcare Experience

Mark attended a public kindergarten daily from 3:6 years of age. Mark’s mother strongly believed that it was a ‘parent’s duty’ to help provide their children some structured learning prior to school. She explored several different early childcare services with her older son until she found a service that provided for his learning needs. She wanted a more ‘structured’ learning environment that would help him develop literacy skills prior to school.

Mark’s mother was a parent helper at the kindergarten and would support the kindergarten when special outings were planned. Her parent help at the kindergarten increased her knowledge about the sorts of literacy activities that she could also integrate into home activities with her children. Mark would bring home a scrapbook from kindergarten with small interactive activities for him to do at home with his family. Samples of some of the activities from kindergarten are shown in the following figures 5.6, 5.6a, 5.6b, 5.6c, 5.6d and 5.6e.
Figure 5.6: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Oct '98)

Figure 5.6a: Development of literacy activities at Kindergarten (Oct '98)

Mia Gra [Mark,]

Every Friday we bring our morning tea to kindergarten in a lunchbox, or bag. Lately we have been taking our morning tea to the reserve by kindergarten and having a picnic.

What game do we play after we have had our picnic? Do you like playing it?

Draw a picture about having a picnic, or playing "Duck, duck, goose"! (Don't forget to write your name).

[Mark's drawing and writing]

Duck, duck, goose is fun. Isn't it.
Mark
Good drawing.
Wednesday 10th May, 1994

Hello Mark,

On Monday Carol, the Dental Nurse came to talk to us. She showed us what she wears when she is working.

Draw a picture about the Dental Nurse, or draw a picture about you brushing and looking after your teeth.

Don't forget to write your name!

It looks like you are looking after your teeth. Mark. Well done!
Transition to School

Mark felt nervous and a little overwhelmed on entry to school. Mark attended pre-school visits approximately a month prior to starting school. During this time his mother gained valuable knowledge about daily classroom routines and how some literacy activities were constructed. In particular, she noted instructional processes his teacher (Mrs Gabriel) emphasised during writing activities that she found useful. She commented that this knowledge enabled her to incorporate into her own teaching strategies with her children at home.

During Mark’s first week his mother described her son becoming tearful and at times reluctant to join the class. Mark’s teacher reassured his mother that it was common for children to behave this way as they made the transition into school. She even suggested to his mother that it be all right for her to take him home if he did not settle. Mark’s mother continued taking her son to school so that he could settle more quickly rather than have the routine interrupted. Within a week he had begun to settle and adjust to the new environment and the classroom routine quickly.

Classroom Story Writing

Teacher-child interactions were analysed during a story writing session in the classroom. Connections between Mark’s writing at home and in the classroom demonstrated important aspects around a child’s ability to utilise early writing skills across multiple settings.

Whole Group Story Writing Activity

The routine for the story writing activity observed in this classroom demonstrated a combination of process writing and the language experience approach (Smith & Elley, 1997). Mark’s teacher introduced a topic, which provides in the standard lesson format a bridge to personal writing and collaborative writing. It sits within a wide curriculum and introduces the creation of rich text using versatile activities (McNaughton, 2002). There was little evidence for its direct effects in building Mark’s awareness of story writing and had little known resonance for Mark with out of school activities or expertise. However as a bridge to the next activity it did enable the incorporation of a personal topic.
4th November 1998.

Kim Ora Mark,

As you may have noticed, our swan plant is swamped in caterpillars, which has attracted growing interest from the children. Could you please draw or find pictures of one or more of the stages of the life cycle of a caterpillar. (e.g., pictures of a caterpillar, cocoon, or a butterfly.)

At least drawing

m a 9
Prior to individual story writing taking place, his teacher introduced this event as a whole group activity providing instructions for the writing activity. This particular observation follows on from a previous class discussion the class had participated in about the role of the SPCA (Society for Prevention and Cruelty to Animals). His teacher engaged in a class discussion about a 'Pet' they may own or would like to own. This topic provided the theme for the story writing activity. Clearly the teacher had a specific topic in mind for this activity. The interactions of this activity are shown in the following excerpt.
Teacher: What were we talking about yesterday? What were we talking about?  
Child 1: (calls out) …SPCA (other children repeat).  
Teacher: Yes, we were talking about the SPCA. But we haven’t been to the SPCA yet so probably you can’t write about it very well yet. But what else can we talk about?  
Child 2: (calls out) …Cats?  
Teacher: Yes, cats, but not just cats…  
Child 3: (calls out) …Puppies?  
Teacher: …puppies …we talked about puppies … But what is the first word that tells us about all those things … (writing the word ‘pets’) … cats … puppies? (another child interrupts)  
Child 4: The big dog?  
Teacher: No. What I really want you to tell me about was …. (writes the word ‘Pets’ on the whiteboard) What does this word say?” (underlining the word “Pets”) (one child attempts to spell the word out, another child shouts out “Pets”) (repeats) … what does this word say? (the same child calls out “Pets”) …Ok, who’s got a pet? (some children put up their hands) …Hands down. Who’d like a pet? (some more children raise their hands) …Alright, you could either write me a story about your pet. I want to hear about your pet … … and if you haven’t got a pet perhaps you could tell Mrs Gabriel what kind of pet you would like. Who hasn’t got a pet and would like a pet? (one or two children raise their hands). Bessy, have you got a pet, Edwina, have you got a pet? (nodding) Ok. But if you haven’t you could perhaps write about one you would like.  

The general theme about animals resonated with topics familiar to Mark, as the flow-on activities illustrate. Following on from the class discussion his teacher assigned children to one of two groups of writing instruction. One small group was completing publications while the rest of the class began writing their story based on the ‘pet’ theme. The second group was instructed to draw a picture, followed by a story underneath, which the teacher was to assess and comment on when finished. Mark joined a group of four other boys at a table to make a start on the activity. Conversing with his peers played an important part in his participation in the writing activity.
Peer Collaboration Over Drawing for Writing

A small group activity followed which provided opportunities for peer collaboration. It was not known how this resonated with out of school activities. A notable feature of children working together in small groups includes the contribution that ‘small talk’ contributes to building awareness in activities like writing (Cazden, 2001; Dyson, 1999). Peer collaboration can have powerful motivational value especially for children who commonly share interactive roles between older and younger siblings or members of their community (Cazden, 1992; Hohepa, 1990).

Mark I'm going to draw my pet.
Child 1 You colour in your pet.
Mark See look what I've done. See? (showing previous drawings of animals)
Child 1 Can you draw this? Eh? Can you draw this? (shows Mark his drawing)
Mark (nods)
Child 1 Go on then draw it.
Mark (Mark proceeds to draw a house commentig to his peers at the table…) This house … has two windows.
Child 2 (repeats) … windows.
Mark (Out loud to himself) I’m going to make my pet outside.
(He begins drawing and comments to the peer next to him) My cat’s big.
Child 1 What?
Mark My cat’s big.
(Both look at the picture together then continue with their own drawings…)

The children (Mark and two children) rehearse different aspects of the same task. Mark and child 1 both show some confusion over what the task requires, whether Mark has to draw or colour his pet. In fact they are both correct because Mark needs to draw, then colour in his picture. The interaction between Mark and in particular with child 1 seems to allow each of them to learn from each other in a playful context as they share each other’s viewpoints without any reasoning or negotiating. Their talk moves between current and previous drawings that add to their playful rivalry about who can draw the best. As Mark finishes his drawing he begins to utilise several strategies in developing his story.
Personal Story Writing

Following the discussion Mark personally constructed his ‘story’. The development of Mark’s story emerged from his drawing (of a house and a cat). It read, ‘I see the can’ (cat). It appears to adopt a simple narrative structure common to beginning reading texts, but it develops into a personal account. The creation of this simple text occurred through a versatile activity, with resonance with Mark’s incorporating his experience of composing accounts. The example that follows shows Mark incorporating component strategies and incorporating specific item knowledge (McNaughton, 2002). This came to be a familiar activity for Mark, but at this stage there is little evidence for direct effects on his awareness of types of text and text production. A description of his performance during the activity follows:

Mark

I saw… (Mark is unsure how to spell the word ‘saw’. He checks previous writing he has produced from his writing book, then decides to ask a friend…) How do you spell ‘saw’? … (asking a peer)

(He doesn’t get a response, therefore begins to sound out the word himself)

sss … aw (sounding out loud)

(Mark makes a finger space before he produces the first letter, ‘s’. He repeats the word ‘saw’ again and decides, (instead of figuring out how to spell the rest of the word) to substitute it for another word ‘see’. As he writes the new word he sounds it out emphasizing the ..ee, followed by Mark saying and writing the rest of the sentence. Mark says ‘cat’ but writes ‘can’)

I s…s…ee. …I see the cat.

Throughout the development of his story Mark utilized several possible strategies. For example, his uncertainty to spell the word ‘saw’ prompted him to first, check previous written work and secondly he resorted to asking another peer. Where these options turned out unsuccessful Mark attempted the word by himself. His knowledge of letter-sound relationships was facilitated in the spelling of this word. However, where he was unable to ‘figure out’ how to spell ‘saw’ he instead substituted another word, ‘see’, a word with which perhaps he was more familiar and could spell correctly and a word that perhaps he understood would fit into the linguistic context of his story. The versatility of the activity enabled Mark to engage at a level at which he could perform efficiently.
However, the lack of contingent response from his peer may have limited developing awareness further.

After completing the sentence Mark takes his work to show his teacher. She comments on his drawing.

**Teacher**  Now do you think that you could colour your house in with crayon?
That would be good.

Earlier home discussions with his mother revealed that Mark’s confidence at being able to attempt to spell words independently could partly be attributed to his mother providing a model of a word for him to copy. His mother recalled that if Mark was unable to spell a word she would write the word onto a separate paper for him to copy. She added that she encouraged him to write his name using a similar strategy of a model and where he became ‘stuck’ she would help him sound out individual letters. Utilizing this strategy developed from teaching her older child how to write, stressing that, “…it was important that he (her older child) know how to spell his name and be able to identify the alphabet and how to count”. The importance of teaching her children these basic writing skills was, as she explained, to provide both of them with “…a good boost to start school” with. As well as identifying letters of the alphabet, Mark’s mother considered that knowing the sounds of a letter helped in the spelling of words. Incorporating what his mother had shown him, Mark was able to produce words and parts of words successfully (see figures 5.7, 5.7a, 5.7b) before he began school.
A letter written by Mark and addressed to his Kindergarten teacher.
Figure 5.7a: Writing conventional letters at home (Feb '99)

Figure 5.7b: Developing writing expertise at home (Oct '98)
Since Mark had started school, his mother observed him more frequently at home attempting to spell words alone. She made the comment that, “…he’s actually trying to spell it (words). He’ll try it himself. He would rather do it himself”. This may partly account for Mark’s attempt in producing the word ‘can’ in the classroom writing activity (see above) as being acceptable. That is, hearing and comprehending the beginning letters of the word and not the ending. It perhaps emphasizes the process of how children come to comprehend that words are made up of a group of letters in a particular sequence, and eventually attending to all the letters in a word is part of the process of becoming a young writer (Clay, 1991).

Figure 5.8: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Sept ’98)
One activity where Mark was applying his understanding in the spelling and sequencing of a word was in name writing. His mother had earlier stated that he was able to write his own name, ‘mum’, and ‘dad’ (see figures 5.8, 5.8a, and 5.8b). She admitted that these names were relatively easier to write than trying to write his brother’s name (Quentin). His mother described how Mark was familiar with his brother’s name and how he “knows the letters but doesn’t know how to put them together properly…” giving the reason that, “he doesn’t know how to spell it all, yet”. She explained to Mark that writing his brother’s name is “actually longer than ‘mum’, ‘dad’ and Mark” suggesting that his brother’s name required more letters to be remembered (see figure 5.9 and 5.9a).

Figure 5.8a: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Sept ’98)
Figure 5.8b: Developing expertise in name writing at home (Dec '98)
Figure 5.9: Inclusion of family members names in writing activities at home (Aug '98)

Figure 5.9a: Inclusion of family members names in writing activities at home (Aug '98)
Story Writing and Continued Peer Collaboration

Once Mark had shown his teacher his writing attempt he was instructed to return to complete colouring in his drawing. He relayed to a friend his teacher’s remark that he was, “…a good boy” conveying to the rest of his peers information that may be helpful. The following peer collaboration has the same general features as described above.

Mark  Mrs B won’t like that. She won’t like that, eh? (turning to another peer) … eh, will she like it? … No. You have to colour in, you have to colour in.
Child  It’s orange. Look! (painting to Marks drawing)
Mark  (looking at his friends drawing, laughing) …You have to colour that in too (traces over his sentence) … Yes, I’m not lying.
Child  That’s not writing! (referring that you don’t colour in words)
Mark  …Yes. See. (pointing to his picture) … gold, gold!
Child  That’s a different gold (he searches for a yellow crayon) … This is gold, this is a gold here.
Mark  Oh yeah! This is the same as me.
Child  This is a gold (showing Mark another yellow crayon).
Mark  You’re not allowed skates at school, eh? You might … kill somebody. (They continue to finish colouring their drawings.)

The three children exchanged a light-hearted, and at times obscure discussion about distinctions between colouring in drawing and writing. However, other observations indicate Mark was trying to distinguish between writing and drawing and was still disambiguating what the task demanded (see below). The discussion quickly comes to an abrupt end as the topic changes. The conversation emerged from the teacher’s earlier response to Mark’s drawing, which she had instructed Mark to colour in his picture. Mark’s initial comment he made to his peers identified his concern about the importance of producing work in accordance to the teachers’ expectations. His concern may also serve the purpose that following the teacher’s instructions is extremely important. Similar to the piece of work Mark took home which showed his name scribbled over instead of traced or copied as his mother explained to him. She also commented “he listens to what the teacher says”. Perhaps following the teacher’s instructions regardless of whether he knew how to write his name or not is part of the process where children are coming to understand the rules of the classroom. That is, learning to obey instructions. The goals for drawing seem to be developing clearly in this episode, but they are essentially irrelevant to the purposes of writing. If they are to serve the purpose of careful
observation and representation functioning as a narrative prop to writing then there is little evidence for awareness of these goals developing. Mark’s peers didn’t appear to have this goal in mind.

**Teacher-child Collaboration During Story Writing**

As each child completed their individual story they were taken up to the teacher to be assessed, following the general format of a writing conference (Smith & Elley, 1997). The following interaction between Mark and his teacher shows his attempt at producing a story, which leads to the development of a collaborative story, they both elaborate together.

**Teacher** Can you read me your story? You read me your story (writes in the date at the top of his page).

**Mark** (reads his story aloud, points to each word) … I see the cat.

**Teacher** Oh, good boy. Very good boy! (Writes out the word cat correctly beneath his attempt can) … That’s a very good story.

**Mark** (comments) … cats outside.

**Teacher** (checking) … your cat’s outside?

**Mark** (nods)

**Teacher** Does he sleep outside?

**Mark** (nods)

**Teacher** What does he do while your at school?

**Mark** Having kai.

**Teacher** Having kai! Is he? Having kai while you’re at school?

**Mark** (nods)

Contingent responsiveness in the form of semantically appropriate response by Mark’s teacher, and providing space for Mark’s own response were evident in this interaction. After the praise, which does little to promote awareness because it is non descriptive and unclear why it is a good story, Mark initiates further conversation and added to his account using a familiar topic (his cat being outside). This recount is incorporated into the activity and his teacher’s contingent question extends the recount adding further information. His teacher recognised and accepted the incorporation of the colloquial Māori word ‘kai’.

161
After a brief reading of Mark’s story, both Mark and his teacher collaborated in constructing what was called a new story. Mark’s earlier comment about his cat prompted the teacher to question and elaborate further his story. Their discussion created the platform and development of the narrative. There may be a problem for developing awareness of stories as coherent (extended) narratives in his teacher’s use of the term ‘story’, although it was consistently applied to refer to completed sentences.

Okay, can you tell me a story about your cat?

My cat is having his kai.

Alright then. You can write ‘cat’ ‘my cat’. Leave a nice big space (indicating where to leave gaps. Mark proceeds to write the letters ‘ca’ and pauses) … Can you hear the sound … cat … t … t (emphasising the ‘t’).

My cat is ‘t’?

Nods

(writes the letter ‘t’)

(says the next word) … ‘is’ … You write ‘is’ while I come back. Mark makes a finger space gap then writes ‘is’. His teacher returns to read his story) … ‘My cat is’ …? … What? (Mark doesn’t respond, she asks) … Right at this moment ‘my cat is’ doing what?

Eating!

Good boy (indicates where to write ‘eating’).

(writes a letter ‘t’, then pauses).

(writes the word ‘eating’ for Mark, says) … ‘My cat is eating’? What’s he eating?

Kai!

Do you know what ‘kai’ starts with? Kai, kai … spell kai?

K?

Yeah, good boy.

(thinking how to write ‘k’, he hesitates, the teacher helps to sound out the letter for him).

Kai, … ‘k’ (sounding the letter) for ‘kai’. Can you make the ‘k’?

(shakes his head)

No, no, never mind (writes the word ‘kai’ and continues to write the last word ‘outside’ for Mark). You read me the two stories.
Through his teacher’s guidance Mark was able to participate in producing his second story. There were some words and letters he was able to write confidently and others that required prompting by his teacher. His teacher’s guidance included highlighting the last sound in cat /t/, clarifying the task of representing sounds in decoding / encoding. There were also occasions when it appeared that his teacher assumed Mark could write some words and not others of which she would write for him and enable him to try others. For example, the teacher had already written ‘my’ without prompting him first perhaps assuming that Mark was unfamiliar with this word. Towards the end of the interaction his teacher resumed the responsibility of performing the task by writing the last two words. First she sounded out the word ‘kai’ emphasizing the letter ‘k’ and perhaps making the assumption that Mark would be familiar with most alphabet letters. Mark’s hesitation and queries and then explicit signal about not knowing what to do led his teacher to continue writing this word and the last word.

It is interesting to note both participants’ roles during the interaction. They both appeared to be trying to find out what the other is going to do next. The teacher having been distracted perhaps changed the initial phrasing of ‘having kai’ to the phrase ‘eating kai’. Her last comment seems to add some confusion about the task, whether to copy over the model or to copy underneath.

Teacher and Parent Awareness

Classroom observations for Mark began in his second week at school. Mark had participated in some of the writing activities while he attended preschool morning visits with his mum. One of the activities in which he participated involved writing a story from a drawing (see figure 5.10). His teacher commented on his story saying that it was “well written” and also concluded that he couldn’t have written it on his own believing that his mother must have helped him to write it. She pointed out that “he couldn’t have known
how to spell elephant” and mentioned perhaps he copied it from somewhere or that his mother spelt it for him.

Mark’s teacher’s uncertainty was based on a piece of Mark’s writing that she observed during one of his first school visits. Mark had written several words filling his entire page (see figure 5.10). Mark’s writing revealed a great deal about his knowledge in relation to the writing process, such as use of capitals, spacing, and letter ordering when writing and spelling words. Another piece of writing showed, with a lot of effort Mark had been able to produce a sample of familiar words he was capable of putting together when making up a story (see 5.10a). She said, “...it didn’t make sense, there were random known words and no sentence structure.” She acknowledged Mark’s competence in being able to produce some words saying that, “Mark certainly knows a lot of words for a child at this school but he's still to learn the structure of sentences...words and comprehension.” Instead she had superimposed and written out a (proper) story, following some discussion with Mark. This was followed by Mark having to trace over each word. The sentence read, “I am playing with the blocks” (see figure 5.11).

Discussions with his mother confirmed her involvement in the earlier activity. With the help of his mother he wrote, “The elephant is eating grass Dad” (see figure 5.10). She stressed that “it was Mark who thought of and wrote the story by himself”. His mother’s actions prompted Mark to use the alphabet chart displayed in the classroom to help him find the word ‘elephant’. By directing his attention to the chart she explained “look up at the, a, b, c’s … see there’s an ‘e’ for elephant. That's how you spell elephant … there’s a picture of an elephant and the word elephant”. When asked if Mark wrote the rest of the story his mother confirmed that, “… be did it all by himself”. She further added that, she didn’t “… want to write it for him. He really wants to write it himself.” Her comments emphasised her son’s confidence in wanting to write independently. At home, she mentioned how they spent a lot of time drawing, or reading with their children. She also pointed out that Mark loved writing letters of his name and alphabet letters. For example, his mother described, “it’s like he’s trying to write a letter … to somebody … he just gets down and starts writing … writing down letters that make up a story” (see figures 5.7 5.7a, 5.7b).
Figure 5.10: Mark’s personal story writing exercise during a preschool visit (March '99)

THE ELEPHANT IS EATING GRASS DAD.

The elephant is eating grass.
Figure 5.10a: Personal expertise in story writing during a preschool visit (March ’99)

Figure 5.11: Personal expertise in story writing during a preschool visit (March ’99)
The need for Mark to disambiguate participation is shown in writing his name at school. His mother produced a piece of work that Mark had brought home from school, which showed that his name had been scribbled over. She had questioned him about why he did this stressing to him that, “you don’t do it like that. You write over your name or you do your name by itself”. She later reminded his teacher of his ability to be able to write his own name saying that, “maybe she (teacher) forgot because she says he’s probably one of the only ones who can do that (write his name) in the class”.

This is a powerful example of the family activity as a source of the teacher’s awareness. The intervention by Mark’s mother had an effect. During a later observation in the classroom, the teacher did make the error of writing out his name for him to copy. Realizing what she had done, she quickly erased the model apologizing and remembering that his mother had in fact pointed out to her that he could already write his name. The transference of knowledge from one setting, activity or from one caregiver to another is a critical area where teacher’s lack of personal detailed knowledge can be augmented. There were many examples of Mark’s expertise in name writing prior to school from his experience at home and in Kindergarten (see figures 5.6-5.6e and 5.8-5.9).

The observations also show how a child’s expertise if it already resonates with a classroom activity primes the teacher to see, make sense of and evaluate a child’s knowledge and skills positively. In this case what is seen was already quite well developed conventional school forms of literacy. However, ‘seeing’ this expertise was somewhat clouded by an expectation that this was probably too advanced for Mark to have done himself.

**Guided Reading Activity**

Guided reading sessions (Smith & Elley, 1997) took place between Mark and his teacher each morning following classroom language activities. In the general format, each child was given a new ‘reader’ every day to take home to read to a family member. A record of each book read at home was kept in a journal and signed. At the start of each reading session this book was read first. Following this activity his teacher introduced another new reader. The new reader becomes the book the child takes home and shares with a family member.
Reading books at home was an integral part of the family everyday practices. At home Mark’s mother read to the children on an almost daily occurrence. Listening to a story being read was more common rather than interacting in any shared discussion. This activity gave Mark insights into how books from school are read. It was a more convenient and a preferred style to read an uninterrupted bedtime story especially given the busy lifestyle and sometimes limited time available to hear a story. For example, watching and listening to his older brother read books sent home from school provided Mark with a ‘model’ in which school books are read. Having an older child already attending school made the routine of reading a school journal an embedded and familiar activity. There were recorded incidents where Mark was observed imitating book reading similar to hearing his brother reading. His mother described his actions where he would pick up a book, “…looking at the letters and making up his own story, trying to read it, even though he wasn’t actually reading any of the words.” Sometimes he would memorize some of the actual words from a story and pretend to read.

