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# Third-grade evaluators thrive as readers

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# THIRD GRADE EVALUATORS THRIVE AS READERS

## BY

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## DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

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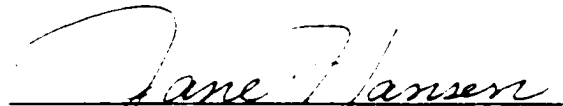
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# DEDICATION

To Michael, Elizabeth, Alexander, and Kathryn, my biggest fans.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**gratitude (*n*) An appreciative awareness and thankfulness, as for kindness shown or something received.**

These words from the American Heritage Dictionary capture the essence of my state of mind as I write these acknowledgements. There are so many people who have shown me genuine kindness and from whom I have received so much.

To my colleagues in the UNH community (Dale, Pat, Pam, Julie, and Kathy) I am grateful for your wisdom and for the free-flowing exchange of ideas as we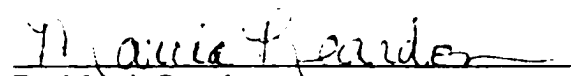 navigated our way through engaging coursework. And especially to Dan Rothermel, my partner in crime, who continues to share his wisdom and support via email and long distance phone calls. He is a remarkable educator and friend. I extend my gratitude to the backbone of the UNH community, Elizabeth Lane. Her acts of kindness are too many to enumerate, and without her organizational help and friendship, I would not have made it to my defense.

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I extend my gratitude to three new colleagues at the University of St. Thomas, for their

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Charlotte, E.B. White's famous spider, is described by Wilber the pig in this way, "It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both." These words could have easily been written about my advisor, Jane Hansen. Jane's unwavering belief that I could do this carried me through from beginning to end. I am grateful for her friendship, patience, and support.

To my parents I am grateful for raising me to believe I could do anything I set my mind to. I hope my own children feel this too. And to Mike, Betsy, Alex, and Kate who are always my biggest fans. I love you.

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# ABSTRACT

## THIRD GRADE EVALUATORS THRIVE AS READERS

By

Amy F. Smith
University of New Hampshire, August, 2002

This study addresses the question, "When third grade students become evaluators of themselves as readers, what new roles do they negotiate for themselves?" I studied third grade students who became evaluators of themselves as readers, examining evaluation process. This included their own determination of their strengths, goals, assignments, and what to use as documentation of their learning processes in portfolios, as well as the influence of the classroom community on goal setting. Using observation, co-teaching, and group and individual interviews, I documented the new roles students adopted as they became better evaluators of their learning needs and took a more active role in planning their own learning experiences during reading class.

I found that four different student roles emerged as they evaluated themselves as readers: 1) constructors: students who created and planned learning experiences based on self evaluations, 2) reflectors: students who reflected critically about what was and wasn't working in their goals and made revisions as necessary, 3) connectors: students who bridged learning goals to other areas of curriculum and life, and, 4) resistors: students who challenged and resisted the invitation to take a more active stance as a learner.

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Additionally, elements of time and talk were especially influential in helping these third grade readers develop reading confidence. The connected concepts of evaluation, talk, and time all led toward confident students who took initiative in their learning decisions. Students negotiated new roles and new ways of viewing themselves as learners as they worked through their goal-setting. Their evaluations of their own needs became central to their reading progress, and students made themselves responsible for continuing their progress by setting new goals.

By negotiating new roles and bringing confidence to their abilities to make decisions, these third graders, if given support in future grades, will see themselves as people who can make a difference in their own learning.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION:

## THIRD GRADE EVALUATORS THRIVE AS READERS

**Overrall Question:** When third grade students become evaluators of themselves as readers, what new roles do they negotiate for themselves ?

My daughter, Betsy, bursts through the door, fresh off the school bus, only days into her third grade career. Clearly excited about something, she partially describes to me a goal she is working on as she searches the school directory for Sarah's phone number. "I've got to call Sarah. We have plans to make and I want to be organized when it comes time to 'show what I know' to the class in a few weeks. We are in charge, and I want my performance to be great!" When I get Betsy to slow down, I discover that she wrote a reading goal at school. She wants to increase her vocabulary by reading a challenging chapter book. She plans to keep a note card in her book and write down words she doesn't know, find their meanings by looking the word up or asking an adult and then she will write a skit in which she uses at least seven of the new words. Her friend Sarah will play a supporting role in her skit, which they will perform for the class. Betsy has her book, *The Bodies in the Besseldorf Hotel*, and is anxious to get going on her goal. She wants to secure Sarah's participation and arrange a date for Sarah to practice the skit.