The following interactions between Mark and his teacher show him reading his home reader with his teacher. There are instances of building awareness of the new goals. The teacher focused Mark’s attention on ‘pointing’. She had to assist Mark in helping him recall word knowledge relating to the story.

**Teacher**  
Point your finger ready. Is that the hand you like to point with?

**Mark**  
(nods)

**Teacher**  
Good boy. Can you point underneath?

**Mark**  
(begins reading)

…Lambs like milk.

…Calves like milk.

(Pauses, checks the picture)

**Teacher**  
Can you remember the name for a baby horse?

**Mark**  
(no response, continues looking at the picture)

**Teacher**  
…a foal … a foal

**Mark**  
(repeats) … a foal.

(Mark continues to read without any errors to the last page and reads…)

…we like milk.

**Teacher**  
(the teacher praises Mark for his reading and introduces the next new reader)
It is not uncommon during guided or shared reading for the teacher to direct the child’s attention to various parts of the text through ‘instructional detours’ (see Cazden, 1992; Smith and Elley, 1997) highlighting the structural properties of a book, strategies and concepts. Establishing concepts and actions of directionality, orientation and sequence is a major goal for early instruction (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002). Teachers may point to individual words as an instructional property and a property of texts when young readers are following a line of text (directional movement) to help in recognising individual words and building concepts about print (Clay, 1979). Hence, the significance to Mark of repeated opportunities to point for direction, orientation and sequence.

Mark was already familiar with the concept of ‘pointing’ to words from having observed his older brother reading at home. His mother described a “typical reading” event when her older son who at the time had not long just started school. Part of her preparation during reading sessions was “trying to separate the two boys” because of the different interactional styles she experienced with each child. For example, the session with her older son was more formal and child directed, requiring him to read in a particular style. Like getting him to recognise and point to individual words. His mother felt her role was to monitor and guide his reading therefore played a passive role during reading sessions rather than directing the activity. In contrast, the reading with Mark was more informal, and it was usually read by mum or dad, focusing on the narrative.

The reading sessions at home with Mark’s brother helped in the development of his reading. For instance his mother commented, “…Mark picks up a lot from watching, and listening to Quentin.” These incidents described Mark’s knowledge in recognising the way in which some narratives were structured. Some of the narratives he heard had similar sentence structures to the school readers Mark were given to take home. For example, the reading session between Mark and his teacher already mentioned, indicated his reader had patterns of repetitive sentences which read, “…lambs like milk, calves like milk, foals like milk etc”. The predictable sentence structure allowed Mark to successfully read each sentence partly with the help of a picture as a cue to his reading. Where the task proved challenging for Mark was trying to recognise the name (foal) of one of the animals even when he attempted to remember by looking at the picture. When this attempt proved to be unsuccessful, his pause encouraged his teacher to respond by telling him the unknown word.
Discussions at home with Mark’s mother revealed that when Mark was unable to read a word usually a ‘pause’ was an indication for his mother to respond by saying the word. The ‘pause’ in this instance with his teacher was a strategy Mark found successful in getting a much quicker result for this activity, similar to the result he would have received while reading with his mum. The corollary of a reader pausing is a teacher creating space for it to occur. In the example above, where he was unable to identify the word ‘foal’ he was able figure out and apply his word knowledge where the sentence structure changed. Mark continued reading the rest of the text without error recognising the variation in the sentence structure in the final sentence, “…we like milk.”

**Introducing an Unfamiliar Text**

The reading lesson in the classroom included the introduction of an unfamiliar book to Mark. Re-reading the same text increases familiarity of a text and possibly ‘memorising’ of the text. Teachers may introduce an unfamiliar text to see what reading skills the child brings to the activity (Clay, 1991).

Following the shared re-reading of the home reader the teacher introduced a new text. A brief explanation about the story was given before elaborating words, concepts and actions relevant to the text. Towards the end of the discussion before Mark began reading his teacher reminded him, as she did in the earlier reading, about pointing, further evidence for the presence of consistency in instructional language, which may help build awareness (McNaughton, 2002).

**Teacher**

This is a story about a person getting dressed up pretending to be a goat. It’s called ‘The goats’ *(running her finger across the title encouraging Mark to repeat).*

**Mark**

‘The goats’ *(pointing to each word)*

**Teacher**

Good boy!

What’s she got on to make her look like a goat?

*(pointing to the picture beneath the title)*

**Mark**

A coat?

**Teacher**

Yes … and a paper bag with some eyes cut out.

*(She motions Mark to begin reading, reminding him to point…)*

… right, do your pointing now?

**Mark**

*(He begins reading, pointing to each word. He read confidently and without error. Once finished the teacher asked several questions relating to the text).*
Given that this text was a new reader and an unfamiliar text it appeared that the instructional reading level for Mark was too easy as Mark read the text without error. While this might aid awareness via immersion, it is not a very good context to provoke or highlight new learning. Perhaps the teacher knew he could decode but wanted Mark to expand his event knowledge and hence build story comprehension. Clearly the teacher’s focus was on the themes and narrative features of the story, for example the central intention of ‘pretending’. For instance during a discussion about the topic his teacher encouraged Mark’s participation by allowing him to elaborate his understanding of the topic. He responded in a manner that was satisfactory to his teacher’s query. Mark read the entire text by himself confidently and without error.

The following exchange between Mark and his teacher highlight the discussion that led to the rephrasing of her question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Show me mum? <em>(pointing to the picture)</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td><em>(points to the word ‘mum’)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Show me dad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td><em>(points to the word ‘dad’)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Can you point to mum … in the picture? <em>(pauses)</em> … Where’s mum in the picture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td><em>(points to mum in the picture)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yeah. Where’s dad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td><em>(points to dad in the picture)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Good boy!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the completion of the reading Mark’s teacher returned his focus to the narrative. However, the way in which his teacher’s direction was phrased was ambiguous and caused some confusion to Mark. That is, show the ‘word’ mum, versus show the ‘illustration’ of mum. In previous examples, Mark was familiar with the concept of pointing for word identification. When the concept was associated with finding ‘mum’ in the picture the question was too general and required greater specificity of the task. The confusion was resolved by a rephrasing of the question. Seeing his response, his teacher modified her question to one that was more explicit in directing him where to look, to “where’s mum … in the picture?” Mark was able to respond by pointing to mum in the picture without hesitation. This also enabled Mark to respond to the next question, “…where’s dad” without having to be prompted further, indicating rapid learning.
However it is not immediately clear from the discussion why it might be important in the narrative to know where the mum and dad are in relationship to the child dressed up as a goat, and how using the illustration helps. Leaving the reason unspecified misses an opportunity to clarify an attribute of knowing the text the teacher felt was important. Both the teacher and Mark were able to develop a shared understanding of this task by negotiating and readjusting their level of understanding in this activity.

Mark’s teacher continued to maintain his focus on the narrative encouraging him to participate by elaborating intentions, feelings and states of the characters. His reluctance to participate in any further shared text discussion may have been because of the possible confusion from the previous example. Also, given that Mark had just completed reading his home reader followed by the introduction of a new book, perhaps made his level of concentration begin to decline.

Teacher (Turns the page, asks) …Oh, what’s she doing? Why’s she looking so frightened? What’s she saying?

Mark (Mark doesn’t respond, the teacher prompts again…)

Teacher What do you say when your frightened? … Because she wants to frighten him. Look, poor mum and dad are really frightened, aren’t they?

Mark (nods, agreeing with the teacher).

Teacher Good reading, and I like the way you’ve been taking your book bag home each night!

Assessment Data Results
The New Entrant Assessment package was administered by the Head teacher of the Junior School approximately 6 weeks after Mark child began school.

1. Entry to School Check
The data collected for measuring literacy knowledge included a Self Portrait and Name Writing activity and the Junior Oral Language Screening Test (Ministry of Education, 1998). A Reading and Social Skills assessment was included in the package but had not yet been administered at the time of collating this information. Each assessment
conducted was discussed and an overall summary of his progress according to the assessment data follows at the end of this section.

(a) Self Portrait and Name Writing
This assessment was administered at 7 weeks after this child began school. A full self portrait was produced along with Mark's successful attempt to write his name (see figure 5.12). On the same assessment were recorded whether the child is right or left-handed and whether the child holds a pencil correctly, which was indicated positively.

(b) Language and Vocabulary
An Oral Language and Vocabulary test (Ministry of Education, 1998) was administered by the Head Junior School Teacher at approximately 6 weeks after entry into school. There are three sections that test Vocabulary, Grammar and Oral Language providing the class teacher an understanding of the child’s expressive language use. Mark’s performance on this test is discussed in more detail below.

Vocabulary
This section of the test requires the child to identify parts of the body, the body functions and understanding the use of verbs. Mark was able to identify and meet all the requirements in this part of the test. Overall, he achieved 100% in this section of the test.
Grammar

Mark provided a high understanding of Grammar usage in his knowledge of ‘opposites’, ‘associations’, ‘prepositions’, ‘pronouns’, ‘negatives’, ‘tenses’, and identifying at least known and number of ‘animals’ within 1 minute. He was unfamiliar with the plural for two of the three items (bus and mouse). He was also assessed on some ‘pragmatic’ knowledge of, ‘naming the school’, ‘address’, ‘age’, ‘initiates conversation’ and
‘participates in group discussions’ using a ‘wh’ question. Mark was able to give the name of the school and his age.

**Oral Language**

The Oral Language sample Mark produced showed basic to plain descriptive and expressive language use. He was able to describe the picture scene used in J.O.S.T providing the following summary:

- Someone’s eating.
- Someone’s riding.
- A balloon is up the air.
- A dog’s woofing.
- Someone’s putting on the socks and shoes.
- A bird flying.
- The balloon up the sky.

**Assessment Summary**

Overall Mark was seen as having made high progress in activities such as oral language and Vocabulary upon entry to school. As well, he was able to write his name contrary to the classroom teacher’s assumption of what he was able to do. Given that this assessment was administered and conducted by the Junior Head Teacher there were some inconsistencies in knowing what Mark was able to achieve between the time he began school to when he was assessed. It is also uncertain how much information from the assessments was shared between the administrator of the test and Mark’s teacher. The providers of the J.O.S.T (Ministry of Education, 1998) test recommend that the administration of the test be given by the class teacher or a person working with the child to take into consideration other influencing factors that they observe during the session, such as concentration span, cueing necessary and response time.
Child Three: Theresa

Literacy Activities at Home

Theresa’s mother described a broad range of literacy activities taking place at home. These included quite structured activities that Theresa took part in with her mother as well as activities that involved other family members. Theresa’s mother described on many occasions that Theresa would bring books for her mother to read to her. These included fable, fairy tale stories she enjoyed. Her mother recalled she made cards for birthdays and ‘special’ occasions like Father’s Day (see figure 5.13). She also stated that Theresa loved watching T.V videos and listening to a read along tape and book story.

Figure 5.13: Literacy activities at home (Oct. ’98)

Early Childcare Experience

Theresa had been a part of the HIPPY programme (a parent education programme focused on supporting children’s cognitive and language development) but the family couldn’t continue in the programme because of work commitments, once Theresa started school at five years of age. Her mother stated she became involved in the HIPPY programme through her sister-in-law. They both had their children attend a playcentre, which informed them of the programme. Theresa’s mother was also involved in the Parents as First Teachers Programme (PAFT), having been contacted about the programme at the hospital when she was there having her second child. She commented,
“…I thought it was really cool because it was especially for a lot of Māori women that were more from lower socio-economic group.”

Theresa’s mother commented that as a new mother she had no idea of the different programmes available for families to encourage their children’s literacy. She spent a considerable amount of time supporting and guiding Theresa as she worked on the daily HIPPY homework schedules. She was committed to helping prepare Theresa in making the transition to school.

**Reading and Story Telling**

Many of the features of writing and reading noted with Mark and Mary occurred with Theresa. During this section of the study we concentrate on showing the processes also at work during classroom story telling and language activities that resonated with similar literacy and language activities at home.

**Reading to the Whole Class**

The activity of story retelling followed on from a ‘whole group’ storybook reading session that the teacher introduced to the entire class. Reading to the whole class places some limits on a versatile activity (McNaughton, 2002). Among them are constraints on personalising interactions and thereby reducing the potential for incorporation. However with a rich text and with suitable teacher commentary and discussion it is possible to build awareness (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002). The text used during an observation was familiar to Theresa and had a repetitive structure. During the reading Theresa’s teacher (Mrs Muriel) focussed on two styles of participation. In one she encouraged children to contribute to the reading by performing. The type of text aided this and the performance style took the form of completing sentences marked by the teacher with a rising intonation followed by a pause. However, she also used a second style of interaction focussed on the narrative. On several levels there was potential incorporation of Theresa’s familiarity with both these styles. This potential was then realised in the following small group activity reported below. Theresa was observed actively engaging in the activity.

**Teacher**  
Lucy went home to watch television. The rooster sat on the armchair. It went… *(pause)*

**Together**  
cock-a-doodle-doo!
Teacher: Take that rooster…? (pause)
Children: OUT!
Teacher: …said Dad. So Lucy put the rooster on the…? (pause)
Children: Gate!
Teacher: …the gate.

These performance routines were present in the shared reading between Theresa and her mother. Before Theresa went to school they read a book called ‘Goodbye Berry’ (HIPPY, 1994). At the end of each line, Theresa’s mother included expressive intonation patterns to help point to where Theresa could imitate. Theresa imitated her mother’s responses.

Mother (Reading) Berry wanted to go away, he wanted to go to a different place, a better place, and a more beautiful place. He said goodbye to his bed and closed the door with the picture of a strawberry on it and left. Goodbye Berry.
Theresa: Goodbye Berry

The main character, ‘Berry’ meets a bird, and a goat that he invites to join him on his journey to “find a different, a better, more beautiful place”. The animals and ‘Berry’ soon arrive at a big city where they find it to be an unpleasant, unwelcoming place. They decide to go back home. As they climb the last hill they soon see for themselves just how ‘beautiful’ the green hills looked (where the goat lived), and the ‘beautiful’ tall trees (where the bird lived) and Berry’s ‘beautiful’ home. As the story nears the end Theresa increases her participation by imitating her mother’s contributions more frequently during the reading:

Mother: The bird saw her three trees…
Theresa: (counting each tree) … one, two, three … ‘trees’…
Mother: …from far away and they looked…sooo beautiful
Theresa: …sooo beautiful
Mother: They were the most beautiful trees she had ever seen. Goodbye bird.
Theresa: Goodbye.

During the reading activity at school there were questions her teacher initiated that deliberately encouraged elaboration of the text. Interactions had a focus on understanding of the narrative and events around the central problem of finding a place for the rooster where his call won’t interrupt others.
Teacher: Do you think the movies is a good place to take a rooster?
Children: No.
Teacher: Why not?
Child 1: Noise. It'll make too much noise…
Teacher: What else?
Child 2: …and you have to be quiet at the movies.
Teacher: Yes, you have to be quiet at the movies…don’t you think the rooster will be quiet?
Child 3: No. It might flap around.
Child 4: It might wake the movie up.

The exchanges initiated by her teacher not only encouraged the children to participate and respond but it also enabled other children to elaborate on each other’s responses adding to the description of the story.

The reading activity at home and school required her to use expression and to provide very detailed descriptions of what was happening in the story. The instructions from the HIPPY workbook required the reader to, “Read the whole book from beginning to end” without interruptions, listening to the entire story. A series of questions detailing events from the text ‘Goodbye Berry’ were asked at the completion of the story for her to elaborate and give descriptions. For example Theresa’s mother would ask:

Mother: Where did Berry arrive at the end of the story?
Theresa: At home.
Mother: Berry arrived back at home.

Theresa’s mother would elaborate Theresa’s responses providing an explicit description as it was written from the activity book. Another question prompted Theresa to respond further:

Mother: Did Berry find a better place than his home?
Teresa: No.
Mother: No, he didn’t find a better place.

These two examples were recordings from the first reading of this book. A few days later, the same book was introduced and read again with more in depth questions.
Mother  Berry decided to leave home. He said goodbye to the house and left. What was he looking for?

Theresa  A better place, more beautiful place, a different place.

Mother  He wanted a better place, a more beautiful place a different place.

Theresa’s response in the above example illustrates her understanding and expertise; she provided a more elaborate description repeating a larger section of the text.

**Story Retelling in a Small Group**

Prior to an observed activity of story retelling in Theresa’s classroom, each child was assigned to small groups of three children. Theresa’s teacher commented that she found small group learning much better for children who were quieter and participated less with the whole group. She expanded her comments saying it “…help(s) those children who rarely participate in whole group, to actually take part in small groups”. She would choose a person to act as a leader. From the teacher’s view it was, as she advised, “recommended that an ‘older child’ help the younger less experienced children”. That is, a child who had been with the class longer who was familiar with the routine of this activity could provide guidance and leadership. This teacher expressed strong beliefs about the need for children to quickly adapt to the regular routines in class, by providing the same activities in very much the same order with similar instructions stating, “this type of routine helps children establish a pattern that becomes familiar to them without too many changes”. As well, establishing routines in this teacher’s opinion reinforced the importance of making transitions for children into the school environment, making them smoother and, helping them settle into school more quickly.

In this group the leader dictated who talked, when and for how long. Her role was to maintain control, keep the others in the group ‘on task’, provide guidance and direction in helping to ‘structure’ the activity. The observations showed one of the children in Theresa’s group assigned as leader performing imitation and modeling routines reflective of the teacher’s performance. From the retelling transcripts illustrations of the leader exercising similar behavioural patterns as the teacher were evident from her ability to organise the group. For example the leader maintained control over deciding who should talk by at first directing a question inquiring, “what’s she saying over here, please… Theresa?” and systematically choosing another child in this group to respond to the next question making sure that both children participated. Where a child interrupted another child’s
turn, the leader enforced her power and stopped her abruptly by saying, “…YOU’RE not Theresa!” The leader’s style of managing this activity reflected the consistent routine structure that the teacher maintained during the whole group reading activity. It shows the strength of modeling by the teacher and the development of consistency across activities, that is, being able to understand and follow instructions. This style of leadership also reflected the responsibilities and roles of an older ‘more expert’ child responding to the needs of the younger ‘less experienced’ children.

In other classroom activities as well, Theresa was observed being guided and encouraged by other class members the appropriate manner in which to behave and come to understand classroom routines. For example, Theresa was observed adjusting her posture according to what others in the group were doing. Like, being gestured to sit properly (arms folded, legs crossed), or having to raise your hand if you want to ask or respond to a teachers’ question. These incidents enabled her to quickly modify her own behaviour according to what was acceptable in the group as well as in the classroom.
For instance in the classroom her teacher provided simple instructions about participation for the class to be aware of at the beginning of a reading session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Now, this is a story that you can join in … but when I put up my hand what does that mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Stop!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Stop. Right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Theresa did not experience the formalities of what was acceptable and appropriate classroom behaviour she came to understand what was required by observing other classroom members and through the guidance of her teacher. Video recorded incidents showed Theresa being guided by her cousin’s movements and gestures, resembling the responsibilities that a tuakana would have for a teina.

This type of shared learning and the responsibility of an older child leading and guiding younger children are similar to that expressed in Māori families, referred to as tuakana-teina relationship. The role of the each child in this relationship is flexible and responsibilities are interchangeable depending on the circumstances (Pere, 1994). At home, Theresa is the older sibling therefore resumes the role of tuakana when she interacts with her younger brother. Theresa’s experience of having her older cousin
present both at home and in class enabled her to participate in a non-threatening event, which to some extent was fairly familiar.

Theresa’s participation is similar to her experience sharing and retelling stories from the HIPPY programme activity of which she and her whānau had participated. Theresa was asked to describe the next series of events in the story retelling activity. She began to describe the picture on the opposite page, which was not related to the current text. As she began to describe the scene another child in the group interjected, correcting her errors by showing her where to begin and demonstrating the appropriate way to explain. A small extract of the exchange read:

Child 1  Who wants to read me this page? …Theresa.
Theresa  *(quietly says)* Lucy …
Child 1  *(doesn’t hear)* No, her names Lucy.
Theresa  Lucy.
Child 1  …had
Theresa  …had
Child 1  …a
Theresa  …a …fire.
Child 2  No, a rooster.

Child 1  What is…does she have to do now …Theresa?
Theresa  She sat watching TV…the rooster…
Child 1  This one!
Theresa  She’s going home *(describing the picture on the opposite page)*
Child 1  She’s going to put the rooster on the gate.

In this example, Theresa may have understood the process of describing an event from her earlier experiences with reading however, on this occasion she may have misunderstood the implied specific instruction about ‘how’ one describes an event, which corresponds to the context of the current text.

The familiarity of this event was reported by her mother during an activity of playing pretend school. This event evolved from an activity from the HIPPY programme. The
The flexibility and interchangeable nature of roles of the tuakana-teina relationship were captured in this activity allowing Theresa to presume the teacher’s role while her mother accepted the learner’s role and where necessary reversed roles when helping Theresa. The programme instructions required the teacher (Theresa) to “tell the children a story”. Cut out figures from the activity booklet were arranged in a circle, and they posed as the audience listening to a story. In contrast to the reading event at school, the play event enabled Theresa to have some insight into a school activity in familiar surroundings. She was able to create an imaginative elaborative story about a squirrel that had misplaced something.

Theresa

Something was there … and he looked.
He looked and thought … something was there.
But nobody was there.
He thought, it was small.
But he dropped it last time … for a long, long, long ago.
I know he said, said the frog.
Last time I went there, I dropped them all.
No. This is not mine!
It’s somebody else’s.
Are these yours?
Yes. I’ve been going here to find them.
And they went to go … and they waved to each other and they both went to sleep.
And that’s the end of the story.

The story utilised expression and shared exchanges between characters, which she described with rising intonations, similar to the accounts she shared with her mother while reading ‘Goodbye Berry’. It also turned out to have familiarity when she went to school.

During the reading event at home, Theresa’s make-believe story had the basic structural components of a descriptive story with elaborate initiations and exchanges. Likewise, during the reading event with her mother, Theresa was guided and supported through the reading by her mother’s performance. In this instance Theresa’s performance when referring to the picture can be attributed by a comment her mother made through a recorded interview stating “she looks at the pictures to see what the word would be”. She reconstructed her own sentence from using the picture as a vital cue to her retelling.
Another possible resonance that assisted Theresa through the retelling task was the specific instructions the HIPPY activity book provided. For example, during shared reading routines there were particular steps to follow that introduced and suggested ways for the reader to engage with the listener to discuss the components of the book and its text. One of the instructions referred the reader to “point to the cover and discuss the picture” while another suggested to “point to the pictures that illustrate the words you are reading”. This is consistent with her strategy in the classroom activity. The peer interaction allowed Theresa to negotiate her understanding and interpretation of the task. The evidence of this is in the presence of self-corrections (s/c) in this activity.

Theresa

She sat watching …TV…(s/c) …the rooster
He saying, … (s/c) …dad’s saying….

Teacher and Parent Awareness

During an earlier reading account of ‘Goodbye Berry’ from the HIPPY programme, there were recorded incidents where Theresa’s mum assisted her with any difficult words. As a strategy, her mother would remind her to look at each word and try to recognise them and encouraged her to look back at words she had already come across. She explained “sometimes she’ll read one page and it’s got the same word on the next page, but she’ll forget it and I’ll say to her, you know that word is the same as that word (pointing to the previous example)”. Theresa’s mother was quick to point out that “you can tell though that it’s mostly based on memory, that she’s reading it”. To encourage her to recognise and remember each word her mother commented that, “…now, when she reads I make her read out each word so she’s not running them all together”.

Similarly when Theresa began school her mother explained how Theresa would try to pronounce words and try to memorise what letter these words started with. This was elaborated by her mother especially after noticing Theresa’s involvement with more reading from school saying, “she’ll try and guess … I mean most of the time she’ll get it wrong but … she’ll ask me what it (word) starts with …she knows some of the smaller words but she does have trouble with the other words.”

Assessment Data Results

Theresa was assessed twice at school during this study. First approximately 3-4 weeks after entry to school then again approximately 4 weeks after school resumed from the
Christmas break. The first assessment carried out at 3 weeks for Theresa included a School Entry Check that measured her literacy development and adaptation to school.

1. First School Entry Check at 3 Weeks
Theresa’s class teacher carried out a School Entry Check to assess Theresa’s literacy development and adaptation to school. Part of this first assessment included a Self-portrait and Name Writing. As well, a Development and Adaptation to School assessment were conducted to measure, Social Development, Listening and Speaking, Reading, Printing and Story Writing. Finally, Letter Identification (LID) and Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC) were presented as well as a sample of Theresa’s story writing.

(a) Self Portrait and Name Writing
Theresa produced a detailed Self-Portrait along with her attempt to write her name (see figure 5.14). She successfully produced her name with each letter written in the correct sequence including an inverted letter ‘a’, legibly written on the line. The information was consistent with reports from Theresa’s mother of her practising writing her name as part of the requirement from the preschool literacy programme. Writing her name became embedded in other literacy activities at home such as signing letters and her drawings.
(b) Development and Adaptation to School

This assessment was a guide for Theresa’s teacher to check Theresa’s development in literacy skills and how she had adapted to school life in general. There were five categories that measured; Social Development, Listening and Speaking, Reading, Printing and Story Writing. Within each category were several descriptors of skill that were rated as being, ‘consistently’, ‘developed’ or is ‘yet to develop’. A discussion of the five Development and Adaptation categories that Theresa was assessed in follows.

Social Development

The category of Social Development showed Theresa consistently ‘works and plays well with others’, ‘takes turns and shares’, is ‘courteous and co-operative’, ‘can recognise the rights and property of others’, and ‘cares for and looks after belongings’. In this category her skills were recorded as developing in areas where she ‘works quietly and independently’, ‘completes work’, ‘is able to concentrate throughout an activity’ and ‘tidies up after activities’.
Listening and Speaking

The Listening and Speaking category showed Theresa consistently ‘listens to stories attentively’ and ‘listens when others speak’ while she ‘participates willingly in discussions’ and ‘expresses self well’ were observed as developing.

Similarly to the Reading category Theresa’s participation in the preschool literacy programme developed her listening skills. For instance, each reading activity in the programme booklet consisted of listening to a story being told followed by a series of questions related to the story. As well, other activities in the programme had specific instructions that had to be followed in order to complete a task. Theresa’s knowledge of Listening and Speaking skills can possibly be the result of her skills developed from the preschool literacy programme at home.

Reading

In this category the teacher notes say she consistently ‘enjoys participating in stories, rhymes and poems’ while developing in areas where she ‘wants to read and is confident in making an attempt’, ‘gets meaning from books read’, and ‘can recognise some words in stories’.

Printing

Theresa’s development in Printing show that she was competent and consistently able to ‘hold (her) pencil correctly’ and was developing in areas of being able to ‘print her name’ and ‘form letters correctly’.

Story Writing

The Story Writing category recorded that she consistently ‘can tell an idea for recording’ while developing in the skill where she ‘uses some letter/sound knowledge when writing’ and being able to ‘write some words correctly’.

This clearly tapped a family event recorded in an incident where Theresa pretended to play a game of ‘waitress’ with her dad (see figure 5.15). She quickly scribbled a lunch order for her father on a piece of paper starting from the top of the page continuing down to the bottom of the page. At the top of the page she asked her dad to write ‘daddy’ and at the bottom she copied and wrote ‘daddy’ followed by the word ‘Lunch’. Theresa was able to sound out the first letter of the word ‘Lunch’, and with the help of her father
wrote the rest. The activity does give a small insight into her knowledge of writing and how it should look and be presented. As well, it includes a strategy she found useful when working out a word she was not certain about through letter/sound knowledge.

(c) Initial Alphabet Check – Letter Identification (LID)
The LID assessment was administered at approximately 4 weeks after entry to school. Theresa recognised 15 out of 52 upper and lower case letters. There was little direct evidence from home to suggest that specific guidance on recognising individual letters had taken place. The experience of writing from formal and informal events at home however, was more common. For example, some of the writing activities from the preschool programme required some form of writing and recognition of words. Such as, writing her name and copying and recognising other family and friends names, objects as well as instructions to some of the activities.

(d) Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC)
A word test to assess how many words a child can write within 10 minutes was administered 4 weeks after entry to school. Within the 10 minutes Theresa attempted to write 10 words of which she was able to write one of the words correctly.

Figure 5.15: Incorporating writing expertise during a game at home (Sept '98)
(e) Written Language

The teacher collected a sample of Theresa’s story writing, which was included in the assessment package. Theresa produced a picture of a rabbit in long grass adding a caption below that read, ‘Mr McGregor Petar Rappit,’ followed by her name. In collaboration with her teacher another story was added below Theresa’s story. The second story read, ‘Peter is running home to his mother.’ (see figure 5.16).

Figure 5.16: School assessment task of a personal story writing exercise (Dec ‘98)

First Assessment Summary

Overall, at one month of schooling, Theresa was identified by her teacher to be competent in many of the observed category activities. In each category for example, she was observed to be either ‘consistently’ in using or ‘developing’ her skills across all areas.
There were no categories that listed her skills ‘not yet’ developed. The range of assessment tools Theresa was tested and measured on provided a glimpse of literacy skills in which she was competent in relation to school literacy. A comment written by Theresa’s teacher recorded on the one month assessment stated; “Theresa displays a keen interest in all areas of school life. She mixes well with her peers and is quick to use her initiative.”

2. Second Data Assessments
The second set of observational data collected for Theresa was administered approximately 4-6 weeks after school resumed at the end of January. Because Theresa began school late in the year she remained in the same class when school resumed in the New Year. She was 5:2 months of age when school resumed. Her class teacher administered all assessments. These included tests from the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) or modified versions of these tests. The assessments given during this phase included, Letter Identification (LID), and Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC). This was followed a week later by the School Entry Assessment (Learning Media, 1998) to measure oral language, which used the Tell Me/Ki Mai test and Concepts About Print (CAP) test. A written language sample was also collected and included in this assessment. A description of these assessments follows.

(a) Letter Identification (LID)
Theresa was assessed on the LID test, which was administered approximately 4 weeks after school resumed from the Christmas break. In this test Theresa recognised 24 out of 52 letters, then again two months later this test was given where she was able to recognise 51 out of 52 letters correctly, showing rapid acquisition.

(b) Written Vocabulary Test (WRVOC)
The WRVOC test was given at 4 weeks after the Christmas break. Within the 10 minutes Theresa wrote 6 words correctly out of the 11 words that she attempted (see figure 5.17). There is little information from home that resonate her knowledge of written words other than some small contributions of her written products, which her mother informed, were mostly copied from a model.

(c) School Entry Assessment (SEA)
The School Entry Assessment (SEA) was conducted approximately 6 weeks after the Christmas break. The first of the SEA tests presented was CAP that measured book
knowledge and awareness about print concepts. Following this assessment the Tell Me/Ki Mai test was given that measured story comprehension through the main points of the story and to retell a story. Each test is discussed in more detail.

Figure 5.17: School assessment task of writing vocabulary (Feb ’99)

Concepts About Print (CAP)
Out of the 24 items listed in the CAP measure, Theresa scored 11 correctly. The items that she answered correctly illustrated her knowledge about how reading is carried out, for example, items such as knowing the front of a book, that print contains a message, where to start on a page of print, and that reading consists of moving from left to right. As well, she was able to recognise parts of a word or a letter, line sequences, like knowing which way print is read. She also was able to recognise punctuation items like a full stop and some letter and word concepts such as, knowing one letter: two letters and the same for one word: two words.

Understanding about books and knowing about reading can be recognized as part of the preschool reading activity that the HIPPY programme Theresa participated in encouraged. For instance, one of the activities required her mother (the reader) to
demonstrate reading with a deliberate focus on labelling, negotiating and modeling that related to knowing Concepts About Print.

**Tell Me/Ki Mai**
Theresa was presented with the Tell Me/Ki Mai assessment approximately 5-6 weeks after the Christmas break. An arrangement of subtasks can be identified on the Tell Me/Ki Mai assessment. These subtasks focus on: comprehension, sentences, vocabulary, organisation, description and content. A possible total score of 18 for Tell Me/Ki Mai from the six subtasks can be scored on this measure across all subtasks. On this assessment Theresa achieved a total score of 12 points.

**(d) Written Language**
A second writing sample was produced approximately 6 weeks later after school resumed from the Christmas break (see figure 5.18). Theresa’s story read, “Last night my dad took off my training wheels so I can ride my bike with two wheels.” Theresa’s piece of writing showed a more independent and elaborated style of writing with both invented and conventional spelling. Unlike Theresa’s first attempt to write a story, the teacher was able to make a closer approximation of what Theresa wrote in this story.

**Second Assessment Summary**
Overall, her performance on the second set of assessments showed rapid progress in many of the tasks. This was seen in her recognising letters in LID and knowledge of words on the WRVOC measure. Theresa’s results from the CAP test are consistent with other norms established from this test (see Gilmore, 1998). The report stated that generally new entrants have little difficulty relating to the performance of reading as well as being able to recognise letters and the meaning of a punctuation mark. In comparison to the report findings overall, the distribution of total scores Theresa gained on the CAP measure can be identified as ‘average’. The relatively high score Theresa achieved on the Tell Me/Ki Mai task suggests that she was relatively competent and consistent in identifying, understanding and retelling aspects of a story. Since the second story writing activity Theresa’s ability to expand her writing skills were extended by her teacher’s comment that stated, “you have written an interesting story!”
The was a tiff my dad for over my training whilst so I rh rb my book with to whlc. You have written an interesting story. Last night my dad took off my training wheels so I can...
Child Four: Hona

Literacy Activities at Home

There were very few incidents recorded by Hona’s whānau of him actually participating in literacy activities at home. Discussions showed that reading and writing events were less important to other things Hona was required to learn at home. His nana mentioned that she noticed him ‘a couple of times’ writing with his cousins. Her descriptions of ‘writing’ became combined with the act of ‘drawing’. Both terms, learning to write and draw were synonymous. She believed that he learned to write his name ‘properly’ at kindergarten partly because she was unsure who might have helped him learn to write it at home. Reading activities were also infrequent at home. Some of the reading events that his nana described came from seeing her daughter singing and reading rhymes to Hona. There were a few occasions when Hona’s nana would listen to her other moko (grandchildren) read to her in which case Hona would listen as well. During a family visit, Hona’s nana couldn’t wait to show the researcher a new alphabet book that she recently purchased for Hona a couple of days earlier. She proudly asked Hona to recite and point to each alphabet letter as he flicked through the pages. He began singing ‘a,b,c…’ and slowly pointed randomly at other letters in the book without matching the letters or the names of each letter. He tried another strategy, which was to figure out the name of the picture with the corresponding letter. He recognised and recalled the letter ‘H’ which he pronounced confidently.

His nana would explain that being at home was a place for him to be with his cousins and to be amongst his whānau. She maintained that it was at home that he would be exposed to learning his cultural experiences and of ‘knowing where he came from’ - his identity. Hearing and speaking te reo both at home and through visiting marae and hui with whānau were an important link and a constant reminder to Hona of his cultural connections to his identity.

Early Childcare Experience

Hona has attended a Māori preschool language nest, Te Kohanga Reo from the age of 2 until he was 4 years old. His nana enrolled him into a mainstream (English medium) Kindergarten at age 4 until he began school. A feature of Hona’s preschool learning is that he experienced several transitions across a variety of environments. His early childhood experience has provided him with a diversity of learning and socialisation practices that have been an integral part of his life. However, his progress in the
classroom activities may have hindered his progress as it seems that he had managed to ‘figure out’ how things should be done either by watching others in the class or through trial and error. This was evident from his experiences at home. His nana conferred that Hona learned to “…write, by watching his cousins…his uncles and aunts…” who resided together.

**Classroom Writing**

There are fewer explicit examples in Hona’s data compared to the other children which do not demonstrate incorporation and awareness taking place in the classroom. However, there are descriptions of Hona engaging in a writing activity from video recorded incidents taken at school and these show incorporation and awareness as well as some incidents where there were difficulties and confusion.

**Whole Class Worksheet Activity**

In an early session observed in Hona’s classroom, a worksheet activity was presented to the whole group to prepare children for individual writing. Writing activities would take place each day during the morning language activities. The preparation of this writing activity involved his teacher (Mrs Dee) introducing and collaborating with the class by identifying and modeling a letter followed by a short sentence that she added for children to copy into their individual books. The teacher’s instructions provided the basis of the activity. The worksheet, which required children to practice writing a letter in upper and lower case, had low versatility and was not a text rich activity (McNaughton, 2002). The general features of this activity illustrate the way in which his teacher organised and arranged the activity as well as developing an awareness in assisting the children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>What letter are we doing for handwriting?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>‘q’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Begins singing the algorithm) …quack, quack, quiet, quiet, qu, qu, quick … rainbow ‘e’ and a flick for ‘q’ … everybody …*

Following this demonstration, Hona’s teacher drew two straight solid lines with a dotted line in-between ready for the handwriting exercise. Before the writing began she focused the children’s attention on the beginning process of writing.

| Teacher | What’s Mrs Dee doing now? |
Child 1  *(Calls out)* A road!

Teacher  I thought you’d say that! A road. But we’re doing handwriting. Why would I be doing a road?

Child 2  *(Calls out)* A ‘q’ … handwriting … a ‘q’

Teacher  *(Doesn’t hear the response)* No. We’re doing handwriting, and it’s the $\frac{1}{2}$ way part of the line *(dotted lines)*. That’s the top *(marks with an $\times$)* and that’s the bottom *(marks with an $\times$)* top and bottom … *(puts another $\times$ by each solid bottom line)*.

*(The teacher adds)* … where there’s 2 crosses, that’s the bottom *(of the line).*

Hona’s teacher may have assumed that her inquiry helped her reduce the ambiguity inherent for these children in knowing about the writing process. That is, recognising that letters have a ‘correct’ way of being formed and that they are written on lines that guide the writer where letters (and words) begin and end. The structuring of the writing activity and the class participation is illustrated from the following account.

Teacher  I’m going to choose somebody to write … but I’m going to write it first, but you are going to help me. Put your fingers up *(writing the letter in the air)* … while I write it on the board. *(Saying an algorithm)* … a rainbow ‘c’ up and a tail for …. *(checks her notes how the algorithm continues)* … a rainbow ‘c’ up and a tail for ‘q’ *(repeats)*. Now whose going to be first *(teacher chooses a child)*.

Child 3  *(Produces a very small letter ‘q’ that is half the size of Mrs Dee’s model. While he writes his letter the teacher repeats the algorithm, … a rainbow ‘c’ up and a tail for ‘q’)*

Teacher  Well done. I have to give you a sticker because you’ve worked so hard but we have to talk about the shape of it don’t we? *(To the class)* Now what happened to his ‘q’? What happened to his ‘q’? … What happened to it?

Child 4  It’s not big enough.

Teacher  It’s not big enough. Well which part? Show me. Do you think you can make it right?

Child 4  *(Moves to the whiteboard)* Points to the small letter.

Teacher  Make it right. *(She encourages the child to demonstrate to the class. He is reluctant to take the marker from the teacher, she says…)* Well I’ll hold your hand … *(saying)* around and down half way *(guiding his hand)*. Now it looks right doesn’t it?
Hona’s teacher and the class participated in a writing routine producing the letter ‘q’ before they were each given a worksheet in which to complete at their tables as individual seatwork. Along with the above demonstration of the letter ‘q’ other letters to be reproduced from the worksheet included a capital letter ‘Q’ and combinations of letters ‘Qq’ as well as the number 33. Children were given the worksheet to complete after the morning tea break once the teacher instructed them that she would help them with their work if they required help. It is not known from the observations how much Hona took from the demonstrations.

**Teacher Collaboration**

After moving to groups his teacher collaborated with Hona on the worksheet activity. The first part of the worksheet required Hona to write his name. An extended analysis of the collaboration is provided to illustrate how the process of developing awareness of the goals and forms of participation in the activity itself was limiting, in two ways. The first is in some respects positive. Because it had little versatility, it constrained the teacher’s and Hona’s attention to solving a very circumscribed problem; how to perform the activity effectively. In solving this problem one can see some opportunity created for Hona to bring his ways of participating developed through out-of-school activities, particularly skills in observing and imitating, into the activity. But the second sense of limiting is problematic. It is what Hona learns about the nature of reading activities in the classroom and how to solve problems associated with learning what to do.

His teacher altered her guidance attempting to include Hona in the task by negotiating and making a series of contingent adjustments in the level of support. A contingent adjustment can be shown by a change in performance when reducing the level of a task. The adjustments ranged from providing minimal assistance, such as simply asking Hona to write his name, to providing him with a full model, demonstrating formation and spelling each letter of his name. During the name writing part there were several occasions where his teacher had to negotiate parts of the writing task that were too difficult for Hona to do alone. The following excerpt illustrates his teacher demonstrating Hona’s name through modeling and spelling out.

**Teacher**  
There you are there’s a seat. Show me how you hold your pencil … that’s right … good boy. Put your seat in nicely … if that will help you … put your hand flat *(shows him where to place his hand to steady the paper)*
Hona (commenting) I’m working nicely.

Teacher (Doesn’t hear his comment)

Now, this is your name. Ho … na (pointing and pronouncing his name)

Hona (At the same time Hona says his name out loud) … Hona

Teacher Hona! (Out loud)

H…o…n…a (spelling out each letter)

Copy your name now (running her fingers across his name, Hona provides no response)

Upon the initial presentation of a model of Hona’s name through to spelling out his name, his teacher provided an overview of the task and the steps connected to writing his name. Once his teacher had provided a format it was then expected that Hona produce his name in a similar way, unaided. The pause in Hona’s response led to the first contingent adjustment where his teacher reduced the level of instruction in the task by demonstrating, utilising a model.

Teacher (explaining) Look … you go like this … over the top (traces over letters) … you think you can do that?

Hona Nah.

Teacher (says) Try! I’ll hold your pencil, … you hold your pencil

(Mrs Dee adjusts his grip on the pencil, she guides his hand, tracing and spelling each letter out loud)

H…o…n…a… you try that.

His refusal led the teacher to negotiate and apply a new strategy to reduce the task further by modeling, demonstrating and spelling out his name. This enabled Hona to attempt a part of the task by himself.

(The teacher leaves Hona to attend children at another table. Hona begins tracing over the first letter in his name. The teacher glances over to see what Hona is doing. He looks up at her for comment. She says…)

…Good boy … keep going.

(She turns to attend to other children while Hona continues writing his name. He copies over the second letter in his name. He calls out to his teacher…)

Hona …Mrs Dee … Mrs Dee … (He waits for her to respond…)
Hona has attempted to trace over two of the letters in his name. He completed tracing over the second letter and waited for his teacher to check his performance. Hona waits for his teacher’s approval before attempting to move on to the next part of the task. When his teacher did return, Hona redirected her attention instead to the next task on the worksheet, which is described below.

(The teacher is involved talking to other children and cannot hear Hona. He calls two more times and waits for a response. He doesn’t write any more of his name by himself, instead fidgets and plays with his pencil, and looks around the room, until his teacher comes to see him. After a few minutes pass, he calls out to the teacher again while he waits for assistance. His teacher comes over to check on Hona and he makes a comment about the next task on the worksheet and asks…)

Hona …Do you draw on these? (pointing to the dotted lines on which the letters are written)

Teacher (checking what Hona is pointing to…) …Yes.

Hona How?

What seems apparent from this observation and similar situations is that as some children begin school there are very few clues or devices that teachers are able to pick up on what children know and are able to do alone (see Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000). Their general diversity awareness may be low and their knowledge of a particular child is limited. There are a variety of interpretations that can explain the way children behave if they are unable to connect. For some children refusing to perform or maintaining a prolonged silence in an activity for instance may indicate to a teacher that they don’t know what is required. On the other hand, refusal and silence can be interpreted by a teacher as being a social signal, perhaps indicating reluctance to engage. Hona had been observed throughout this activity and other classroom activities refusing to participate as well as waiting for assistance. It seems likely that refusing or remaining silent for Hona in this activity was an indication that he did not understand the routine format shown to him by his teacher.

An incident during a home interview session resonated with Hona’s behaviour in the example above of his refusal to participate and silence. His grandmother was keen to show the researcher a new alphabet book that she had brought him. She instructed Hona to ‘read’ the alphabet, reminding him to ‘point’ to each letter as he went. Like many
children, singing the alphabet is a common activity that children learn before they identify individual letters. Hona was no exception, however when he realized his finger was moving much faster across the letters than his letter recognition could keep up he back tracked several times trying to locate a familiar letter he knew. When he became confused where to begin again he would glare at his grandmother in silence waiting for assistance. She would move his finger where to begin again and again he would start the rendition. This happened several more times. There was very little exchange by Hona, instead he allowed his grandmother to guide his progress.

His knowledge about what was required and expected of him may have varied in important ways from the teacher’s expectations. The process to writing his name in both the school and kindergarten varied for Hona in the way the writing was constructed. Contrary to the way that the teacher and Hona constructed this activity at school, previous discussions with his kindergarten teacher revealed that Hona was already able to recognise and write his whole name prior to school. At kindergarten each child was provided with his/her own name tag that were readily available for the child to collect when they wanted to name their products. Hona was observed by his kindergarten teacher at first being able to write his name in capitals and then copying his name from the name tag. His kindergarten teacher confirmed that it was during the last few months prior to his fifth birthday that writing his name was “self learned, mostly by capitals at first then using the name tags to copy from”. She added that she was unsure where Hona had learned to write his name in capitals and suggested perhaps he learned it either at home or in Te Kohanga Reo. Hona’s grandmother mentioned during earlier discussions that Hona was able to write his name but was unsure where or how he learned to do this.

In part his knowledge about how to write his name at kindergarten has been inconsistent with what Hona was required to do while at school. For example, knowing and being able to identify each letter in his name in the correct sequence by the format and instruction guided by the teacher may have contributed to his confusion of the task. Also, the participation patterns may have been unfamiliar for him. In particular, both Hona and his teacher shared different goals around the activity of name writing illustrated by the negotiations and renegotiations of the task. It also acknowledges what the teacher knew about Hona being able to write his name or parts of his name. Hona’s expertise in name writing was assessed as part of the school entry assessment criteria (see figure 5.19). His classroom teacher may have been unaware of his name writing expertise.
Therefore the result of the teacher not knowing what Hona could do in this particular activity meant subsequent interactions were constrained.