I am able to follow Betsy's frenzied descriptions because during the previous school year I conducted my dissertation research in this same third-grade classroom. Her teacher, Jeanne Bennek, used a goal setting process to help students become better evaluators of their learning needs and take a more active role in planning their own learning experiences during reading class. Jeanne wanted her students to

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initiate their own plans for reading growth based on their own evaluations. Not only would her students use their plans to guide their own actions, Jeanne intended to use them to make curricular decisions that would impact their reading workshop. Based on Betsy's high level of engagement for her goal, I'd say Jeanne has experienced a measure of success. My research in Jeanne's classroom provided me with a way to learn more about what student evaluators could accomplish when given teacher support and a classroom community where students' choices are valued.

I have studied evaluation in many forms for years and am interested in ways to move evaluation away from something done "to" students toward something students do for themselves. In essence, I want students to take more initiative for their evaluation and learning. When I was a classroom teacher I gave my students some opportunities to evaluate their progress and take control of their learning. However, I fought the notion that students could know how they were doing, unless I told them by giving their work a mark or comment to indicate its value. At the same time, I wanted students to find value in their work and to trust their own knowledge of their learning. My sense was that students would need to adopt a more active or new role; I thought, in so doing, they would become more committed to purposefully becoming better readers who take initiative for their own learning progress. However, I didn't know where to begin.

Teachers I talked to at workshops or inservice days and in classrooms shared similar concerns. I wanted information about how to incorporate learner-centered evaluation practices into classroom routines allowing students to play more active roles. As I scanned a Minnesota university's teacher education catalog I was amazed at the number of offerings that appeared to emphasize evaluation and goal setting as efforts to help students become invested in their schoolwork. Course descriptions called for reflective students and new evaluation approaches to implement change. They suggested that turning to portfolios and performance evaluations would help

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students learn to evaluate themselves.

While the offerings mentioned above sounded promising, I wondered why so many of the classrooms I had visited still relied upon teacher-centered curriculums and the "banking" concept (Freire, 1970) of education. Freire warns against an education where teaching and learning becomes an "act of depositing, students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 53). In her most recent update of *Learning to Read*, Chall (1996) wrote that:

> The use of research and theory for improving practice has not been
> consistent. While research continues to produce findings in the same
> direction, practice seems to move back and forth. More often than
> not, it moves in the direction that is not supported by the research
> and theory. (p.xx)

I concur with Chall and many teacher educators, researchers and staff developers who offer a plethora of reasons why teachers do not implement research-based practices, such as: (a) lack of effort or commitment because the innovation "won't be here long," or the fad phenomenan (Slavin, 1989); (b) lack of knowledge of research, or issues of dissemination (Gallagher, 1998) and access (Kennedy, 1997); (c) not enough time or inadequate material, personnel, and financial resources; (d) insufficient systemic support and weak leadership (Fullan, 1993).

In addition to the above reasons, my experience in Minnesota classrooms has led me to believe that another reason exists: teacher anxiety and fear. This is not to say that there was no good teaching happening in Minnesota classrooms, but rather that teachers were struggling with how to change their teaching amidst a politicized school climate that valued high scores on standardized tests above all. I heard over

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and over again from teachers who believed they were just covering material and not really engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. They were frustrated and knew intuitively that their students could do more.

As adjunct faculty at the University of St. Thomas I was teaching graduate courses in reading and writing for practicing teachers. I listened to these teachers for four semesters as they asked each other and me what they were doing to become more student-centered. Teachers expressed fears about meeting curriculum standards and covering the curriculum to prepare students for state tests. They worried that if students led the way, they would be unprepared for these state tests and the teachers would be accountable if test results were poor.