Figure 5.19: School assessment task - Self portrait and expertise in name writing (Nov ’98)

![New Entrant Assessment Package](image)

**Developing Shared Goals for the Writing Task**

Following Hona’s previous query about “how” he should continue the next part of the writing task, a fuller explanation as well as physically guiding him facilitated a better understanding of the writing process. After tracing his name, his teacher directed his attention to the model letter ‘Q’ from the worksheet. Hona’s teacher guided his movements through the activity by tracing over the model and demonstrating using an algorithm as illustrated:
Teacher Like this one (pointing to the letter ‘Q’ on the work sheet, she models the letter explaining…) … Here, you make the shape … go over the top … here, … hold your pencil … you go over the top … hold your pencil … start at the top (guiding his hand over the model saying an algorithm) … around, down … around, down (tracing over the letter)

Now you do one, … around and down (Mrs Dee points where to begin on the dotted line, she says) … where the dots are … good boy.

(She leaves Hona to continue working on the task sheet, while she attends children across the other side of the room. He makes an attempt at writing the letter ‘Q’ by checking with the teacher’s model. When he completes one he calls out to the teacher…)

The teacher’s negotiations enabled Hona to participate in the writing activity that offered him a clearer framework from which to begin writing. The goal of the full activity by the teacher was to simplify the activity through a demonstration of tracing over a model repeating an algorithm so that Hona was able to reproduce the same letter ‘Q’. Part of Hona’s understanding also included making sure that he was able to ‘get it right’ through his attempts to copy from the teacher’s model. He would frequently check his production with the teacher’s model. Copying from a model was similar to having the name tag to copy while at kindergarten however without the explicit guidance. Hona’s teacher’s comments during the letter writing activity supported his attempt even when questioned by another child as the following account shows.

Hona (calls out) … I did … I did … Mrs Dee … (His teacher comes over to check Hona)

Teacher Good boy … that’s very good … good boy … now do another one, that’s very good … just like Mrs Dee’s one … remember? (Hona proceeds to produce another capital letter ‘Q’. One of the children sitting opposite Hona comments to the teacher…)

Child 1 Is he doing it right?

Teacher Yes he is. (Checking Hona) Let me see … good boy… now sit up properly or you can’t do it … remember to keep this hand flat (she readjusts his posture) … flat, so the paper doesn’t slide … now keep going … remember to look up at Mrs Dee’s to help you too (she is pointing to her model. The teacher lets Hona continue with the activity sheet and checks on the other children in the class. Hona attempts two more letter ‘Q’ by himself).
Hona’s success at reproducing the letter ‘Q’ gave him the competence to perform more of the same letter across subsequent lines on the worksheet whereas the activity required a new letter to be practiced. His continuation of writing the letter ‘Q’ also demonstrated his knowledge about the writing process. That is, the movement of his writing in a ‘snake like’ fashion (Clay, 1991) and learning what to attend to next on the activity sheet. A description of his approach while continuing the rest of the writing task follows along with the teacher’s reactions to his attempts.

After Hona attempted two more letter ‘Q’, he decides scribbling in the corner of the page, he draws a line down the length of his page in the right hand margin before he attempts anymore writing. He gets to the end of the line and is unsure what to do next. He tries rubbing out the line he drew earlier, with his finger then begins another row of capital letter ‘Q’ starting from the right hand margin going left. On this line Hona should be reproducing a lower case ‘q’. He continues producing several capital letter ‘Q’ writing in a ‘snake like’ fashion (left-right-right-left etc) across the next two lines. His teacher comes back to check what Hona is doing and realizes that he’s produced a capital letter ‘Q’ on every line, so stops him immediately. She takes his pencil and traces over a lower case ‘q’ for Hona to copy.

The teacher quickly explained to Hona what letter he should now be copying. Similar to the previous demonstration of the capital letter ‘Q’ she again demonstrated for him by tracing over the model (‘q’) from the worksheet before guiding Hona’s hand back over the same model, tracing the letter while repeating an algorithm. His refusal to follow after his teacher’s demonstration prompted the teacher to scaffold Hona’s movements by explicitly instructing and guiding him closely to reproducing a similar model by himself. The interaction and exchanges between Hona and his teacher are described below.

**Teacher**

Alright, stop, stop … see that one? (Pointing to the model ‘q’ in the margin on the worksheet. She demonstrates over the model saying…)

Around, down, flick … around, down, flick … Hold your pencil …

(she guides his hand, demonstrating and modeling over the ‘q’ saying) … around, up, down, flick … around, up, down, flick.

**Hona**

Nah!

**Teacher**

You try … just like that one (pointing to the model)

**Hona**

(Begins to do a circle shape, pauses and asks for direction…) … down?

**Teacher**

Yes.
(He begins to put the tail on the wrong side of the ‘q’, his teacher quickly points where it goes).

On this side …Like Mrs Dee, now flick … that was very good … now you can do a tail, flick on that one. (Pointing to a circle that he previously began while producing capital ‘Q’ earlier) … a tail and a flick. Ok, now you see if you can do some more of those.

(She leaves Hona to continue the writing activity. He reproduces another letter ‘q’ perfectly by himself. His second attempt he produces a circle shape. He looks uncertain about what to do next. He checks the teacher’s model. He traces over the teacher’s model with his pencil then attempts to reproduce one. He produces an ‘o’ shape and puts the tail on the wrong side of the ‘o’ shape. He checks his attempt with the teacher’s and notices the mistake, he tries rubbing out the tail with his finger. He puts the tail onto the correct side of the letter ‘q’. He becomes distracted by another peer sitting opposite him and begins talking to her. He produces two more letter ‘q’ by himself. He calls his teacher to come over).

Having the very detailed structured guidance from his teacher was clearly very effective for Hona’s understanding as indicated by his self corrections. Hona was observed throughout the writing activity ‘self correcting’. For instance, while writing the letter ‘q’ Hona produced several rows of the letter ‘o’ before realizing that he should have produced lower case ‘q’. He traces over the worksheet model ‘q’ checks his own attempts and notices the difference between his attempt and the model. He attaches ‘tails’ on the left of each letter producing inverted letter ‘q’s. He checks with the model from the worksheet again then he promptly corrects each one by erasing the ‘tails’ to make the letter look more like the model ‘q’.

Two things are noticeable from the above incident. The first was Hona’s knowledge and awareness that letters (and words) are written with a particular orientation and direction and second was his ability to self-correct his own productions. The model enabled Hona to make regular checks with his own imitated model. Knowing what the end product looks like rather than knowing how to produce the letter may have been more important for him to understand. As well, his ability to compare his own attempts with the produced model enabled Hona to ‘self-correct’ so that his example looked more like the model. Because the teacher wasn’t present during this part of the writing she perceived the work Hona completed to be a very close approximation of the given task. During the
final segment of the letter writing activity she praised his efforts saying “that’s pretty good isn’t it, that’s pretty clever isn’t it?” without having seen him carry out the task and knowing whether or not any part of the task may have caused him difficulties.

Part of Hona’s success in being able to reproduce similar letters to those modeled on the worksheet were attributed to the way in which he communicated his lack of understanding to the task through his refusals (nah!) and the way in which he requested guidance through his queries (do you draw on these? how? down?). Through these strategies Hona was able to gain specific guidance from his teacher. A further example of this occurred during the letter writing activity. Hona motioned the teacher to his table and pointed to the rows of dotted lines on his worksheet asking:

**Hona**
Do you draw on these?

**Teacher**
Yes.

**Hona**
How?

The final segment to the writing activity involved writing the number 33. The teacher wanted Hona to complete the final part of the worksheet but he was reluctant to continue. His teacher interpreted his reluctance as not knowing what to do so quickly responded again by demonstrating and then physically guiding his hand tracing over the model. Even under the teacher’s guidance Hona continued to refuse to participate further in the task.

**Teacher**
Right, do you want to do that one now?

(Pointing to #33 on the worksheet. Meanwhile she comments on the letter ‘q’s that Hona attempted by himself)

…That’s pretty good isn’t it, that’s pretty clever isn’t it?
Hold your pencil … Oh, I’ll show you first (models and demonstrates)… over the top, around, around (hands the pencil back to Hona).
Over the top … I’ll help you … you help me too (guiding his hand over the model) … around … around … stop … right beside it (pointing where to begin)… around, around, stop. That’s very good isn’t it?

**Hona**
I can’t … I can’t.

**Teacher**
You’ll have to show your nana tonight, that’s very good isn’t it?

**Hona**
I can’t.
Teacher  You can, just go over the top of it … and then try it over there (demonstrating over the model).

Hona    I can’t.

Perhaps in this instance, Hona felt constrained within this particular pedagogy. It could also mean that possibly he just had enough of the writing activity for that day and that he was more content to observe what the teacher was showing him. Metge and Kinloch (1995) emphasise that learning rather than the teaching is more important for the Māori child especially when put in situations where they can learn more by watching rather than being taught and demonstrating this skill when they are ready.

**Peer Collaboration in Writing**

The teacher sensed Hona’s reluctance to continue to participate during the final part of the writing activity. The effect of the interaction eventually spiraled down having a negative effect on his engagement in the activity. Hona’s teacher therefore assigned another child in the class to help him with the task.

Child 2    Can’t you do 33?

Hona    (Shaking his head)

Child 2    Who made this? (pointing to the model that Hona and the teacher produced)

Hona    Mr Dodd. (inadvertently refers to his teacher as Mister)

Child 2    (Begins writing the number 33)

Hona    Who rubbed that out? (pointing to a faint letter Hona had earlier erased)

Child 2    I did.

Hona    There! (Completes writing number 33. He hands back the worksheet and pencil to Hona then leaves)

But assigning a peer to help Hona in this task did not result in a productive interaction. The brief exchange of dialogue between Hona and a peer (child 2) showed what he could and could not do in the activity. The child helping Hona felt it was his responsibility to complete the entire task, which involved the full production of the number. The teacher queried the child helper about the construction of the activity asking:

Teacher    Did you do those?

Child 2    (Nodding his head) Yeah.
The teacher’s query “did you do those?” and her response “…are you helping?” highlight an important aspect of this task that has cultural and pedagogical significance. For instance, the child’s blank stare was accompanied by a quizzical expression of confusion. Given that this Māori child also had a similar cultural background to Hona his blank stare can further imply that he was unsure of what else the teacher expected him to do. Consistent with his understanding of manaaki (caring, sharing and helping others) as seen in the tuakana-teina relationship, perhaps for this child a vital aspect of teaching/learning meant doing the work for the other person while they carefully observed. Transmitting and understanding different cultural messages can create opportunities of conflict if the correct message is not specifically clarified. Another way that this event could be interpreted may also suggest that by putting children together doesn’t necessarily have the desirable pedagogical outcome. His teacher may in fact have expected the child to understand what she meant by helping another person. In this case, the helper did what he felt was helping that is, producing the text for Hona. Therefore, realising her misunderstanding about what was required of this task the teacher reiterated to Hona:

Hona’s reliance on others in the writing activity at school can be interpreted as problematic for him, potentially preventing him from actively developing his knowledge about writing in the classroom. During a later story writing occasion for example, Hona’s teacher helped him construct a story. Due to his reluctance to participate his teacher instead wrote out a story for him to trace over. It read: “The bee is big. The bee is little” (see figure 5.20). Hona returned to his table to begin the task. As Hona sat watching the other children, another child sitting opposite him offered to help him with his writing. He remained still as he watched the child complete the writing task for him. She began
writing his name and copied the sentence underneath the teacher’s model. She handed the book back to Hona where he produced a drawing and on completion he showed his teacher. She praised him for his work, not knowing that another child played a major role in completing this for him.

This particular incident is similar to the previously described peer collaboration incident and has some important cultural implications. Hona’s willingness to allow another child to complete the task for him demonstrated a familiarity with accepting expert guidance (tuakana). Having another child take over the activity for him occurred in a context that was familiar. The tuakana-teina relationship encourages younger or less able members to share in and be cared for by their older more able providers. In this case, Hona felt it appropriate for one of his classmates to help with the task. What is unclear is which part of the task did Hona not understand and find difficult. Whether or not Hona understood any part of this task or to some extent the previous writing events was irrelevant because completing the task appeared to be a more preferred learning expectation. In recognizing his practice of learning within the whānau concept perhaps there wasn’t a person for him to work alongside, or peer group that Hona could relate to and confer with when he was having difficulties. This may have possibly resulted in his reluctance to want to write independently and more on getting the teacher and others to help him. However, the presence of a peer group was not necessarily productive or supportive of his developing control over the writing tasks.
Reading to the Whole Class

Reading to the whole class was a part of the reading programme. The activity can have versatility in that children can enter and engage using their event knowledge, as well their knowledge of structural properties (McNaughton, 2002).

The story reading activity provides a vehicle in which Hona was able to incorporate knowledge from home. The story was about a young girl who dreams of playing on the local rugby team. Her dream becomes a reality when she is finally asked to play for them. The activity has versatility in that children can enter and engage using their event knowledge as well their knowledge of structural properties. The teacher’s interactions provide opportunities for incidental identification of concepts about print. But clearly a central focus was on the meanings in the text including developing children’s understanding of concepts and aspects of the narrative structure.
Teacher: This story’s about ‘Claire’s Dream’ … there she is (showing the front cover). She’s dreaming about something … got her eyes open, but she’s (day) dreaming about something. Or it’s called ‘The girl who wanted to play rugby’.

(To the class) … Hands up those who like rugby?

Hona: (calls out) I play rugby!

(She doesn’t hear Hona. Other children call out… I like rugby,… I play rugby.)

Teacher: Good. Hands down. (Begins to read the story) … I’m going to be an All Black…

(To the class) … What’s an “All Black”?

Hona: (calls out) … I play rugby!

Teacher: (Doesn’t hear Hona, continues reading to the end of the story) … The end…The beginning.

(To the class) … What does that mean?

Children: (Calling out)… The end of the story? Last page? One page left? …

Teacher: I think it means, that’s the end of our story, but this is the beginning of Claire’s rugby.

The text selected by the teacher had a topic and content that was familiar to Hona. What didn’t happen in the exchanges is the feature of contingency, at least for Hona. During the reading of the story, the teacher asked several questions in relation to the text. Hona responded quickly to her questions however these went unheard or at least not directly explicitly acknowledged. The lack of contingent response to Hona’s attempts to incorporate his knowledge and to have it recognised was presumably a function of the whole class setting. This class had reached its maximum number of 27 children for the year when Hona joined the class. Nevertheless, the activity had ongoing significance as a vehicle for incorporation. Hona’s actions did have a positive effect on his ability to make connections to the activity. It was evident in that it prompted Hona to bring along to class some trophies his team won playing rugby. This happened a few days later when Hona brought in the trophies his team won to show the class.

Hona’s actions also reflected a more general resonance at the level of a family activity. Hona’s grandfather, often told stories when he returned home with several stories about his work as a ‘truckie’. He had photos displayed in the lounge of their home showing various types of transporting trucks that he drove. This series of photos becomes a talking point by Hona’s grandfather when he returned from his travels. He would add a
new photo to the collection. His grandfather used artefacts as a narrative prop to bring his experiences outside of the setting into that setting. So too, Hona brought his artefacts from outside the school setting to act as narrative props.

‘Waiata’

A parallel example of an opportunity for incorporation provided by a wide curriculum and resonating activities occurred during a class sing-a-long. A waiata (song) was introduced while the class waited for the morning break. The activity had versatility admitting at least potentially a range of forms of expertise.

Teacher (The teacher leads them into the waiata. Part way through she stops them and asks…) Who knows the actions to Tena Koutou?

Hona (Hona waves his hand in the air. He calls out…) I do … I do Mrs Dee…

Teacher (She chooses two children from the group to come up to the front of the class to perform the actions to the waiata. Hona stands up also and proceeds to join the children chosen by the teacher. She quickly tells him to…) Sit down Hona – it’s not your turn yet.

(Hona remains standing where he is performing and singing the action song)

The waiata was a strongly resonating activity for Hona. The activity of singing these songs and this one in particular was familiar while he attended Te Kohanga Reo (Māori preschool language nest). He attended kohanga reo since he was two years of age and his close links with his multi-cultural extended whānau provided Hona with many opportunities to participate. Typical participation would be for the whole whānau group at kohanga reo to join in rather than perform as individuals alone, although there would be leaders for waiata. In this case Hona might very well have been more expert than the others. The turn taking and the teacher’s explicit enforcement created a barrier to incorporation which Hona resisted.

Singing activities featured strongly at home. Hona’s nana expressed how singing was a natural part of their daily life. Included in his everyday life were singing and telling stories together. She gave an example of her daughter singing a story to Hona, which she commented was “to make it more interesting, instead of just reading” a story from a book. She further added, “…so that the story can be remembered better.”
Peer Collaboration in Reading

An activity took place in which Hona was working alongside another peer in a shared storybook reading activity. This activity had participation features that have cultural significance. There was very little conversation between Hona and another child during storybook reading. They both communicated using non-verbal cues such as eye contact and gesturing. Throughout the exchange both children were able to reverse interactional roles similar to the tuakana-teina relationship where giving and following instructions, which includes verbal and non-verbal communication, was evident. Unlike the interactional role between Hona’s teacher and the child described earlier during a writing incident the roles here were reciprocal. A description of this exchange between Hona and his peer follows.

There are a number of books that Hona and his peer can select from scattered on the floor. Hona chooses one of the big books. He flicks through the book looking at the pictures. He chooses another book and gives it to his peer. They both look through the book together in silence. Once they have finished going through this book they both select a separate book to read. Hona presents his book to his peer and says, “read a story … a book”. His peer has already started reading from her chosen book. She holds up the book she has and insists they read her book. She shows Hona the cover of the book, pointing and running her fingers across the title. She begins reading and occasionally looks up at Hona checking whether he is watching and listening to the story. After a few minutes into the story he removes the book she is reading and gives her another book. She tells him “we got two? (books)”. Hona ignores her comment and presents another book, which he displays before she signals with raised eyebrows to read this one, followed by a quick nod of his head for her to take his book. She flicks through the pages, smiles cringing her eyes, shaking her head, indicating that she doesn’t want to read that book.

The unconventional style of this peer interaction through non-verbal as well as some verbal responses serves as an effective scaffold by both children. That is, both children engaged in the activity, mutually acknowledging each other’s perspective of the task and by acting co-operatively. It is claimed that where peers can successfully work alongside each other in a communicative way, cognitive development occurs when children establish intersubjectivity (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In this case although there was very little discussion between the children both reacted and acted in accordance to each other’s responses.
Another aspect to this exchange is that there was little conflict or disagreement between these two children. By choosing another book for example, disagreements were resolved through mutual acceptance of each other’s initiations. This would usually be demonstrated by either a shake or nod of the head and willingness by either child to share in the decision-making. The customary relationship between the tuakana (peer) in this instance, can be described as the one who holds the mana (prestige), whereas the teina (Hona) is the one who gives the activity substance, that is, the doer (Metge, 1995). In the example that follows, Hona maintains respect for his tuakana (peer) by seeking her permission before acting on any decision he suggests because her opinion is vital in achieving their task.

Hona chooses another book and indicates by nodding his head for his partner to read this book. She shakes her head, refusing. Hona chooses another book and says “this book?” She continues shaking her head. He chooses another book, this time she nods her head and accepts the book and begins reading. Hona watches, and listens to the story. There are no other exchanges from either child. After this book is read Hona suggests they “get a book over there…” from the classroom library. She nods, agreeing to his suggestion. Hona selects a book and checks with his partner whether it’s suitable. He indicates by nodding his head and raising his eyes to suggest ‘this one’. His partner looks at the front cover, flicks through the book, and then begins to read. As she reads she checks to see whether Hona is following the story.

Assessment Data Results
Hona received two assessments; the first assessment was conducted 3 weeks after he began school and the second assessment given approximately 6 weeks after the Christmas break. Since Hona began late in the school year he remained with the same teacher in the same class when school resumed in the New Year. There was a 6-week break from the end of the school year to the beginning of the next school year. Hona was 5:2 months of age when school resumed in January. The Junior School Head teacher conducted and carried out all assessments.

1. First School Entry Check at 3 Weeks
The first of these assessments were administered approximately 3 weeks after Hona began school. The assessments included, a Self-Portrait and Name Writing, Letter Identification (LID), a Reading assessment, as well as samples of Printing and Story Writing that Hona produced from classroom writing activities.
(a) Self Portrait and Name Writing
Hona produced both a Self-Portrait as well as wrote his name (see figure 5.19). Hona’s first attempt to draw a Self-Portrait included a detailed sketch of himself and another child, possibly his sister. He was also successful in writing his first name, which was not the case when he was asked by his class teacher to trace over his name for a writing activity.

This assessment tapped existing knowledge. Hona learned to write his name from two sources. As described earlier, his Kindergarten teacher had reported that she had observed Hona writing his name while attending Kindy. Each child is given a name tag that is transportable when they need to copy their name onto artwork or other written products.

Learning to write his name was also recognised by Hona’s nana. She responded that one of the things she had observed and was confident her grandson could do was that “…he can write his name.” She was also certain that Kindergarten supported his eagerness to draw and learning to write his name stating that “he spends much of his learning being at the kindy, that is, they draw and learn to write his name…”

(b) Letter Identification (LID)
The LID assessment was presented to Hona at 3 weeks after entry to school and again approximately 6 weeks after the Christmas break. During the presentation of the first LID assessment, Hona was unable to recognise any letters or their sounds.

(c) Reading Assessment
A Reading assessment was conducted at 3 weeks where Hona was measured on his reading knowledge and his performance during reading. From the assessment measures it was observed that he; ‘listens to stories’, ‘join in shared reading’, ‘learn poems/nursery rhymes/songs’, ‘pick out a favourite story’, ‘read books/stories on his/her own’, ‘tell stories based on own experiences’ and ‘recognizes own name’.

Discussions with Hona’s nana provided some information that may have contributed to Hona’s reading performance and his knowledge of reading as an activity. In particular, Hona’s cultural links with his extended whānau, hapu (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribal affiliation) may have contributed to his understanding and knowledge of listening and
hearing stories and song/poems. Telling and sharing stories on a marae (communal meeting place) are events that children become exposed to at a very young age. Hona was culturally immersed in his oral tradition that may have some resemblance to skills required in reading.

(d) Writing Samples
Two sorts of writing samples were collected from Hona’s early writing attempts. One sample provided a story writing attempt and the second sample describes a Printing attempt. Samples of Story-Writing and Printing activities were collected again after the Christmas break.

Printing
The first Printing assessment shows Hona’s attempt to copy letters, a word and numbers provided from a model. As well, he is required to trace over his name. Hona copied a row of letter ‘S’ from a model. The flow of his letters continued across the page below the line of type. He attempted to copy the word (snake) and made an attempt to write a row of the number ‘36’, some of which were reversed. He attempted to write the first two letters of his name and two other letters that were not part of his name (see figure 5.21).

Story Writing Sample
Approximately a week later after the Printing activity a copy of Hona’s Story Writing was added to the assessment. It required him to trace over a story that his teacher wrote for him. The activity also required he trace over his name and the date. He also made an attempt to write his name as well as versions of his name below the story that he traced over (see figure 5.22)

First Assessment Summary
At one month of school, further assessments provided more possible insights into his knowledge and understanding of literacy skills. In particular it was uncertain whether or not his class teacher was aware that Hona was already capable of writing his name unaided from the information provided in the name writing assessment. At the end of his one month observation his teacher commented “Hona is learning to co-operate with his peers. He is very independent and he is developing consistent work habits.”
Figure 5.21: A classroom writing activity (Dec '98)

Figure 5.22: A classroom story writing activity (Dec '98)
Second Assessment Data

The second set of assessments received after the Christmas break were, a Self Portrait and Hona’s attempt to write his name, a Written Language and Vocabulary test (J.O.S.T, Special Education Services, 1994), a Social Skills test, Letter Identification (LID), Word Vocabulary test, Written Language assessment and samples of Story-Writing and Printing were collected from classroom writing activities. The New Entrant Assessment Package was developed and administered by the Head Teacher of the Junior School. An analysis and description of the above assessments follow.