I recall the strained look on one teacher's face as she described how she had to highlight in her lesson plans each day what she did to meet state curriculum standards and then turn the highlighted plans in each week to her principal. She said she was weary just trying to do the minimal curriculum and couldn't imagine how she could break free and try a new approach in her teaching. A period of transition or time in which to work out her ideas was unavailable under the pressure she felt to deliver high scores on tests.

I also had the opportunity to supervise student teachers in six different Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools in Minnesota. Here again, as I observed preservice teachers who, while trying to implement what they learned in methods classes about teaching reading and writing which included a constructivist, child-centered approach, met resistance from their apologetic master teachers who said they needed to stick with the basal to teach reading. These master teachers spoke to me about the need to cover the material and teach to the tests for fear that poor results would result in at best a few day's bad press in the newspaper, and at worst less funding for their school.

Much of what I was reading about in the professional journals *Language Arts,*

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*Reading Teacher, and Reading and Writing Quarterly,* was not happening in the schools around me.

About this time, former teaching colleague and good friend, Jeanne Bennek, and I had a conversation about her third grade classroom at St. Mary of the Lake. She talked less about the concern for meeting standards expressed by public school counterparts, but like them, she was concerned about the level of engagement her students exhibited. She said, "I can't be the only one invested in the third grader's reading. I want them to love to read more than they do. I want them to be engaged learners, able to think for themselves. I need to involve and engage them more...connect their needs and ideas. Each week I write in the third grade newsletter, 'Life is good in third grade,' but is it? Can it be better? I need the third graders to help me answer this question."

In her own way, Jeanne expressed the same types of concerns I heard from other teachers. She wondered about how to be more effective in creating a classroom community where students were invested in their learning and took initiative, not because they would be tested, but because they were interested and invested in their own growth.

Jeanne went on to talk about the goal-setting conferences in her school as an example. Each child in the school set goals at the start of each year. The children and their parents filled out a form that included spaces for academic, social, and physical goals. In concept, the teachers believed this would help students connect their own learning interests with those in school, and that students would be invested in achieving their goals because they had created them. The concepts reflected in this idea were sound, but Jeanne related that little investment or initiative on the part of her students came about. The students didn't understand how these goals were to impact their school experience, and the teachers did little to support the goals beyond asking students about them at conference time. More needed to be done if these

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goals were to have impact on students or on their classroom communites. Jeanne talked about a journal article she read about goal setting and realized that she needed to go beyond the surface of goal setting to see any real change.

Carroll and Christenson (1995) call for goal setting through the portfolio and stress its importance in encouraging students to become evaluators who take initiative. The fifth graders in their study placed their evaluations of themselves in portfolios; these portfolios documented what they knew and did. Documentations included reading logs, written reflections, and class assignments. Students used this verification of their worth as a jumping-off place and purposefully moved forward as writers and readers.

Jeanne and I discussed our mutual concerns of how to engage students more actively in their reading, how to encourage students to initiate their own learning plans. Helping students move forward in this way, however, is not an easy process. Students who have learned to follow adult expectations are often at a loss when first asked to set standards for themselves or identify what they want to learn. The teacher's understanding of the nature of goal setting is paramount. Students must know what they can do well and be aware of many possible ways to grow in order to make decisions about what goals to set; they must be evaluators. Frequent interaction with each other helps them realize what other students are learning and what they are doing to learn it. These conversations give them ideas for goals.

These are not typical classroom conversations; they require new roles of students. For students to take a leading role in determining their own assignments, they must assume a vastly different position than is typical. As I envisioned a classroom in which to collect my dissertation data, I believed it would need to be a place where much negotiation between student and teacher occurred, a classroom where the teacher and the students were eager (ready) to co-create learning experiences, a classroom where the teacher and student roles evolved to meet the needs of students.

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In short, the teacher needed to be willing to share the curriculum building with her students.

This being said, I need to acknowledge that some would be suspicious of a teacher wanting her students to have more control over their learning, to play more active roles. However, as the teacher and "most mature member of the group" (Dewey, 1902) she is morally obligated to share her expertise with her students, to ensure experience that will lead to growth. If she becomes newly aware of theories that show possibilities for students as evaluators her new knowledge may affect her practice. Her roles as a teacher may become more complex and problematic. The teacher must be able to "see the ends in the beginnings" (Dewey, 1902) if she is to engage students in the construction of curriculum. For this to happen she must learn to recast students' understandings, cultures, and experiences, reenvisioning at the same time potentials for learning. In this way she honors who her students are in the present while exploring who they may become.