(a) Self-Portrait and Name Writing

This was the first assessment that was presented at approximately 6 weeks after school resumed from the Christmas break. Hona successfully wrote his name and drew a large picture of him. The self portrait he produced during the first assessment included a more detailed drawing in comparison to his second attempt (see figure 5.23).

Figure 5.23: School assessment task of self portrait and name writing (March ’99)
(b) Language and Vocabulary
A Junior Oral Language Screening (J.O.S.T) test was administered approximately 3-4 weeks upon entry to school. There are three sections to the test; Vocabulary, Grammar and Oral Language. A summary of the results that Hona achieved on this assessment follows.

**Vocabulary and Grammar**
Overall the test data show Hona to have made relatively high progress in both Vocabulary and Grammar. For example, his total score for the Vocabulary and Grammar measure indicated that he knew almost 80% of all test items. His scores were similar to the scores of children in the 4:6-5:6 year level.

**Oral Language**
The Language sample required Hona to provide a description of a picture scene that he is shown. He provided the following description;

- He’s riding his bike and the balloon’s going up.
- He’s riding his bike.
- He’s holding the balloon then he let it go.
- They sitting.
- He’s sitting down.
- He’s standing up.
- He’s eating. She’s sitting down and he’s standing up.

These results coincide to what other 5:6 year old children should be achieving at this level.

(c) Social Skills
Hona was assessed on his development of Social Skills in the classroom. Hona was described as ‘active’, ‘plays with others’, ‘plays alongside’, ‘has made friends’, ‘greets peers’. He was also assessed that he follows the ‘teacher’s instructions’, ‘is developing independence’, ‘is learning about classroom routines’ and generally ‘enjoys school’. Hona’s behaviour was also assessed as ‘aggressive’ and ‘uncooperative’. A note tagged on to his assessment stated that he was “initially and often (now) very difficult.”

(d) Letter Identification (LID)
At the second assessment he successfully identified by letter-name 4 upper case letters (A, H, O, S) and the corresponding lower case letters (a, h, o, s). As well, he identified by
letter-sound all lower case letters, showing slower progress was made between the first assessment and the second assessment.

(e) Word Vocabulary
A word recognition assessment was administered at 6 weeks after the Christmas break. A list of the “most frequently occurring words” (Clay, 1993) in basic reading texts was used as a source of test items. The data from this assessment show that Hona recognised one word, (the) from the list of words. It is not uncommon for children at 5 years of age to recognise one word during their first word assessment.

(f) Written Language Assessment
A Written Language test that assesses a child’s early attempts to write stories was administered approximately 6 weeks after the Christmas break. Scoring this measure was rated across two categories. The first category marked whether the child can achieve the skill and the second category indicated the child was not yet able to develop this skill at this point in time. A description of Hona’s achievement in this assessment follows.

The assessment data show that Hona can, ‘dictate a story’, ‘relate a story to a picture’, ‘write letters’, ‘write some basic words’ and ‘knows that print has meaning’. He was assessed as not yet able to, ‘write stories with symbols’, ‘starts story in the right place’, ‘leaves spaces’, and ‘writes the first letter in a word’. Other Concepts About Print (Clay, 1993) descriptors and some linguistic features of writing were included in the assessment sheet but were not relevant to Hona’s level of skill in written language.

(g) Writing Samples
The second writing attempt was collected from a sample of Hona’s writing approximately 8 weeks after the Christmas break. A sample of Printing and Story Writing were collected from writing activities and these are discussed in detail.

Printing
Similar to the earlier writing samples Hona was required to trace over his name and the date followed by copying letters (H, h), a word (house) and a number (9). From the sample it shows that following instructions may be a little difficult for Hona in understanding the activity. For instance, his attempt to reproduce the word ‘house’ did not
occur instead another row of letter ‘b’ followed. His name attempt and writing the date was also inconsistent to what he was required to do (see figure 5.24).

Figure 5.24: A school assessment task of a printing activity (March '99)

---

**Story Writing**

Another sample of Hona’s story-writing was selected from writing he had attempted in class approximately 6 weeks after the Christmas break. It is not clear whether this writing was Hona’s attempt to develop a story or one in which he gained help to write words that are recognisable into a simple sentence, like “I am walking…” His attempt to write each word included spacing and the use of a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence (see figure 5.25).

Figure 5.25 A school assessment task of a story writing activity (March '99)
Another writing sample was collected 2 days after the previous story-writing attempt. This sample of writing showed Hona independently attempted in writing his name unaided along with self-correction. A sentence that his teacher wrote ran down beside the margin, which read “the people are sick.” Hona was required to copy out each word across the page instead copied each word below each other. There was a mixture of words that Hona chose to copy, as well as adding a full stop in the middle of his attempt. The teacher praised his attempt, writing ‘good boy!’ (see figure 5.26).

Figure 5.26: School assessment task of a story writing activity (March ’99)
Second Assessment Summary
Overall Hona’s development as shown by his assessment indicated he made slow but steady progress across most activities. Because the assessment was administered and conducted by the Junior School Head Teacher it was uncertain how much of this information was shared with his class teacher given that he was able to write his name during the first assessment phase and was required to continue to trace over a model during part of the second assessment.

Six Year Data for All Children
Observation survey data was collected at six years of age for each child. This observation data shows progress each child made after one year at school. A trained observer collected achievement data in literacy using the standard tests of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) or Letter Identification (LID), Hearing and Recording Sounds (H&RS), Concepts About Print (CAP), Word Recognition (WORD) and Writing Vocabulary (WRVOC). A measure of generalised word recognition – the Burt Word Recognition Test was collected (BURT – Gilmore, Croft, & Reid, 1981). Also oral language measures were collected using the Tell Me test from the School Entry Assessment (Learning Media, 1998) and using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997).

A summary of Mary’s observation survey results at 6.0 years (see Table 4) shows that she had made high progress in all areas and her oral language development in English, indicated by the Tell Me and PPVT scores, was advanced.

The school progress data show Mark to have made high progress in his knowledge of items and concepts, and word recognition (see Table 4). The measure of generalised word recognition (BURT) showed he was reading age level. His progress was not as high in writing (stanine 3). His language skills for retelling stories and receptive language (both in English) were age appropriate.

The school progress data (see Table 4) show Theresa to have made high progress in her knowledge of items and concepts, and word recognition. The measure of generalised word recognition (BURT) showed she was reading age level. Her progress was not as high in writing (stanine 3). The measures of expressive and receptive language in English show appropriate development.
By 6.0 years Hona had made better than average progress in learning items and concepts. His word recognition (BURT) and writing vocabulary were relatively low, as was his scores in expressive and receptive language (English).

Table 4: Children's Scores On Literacy and Language Measures at 6.0 years of age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>LID(^1)</th>
<th>CAP(^1)</th>
<th>H&amp;RS(^1)</th>
<th>WORD(^1)</th>
<th>WRVOC(^1)</th>
<th>BURT(^2)</th>
<th>TELL ME(^3)</th>
<th>PPVT(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(6-9)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6-9)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(6-9)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hona</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(7-9)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. Stanine levels shown in parenthesis, based on 6.0 – 7.3 year olds in 1978 (Clay, 1993).
2. BURT raw score for lowest age level 5.10 – 6.4 years = 20 (Gilmore, Croft, & Reid, 1981)
3. Average of Tell Me scores for children in high achieving Decile 1 schools at 6.0 years = 12.2 (Phillips, McNaughton and MacDonald, 2002).
4. Stanine levels shown in parenthesis, based on 6.0 – 6.1 year olds (Dunn & Dunn, 1997).
Overall Summary of Children’s Literacy and Language Expertise

The four case studies provide evidence of the processes enabling incorporation and building awareness to occur. Their presence was attributable to the vehicles of the curriculum, activities (types and immersion) and instructional language and their properties. The case studies are ordered from the greatest degree of incorporation and awareness detectable in the observation records through to least degree, although across the four children there were many instances of these processes. All four children could be considered to have made average to above average progress. Three of the children were high progress compared with national expectations. A synopsis of the degree of incorporation and awareness is summarised here for each of the children to illustrate the extent and variation of children’s literacy and language expertise.

Mary

Mary illustrated the greatest degree of incorporation and awareness of literacy and language expertise. There were many incidents where Mary was able to make effective connections to classroom literacy and language activities by building on what she was already familiar into activities that she was unfamiliar. For instance the versatility of story writing resonated strongly in home activities. There were examples from the classroom descriptions that illustrated Mary incorporating the format features of story writing and in several instances this was accompanied by a picture. Minimal directed guidance and interaction was provided by her teacher during the construction and formatting of story writing in the classroom activities. Instead, evidence from the home diary, transcripts, school assessments and discussions with Mary’s mother and her teacher illustrated Mary’s competence and expertise was well developed in writing skills.

Reading also showed similar high levels of incorporation and the transfer of Mary’s expertise from shared reading activities at home with the classroom reading sessions. There were examples that showed Mary engaging and functioning in the reading activities very quickly with minimal assistance by her teacher once she had understood and applied the routine format of reading. Her awareness of being able to apply ‘out-of-school’ and ‘in-school’ forms of reading expertise also enabled Mary to make significant gains in her reading levels during her first year at school (McNaughton, 2002). Incorporation and awareness of Mary’s ‘out-of-school’ literacy expertise was also affirmed from the diary entries, collection of literacy home products and discussions with Mary’s mother. Discussions with Mary’s mother identified the importance of traditional Māori practices
of whanaungatanga which played a vital part in the teaching/learning and socialisation process.

**Mark**

Classroom literacy and language activities for Mark demonstrated varying degrees of incorporation and awareness. There was evidence from the classroom observations that Mark was able to engage in many of the literacy and language activities at a level which enabled him to perform efficiently given his knowledge and incorporation of employing familiar strategies. In this way, where a classroom literacy activity was seen to limit his performance Mark was able to make connections by transferring familiar knowledge across to an unfamiliar activity. Examples from the descriptions showed instances of Mark building awareness in literacy activities such as, pointing to words, expanding event knowledge and building story comprehension. Where awareness of an activity limited his performance the observations showed his teacher provide a more focused and explicit instructional style that enabled Mark to participate in completing a task. His incorporation and awareness of literacy expertise in the classroom activities was contingent on both Mark and his teacher negotiating and renegotiating their level of understanding and development of awareness in activities to complete a task.

**Theresa**

The classroom observations showed Theresa perform and participate to a lesser degree than Mark and Mary but also showed that she made more effective connections than Hona in the literacy and language activities. Her involvement with the preschool home intervention programme assisted her learning and development of enabling incorporation and awareness to occur. It was shown by the classroom descriptions that incorporation of some performance styles had similar participation and involvement structures that resonated from the literacy and language activities at home. This enabled Theresa to incorporate some of the out-of-school knowledge of the expected participation style to that of the classroom activities.

Theresa’s participation and level of involvement in the activities also showed cultural and pedagogical features of the tuakana-teina relationship. The classroom descriptions showed she was able to develop an awareness of involvement and participation in many of the classroom activities from imitation and observation which is a significant characteristic of the tuakana-teina relationship.
Hona

Hona’s classroom observations showed the least degree of incorporation and awareness than the other three children. There were fewer instances of Hona making connections to the classroom literacy and language activities. Instead Hona showed a greater level of confusion when he tried to participate and perform many of the activities. There were some opportunities for Hona to develop his awareness of ‘out-of-school’ participation in the classroom activities, such as developed skills of observing and imitation. However, the process of developing awareness as shown in the writing tasks was constrained and limited by Hona and his teacher trying to work together to understand how to complete the task. These classroom writing activities showed that his teacher negotiated and closely guided his attempts through a series of contingent adjustments from utilising minimal instruction and assistance through to full demonstration. However, the examples showed further limitation of Hona’s performance thus his teacher was observed to renegotiate the activity to provide more specific instruction with explanation, modeling and explicit structured guidance.

Discussions with Hona’s nana showed a high presence and participation of other family members and the importance and value of whanaungatanga. The classroom observations illustrated this concept especially in the teaching/learning process and the concept of tuakana-teina. There were more instances of Hona developing awareness of his participation and involvement in some of the classroom activities that reflected his culture and identity that resonated strongly within his whānau.
Chapter Six

Discussion

The study reported here examined early literacy development and the developmental transition to school that four Māori children, their whānau and their teachers experienced. The study provided a descriptive analysis of three family literacy and language activities at home. These were: reading to children; guiding children’s writing; and telling and retelling narratives. The descriptions showed how the activities were constituted, specifically the goals and ideas parents held about the activities, the patterns of participation, features of expert guidance that family members provided and the various kinds of expertise that emerged through the activities.

Similarly, there were descriptions of classroom activities, focused on the same three literacy and language activities of reading to children, guiding children’s writing, telling and retelling narratives. This study analysed these activities in terms of goals, ideas, participation, and interactional features of expertise. In addition, the focus for the classrooms was to examine the degree to which classroom activities enabled children to engage quickly and effectively in classroom literacy and language activities, given the expertise they brought with them to school.

The findings that emerged out of this research are interpreted against two major predictions. The first prediction was that children experience multiple pathways to literacy development. The idea that children experience multiple pathways to literacy development is illustrated in the wide variation of literacy expertise with which children enter school (Clay, 1998; McNaughton, 1995). This position recognises the child’s role in the social construction of literacy through environmental interactions (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). The present research focused on how children developed literacy knowledge and literacy practices that were embedded within the learning environment within each family.

The second prediction proposed that the developmental transition between home and school could be tracked in multiple contexts in which literacy takes place. The prediction goes on to propose that effective teaching and learning will be determined by the degree
to which incorporation of literacy expertise into classroom activities take place and the
degree to which awareness of the relevance of expertise is developed further in
classroom tasks.

Multiple Pathways to Literacy Expertise
Previous research into emergent reading and writing behaviours has provided detailed
accounts of children’s conceptual knowledge of emergent literacy and the skills and
expertise that children develop in activities situated in the home environment and other
contexts (Clay, 1991; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984;
Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The evidence from this research suggested that the construction
of literacy at home emerged from multiple sources and diverse forms of literacy
practices. Families supported opportunities for children to engage in literacy activities
through the language of their home and their community (Clay, 1991). It has been argued
that multiple forms of literacy take form through the everyday context of their social and
cultural environments that contribute to their cognitive development and learning
(McNaughton, 2002; New, 2001). Inherent in this view is that literacy is not a unitary or
fixed skill but develops as a social practice into which children are ‘apprenticed’ by the
more expert members of their community (Cairney, 1995; Rogoff, 1990; Scibner & Cole,
1981). This further suggests that the social construction of literacy reflects the shifting
and dynamic relationships between the cultural context and the social activities in which
children are socialized through specific practices and processes (New, 2001).

Literacy Activities at Home
The first prediction was supported in that children entered school displaying a wide
range of skills and knowledge about literacy. Moreover, families reported many incidents
where their children participated in literacy activities at home including, storytelling,
reading books together, writing personal letters, preparing birthday cards, creating
treasure maps and incorporating writing and reading skills into many pretend play
activities. Families reported that learning to read and write were activities embedded in
their everyday ‘unofficial’ daily experiences (Dyson, 1997) as well as official experiences
in deliberate environments such as early childcare services and home intervention
programmes like the HIPPY programme.

Explanations and descriptions of the different sorts of literacy activities occurring at
home could be explained by the socialisation model of emergent literacy (McNaughton,
For example, this study demonstrated how the everyday practices that families engaged in, illustrated the way families actively selected, arranged and deployed literacy activities. Because of the way activities at home were organized, parents, children and their peers primarily mediated interactions. The interactions reported by families showed that many literacy activities had a deliberate teaching focus, although were often embedded in the context of other activities. Deliberate teaching occasions took place usually in the presence of one of the parents, normally the mother and for one family, the grandmother. One of the more prominent features of these activities was demonstrated specific family cultural practices that influenced the way activities at home were structured and organized.

A major feature of the organizational structure of activities is that they characterized important aspects of whanaungatanga (extended family). The presence and participation in family activities involved multiparty interactions and the interactions featured tuakana-teina relationships. These are relationships where an older and a younger sibling share reciprocal roles in the process of teaching and learning. This is a feature of culturally preferred methodological pedagogy commonly observed in Māori interactions (Smith, 1987). The interactions were fluid between participants, reciprocal and interchangeable (Pere, 1983). There were many examples in this study that showed children learning from observing, working or playing with other children. In particular, children’s understanding about a task was co-constructed by other family members, who apprenticed children’s literacy development (Rogoff, 1990).

There are theoretical implications here for families about how home environments endow families with a source of ‘intellectual capital’, suggesting the greater the capital, the greater the gain to educational knowledge (Leseman, 1993). The original argument around gaining capital knowledge was specific to middle class practices (Bourdieu, 1977). This study adds to the argument that one could identify different sources of ‘intellectual capital’, which do not necessarily feature one particular practice but incorporate many practices. That is, the findings of this thesis challenge teachers about how to assist children’s ‘intellectual capital’ from culturally diverse sources (Dyson, 1993).

**Writing Expertise**

Discussions with families showed that writing occurred across a variety of situations within the home, often prompted by other family members. Children’s written products
showed an array of writing expertise from their attempts at producing conventions of print, producing individual letter-like forms, identifying alphabet letters and numerical symbols, being able to write part of their entire name, and some children being able to put a message into written form. This range is reported in other studies that describe early writing occurring in white middle class families (see Garton & Pratt, 1998; Kempton, 1994), and Māori and Pacific families (Goodridge, 1995). Demonstrations of print awareness were shown in children’s involvement in the construction of their own knowledge through experimentation and exploration (Galda, Cullinan & Strickland, 1997). For example, there were episodes where writing was produced for particular purposes especially where the content involved others. In one incident Theresa demonstrated her understanding about writing while play-acting as a waitress during lunch preparations at home (see fig. 5.15). The playful context in which this activity took place enabled her to construct and conceptualize the writing ‘act’ because the content was familiar and embedded in an activity that was co-constructed with her father. In this example and a lot of the home activities was evidence of families collaborating, ‘scaffolding’ and imparting literacy and language expertise to the teaching and learning process (Clay, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

Writing activities that were repeated frequently, like constructing shopping lists and homework sessions were performed in the presence of others that stimulated children’s interest in contributing and developing their own understanding about writing. Children were observed to use forms of invented spelling, the placement of dots between words to signify a space, repeatedly using the same three-letter word but changing the first letter of the word, and incorporating drawings and signs into writing scripts to represent words. Families commented that many of these forms of emergent writing were considered to be forms of ‘scribble’ that were connected to drawing (Garton & Pratt, 1998). The writing children explored and experimented with showed how they hypothesized new and developing ways that words, messages and letters should be written. Descriptions of these writing activities extend similar findings from a previous study (see, Tamarua Turoa, 1995) that showed children’s early understandings about print emerging out of diverse forms of emergent writing (Clay, 1991).

**Storybook Reading Expertise**

Storybook reading took place within a variety of family contexts. Like writing, it was carried out mostly in the presence of other family members. The role that fathers played
for instance was in supporting their children’s development by listening and reading bedtime stories with their children, which was also regarded by families as part of their childcare responsibilities. Family members were often implicitly included in many everyday events and activities. Some of the stories parents told had a strong moral and philosophical basis while others were connected to knowing about their cultural identity (Wolfram, 1991). Telling stories has been one of the most common and culturally preferred methods of instruction used by many traditional oral cultures as a way to impart knowledge (Bishop, 1996).

Along with telling stories, listening to children reading school texts was also recorded as another way families had access to stories. There were several occasions where an older sibling would bring a school reader home that was heard by other members of the family including younger siblings. These events prompted similar storybook reading reenactments to occur. Families observed their children imitating and modeling the stories they had listened to during play activities. Storybook reading to children is a socially created activity that encourages and teaches children to understand how to actively participate in reading and how reading occurs (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

The findings around storybook reading at home showed that families understood there were specific processes involved in understanding that reading requires taking meaning from text, such as recognising the relationship between the text and the pictures (Clay, 1991; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). These families also commented during home discussions that their children’s attempts included creating narratives from prior knowledge, and guessing at words based on the context from the text. Where children had forgotten parts of a text, they were observed to incorporate memorised parts of another text to fit into their story. Sharing storybook reading helps develop the way in which children begin to recognize that print carries a message that often emerges well before school (Clay, 1991; Galda, Cullinan & Strickland, 1997).

Interestingly, families reported that they considered storybook reading at home less important in comparison to developing writing skills. This was signaled by parent’s ambiguousness about reading, and specifically by their uncertainty regarding the kinds of storybooks that children should read at home. The interactions during reading sessions showed similar exchanges to those reading sessions described earlier. The work that Heath (1982) conducted suggested that it is not the presence or absence of storybooks
that affect aspects of a child’s literacy development but the language and social interaction that surround the text that lead to children’s progress in conventional school forms of literacy. Families regarded the stories that are read to children in early childhood settings would assist children’s development in the sorts of reading skills required for conventional school reading. This belief by families is reflected in professional and academic knowledge that reading (and writing) skills developed in early preschool settings has been found to facilitate children’s language growth (Dickinson, 1991).

**Storytelling Expertise**

There were contextual variations in the way in which stories were told, this depended on who was telling the story, to whom, and for what purpose the story was being told (Hudson & Shapiro, 1991). Families told stories where explanations and knowledge about certain events needed to be comprehended clearly. Explanations told this way had the benefit of being more informative if they were put in a more interesting and novel way while at the same time getting the message across to younger members of a family. Often the form and type of story told to a younger child would undergo a complete transformation within the context of a story. For instance, children would incorporate ideas of reality with fantasy usually through moments of their play actions and play on words, that was pieced together to form an ‘intertextual’ type composition (Cairney, 1998). For example, different types and forms of genre were commonly found in families where storytelling was integrated within the social practices of the family. These included, singing songs and more often singing and telling rhymes, listening to book and tape recordings, watching video stories, bedtime reading and retelling of stories that were a mixture of personal experiences, myths and fantasy stories. The opportunity families created for sharing and telling stories to their children firstly was seen as an appropriate way by which families could find more amusing ways for their children to make connections to their cultural roots and identities. Secondly, there was a more conventional use of stories that families recognised, which was the need to have their children assume greater command over listening to more language. Studies have found that through telling stories children come to understand how stories are constructed. It is assumed that the more practice they experience at telling and retelling stories the more experience they bring to reading and writing (Clay, 1998).

Families frequently shared personal stories that reflected personal experiences that often contained philosophical or moral messages. Storytelling would emanate from objects,
such as photographs or something personal. These types of stories showed strong family and cultural connections based around whakapapapa (genealogy) as well as being a useful way of passing on a multiplicity of knowledge that one can identify through their culture (Bishop, 1996). Personal experiences would link them back to their cultural worlds. These types of stories were clearly marked from the background information that was included in a story and episodic information that distinguished shifts in time and place (Cazden, 1988).