Educator Myles Horton, in his autobiography *The Long Haul* (1990), metaphorically describes the kind of teacher-student relationship I envision:

> I like to think that I have two eyes that I don't have to use in the same way. When I do educational work with a group of people, I try to see with one eye where those people are as they perceive themselves to be. I try to find out where they are, and if I can get hold of that with one eye, that's where I start. You have to start with where people are, because their growth is going to be from there, not from some abstraction, or where you are, or where someone else is. Now my other eye is not such a problem because I already have in mind a philosophy of where I'd like to see people moving. It's not a clear blueprint for the future but a movement toward goals they don't conceive of at the time. I don't separate these two ways of looking, I don't say I'm going to look at where people are today, and where they can be tomorrow. I look at people with both eyes simultaneously all the time, and as they develop and grow I still look at them that way because I've got to remind myself constantly they are not all they can be. If you listen to people and work from what they tell you, in a few days their ideas get bigger and bigger. They go back in time, ahead in

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their imagination. You just continue to build on people's own
experience; it is the basis for their learning. (pp. 131-132)

The teacher must have a clear sense of her own values, intentions and goals and
she must enter into her students' worlds. As the teacher, Jeanne has a particular
slant, a belief system about how students can best learn to read; she can't help but be
grounded in this. As educators, we bring to our teaching particular perceptions,
theories, and philosophies, making the education of others a highly political act.
What I believe about teaching and learning impacts my practice. This is true for
Jeanne as well. However, she can teach her students to set goals that they are
interested in pursuing within this framework.

My own nagging question about how to engage students more actively in their
learning, especially reading, caused me to pursue many long conversations with
Jeanne. Together we discussed ways in which her own concern about the passivity
of her students could be addressed. Slowly, ideas for this study emerged. We both
saw the need to connect theory and practice, going below the surface of educational
jargon to really look at how the ideas detailed in the professional journals could be
not only supported, but also maintained in meaningful ways.

My own intuition about how to proceed involved working to help children
become responsible for evaluating themselves to determine what they needed to
learn. Helping students to take an "inquisitive" stance toward their learning seemed
a place to start. Jeanne agreed. She too believed that if students were to take a more
active role in their learning, they would need to begin with evaluation of themselves.
Together, Jeanne and I made a plan for how to begin (see chapter three).

As you will read, my questions, and Jeanne's questions formed the foundation for
this study of third grade students who became evaluators of themselves as readers,
examining in particular, the new roles the students and teacher negotiated
throughout the evaluation process. This included the determination of their

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strengths, goals, assignments, and what to use as documentation of their learning processes in portfolios, as well as the influence of the classroom community on goal setting.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

## AN EVOLUTION OF THE NOTION OF SELF EVALUATION

### New Roles for Teachers and Students

Dewey (1938) writes about the importance of students' involvement in their work

as necessary for them to play the role of participatory citizens in a democracy.

"When education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a

social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of

external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities." Later,

Dewey (1973) writes about his perceived disconnect regarding the differences in what

is expected from adults and children and their learning.

> With the adult we unquestioningly assume that an attitude of personal
> inquiry, based upon the possession of a problem which interests and
> absorbs, is a necessary precondition for mental growth. With the child we
> assume that the precondition is rather a willing disposition which makes
> him ready to submit to any problem and material presented from with-
> out. Alertness is our ideal in one; docility in the other (p. xiv).

He goes on to challenge this notion that the role of "the docile student" is a role that

will lead to growth.

Lucy Mitchell, a progressive educator and contemporary of Dewey, writes about

similar concerns:

> Our children showed in our research studies as well as in observation
> in the classrooms that their conception of being good in school was to
> be quiet and docile and to remember facts which the teacher wanted
> them to remember. Many simply accepted school as a place where
> boredom was to be endured and lived their real lives, followed their

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real interests and drives, outside school (1953, p. 452).

More than fifty years ago Mitchell wrote about the need for students to be actively engaged in planning their learning based on their own evaluations of their needs. She goes on to write about observing children at play after school and her realization that, "Their eager response and quick learnings when given a chance to learn through firsthand experiences *along the lines of their own interests* proved to us that children needed an active role in school, unfettered by teacher regimentation"(452).

George Wood (1998) and Kathy Collier Paul (1998) write about fostering the above ideas. They believe in democracy in the classroom and that the primary mission of education is not job or college preparation but rather preparation for our most important role, that of citizen. Shared decision making is the bedrock in these classrooms, and implies new roles for students and teachers.

Brown and Campione (1994) argue that no single template exists for building learning communities where children and teachers share responsibility for decision making. "The exact role of the teacher in constructivist classrooms is still largely uncharted" (p. 230). Teachers develop and negotiate roles as they proceed, reacting to their own and student reflections.

Baker and Moss (1996) offer suggestions for role changes for teachers and students, based on their classroom practice, that may assist educators who are interested in building classroom communities where students are engaged and active participants in constructing curriculum. First, they describe the role of the student as "The Apprentice." They note that research studies (Sarason, 1991; Goodlad, 1984) that have closely observed the work of students in the classroom, report that during the school day, most students are passive recipients of teacher-directed activities.

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This passivity for some students leads to boredom or disinterest (lack of engagement) resulting in distractive behavior from students. Teachers cope with these distractions by increasing their control over all the students creating a cycle of teacher control and student passivity. To break this unproductive cycle, Baker and Moss suggest casting students in the role of apprentice whereby they learn a new craft in the company of other apprentices and adult masters who are able to provide needed guidance. "The accent is on active participation in a wide array of literacy events that make sense to students, parents, and the teachers" (p. 5).

For teachers, Baker and Moss suggest the "Designer" role. "The focus moves away from the teacher assigning a series of discrete tasks toward creating new social arrangements that emphasize participation among peers, parents, and other adults" (p 5). The teacher designs new opportunities for students to adopt the role of apprentice thinkers. In so doing, this teacher creates a learning community where students and teacher actively co-create curriculum in order for students to become engaged in their growth.

Cambourne (1995) referred to engagement in literacy as a merger of multiple qualities. He argued that engagement entails holding a purpose, seeking to understand, believing in one's own capability, and taking responsibility for learning. Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, and Rice (1996) described engaged readers as motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in using multiple approaches to comprehend, knowledgeable in their construction of new understanding from text, and socially interactive in their approach to literacy. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) described engaged reading as a state of total absorption or "flow." Despite the wide range of terminology used to describe engaged readers, these investigators concur that engaged readers are active decision makers who have wants and intentions to guide their reading. Further, engaged reading is strongly associated with reading achievement. Students who read actively and frequently

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improve their comprehension of text as a consequence (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992).

Another aspect of engagement involves choice. For example, Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) reported that teachers who enabled students to make choices about their learning and participation in instructional decisions created a classroom environment in which students were motivated and contributed actively to classroom learning experiences. Nolan and Nichols (1994) concur in their writing about student motivation. In their research of elementary teachers' beliefs about motivation in general, they found that children need choice to develop independence. They note that teachers can promote student choice by giving them input into which books will be read, whether students will participate in reading aloud or silently, and how students report on what they read. Nolan and Nichols contend that choice is motivating because it affords students control. "Children seek to be in command of their environment, rather than being manipulated by powerful others. This need for self-direction can be met in reading instruction through well-designed choices" (p. 411). Teaching students to be evaluators of themselves helps them make choices for their own learning.

Like offering more choices to students, student-centered evaluation practices have also been reported to increase student engagement and foster active rather than passive roles for students. In general, evaluation that provides feedback on progress increases self-efficacy (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997) and affords students opportunities for establishing more active roles in learning as well as a belief in their own competence. Children's belief in their competence begets confidence and enjoyment in learning.

The use of classroom portfolios (Au & Asam, 1996) or project based exhibits (Afflerbach, 1996) to provide a process for evaluating progress in a meaningful context also contributes to student engagement. Teachers who are known to be able

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to spark and sustain their students' attention and interest in reading often report that they evaluate effort and progress rather than just absolute skill (Stipek, 1991). These teachers encourage students to believe that effort will yield success and enjoyment.