Social and Cultural Practices
The observations at home showed literacy being influenced by cultural socialisation practices within the contexts provided by family activities. Literacy is recognised as a cultural practice reflecting the beliefs, values and attitudes by which children become enculturated (Cairney, 1995). This study has shown that home environments of these Māori families provided meaningful contexts by which children co-constructed literacy activities, through multifaceted and complex interactions. Families included cultural and pedagogical styles of teaching and learning processes that were socially and culturally specific within family practices (Scribner & Cole, 1978). For instance, this study has illustrated that collaboration with more knowledgeable members enabled children to learn to think and behave in ways that reflected their community’s culture (Berk & Winsler, 1995), in particular the development of forms of expertise appropriate for the activities. Vygotsky’s (1978) notion of development describes children’s literacy learning derived from their social and cultural contexts.

In many instances, the development of literacy children encountered at home was embedded in the teaching and learning practices of kaupapa Māori, that is, the philosophy and practice of being and acting Māori (Smith, 1992). The primary locus of learning occurs through whanaungatanga that is family and extended family members, who, in the context of this study were vital contributors to the construction of literacy activities. In the course of engaging in activities, children learn to understand their position within the structure of the family as well as the role and responsibility of their position. Each child experienced characteristics of learning, which Metge (1984) describes as open, inclusive of others, led by demonstration and through exposure. The responsibility of each member in the group and respect for one’s elders, in this case the children’s parents, teachers, and peers added to the complexity of how knowledge was being imparted. The social and cultural processes of children acquiring knowledge in this
study were multiple and included learning by listening, watching and being immersed in
the everyday experiences of life (Pere, 1983). In the context of this study, learning was
seen to be highly contextualized where literacy was deeply embedded in the culture of the
family, that is literacy became socially constructed through the social mediation of others
(Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

The teaching and learning that took place during interactions and literacy activities can be
described using the metaphor scaffolding or assisted learning (Wood, 1998; Wood,
Bruner & Ross, 1976). An example from this study showed how two sisters (Mary and
her older sibling), collaborated so that Mary’s sister could write out a word she had
forgotten how to spell, during a homework writing activity. Mary assisted her by spelling
out the parts of the word her older sister couldn’t remember. The transfer of
responsibility from the expert to the novice occurred where shared understanding of a
task was evident (McNaughton, 1991; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Both these children
were able to share the responsibility of understanding the form and purpose of a task
given each other’s expertise. This process further highlights that where a task requires
peers to give specific directions around a similar activity, may require a much wider
framework from which knowledge can be transferred (Cazden, 1988).

Vygotsky’s (1978) theory emphasizes development as a process of internalisation by
which social relationships help structure literacy practices with members currently in the
child’s environment sharing knowledge. The social relationships that occurred within the
whānau, especially the relationships that involved siblings, were seen to add significantly
to the development of their literacy expertise. Traditional Māori knowledge was acquired
through the learning processes of apprenticeship or tutorial strategy, where a puukenga
or wiser, older person guided and supported the knowledge of the younger learner
(Metge, 1984). That expertise can also be reciprocated through the relationship of
tuakana-teina, was evident in the example already mentioned above.

**Tuakana-teina**

It was noted in this study that the processes by which children interacted together
represented characteristics shown in peer relationships but these were configured in
distinctly Māori ways. Notably in this study, the tuakana-teina relationship of an older
and younger child collaborating together was evident for each of the children both at
home as well as in the classroom. In the latter context, the reciprocity and interactional
roles that were expressed by the children showed features and characteristics typical of peers that were not limited to kaupapa Māori pedagogical ways of learning.

A major feature of peer collaboration according to the theory of Piaget is that children benefit more from interactions with same age peers than from interactions from older children and adults. Vygotsky (1978) on the other hand saw mixed age peer collaboration at the forefront toward enhancing cognitive development. He determined that a more competent peer supports a less capable peer, especially children of mixed ages working together on a common activity. They create opportunities for intersubjectivity to improve their understanding of a task. More importantly, the interaction allows children access to more knowledgeable peers that serve as a resource to children’s developing expertise (Berk & Winsler, 1995). The examples found in this study demonstrated that learning at home was constructed mostly in groups of mixed age that contributed to children’s cognitive growth. This style of learning together in groups resembled culturally preferred ways of learning which Māori identify, and that occur within the concept of whanaungatanga (incorporating family values, care and nurturance). A significant feature of the tuakana-teina relationship is the responsibilities that children have of each other within the whānau. The process by which children come to understand their role and responsibilities within the whānau are not exclusive to the home environment, but are easily transferable into other contexts.

**Parental Belief Systems**

Parental belief systems have been found to be a useful way of describing the complex relationships occurring between individual members in families and external ‘systems’ like schools (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Descriptions of families organizing and arranging literacy activities at home can be viewed as independent sub-systems that are a major part of what make up parents' belief systems (Schaffer, 2004). For instance, the nature and source of parent’s ideas provide information that can be linked to understanding children’s development in specific contexts. In particular, systems theory has been strongly advocated for understanding the relationships parents provide to support children's development at home as well as connections to school contexts (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).
'Readiness’ as a construct to literacy development

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is a commonly held belief by parents that schooling begins once a child turns five years of age, although school attendance is not compulsory until children turn six years of age. This is supported by most early childcare education services that cater for children at an early age prior to school up to the age of five years. In a sense, parents recognise this age as reaching a stage of ‘readiness’ to begin school.

Early research theorized ‘readiness’ as particularly relevant to chronological age, as a stage or level of development in children, as a set of skills and competencies, and as a process to allow children to learn easily (Dyson, 1999a). As well, in the classroom the perception of ‘readiness’ can imply that children enter school knowing expected forms of literacy expertise. ‘Reading readiness’ for example, suggests children become ready to begin formal reading instruction, which has been argued as society’s attempt to formalize instruction for children (Clay, 1990). The term that Sulzby & Teale (1986) coined, ‘emergent literacy’ describes children’s early literacy experiences part of a gradual process of becoming literate. The assumption given earlier by both these terms implies that children enter school with some literacy, developed from experiences before school providing quite a narrow view of ‘readiness’.

This study demonstrated recognition of various forms of the notion of ‘readiness’. This was expressed through parents’ deliberate choice of early childcare education, personal attitudes and experiences about schooling and also expectations about their child’s schooling, which contributed to understanding how families prepared and promoted literacy development at home. As well, parents’ ideas about literacy activities at home were found to be socially and culturally co-constructed mostly through implicit forms of teaching/learning that were embedded in family practices. This prevailing view places a strong focus of learning opportunities by families that endorse the contextual social and cultural experiences that children are exposed to.

Rather than ‘readiness’, the argument in this thesis has been that each child experienced multiple and diverse developmental pathways to learning. Specifically, the characteristics of children’s literacy experiences prior to school strongly featured varying degrees of structured forms of learning, derived from what families included in their home practices. The configuration of the children’s literacy expertise therefore had different shapes that emerged from various sources, emphasizing the multiple pathways to children’s expertise. For example, the educational choices that families consciously made
reflected their understanding of literacy practices and beliefs about how best to support their children’s literacy development prior to school. One family participated in a home-based literacy programme that provided structured literacy instruction similar to that found in classroom instruction. Other families were observed to provide a less structured approach where literacy occurred more implicitly through children’s play activities, relying on their connections with Kindergarten and their personal experiences for guidance. All families maintained constant links with extended whānau (family) members who were an inclusive knowledge source of literacy practices.

Participation in a home-based programme by one family was regarded as providing literacy skills in preparation for school. In general, family participation in home-based literacy programmes have been found to support parents’ personal development to learn about current educational ideas and practices, child development and the political organization of a school (Toomey & Sloane, 1994). Family intervention type programmes have as a common goal the strengthening in the ties between home and school by transmitting the culture of school literacy through the vehicle of the family. Parental involvement in these programmes is often guided by specific conventional school literacy tasks and instructions on how to carry out the activities. While these programmes structure parental participation in their children’s education, there are assumptions implicit in the ideas and practices inherent in the conveyance of school practices. The assumptions that emerge from some of these programmes appear to be variations of deficit models that tend to place a great deal of the ‘lack of’ responsibility with families (Auerbach, 2001).

However, Theresa’s participation in the home based literacy intervention programme derived from specific expectations and ideas about the sorts of literacy knowledge and skills that her family believed were important for children to know prior to school. For instance, Theresa’s mother commented that preschool education should provide more “…school-like structure programmes to help children develop skills that are necessary for school.” These ideas emerged more from participating in the programme that Theresa’s mother mentioned gave her daughter confidence in reading and writing skills that “…probably (came) from the HIPPY programme, that’s helped.” The significance of this type of learning for Theresa’s family was to incorporate learning that would support their child’s learning into school.
Parent’s ideas about literacy were reflected also in enrolling their child into an early childcare education centre. Family involvement in early childcare resulted in parents including teaching and learning ideas from these settings to reinforce and align with their own personal beliefs and ideas about how best to support their children’s literacy development. Families also relied on this source of information to understand the requirements and practice of conventional literacy tasks, which was especially evident from families’ activities. Family participation in literacy events for example, has been suggested as a way in which children (and families) become more familiar to school literacy practices (Auerbach, 2001). For example, developing specific ways of taking meaning from a text and developing the child’s schema for stories by familiarizing children with literary conventions (Teale, 1984) can enhance a child’s experiences with books similar to school practices. In addition, the similarities and familiarities between home and school literacy events have been found to predict success in school-based literacy (Heath, 1983; Pellegrini, 2001) and to some extent make links between home and school stronger (Teale, 1984). The different approaches that families actively participated in added to the complexity and diversity of the literacy development children experienced at home and in some instances showing close resemblance to school literacy practices. The teaching and learning practices found within the whānau for all families meant incorporating ideas from external literacy practices.

**Family Beliefs about Literacy**

Families had very firm ideas about their children’s literacy development and the sorts of teaching/learning processes involved in their learning. In part, their teaching and learning processes incorporated social and cultural processes identifiable as Kaupapa Māori philosophy. The theories and ideas that families held about literacy in general emerged from personal experiences and their expectations about learning. But in addition, families actively sought professional guidance as well as relying on personal experience in supporting their children’s literacy development.

This might explain the reason why parents in this study showed a genuine desire to gain a better and deeper understanding about literacy skills, especially where personal experiences were more adverse. Studies have shown that parents from minority communities tend to place considerable trust and belief in professional educators opinions (McNaughton, 1995; Tamarua Turoa, 1995). The ideas that families discussed in this study were central to their learning about how best to support their children’s
literacy prior to school. These ideas emphasized how much these families valued their children’s education. These findings add to studies that have shown highly educated parents value and socialize their children into formal learning (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphill, 1991). The implications here show differences in the amount, quality and content of the value families place on formal education that exists between families from different sociocultural backgrounds (Leseman, 1993). These differences have an impact on the way families socialize processes of learning. More importantly they highlight a common desire held by families that they simply want to know how to best support their children’s learning.

Summary of Literacy Activities at Home
The findings that emerged from data gathered about literacy activities at home confirmed the first prediction proposed by this study, which suggested that children’s literacy expertise developed across multiple sites, and for this multiple pathways were evident for each child prior to school entry. Among the major findings of this research, was that families were observed to participate in a wide variety of literacy related activities in the home as well from other sources. Literacy development was highly contextualised and integrated into the everyday social and cultural events that families practiced. Families provided opportunities where literacy activities contributed to the use of and comprehension of decontextualised information through experiences that ‘situated learning’ (Wood, 1998). For example, all families told stories based on personal experiences embedded in their social and cultural practices. Storytelling involved elaborating on past and present events that children came to recognise experience and process in the context of literacy development (Cazden et al, 1996).

The beliefs that families held facilitated children’s learning by providing ‘bridges’ between skills that were familiar to the introduction of new, unfamiliar problems (Rogoff, 1990). Bridging new pathways involved parents accessing information that would assist in their knowledge and their children’s development of literacy through personal and external sources and processes. This guided their practices and ideas to enable children develop expertise while engaging in literacy related activities.

Developmental Connections to School
The following section discusses the second prediction proposed by this thesis. It is the argument that children’s early literacy expertise could be tracked across multiple contexts
and that the relationships between learning and development occurring within these settings become significant in the development of children’s expertise. The notion was tested that when a child goes to school, effective teaching and learning is determined by the degree to which incorporation of literacy into classroom activities is enabled by these relationships and the degree to which awareness is developed further in classroom tasks. It was evident from the findings in this study that the developmental transition to school showed children entered school knowing a wide range of literacy knowledge. Children’s expertise had a significant effect on the way teachers guided their progress, but more importantly development is seen to be related to how teachers capitalized on children’s literacy expertise within activities.

The developmental processes by which children become literate include the cumulative continuous and discontinuous experiences children are exposed to from various social and cultural contexts (Clay, 1991; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). It is possible to track children’s developmental connections between home, other settings and into school. As children enter school they are confronted with new and challenging developmental tasks (McNaughton, 2002). These tasks may differ from children’s early experiences through teacher expectations, which can be linked to particular curriculum constraints and learning outcomes. The transition process may include connections to other developmental settings that may contribute directly or indirectly to children’s development in culturally specific ways (New, 2001).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model emphasizes the transitions that children make that are situated in culturally specific contexts such as, early childhood settings, church, Sunday school and marae. The relationships that develop between these settings (systems) contribute to developmental processes (McNaughton, 1998) that can either enhance or discourage learning. These settings also add to the process of ‘building continuity’ between home, other settings and the transition into schools for many children (McNaughton, Phillips, MacDonald, 2000). The focus in this study was the developmental transition that children make from home to school and how classroom practices might enable children to participate more effectively in classroom literacy activities given their level of expertise.
Literacy Expertise on Entry to School

Upon entry to school differences in children’s individual performances on conventional literacy tasks were noticeable. The teachers across the three schools relied heavily on children’s formal conventional literacy knowledge from school assessments, as well as observing children’s interactions during classroom literacy activities (Genishi & Dyson, 1984). Information about children’s literacy expertise was collated from the school observation data and from assessments of formal conventional literacy and language knowledge, administered to each child at approximately 4-6 weeks after entry to school. Two of the children were tested twice because they began school close to the end of the school year. Therefore a second test was administered when they returned to school in the New Year. The assessment information that the three schools collated was seen by schools to inform teaching practice.

Overall, data from children’s first assessments showed wide variation in this conventional form of literacy expertise upon entry to school. Children ranged from having advanced skills in conventional literacy expertise (eg. writing their name or part of) to children that showed fewer competencies on some literacy tasks (eg. recognising only a few alphabet letters). The assessment tasks children were tested on included name writing, and tests from the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1993) of knowing concepts about print, letter identification, written language and written vocabulary. However, there were inconsistencies between what children could do at home, what they could do in the assessments and what they could do or were required to do within classroom activities. For instance, one of the assessment procedures required children to write their name. Name writing was a common family activity where all children were observed to be able to write their first name. The assessment data showed children’s existing level of competence in producing their name was confirmed by the written comments in children’s assessment records and evidence of the produced name. Yet, the teachers were not aware of the children’s name writing expertise in the classroom activities as well as the assessment data information which was available for the teachers to view.

However, the need for teachers to be aware of and know the forms of emergent literacy was dramatically demonstrated in the classroom activities and was especially obvious in the name writing activity. Sometimes children’s literacy expertise that is embedded in an activity, even expertise that has been assessed, can be difficult for teachers to recognise. In recognising children’s expertise in name writing for example, teachers’ awareness
varied. Two teachers (Mrs Gabriel and Mrs Dee) suggested that children either had ‘no knowledge’ of letters in their name, to ‘knowing perhaps a few isolated letters’ based on conventional school literacy markers. During classroom writing activities, it was routine in classrooms of two of the children, for them to trace over a model of their names at the beginning of any exercise (see transcripts for Mark and Hona). This part of the activity was designed to develop children’s awareness and expertise in producing their name through specific guidelines. But these two teachers were unaware that both of the children had considerable expertise in name writing until one of the parents (Mark’s mother) alerted her son’s teacher about his proficiency in this activity.

It is possible that the teachers’ awareness of the children’s expertise in name writing may have been constrained by their expectations. A teacher’s expectation of children’s progress varies in complex and qualitative ways; a teacher might expect more of some children and less of others (Cazden, 1988). Research has shown that children at school who make lower than normative achievement progress may become associated with teaching practices and expectations that might exaggerate their low progress (McNaughton, Phillips & MacDonald, 2000; Timperley, Robinson & Bullard, 1999). A second possibility was that limited curriculum space occurred in the tracing activity. This meant that the children’s name writing expertise could not be incorporated into the activity that was adopted (tracing over a model) which cut off the teacher’s options. In this sense the activity did not have the attribute of ‘versatility’, that is it did not allow a range of children’s literacy expertise to enter the activity. An alternative ‘highly versatile’ activity could have been made ‘focused and constrained’, that is making the task more difficult for the learner to work out, however a limited activity such as tracing over a model could not be other than limited (McNaughton, 2002).

Mark’s teacher’s awareness during the name writing event may well have been enhanced by the mother’s intervention, in the case of this child, where opportunity for shared discussion may have revealed her son’s expertise in this event. But more importantly, this incident showed how a child’s expertise, if it already resonates with a classroom activity, could prime the teacher to see, make sense of and evaluate a child's knowledge and skills positively. In this case, what might have been seen was already quite well developed conventional school forms of literacy. However ‘seeing’ this expertise was somewhat clouded by an expectation and belief that this was probably too advanced for the child to
have done by himself and the selection of the activity setting reduced how the child’s current expertise could be shown.

The second possible reason why teachers had difficulty recognising children’s expertise, especially in name writing, highlighted an administration feature linked to how assessments are compiled, administered and analysed for school (teachers) purposes. In this particular case, the Junior School Head Teacher administered collated and analysed assessments. It is likely that some of the assessment data may not have been shared or collaboratively considered by teachers making it difficult for teachers to know of children’s competence in particular literacy skills. The way in which the assessments were conducted also emphasized the importance that assessments are guided using reliable and valid procedures. Teacher use and understanding of the data should directly inform teaching practice especially when teachers other than the classroom teacher carry out tests. It is argued that assessments are more helpful for teachers if they can challenge and guide children’s literacy expertise to work closely within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), in this case to ensure their competence in particular conventional literacy skills can be identified and extended.

**Observation Survey: ‘Six-year-old net’**

Observation data from the ‘six-year-old’ net (Clay, 1998) observation survey was also collected to show children’s developmental progress over their first year at school. This data included tests from the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1993) that showed concepts about print, letter identification, hearing and recording sounds, word recognition and writing vocabulary. The Burt Word Recognition (Gilmore, Croft & Reid, 1981) test was administered along with an oral language measure using Tell Me/Ki Mai (Learning Media, 1998) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) test for receptive language. In general, what the tests showed was that each child displayed average to high progress on literacy and language measures, in comparison to national expectations, over their first year of school.

The information gained from the six-year data suggested that regardless of children’s variation in literacy and language expertise upon entry to school, over time their literacy expertise closely aligned to the conventional school forms of literacy expertise. Over the children’s first year assessments showed that developmentally appropriate progress occurred for all children (Calda, Cullinan & Strickland, 1997). This was despite the fact
that initially the administration and results from the assessments were less suitable and
difficult for some teachers to detect children’s diversity in literacy and language skills.
This finding supports the idea that these four children entered school with multiple
forms of literacy expertise and skills from multiple contexts. The way in which the
classroom activities were constituted was also to capitalize on children’s literacy expertise
given their varied pathways of development. According to the results from the formal
assessment data these children’s expertise showed that although their developmental
pathways differed, the outcome for all children was similar (Clay, 1991). This was despite
finding that the formal assessments also may have limited the teacher’s awareness of
children’s developing literacy expertise, which was to an extent influenced by the
teacher’s personal beliefs and ideas about children’s development.

There was another problem with the timing and administration of assessments that
affected teachers’ perception of children’s expertise in some literacy skills. For example,
the interval between children’s entry to school and the administration of the first school
assessment was an opportunity where teachers could have capitalized on children’s
literacy expertise. Instead, in the case of name writing, it was observed that one teacher
introduced children to developing the instructional model of name writing rather than
observed and developed on the skills with which the child was already familiar.

**Two Processes: Incorporation and Awareness**
The two concepts incorporation and awareness (McNaughton, 2002) were used to
examine the instructional processes by which teachers were able to connect with
children’s expertise and skills, specifically by looking at where school activities resonated
with out of school activities in terms of similar goals, and ways of participating. It was
clear from the findings in this study there were many instances of incorporation. Literacy
and language activities in the classroom that were versatile and flexible enabled children
to engage quickly and effectively in literacy and language activities, given their expertise
upon entry to school. For example, this study showed how the activity of story writing
enabled high incorporation of children’s expertise by its structural correspondence with
their emergent writing skills within the classroom writing activities. In Mary’s first story
writing attempt her teacher searched for indicators of her existing knowledge and
expertise in writing by which to guide her through this activity. From this, her teacher
recognised a wide range of the child’s writing expertise of modeling, and writing words
and sentences on which she was able to capitalize, so that this expertise could be
incorporated into the story writing. The versatility of this writing activity enabled many aspects of Mary’s knowledge to be integrated into the general framework of writing ‘a story’, to including using familiar words and phrases as a platform to specific word solving strategies and item knowledge.

The storywriting activity illustrated two dimensions to the concept of ‘versatility’ (McNaughton, 2002). Firstly, Mary was able to incorporate her expertise into an activity because her skills and knowledge were similar to conventional school forms of knowledge. Secondly, her teacher employed a strategy that quickly identified the child’s expertise in conventional literacy knowledge that led to enhancing her participation in the activity to successfully complete what was required. Building on children’s expertise in classroom activities is the basis of incorporation. In the context of this thesis, incorporating and building on children’s cultural values and expertise into classroom activities showed how structural properties of activities enable teachers to make connections to what is familiar to the child. The process of ‘building continuity’ (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002) of literacy skills between home and school settings arguably occurs as expertise and activities that are found in one setting are incorporated into another (McNaughton, 2002). This requires collaboration of teaching and learning processes and more importantly a familiarity of the child with the processes required in following and performing specific classroom instructions.

Theoretically this further suggests it is possible to provide a better match between classroom and home practices (Cazden, 1998). Research has shown how some families are seen to reproduce the ‘cultural capital’ of school practices (Bourdieu, 1977). This implies that the transmission of knowledge flows in a one-way direction that does little to identify or incorporate family practices into classroom practices (Auerbach, 2001). There are important implications here for educators and teaching practitioners that suggest if children enter school with varying forms of literacy expertise it might be possible for teachers to incorporate various teaching practices that would suit children with different preschool experiences (Clay, 1991). This study extends the notion that through shared understanding of home, early childcare practices and classroom practices a better match between settings is possible.
Incorporating with Familiar and Unfamiliar Activities and Developing Children’s Awareness

Thus, it is possible for teachers to recognize and make connections to children’s literacy expertise by building on what children are already familiar with and incorporating this into a new and unfamiliar classroom activity. As noted in this study, during classroom guided and shared reading sessions some of the children were observed to already show familiarity with concepts of ‘pointing’, letter-sound combinations, self-corrections and reading from the pictures. In general, the literacy activities taking place in the classroom enabled high incorporation of children’s expertise.

The way in which activities were structured involved the transfer of learning where understanding and awareness of activities, including strategies, encouraged collaboration between the teachers’ awareness and children’s expertise. It was observed that children’s awareness developed through immersion in activities where children experienced frequent opportunities for practice with a variety of ‘rich textual forms’ embedded in activities (McNaughton, 2002). The more that children sustained engagement with different textual forms, the more that these became internalized and mastered (Cambourne, 1988). However, not all activities appeared to aid children’s awareness through immersion in activities.