John Guthrie and Allan Wigfield (2000) describe the critical importance of actively engaging students in the reading process. They contend, desired outcomes of teaching such as text comprehension, knowledge acquisition from text, and sustainable reading practices, do not result automatically in response to instruction. These outcomes rely on engagement as a mediating process. When engagement is sustained, outcomes will be positive. Strategy instruction, student choice, and student evaluations of themselves impact outcomes indirectly by building and sustaining engagement in reading.

> Engagement is the avenue through which instruction
> impacts outcomes. Students grow in achievement, knowledge,
> and practices as a result of their increasing engagement. Engaged
> reading and learning take time. They do not immediately arise
> in a limited task or situation. Sustained experience and perception
> of motivation-enhancing contexts are necessary for reader
> engagement (p. 417).

Creating an environment in which students take an active, engaged role, supports a reciprocal process of engagement and learning. The closing lines of the Guthrie and Wigfield chapter call for future research in reading engagement particularly in young readers from three to eight years. They call for richer characterizations of engaged and motivated readers, the type of thing I have the opportunity to do in this dissertation.

The teachers of these students play new roles in relation to evaluation. They no longer think only of tests when they consider evaluation. Rather, they look for

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evidence of their students' abilities to create knowledge (Wells, 1984). Instead of using teacher-centered evaluations to measure student abilities and compare children, teachers expect students to create evidence to show what they have learned. Even more important, these teachers serve as knowledgeable guides (Serafini, 1995), who watch, guide, support, and re-direct their students while they are in the process of learning.

In contrast, the more typical role of teachers is that of "program operators," who need to know how to implement prepackaged curriculum or present the lessons scripted for them in teacher manuals (Bullough & Gritlin, 1985). These notions of the teacher as automated program delivery person have hopefully begun to give way to notions of the teacher as one who assumes an active, reflective role in curriculum and assessment decisions (Ross, 1989). Unfortunately, public concerns about the state of education in the United States combined with the back to basics standards movement have renewed the drive to not only standardize curriculum, but teachers and how they deliver it. Teachers who wish to address these public concerns and change public perceptions of new teaching practices require a more public role.

Hansen (2001) writes about the changing roles of teachers and the need to "create public personae of ourselves as professionals who are articulate about what we do well and who have specific plans for continuous growth" (p. 118). If teachers want their changing teaching practices to be accepted, they must demonstrate not just in their classrooms, but publicly as well, their goals about becoming more adept at their responsibilities.

Students too, have new roles to negotiate when evaluation practices change. The assessment-as-measurement paradigm in which knowledge is believed to exist separately from the learner, and students are expected to acquire knowledge rather than construct it, has historically left students out of the evaluation process

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(Bushweller, 1997). Under this model learning is viewed as the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, meaning is believed to reside within the text, and only one interpretation or judgment is acceptable in response (Short & Burke, 1194b). Schools that employ this model often rely on external testing agencies to document their students' educational progress. The spare student involvement required by this paradigm does not create active participants in either the learning or the assessment processes. When measures outside student control take precedence in evaluation, students lose interest and become indifferent (Calfee & Perfumo, 1993). When teachers ask more of their students, and expect them to have a say in evaluation and learning decisions, a new level of involvement helps students to accept more responsibility for their learning and to reflect on their own educational progress. Rief (1992, p. 35), writing about her middle school students declares:

> I have discovered that students know themselves as learners
> better than anyone else. They set goals for themselves and judge
> how well they reach those goals. They thoughtfully and honestly
> evaluate their own learning with far more detail and introspection
> than I thought possible. Ultimately they tell me who they are as
> readers, writers, thinkers, and human beings. As teachers/learners
> we have to believe in the possibilities of our students, by trusting
> them to show us what they know and valuing what they are able
> to do with that knowledge.

Valencia (1990) cites active, collaborative reflection between students and teachers as key to the development of evaluative abilities. The benefits of collaboration are threefold. First, collaboration encourages students to look critically at themselves as learners, define their own strengths and needs, and take increased responsibility for learning decisions. Secondly, collaboration provides teachers with new understandings of student goals, which hopefully lead to more effective curriculum planning and evaluation practices. Thirdly, students gain increased understanding of adults' evaluative criteria and perspectives, which enables them to assess their products and growth in new ways (pp. 338-339).

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Students need to be invited to participate in determining the criteria by which their work will be judged and then play a role in actually judging their work (Kohn, 1993). The new roles that teachers and students adapt and adopt require, too, a re-defined relationship between teacher and student.

## These Roles Re-define Teacher-Student Relationships

As teachers move from teacher-centered instructional practices to those in which teachers and students share responsibilities, students' perceptions of their needs inform teachers' instructional decisions. When teachers ask students to show others what they do well and what does not satisfy them, the students start to create plans for what to do next. Teachers teach students about the various processes they may use in order to move forward. Teachers re-evaluate the role of the students and place new value on student input and initiative.

Lucy Mitchell writes about a good life for teachers and students in *Our Children and Our Schools* (1940). She advocates child-initiated goals as an important part of healthy growth and learning. Her vision of the teacher-student relationship depends on active student involvement. "Children's questionings, their intellectual curiosities, their urge to investigate will abate unless they are kept in action" (10). It is part of the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students' questionings are central to their learning experiences. Mitchell has this to say about the relationship between the teacher and the student:

> The teacher-child and the child-teacher relationship is a close one in
> a more significant way than spending hours each day together in the
> same room. There must be a sharing of interest, a sharing of planning,
> a sharing of putting interests into action. The teacher remains an adult
> though she becomes a member of the group. Her role is different from
> the role of children. But it remains true that teacher and children must

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have a good life together, or neither will have a good life (p. 17).

Shifting responsibility in the teacher-student relationship allows students to set goals, a new role for them.

An element of Cambourne's (1995) conditions of learning theory is the notion of "responsibility." Learners need to make their own decisions about when, how, and what to learn in any task. Cambourne believes that learners who do not exercise the ability to make decisions are at a disadvantage in developing independence from the teacher. He believes students who are dependent upon teachers as the source of their learning in school are at a loss when asked to perform at high levels of thinking. Learners who take a more active role in the decisions that affect their learning are likely to become more interested.

According to Vygotsky (1978), the development of higher order mental functions begins in social interaction and then is internalized psychologically. The vital role of teachers and other adults is to support children's development in terms of both their actual development and their potential. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) requires the support of adults and peers to provide the necessary assistance or scaffold that enables the child to move toward independent functioning. The teacher's role is one of supporting, guiding, and facilitating development and learning, as opposed to the traditional view of teaching as transmission of knowledge. The National Organization for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1997) draws upon the theories of Dewey and Vygotsky and summarizes its theoretical underpinnings in this way, "Learning should be viewed as a developmental, interactive process; learning occurs in children's minds as a result of an interaction--an interaction between thought and experience, an interaction between child and adult, or between children and their peers." These interactions help students construct new understandings.

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## Relationships Promote Constructivism

Constructivism provides theory to support democratic roles in classrooms and students' evaluations as central to learning. It has roots in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education. Constructivism's central idea is that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. Prior knowledge influences what new or modified knowledge students will construct from new learning experiences. This view of learning is in sharp contrast to the more traditional view that learners receive new knowledge from a more knowledgeable other. In other words, reception, not construction would be key.

In reporting his interpretation of data from a fifteen year longitudinal study where he followed the development of children's language from their first words to the end of their elementary education, Wells (1986) states that the aim of teachers should be "to foster the ability of students to take control of their own learning so that eventually they can assume responsibilities for planning of learning activities to an increasing degree" (p. 220). He characterizes what is now regarded as constructivism in this way:

> Teaching can no longer be seen as the imparting of information
> to relatively passive recipients and then checking to see that they
> can correctly reproduce it. Instead, it is more appropriately
> characterized as a partnership in learning. The tasks of the partners
> are necessarily different as a result of their differing levels of
> expertise, but the goal is the same for students and teachers alike.
> Without too much exaggeration, it can be described as the
> *guided reinvention of knowledge* (p. 220).

Another important notion of constructivism is that learning is active not passive. If what learners encounter is inconsistent with their current understanding, they can change their understanding to accommodate new experience. Learners actively build this new knowledge and need time to do so. Ample time allows students to reflect

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upon experiences, upon how those experiences line up against current understandings, and on how different understandings might change their view of the world.