Whole class activities have been recognized generally to have ‘low versatility’ and are inclined to limit children’s potential for building awareness in classroom activities. However, this study found incidents where whole class activities despite having ‘limited versatility’ nevertheless enabled children’s participation (McNaughton, 2002). An example described earlier in this study found one of the children (Theresa) had the potential to show high incorporation of her reading expertise with that of a whole class reading activity. In this particular example, the activity incorporated an instructional teaching style that was familiar and one that resonated with the home based intervention programme Theresa often participated in alongside her mother. During these interactions, Theresa’s mother provided more explicit instructions and in many cases an elaborated and detailed description of the text. What was perhaps more limiting for Theresa’s participation in the classroom reading activity was personalizing the interaction. Children’s performance in whole class reading activities has the ability to constrain the actions of the teacher interacting with children, limiting and sometimes confusing their actions thereby reducing the potential for incorporation. This can be
overcome by a high degree of incorporation with a rich text and with suitable teacher commentary and discussion to build awareness (McNaughton, 2002).

Introduction to unfamiliar texts was also seen to potentially limit children’s awareness through lack of clarity of teacher’s instructional commands. In two reported episodes, Mary and Mark’s teacher’s provided unfamiliar texts that appeared to be at an instructional reading level that might have been too easy for both children. There was a specific focus by both teachers to provide guidance in developing children’s awareness of particular features of comprehension of the new text by the teacher’s instructional style. The focus illustrated by one of the teachers (Mrs Gabriel) was on developing the theme and narrative features of the new story that she perhaps felt was more important knowing. Since the child could already decode well the teacher wanted Mark to instead expand his knowledge around comprehension from a new text. While this might have assisted in Mark’s awareness through immersion by the new text, it was not a very good context to provoke or highlight new learning. In the second case, the questions posed by Mary’s teacher reflected an unfamiliar and rhetorical style that seemed to confuse her when trying to establish vocabulary knowledge and the topic content. The confusion during exchanges was quickly identified, as Mary was able to infer the format required by prompts from the teacher by reciprocating in a turn-taking process. In both these events, the degree of incorporation was dependent on the teacher making connections to the child’s expertise through the explicitness and implicitness of the teacher’s instructional style.

Providing children with a format or a script in which to follow the teacher’s demonstration was observed in this study to be more useful for some children through ‘overt’ instructions (Cazden et al, 1996) by building on and incorporating what children knew in an activity. Research has indicated that overt, often explicit ways of learning for Māori and other indigenous communities is a more preferred and familiar way by which to incorporate new learning (Metge, 1983). To a large extent the way that teachers created classroom literacy activities showed that the processes of school instruction influenced their teaching practice and classroom organisation. What this suggests is the way literacy instruction is channeled in the classroom can either enhance or limit children’s awareness of the goals, rules and participation structures with their out of school expertise. Therefore, the structure of the activities is a necessary but not sufficient
condition for optimizing connections. It also depends on the mediation by the teacher through the way activities are selected, arranged and deployed (McNaughton, 1995).

**Limits to Incorporating Children’s Cultural Practice**

In general, teachers had limited knowledge of the diverse experiences with which children entered school. In addition, teachers recognised that families generally placed considerable emphasis on developing literacy skills for their children, and these would occur specifically through family experiences and children attending early childhood settings. But knowing these possibilities in children’s literacy experience did not directly translate to knowing about children’s cultural experiences and how these skills might be built upon or incorporated into classroom activities (see Goodridge, 1995). Therefore, teachers needed more extensive generic knowledge about diversity and a set of skills to see the expertise.

Classroom activities had the potential for high versatility for incorporating cultural practices of children’s expertise into classroom practices. For instance, following the general format of a writing conference (Smith & Elley, 1997) there was evidence of incorporation of the children’s cultural pedagogy with what they were familiar. Initially in one activity, Mark’s teacher’s contingent questioning enabled her to make informative connections to his written narrative. Their discussion created a platform for the development of the narrative and at the same time created an awareness and acceptance of the use of a colloquial Māori word kai (food) that Mark had incorporated into his story. This activity had high versatility to incorporate the child’s cultural awareness from home into a classroom activity while continuing to maintain the focus of the classroom activity.

This study noted that making connections to children’s literacy expertise was not always successful. One example in this study during a shared group activity showed one of the children (Hona) singing and performing the actions to a Māori waiata during a shared group activity. This was an opportunity for the teacher to build on and incorporate his cultural knowledge with the rest of the class into the activity. This particular incident also highlights the difficulties that some teacher’s face on a day-to-day basis to recognise the significance of culturally based experiences. The expressions of cultural messages are embedded into the contextualised social and cultural belief systems, which at times are not easily seen or heard (Smith, 1993). An implication here for teaching practitioners
emphasises the need for teachers to allow children’s cultural landscapes and their voices to be seen and heard in relation to classroom practices (Dyson, 2001). In this sense, children’s cognitive development is inseparable from children’s sociocultural contexts of learning. Children learn from their social milieu a cultural curriculum of the skills and perspectives of their communities (Rogoff, 1990). It is within this framework that children’s cultural knowledge and skills of literacy are an integral part of their development of learning that educators and teachers need to work on and integrate into current classroom practices.

There were many instances where children’s cultural experiences and practices from their home activities were not well incorporated into classroom activities. Occasionally the goals and forms of participation structures in an activity confused children, and their understanding about how to carry out an activity was interfered with. Hemphill and Snow (1996) illustrate that discontinuities between children’s home and school based language and literacy practices could also be based around the misconceived view that attempts to ‘design comparable literacy curricula’ derive from a Western paradigm. As mentioned previously, the activity of name writing posed difficulties for some of the children despite the fact that their expertise and knowledge in producing their name was already established. This particular event also showed the degree to which children’s knowledge about what was required and expected of them in writing their name varied in important ways from the teacher’s expectations.

For example, name writing for Hona was also limiting in two ways. This particular example highlighted how the teacher might have incorporated the child’s cultural values and practice to solving the problem. One way could have been for Hona to incorporate familiar ways of participating in this activity, such as observing and imitating that were a part of his family cultural practice. Since the inclusion of Hona’s cultural expertise towards solving the problem did not take place, the second solution to continue instruction that was conducted in an unfamiliar manner was probably more restrictive and problematic for him. In a sense, it is what Hona learned about the nature of being able to read activities in the classroom and how to solve problems associated with learning what to do. That is, for both the teacher and Hona it may have meant that they were operating with two theories, both applying a different approach to the same task. In this case, the teacher’s instruction included a model, which was presented in a formal and structured way suggesting that there was a ‘correct’ way in which to write one’s name.
Hona’s articulation of the task may have contributed to his comprehension about what was required of the task. This process required a high degree of shared understanding and intersubjectivity (Newson & Newson, 1975) between the child and the teacher in being able to communicate instructions clearly and explicitly so that Hona could perform the activity more effectively. An implication of this activity could be that applying pedagogies developed in one sociocultural context to other contexts might be problematic for some children (Walton, 1993). Au (1998) argues that teachers should adopt a culturally responsive approach to become more knowledgeable about their students’ backgrounds and to design instruction that promote and reflect children’s values, knowledge and participation structures that children bring from their home culture. In her study, Hawaiian students were observed to negotiate literate features of their cultural ways of discussing ‘talk-story’ into classroom reading activities. Au (1998) explains that incorporating literate activities that closely resemble home and school features, which she calls ‘hybrid events’, can enable children to develop and build new literacies alongside their home culture.

This discussion has already mentioned that whole class activities might enhance a child’s participation when the activity incorporates and builds upon their knowledge of a task. However, whole class activities also have the potential to restrict children’s participation especially when children enter activities using their event knowledge and knowledge of structural properties of activities that are quite dissimilar. This study described a whole class reading activity that provided an opportunity for Hona’s teacher to incorporate his experiences to that of a story topic and content that was familiar.

However, the activity was inconsistent with Hona’s actions and the way he utilized this space that was potentially provided. The activity had ongoing significance as a vehicle for incorporation and participation of Hona’s knowledge through his actions that proceeded after the classroom activity. For instance, it prompted Hona to bring into class trophies that displayed his experiences but more importantly, it reflected a family activity that had consequence to his participation of this activity in class. Hona’s grandfather was a ‘truckie’ and would often return home exchanging stories of his travels usually with a photo that was added to a wall collection. The series of photos became a talking point for the grandfather. The photos were used as a narrative prop to bring his experiences outside of home into that setting. The whole class reading activity provided a similar opportunity by which Hona used this strategy too, by bringing in his trophies for the
class to view, which also acted as a narrative prop. This activity then enabled Hona’s expertise to be incorporated into a classroom activity. Inherent in Hona’s actions were opportunities for his teacher to make links to his family and home community and to his cultural identity (Dyson, 1993) expressed using props to stimulate discussion and storytelling. But in addition, this activity illustrated another source to Hona’s expertise through exchanges that were co-constructed between Hona and his grandfather. In a Vygotskian perspective knowledge is co-constructed through social and cultural experiences that are meaningful for participants (Bird & Drewery, 2003). In this particular case, Hona’s participation and incorporation of his knowledge transformed the process of the classroom activity to include his learning experiences.

**Building Awareness with Peers: Tuakana-teina roles**

Another way that children’s expertise was enhanced in the classroom was through interactions that occurred between peers. This study noted that in many classroom activities the general presence of peer interactions was evident. A significant characteristic of the peer interactions seen in classroom activities illustrated distinct pedagogical patterns and practices that also featured strongly in children’s home environments. Peer interactions in many cases can be qualitatively different from one another depending on the dynamics of the group (Cazden, 1988). For instance, as noted already in this study, children preferred to work collaboratively together in reading and writing activities. One of the children in this study (see transcript for Theresa) was observed over several classroom activities to be guided and assisted by her cousin. In this example, although Theresa is the older child at home, in the context of school, the responsibility of care and nurturance could shift, in this case to her ‘older’ (tuakana) cousin in order to help her through a task. This illustrates a fundamental feature of their relationship in Māori terms (Hohepa, 1998; Tangaere, 1996). For example, in Māori approaches to learning, the reciprocal role of tuakana and teina is present in other contexts such as Te Kohanga Reo (Māori preschool language nest) where an older child helps a younger child (Tangaere, 1996).

The shifting of tuakana roles that often occurred in classroom activities illustrated the nature by which this type of interaction can happen between children in a subliminal way even where children are not related by kin. For instance, this study observed several events where the participation by one child relied on being assisted by another child (see transcripts for Hona). The implication of Hona’s reliance on another child to help to
complete writing activities in class raised important issues about the learning process for children from culturally diverse communities. The participation structures were recognised to be culturally appropriate and were a preferred and near automatic process. The characteristics by which this child and the other children in this study carried out activities with their peers can be connected to distinct Māori pedagogical practices. Learning traditionally occurs in the context of the whānau (family), hapu (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribal affiliation), where members take on reciprocal roles in each others’ learning (Drewery & Bird, 2004). It has meant that every person is a learner and is responsible to teach those less skilled. The process by which this occurs is by watching and listening and where appropriate, learners were expected to follow with minimal instruction or explanation (Metge, 1983). Within a traditional Māori context individuality in children is encouraged and fostered but within the wider context of how they can contribute to the group. Therefore, it is recognised that sharing of knowledge that each individual learns is dependent on a common goal that the group work together to achieve (Pere, 1982). In the case of the writing activity, Hona recognised and accepted the expertise that came from the other peers which he did not find difficult given his learning through whānau was based on working alongside not in opposition with others. Similarly, Vygotsky’s theory describes the ‘competence’ level of the younger child being guided and assisted by an older child towards a child’s ‘potential’ level of development (Berk & Winsler, 1995). More importantly the context by which formal and informal instruction is reciprocated between both participants is the main vehicle for the cultural transmission of knowledge (Wood, 1998).

On the other hand, although children’s expertise can be enhanced through familiar pedagogical practices with peers they can also create sites where learning is hindered. An example from this study (see transcript for Hona) suggested that where another peer completed the writing task these actions did not help in Hona coming to understand and learn the instructional requirements of the task. But the interaction did highlight that perhaps the way instructions are presented may be problematic for some children. The issue recognised here is that the vernacular culture of the school and that of a child’s culture is a point of potential conflict (Cazden, 1988) for children from culturally diverse communities. Especially, where different cultural and pedagogical understandings and expectations with which children are familiar become constrained and often excluded from entering classroom activities.
Thus in peer interaction in general, but specifically in a Māori frame of reference, teaching roles that peers experience are interchangeable unlike the role that is usually experienced between teacher and pupil in the classroom. The teacher’s normative role often is to give instructions and directions, which children follow (Cazden, 1988). Cazden (1988) commented that within classrooms teachers direct and ask questions, and organize the learning. Cazden’s IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) sequence that teachers use in classrooms, feature teacher led discourse. An IRE sequence is typical of the type of ‘question-answer’ talk heard in most classroom environments where lessons are directed and controlled, mostly by the teacher. The IRE sequence can be described as “the default pattern of classroom discourse” that teachers (and schools) continue to interact in a similar way (Cazden, 1988; p.54). Children do not have these privileges. These roles typically are irreversible. She argued that the only context where children maintain reciprocal roles with the “same intellectual content, giving directions as well as following them and asking questions as well as answering them is with their peers” (Cazden, 1988, p.134). For example, peer tutoring during reading in New Zealand Primary schools has become a common practice showing how older children can be effective peer tutors in helping younger classmates to read (Limbrick, McNaughton & Glynn, 1995). This may illustrate how Māori pedagogical forms have in some general sense been incorporated into schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand (McNaughton, 1998).

Peer interactions have also been described as opportunities where children negotiate, discuss and organise their ideas so that they can extend another child’s zone of proximal development (Forman & Cazden, 1989) illustrating Vygotsky’s theory of higher psychological processes deriving originally from within social processes (Brown & Ferrara, 1989). The examples in this study highlighted many occasions where children actively shared ideas in the presence of others in a context that reflected cultural and pedagogical processes described earlier through tuakana-teina relationship.

**Teacher Diversity Awareness**

The concept ‘diversity awareness’ is used in this thesis to describe teachers understanding and perception of children’s literacy development (McNaughton, 1999). Teachers diversity awareness was probed in their expectations and beliefs about children’s expertise upon entry to school. As already described in this study, teachers utilized formal strategies to help make connections to children’s literacy knowledge through formal school assessments as well as through teachers awareness of these skills. This study noted that formal school assessments provided a limited view of children’s literacy
expertise. For example, teachers had limited knowledge on children’s home and early childhood experiences. Teachers recognised that children’s literacy expertise varied from, ‘knowing nothing’ to having ‘very broad’ literacy knowledge. Teachers identified children knowing specific kinds of conventional school literacy expertise like being able to hold a pencil correctly, knowing some concepts about print, being able to identify some letters of the alphabet, or recognising some primary colours and some numerals. Knowing which children had some conventional literacy expertise also contributed to teacher confidence in being able to identify which of those children had any formal early childhood education. Children showed an understanding of concepts specific to the early developments of emergent literacy (Sulzby & Teale, 1991) that teachers recognised and considered important along with information from the formal assessments that some teachers utilised. Knowing something about children’s awareness of literacy forms has important implications for classroom instruction. Children’s individual profiles produced in their home and early childhood setting that are shared with teachers are one possible solution for teachers to develop an awareness of children’s literacy expertise prior to school (see Goodridge, 1995; Goodridge & McNaughton, 1994). However, there are problems associated with knowing what to do with children’s individual profiles in that teachers already have a theoretical framework by which to guide their instructional practice. In a way, teachers may already feel confident knowing they have a predetermined curricula programme by which to teach that allows them to see expected school literacy forms and skills rather than generate theories that must follow the philosophy of the school curriculum.

The wide variations in children’s literacy expertise, posed problems in the way teachers interacted and directed literacy activities and what was expected of children in these activities. This in a way was connected to understanding the processes by which children’s expertise evolved prior to school, which was less obvious and more difficult for teachers to recognise and fit into classroom practices. Several reasons may have contributed to differences in teachers’ and children’s expectations. Firstly, the culturally diverse community surrounding the three schools consisted of a large proportion of the children as second language speakers. Teachers noted that the lack of proficiency in children’s use of English at school limited and perhaps interfered with classroom instruction and having some knowledge of conventional school literacy skills. Teachers described children’s language abilities as ranging from having ‘very little’ English, to some children having a ‘good level’ of English. In general, teachers’ diversity awareness
about the range in proficiency of children’s language influenced their expectations about what children might be able to achieve in classroom activities. One teacher (Mrs Gabriel) for example stated that the probability of a child entering (her) school knowing how to write their name was unusual. As this study illustrated, all four children were capable of writing their name prior to school. The teacher in this case, was unaware of the child’s expertise given her understanding of the diverse makeup of children that attended the school and hence was unable to capitalize on this event. The observations from this study extends similar findings from literature about teachers’ expectations in Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools and how their expectations have impacted on teaching instruction (see Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002; Timperley, 2003). For example, Timperley (2003) noted that as teachers changed their expectations of what children learned, teachers altered their teaching methods.

Teachers expectations of what and how children learned was partly determined by their instruction. For example, in this study teachers directed classroom activities through the use of explicit instructions. Teachers scaffolded children’s learning closely so that children were able to complete tasks (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Writing activities for example, showed teachers used various strategies and techniques to encourage children’s participation through demonstration, modeling and appropriating children’s attempts (Rogoff, 1990).

Teacher’s awareness of children’s level of language proficiency was also seen in this study to connect to low levels of teaching instruction during worksheet activities. In class, worksheets were provided for some children to demonstrate writing skills. The consequence of having children complete worksheets was to detail learning items and simple skills that they could practice in class. The difficulty that this activity incurred for one of the children (Hona) illustrated the low versatility that this type of activity has, that then constrains both the teacher’s and child’s participation and expectations about how to achieve success in performing the activity. A child’s low performance in worksheet activities can be self-limiting in other ways, in that it excludes individual children’s existing level of expertise in activities developed through out of school activities. Worksheets make it difficult for teachers to observe the processes by which children produce learned items. Instead worksheets are inclined to reduce children’s proficiency in developing higher level skills, such as writing for a purpose (McNaughton, 2002).
Activities that have a specific instructional focus become fragmented through delineated steps (Dyson, 1999) that narrow the task further, making the focus of the activity more difficult for some children to comprehend and maintain. This process has been referred to as a ‘Matthew effect’ (Stanovich, 1986). ‘Matthew effects’ have the capacity to either accelerate a child’s learning or they can rapidly reduce learning to the point of making the overall task more difficult for the child to complete hence the term, the ‘rich get richer’ while the ‘poor get poorer’ (Stanovich, 1986). The risk here was to maintain dependent item learning. However, it was evident from the example investigated in this thesis, over the duration of the writing activity Hona’s teacher lifted her expectations about how to present the task from providing very little assistance to providing explicit modeling of guiding Hona’s hand over the model then demonstrating.

The performance shown here by the child clearly distinguishes the role of teaching in children’s individual differences in ‘educability’ (Wood, 1998). In this example, the aims and expectations by the teacher functioned on a different level from the child (Glasswell, 1999). To overcome the continuing downward spiral ‘Matthew effect’ (Stanovich, 1986) the teacher’s instructional focus of the activity was to provide explicit modeling and demonstration with close guidance when teaching specific parts of the activity. One problem of copying over a teacher’s model is that it may defeat the child’s attempts while it may not consolidate correct directional or sequential ‘habits’ (Clay, 1987).

**Parent Awareness of Classroom and School Structures**

Alongside teacher awareness about children’s expertise was parent awareness about classroom activities and the organizational structure of the school. Variation in teacher and parent ideas has already been noted (Auerbach, 2001; Greenfield, 1984). The thesis illustrated this point and recognised the value and importance that parents place on literacy. Parents were keen to understand, especially the way by which some classroom activities and school structures affected children’s learning and development. Parents reported inconsistencies between what their child could do at home and what they were producing in class activities. For example, coming to understand the way story writing activities were structured and organized in classroom activities enabled Mary’s mother to act. This parent, like many parents recognised that there was a specific format to writing a story, which includes having a picture that is related to a story. Research suggests that children’s early developments in writing and drawing include understanding the correlation between what they draw and the written message (Clay, 1991). In this event,
this parent mediated the activity by commenting on the unrelated parts of her daughter’s writing attempt. A part of the writing process that children (and parents) develop is that even if the two (writing and drawing) are unrelated, children gradually discover that there are rules associated with written language and that over time eventually come to understand the process fully (Clay, 1991).

The description showed that parents made conscious and deliberate decisions about supporting their children’s learning and development, drawing on their awareness about the school system and how school instruction operates. For instance, parents recognised the difference in learning environments, where teaching and learning styles in early childhood centres differed from school instruction. This impacted on the way parents selected, arranged and deployed activities at home (McNaughton, 1995). It also impacted on parents decisions to choose the focus of early childhood education that was going to provide the best possible learning for their children (Goodridge, 1995; Tamarua Turoa, 1995).

Some parents deliberately incorporated more formal structured lessons into home activities in preparation for the transition to school, and as part of their understanding about school routines and their responsibilities as a parent to expose their children to some conventional learning prior to school. For Hona’s grandparent, this meant changing early childcare services in an attempt to ‘ease’ her grandson’s transition into school. For example, Hona’s grandmother felt that the transition from a full immersion Māori preschool language nest (Te Kohanga Reo) into a public kindergarten meant he was going to be exposed to learning that would make the transition into mainstream school more familiar. As well as knowing that Te Kohanga Reo teaching and learning initiatives, in particular the use of te reo (Māori language), would not sit well within the mainstream education system (Tangaere, 1996), Hona’s grandmother also made the point that although she varied his preschool learning experiences, she was confident that her proficiency and knowledge as a kaiako/kai awhina (teacher/helper) in te reo (the language) and their strong whānau (family) focus would be maintained. This is not unusual for parents from different cultural groups whose children begin their early education years being immersed in their first language learning environment to include teaching and learning in the majority language in this case English, prior to children’s entry into mainstream schooling (Wolfgramm, 1991). This supports other research showing ‘minority’ parents generally have a strong desire and commitment to providing
specific preparations that their children need prior to school, even if this requires having their children carry out activities in another educational context or language that is not their first choice (Hohepa, 1990; Kaʻai, 1990; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphill, 1991; Tangaere, 1997). By providing choices in early childcare education, parents in this study also felt that they were helping teachers and schools do their job more efficiently (Auerbach, 2001).

As part of their contribution parents regarded it as their duty to ensure that their children engaged in literacy activities at home, or that at least their children would enter school knowing some conventional school skills. In other ways it also resonated with parents' beliefs that education for their children was important. Within parents' theories were strongly held views about their role and their relationship with schools and professional educators. Some parents accepted the knowledge that teachers and professional educators conveyed. In an earlier study that focused on Māori preschoolers writing their name at home it was found that these parents were more inclined to rely on the advice of professional educators to inform families on the ‘correct’ ways of writing with their children (see Tamarua Turoa, 1995). Parents in that study formed a theory of the task that was associated with how they planned and deployed writing with their children. What was significant here was the fact that the particular activity under focus, that of writing a name, was seen as unfamiliar to these families, therefore they were always conscious of whether or not they were providing proper guidance. They held a view that specific teaching of their children would be the responsibility of professional educators.

Assigning the responsibility of teaching literacy to school professionals was also found in a study of Pacific Island families during reading and writing activities (see Wolfgramm, 1991; Goodridge, 1995). Similar to Māori families (see Tamarua Turoa, 1995), Pacific Island families held ambivalent views in regard to literacy. The Tongan and Samoan families for example, did not believe it was their responsibility to interfere with the process of teaching their children school forms of learning nor to challenge the expertise of teachers (Wolfgramm, 1991; Goodridge, 1995). The beliefs that these families held resembled the views Māori parents described here where they felt that the process of teaching they used might be inconsistent with how schools teach children.
The results showed that parent’s beliefs are not static. Ideas change and decisions they make depend on their shifting awareness about other learning environments and that ideas are developed from a wide range of sources (Greenfield, 1984; McNaughton, 2001).

**Summary of Findings**

This study confirmed two predictions. Firstly, it was seen from the findings that all children entered school with multiple forms of literacy expertise that were derived from a variety of sources and contexts. Children’s literacy expertise resulted not only from primary socialization in home activities but also from their participation in early childhood settings and for one family, participation in a home-based literacy intervention programme as well. Family socialization practices contributed greatly to the development of children’s literacy expertise. This was especially noted in the range of ideas and beliefs that families held that determined the sorts of activities that children participated in at home. These ideas were partly driven from personal beliefs and ideas about education but were also connected to the notion of ‘readiness’ that parents held and their expectations about preparation towards school (Clay, 1991). The participation structures within some activities reflected teaching and learning patterns that were specific to family cultural identity. It was observed that families integrated principles of kaupapa Māori teaching/learning processes within activities, alongside conventional (i.e. school related) teaching and learning. Children developed multiple forms of literacy expertise prior to school that illustrated different developmental properties. Descriptions of the transition to school provided further evidence for the multiple pathways argument in that they showed that children’s literacy expertise could be tracked across multiple contexts.

The second major prediction that this study argued was that more effective connections to children’s literacy expertise were determined by the degree their expertise was incorporated into classroom activities and by the degree that children’s awareness in activities enabled them to achieve an understanding of the task. There were many instances that showed processes of incorporation and building awareness in classroom activities as well as many instances where non-incorporation and awareness occurred. Successful incorporation was attributed where teachers were able to incorporate a familiar feature of children’s expertise into a classroom activity that was unfamiliar. Children were more often observed to engage more effectively in classroom activities where a transfer of learning between familiar to unfamiliar instruction was made.
Theoretical Implications

This thesis was concerned with children’s early literacy experiences and the developmental transition to school for children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and how to achieve more successful and effective connections to school. This research points out that if the transition to school process is to be optimized for children’s learning and development, this requires understanding of the complex process by which children become experts in literacy and how that expertise is located or able to be located in conjoint activities. This is a position that is not shared by the opposing view that literacy occurs in a unitary and predetermined sequence of literacy learning (McNaughton, 2001). In suggesting this, one of the major challenges of this thesis has been to identify how children develop literacy expertise prior to school and how their expertise has been incorporated into classroom practices. It was important therefore that a wider theoretical framework was important in considering the developmental, psychological and sociocultural properties that identify children’s experiences in learning and teaching.

A co-constructivist theory (Valsiner, 1988) of development provided a theoretical framework by which to describe and explain the sources of children’s expertise in learning at home and at school. It was expected that the theoretical argument synthesize perspectives of learning and development from social, cultural and personal contexts. Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective emphasised the importance of other people in the child’s environment that influence their cognitive development (Drewery & Bird, 2004). This study provided strong evidence of children developing through a ‘cultural curriculum’ that was based on children’s interactions with others taking place within their social milieu (Rogoff, 1990). Children’s cognitive development strongly featured learning processes specific to their cultural identity.

Explanations and descriptions of teaching/learning from kaupapa Māori principles were applied that integrated perspectives of educational and cultural socialisation patterns occurring in Māori families (Hohepa, 1990; Hohepa, Smith, Smith & McNaughton, 1992; Royal Tangaere, 1996a, 1996b Royal Tangaere, 1997). This framework, alongside contemporary developmental theories provided the basis to understanding the processes by which children acquired literacy skills in the home context and the integration of their expertise into classroom literacy activities in the school context.
Implications of the Research
This study has significant implications for families, teachers and educational research. The implication this study has for families highlights the diverse teaching and learning processes by which children’s literacy expertise develops within the home context (McNaughton, 2001). This suggests the importance of examining family perspectives of teaching and learning as well as children’s perspectives of learning. This has wide implications for research to describe processes of literacy development from the child’s point of view. As well, the wide range of literacy expertise children constructed and co-constructed with others at home validates parents’ concern and support for providing formal educational learning (Leseman, 1993).

This study recognised the diverse range of literacy activities in which families engaged and that families co-opt ideas and practices relating to teaching and learning from a variety of external sources. For example, families demonstrated the importance of including conventional literacy practices of learning alongside ‘traditional’ family practices so that their children entered school knowing at least some conventional school forms of literacy. This study described the way families utilized external educational and professional services to ‘grab’ their ideas to shape their understanding of processes of literacy development (McNaughton, 1996). The implications for families relate to examining family pedagogical and cultural processes associated with activities to explain the various cultural activities by which children engage in as part of their daily experiences. There are also connections here to parental cultural belief systems and the impact that these have in socializing and guiding their children’s literacy development (Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

For example, parental cultural belief systems had a strong effect on the way families organised and structured literacy activities and the way they viewed teaching and learning, in relation to their own pedagogical practices. This study has shown, the way literacy activities are organized can be described in terms of interactional patterns associated with family cultural practices. A major quality of the interactions that children engaged in at home featured tuakana-teina (older-younger) relationships that were a prominent characteristic of family cultural practice (Tangaere, 1996). The challenge for educational research is to understand literacy development as a cultural phenomenon within families of diverse cultural backgrounds. Explanations and descriptions of cultural teaching and learning processes taking place within families need to identify the multiple ways by
which children develop literacy expertise through interactions, which are specific to family cultural practices (Au, 1998; McNaughton, 1995).

This study contributes to our understanding of developmental processes of the transition to school (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This study argued that developmental processes involved in the transition to school are related to the connections between children’s literacy expertise that are mediated through shared understandings about teaching and learning processes occurring within specific contexts. This includes teachers understanding of processes of learning from the child’s perspective within home contexts as well as other educational contexts. The study has already identified the diverse forms of literacy expertise that children enter school with. The implications this has for teachers suggest the need for teachers to develop wider and more diverse awareness especially about children from diverse cultural backgrounds (Greenfield, 1984; McNaughton, 2001). This can be demonstrated in the way that schools come to acquire this information and the way schools apply this information to classroom teaching practices.

This study suggests that formal literacy assessments can limit teacher’s knowledge of the social and cultural bases of literacy development at home. The implication here is that formal literacy assessment programmes are not limited methods to identify children’s acquisition of literacy expertise, which are located in everyday family practices. This has wide implications for more research into formal and informal assessment tools that enable knowledge to be gained of family processes of learning (Harkness & Super, 1993).

Limitations
Part of the aim of this study was to investigate teacher’s ideas and beliefs about their diversity awareness of children’s literacy expertise. There were several ways by which teachers generated this information that this study discussed. An outcome of teacher’s awareness of children’s literacy expertise was shown to influence instructional processes and the incorporation of children’s expertise in classroom activities. Some children were disadvantaged by the way teachers directed and instructed activities given teachers expectations about what was to be learned and how this was to be performed (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002; Timperley, 2003). It also showed in many instances, teacher’s diversity awareness of children’s literacy expertise was limited especially in relation to connections to children’s home and cultural experiences. It was determined by
this study that teachers did not have enough information about children’s literacy experiences at home as well as from other early educational settings (Goodridge, 1995; Goodridge & McNaughton, 1994).

This information highlighted the limitations that formal school assessments produced for teachers. This study recognised that formal school assessments limited knowledge of children’s home and cultural practices but to a larger extent it limited some teacher’s knowledge and access to the process of producing and administrating assessments. Although this study did not investigate fully into the role and sources of teacher’s beliefs and ideas of teaching and learning it seems appropriate to expand on these ideas in particular across teachers. It also seems likely that research into understanding teachers diversity awareness would consider their training, teaching experience or their own ideas and beliefs about literacy learners (Richards & Lockhart, 1995). The developmental processes that influenced the way teachers’ exercised their practice based on stereotypical ideas and beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching can be further investigated.

There were methodological considerations of this research regarding the use of data recording devices that some of the families used. Two families (Hona’s and Mary’s) found the audio recording device intrusive and too formal therefore suggested alternative ways to gather information of literacy experiences at home. One family, (Hona’s) preferred keeping written diaries and collecting children’s products alongside informal discussions with the researcher. Another family (Mary’s) chose to have informal discussions with the researcher rather than keep a diary or to use any recording devices during data collection. Considerations in deciding on ways to collect data from these families were that they all preferred informal discussions over introducing equipment that they felt were impersonal. The preference for informal discussions by these families may have been heightened by the fact both researcher and families shared common cultural backgrounds. The discussions and information shared by families were expressed in a specific way that had a sense of ‘Māori’ humour attached to the many examples given that can only be understood if one has experienced similar cultural experiences.

This study provided in depth discussion and descriptions of literacy experiences that were limited to the four children, their families and their teachers that generalizations should not be made out of the analysis of these findings. For example, the classroom observations for two children (Hona and Theresa) began towards the end of the school
year. This was an extremely busy time where teachers were preparing end of year events. As well each class had already filled their class size quota, therefore comments made by these teachers (Mrs Dee and Mrs Muriel) and descriptions of activities in their classrooms need not reflect their normal teaching standards and interactions with children. The outcome from this study would warrant the need to use a broader and larger sample size across other culturally diverse communities. Also, the collection of data for this study involved tracking children into school once they turned five years of age. The current teaching practice in New Entrant classrooms in Aotearoa/New Zealand recognise that most children begin schooling at the age of five years therefore the process to collect data in a systematic manner may be hindered.

Research Issues
The issues that this thesis addressed are a part of a growing body of research that has been limited in its theoretical scope because the focus has been driven by studies of low achievement literacy levels compounded by deficit-oriented models that have often been associated with minority groups. International research has been informative in recognising educational and cultural differences in children’s achievement and learning over the transition to school (Au, 1998; Heath, 1983; Cazden, 1988). Similar problems have also been found in research conducted in Aotearoa/New Zealand suggesting how these issues parallel overseas explanations (McDonald, 1973; McNaughton & Ka’ai, 1990; Simon, 1984).

Developmental studies that have included understanding literacy practices in the home environment that describe social and cultural processes of teaching and learning (Kempton, 1994; Tamarua Turoa, 1995) and school connections (Goodridge, 1995) have been sparse in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There have been even fewer studies of the transition to school processes. Most have provided qualitative data of children’s adjustment to school (Margetts, 1997) or descriptions of environments that promote literacy (McLachlan-Smith & St. George 1997). More recently local research has expanded on how low literacy achievement levels of children from culturally and linguistically minority groups of low-income can be enhanced by ‘picking up the literacy pace’ as they make the transition into school (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2002). One of the major findings from the Phillips et al., (2002) research was the identification of key elements of a theoretical base for teachers, and early childhood educators about processes that are more effective. The findings from this research add to
conclusions in the Phillips et al., (2002) study underlining the need to have more effective ways to identify and enhance literacy learning of children from culturally diverse and low-income communities. A major challenge of this study was how to recognize the significance of children’s literacy development in multiple contexts of learning, that is, the home and other educational settings including school as the primary basis for the social and cultural processes that fuel children’s everyday interactions.
References


Appendix A

Family Participant Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

FAMILY PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of this study is to examine interactions of parents/caregivers and their preschool children during episodes when the child is engaging in activities of reading and writing. It is being conducted by Lavinia Turoa for a PhD thesis at the University of Auckland.

Your family and your child (including other siblings) are invited to participate. Should you choose not to participate or decide to withdraw at any time during this study, you should feel free to do so without having to give any reason and this will be completely respected. Participants have been invited through personal contacts of the researcher.

I would like to look at what you and your child do together when your child attempts to read and write. These events may include other members of the family such as older and/or younger siblings, grandparents, uncles or aunts, who may be present during reading and writing sessions. The interactions and how literacy practices are established in the home is what I would like to observe.

In an endeavour to ‘capture’ these reading and writing events I would like to use audio and/or video recording devices for a number of sessions. The use of audio and/or video equipment will be as unobtrusive as possible. It is anticipated that about ten sessions can be collected along with informal discussions about your experiences reading and writing with your child. You will also be asked to keep a diary noting the occasions when your child becomes involved in writing.

The possible benefits of this study include that it will give us a greater understanding of how children develop literacy skills within families before children enter school. Of special interest is the adaptation of these learned skills into school.

The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be protected at all times during the project and after the project is completed. Participants will be able to have access to information that belongs to them and/or members of their family. Neither the names of parents nor children will be identified throughout the production of the research unless consent is given by the participant.

The researcher will provide all participants with a copy of the research report at the completion of the study and will also be more than willing to discuss the research further.

If you are at all unsure or concerned about anything to do with this research project you should not hesitate to contact me for further information.
Ms Lavinia Turoa
4 Nga Oho Street
Orakei
Auckland
Ph: (09) 521-1723

Should you have any complaints or concerns which you do not wish to address to me personally, these people may be contacted:

Associate Professor Stuart McNaughton.
Head of Department - Supervisor
Education Department
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
AUCKLAND
Ph: (09) 3737-999 or (09) 3737-599 ext 7541
Facsimile: (09) 3737-699

Concerning ethical matters:

University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee
c/o The Finance Registry (Room 221)
22 Princess Street
Private Bag 92019
AUCKLAND
Ph: (09) 3737-599 ext 7830
Facsimile: (09) 3737-7432

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on ...............................
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the project: The Development of Reading and Writing in Maori Preschool Children

Researcher: Lavinia Turoa

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I may withdraw myself and my child, and any information I have provided for this project (before data collection is completed), without having to give reasons. I understand that informal discussions may be audio or video taped.

I agree to take part in this research and I agree that ..........................................., who is in my guardianship may take part in this research.

signed .............................................................

name ............................................................... 

date ..............................................................

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on ..............................................
Appendix B

Preliminary Parent Interview Schedule

Name (Whanau):
Date of interview:
Age of child:

Reading and Writing

These questions are asked in an attempt to help us understand your child’s experiences learning to read and write.

1. Who spends the greatest amount of time with your child/children?

2. What kinds of things do you do? Is there any special time allocated each day, or per week for doing particular tasks: (eg. Reading, writing, drawing, storytelling etc).

3. Does your child have a favourite storybook they like read to him/her? When would storybook reading take place?

4. How would you define reading?

5. What kinds of writing would you or others in your household do? (how often)

6. Does your child draw/scribble? What does he/she like to draw?

7. How would you define writing?

Second Language

8. Is there another language spoken in the home other than English? If so, do you expect your child or children to learn this second language as well?

9. What reason might you suggest for your child learning to speak this second language?

10. Have you thought about how you might support your child’s continuation of learning this second language?

11. Do you anticipate any problems or concerns learning this second language?

Preschool Education

These questions are asked in an attempt to help us understand your beliefs, attitude and your expectations about preschool education for your child.

1. Does your child attend a preschool centre or partake in any preschool education? (explain type and length of participation).
2. Have any of your other children attended or been involved in preschool education?
3. What do you believe is the role of early childhood services (education)?
4. Do you have any expectations and/or concerns about preschool education?

**How well do you know your Community?**

These questions are asked in an attempt to distinguish how the local community in which you live assists in your child's learning.

1. Do you know of other educational services in your community for families to utilize and how these might be contacted? (explain types of services and settings, how you found these services, and describe the type of activities that occur in these services/SETTINGS).
2. If you are unaware of other educational services/SETTINGS, how might you find out about these?

**Storytelling**

These questions are asked in an attempt to help us understand what types of storytelling occur (if any) in your home. In particular, these questions attempt to find the sources of storytelling as heard in your home.

1. Do you (or other members of your family) tell stories with your child/children? Specify who tells the stories, when and what triggers storytelling?
2. What types of stories are told? (eg. Legends, ‘make-believe’, family stories)
3. Does your child have a favourite story that they like to hear? (how often are these told and by whom?)
4. What do you believe are the benefits of telling stories towards your child's (children's) learning? What would be your reason for storytelling? (ie. a ‘message’, or a ‘moral’, a particular ‘value’ held, personal experiences, simple and easier to learn)

**Family Background Information**

This information is asked in an attempt to build a personal profile of yourself and your family who have close contact with your child.

1. Who lives and visits your home regularly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Would you like to tell me about your occupation and educational experiences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Educational experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post Parent Interview Schedule

Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Age of child:

The following questions are asked in an attempt to help us understand your beliefs, attitudes and expectations about the teaching and learning experiences that your child receives from being at home and also from school.

1. What happens in classrooms? How well do you know how the teacher structures classroom lessons for the day?

2. How well has your child adapted to going to school?

3. Did you have any concerns about this transition?

4. What else have you noticed in your child’s learning since he/she began school?

5. How has this impacted on the rest of the family?

6. Do you see yourself taking on a new role now that your child has begun school?

7. What expectations do you have about school (in general)?

8. What expectations do you have about your child’s learning this year?
Appendix C

Home Diary Information for Families

Reading, Writing and Storytelling Diary Information

The recordings for this diary will help us understand when any reading, writing and storytelling activities take place and with whom. These literacy and/or language activities may happen at home or in places away from home. It is important to record any reading, writing and/or storytelling events as they occur, of if you were not present to note (as best you can) what took place and with whom.

The following information will assist you while gathering this data:

- Keep any written or drawn products that the child has attempted. Write in your diary a record of when, where and with whom these attempts occurred.

- Include in your recordings any other persons (eg. other siblings, other children visiting, family members or friends) who may have visited your home and may have interacted with your child while attempting any literacy and/or language activities. An example might include, children playing shop while their cousins were visiting.

- Include any events that occur away from home (eg. in the car, going to kindy, a day trip to visit family, a visit to the zoo, going shopping etc.), where you observe your child attempting any literacy and/or language activities.

- Try to include at least 3-4 entries per day (eg. morning tea, lunchtimes, afternoon and bedtime routines)

- Include any storytelling that you might observe with your child. Give a brief description of what the them of the story is about and the child’s reaction to the story (ie. Does your child ask any questions? What are these?)

- Below are examples of how you might want to record these events in your diary.

Child’s Name:
Child’s Age:
Date of Entry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time and Duration of the activity</th>
<th>Activity (Describe what took place and where this activity occurred)</th>
<th>Who was present? (Describe what they were doing, include any persons present)</th>
<th>Any comments that you might like to add?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 am (10mins)</td>
<td>Looking at his favourite book at home in the lounge.</td>
<td>By himself. I was busy clearing the dishes.</td>
<td>I noticed that Tom was talking to himself as he read his book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pm (5 mins)</td>
<td>I was reading a magazine, Tom was drawing a picture in his scrap book. At home.</td>
<td>Me and Tom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7pm (15 mins)</td>
<td>Bedtime. Tom is having a story read to him.</td>
<td>Tom’s dad is reading him his favourite story about ‘Thomas the tank engine’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Teacher Participant Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The proposed research has been developed to include family practices of literacy and the transition of these skills into school. The purpose of this phase of the study is to examine teacher-child interactions, peer-peer and/or independent reading and writing activities children are engaging in within the classroom. It is being conducted by Lavinia Turoa for a PhD thesis at the University of Auckland.

The transition to school highlights children’s learning that can either be enhanced or where difficulties in teaching and learning can develop. Of particular importance I would like to look at how these skills are developed with learned literacy practices from home, upon children’s entry into school.

In an endeavour to ‘capture’ these reading and writing events I would like to use audio and/or video recording devices for a number of sessions. The use of audio and/or video equipment will be as unobtrusive as possible. It is anticipated that about ten sessions can be collected along with informal discussions about your beliefs, attitudes and expectations about the construction of literacy.

The possible benefits of this study include that it will give us a greater understanding of how classroom teaching practices can enhance and be effective in children’s learning. As well, how home and school practices can complement each other creating links that are supportive of the child’s learned practices.

The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be protected at all times during the project and after the project is completed. Neither the names of teachers nor children will be identified throughout the production of the research.

The researcher will provide all participants with a copy of the research report at the completion of the study and will also be more than willing to discuss any questions you have.

If you are at all unsure or concerned about anything to do with this research project you should not hesitate to contact me for further information.
Ms Lavinia Turoa
4 Nga Oho Street
Orakei
Auckland

Ph: (09) 521-1723

Should you have any complaints or concerns which you do not wish to address to me personally, these people may be contacted:

Associate Professor Stuart McNaughton
Head of Department - Supervisor
Education Department
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
AUCKLAND

Ph: (09) 3737-999 or (09) 3737-599 ext 7541
Facsimile: (09) 3737-699

Concerning ethical matters:

University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee
c/o The Finance Registry (Room 221)
22 Princess Street
Private Bag 92019
AUCKLAND

Ph: (09) 3737-599 ext 7830
Facsimile: (09) 3737-7432

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on ..............................................
TEACHER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of the project: The Development of Reading and Writing in Maori Children

Researcher: Lavinia Turoa

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I may withdraw myself and any information I have provided for this project (before data collection is completed), without having to give reasons. I understand that informal discussions may be audio or video taped.

I agree to take part in this research and I agree to have the researcher present in my classroom as a non-participant observer, to audio and/or video tape reading and writing activities with the children designated to this research project.

signed........................................

name...........................................(please print clearly)

date...........................................

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on ................................Ref. No.....................................
Appendix E

Teacher Profile Schedule

Teacher Profile

1. Experience Teaching?
   0-5 years   5-10 years   10-15 years   15-20 years   30 years or more

2. How long teaching in South Auckland?
   How long teaching NE children?

3. Qualifications?
   Diploma: ECE Primary Secondary
   Degree:                     
   Advanced:                  
   Reading Recovery:          
   Other:                     

4. Ethnicity?

5. Language/s spoken?
Appendix F

Diversity Awareness Interview Schedule

Teacher Interview Schedule

DIVERSITY AWARENESS INTERVIEW

Child's Name: ........................................... Teacher/School: ..................................................

Generic Knowledge

1. In what ways can children differ in emergent literacy?

   i) What are the dimensions along which children can differ in emergent literacy?
   Describe the possible range of emergent literacy in New Entrants coming into your classroom.
   Conventional descriptors (1 - 2 - 3) .................................................................

2. In what ways can children differ in language abilities?

   i) What are the dimensions along which children can differ in language?
   Describe the possible range of language in New Entrants coming into your classroom.
   Conventional descriptors (1 - 2 - 3) .................................................................

   Family activity descriptors (1 - 2 - 3) ..............................................................

Specific Knowledge (Target child)

1. What did she/he know on entry to school (conventional knowledge)

   Reading: CAP ...................... Letters ...................... Sounds ...................... Other ..............

   Writing: Words ...................... Letters ...................... Control ...................... Other ..............
2. What family/community activities was she/he familiar with (number of)?

Reading

Writing

3. How was the information in 1 gathered?

Systematic observation

Formal testing

4. How was the information in 2 gathered?

Systematic observation

Formal testing

Shared knowledge

Sites: ece family community

5. How was the information in 1 used to help you plan and carry out teaching?

6. How is the information in 2 used to help you plan and carry out teaching?