Crafton and Burke (1994) write about inquiry-based evaluation in which children construct meaning from their experiences and initiate educative experiences focused on personal meanings and the classroom "thought collective."

> Evaluation is an integral part of good learning... Evaluation criteria must be internally defined, tied to social context and constructed for specific learner purposes. From this perspective, evaluation, like the rest of the curriculum, is used to generate knowledge...Evaluation occurs as learners take reflective stances in relation to their work and then invite others in to have conversations about it (p. 4-5).

The nature of their learning informs their teacher's teaching, which in turn influences the students. Children construct important learning through child-initiated experiences and they also learn a great deal from adults. The teaching-learning-evaluation process is interactive.

Underlying the constructivist theory and its goals is recognition of the value of the student as thinker. Without an appreciation of and a belief in the capability and value of the student's thinking ability, constructivism would not exist. After all, why would we need to understand the student's point of view if the teacher's view is the only one that matters?

Richetti and Sheerin (1999) propose four question-based problem-solving strategies that they have successfully used in classrooms to implement constructivist theory. For example, the SCAN strategy—See the issues, Clarify the issues, Assess priorities, and Name steps—can be used to help students set goals for independent learning. The authors also offer a distinction regarding the quality of questions generated. They note that constructivists rely upon the student to generate meaningful questions. They contend most questioning strategies, even when

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effective at stimulating thought about a given point, do little to help students become better questioners. Through self-evaluation, and the determination of learning goals, students are more able to construct learning experiences which lend themselves to the creation of relevant and authentic questions.

Literacy teaching in schools has undergone tremendous changes in the past twenty years. At least partly because of the rapidly changing nature of a highly technological society, literacy can no longer be defined as mastery of a set of isolated sub skills. Experts today emphasize not simply mechanics such as word recognition, grammar, spelling, and rote comprehension questions but also the meaning making aspects of literacy which enable people to use reading and writing to gain information, and connect with and influence others. Wells (1990) speaks for many educators when he says, "To be fully literate is to have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, feeling, and thinking in the context of purposeful social activity" (p. 14). Rexford Brown (1990) asserts that literacy provides the means for a group to consider itself within a historical context, "Literacy is first of all a process of making meaning and negotiating it with others. It is not just a set of skills useful for understanding the works and ideas of previous generations, it is a way of creating here and now, the meanings by which individuals and groups share their lives and plan their futures" (p.35). Students need a constructivist approach to literacy instruction to achieve these goals.

Kenneth Goodman (1986) and Frank Smith (1986) view reading as a process in which the reader deals with information and constructs meaning continuously. They recognize that the reading process involves readers in making predictions, confirming or disconfirming these while reading, and incorporating information from the text with their own experience and prior knowledge. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) suggests "the reader brings to a text all of her personal experiences along with the influence of

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her cultural milieu. The text is the black and white graphic display created by the author...the transaction (between reader and text) is the meaning (poem), but the transactions may not be the same for each reader (because of her individual life experiences)". Students construct meaning and must ask their own important questions.

Educators' interest in constructivist approaches continues to grow. Evidence that students may benefit from a teacher's use of constructivist approaches comes from several sources. Numerous accounts, many written by teachers, provide enthusiastic descriptions of the workings of constructivist approaches in classrooms or schools, including anecdotal evidence or case studies pointing to the learning aims of individual students (Calkins, 1991; Mills & Clyde, 1990; Short & Pierce, 1990).

The overarching goals of constructivism are straightforward and commendable: helping students become autonomous learners and thinkers, explore important questions, and build and integrate deeper understandings of knowledge (Richetti & Sheerin, 1999).

## Constructivism Supports Evaluation by Students

My reading of Lucy Mitchell (1953) further supports my notions of students' evaluations as the basis for learning. Foregrounding all of Mitchell's work in education was the formation of her ideas about how children learn. She formulated the nature of the learning process at any age as follows:

> First, there is an experience, something that happens to one. This I call "intake." Then there follows a transmutation, a digestion of the experience out of which comes doing-something-about-it, an expression in one's own terms which is essentially a creative, active thing. This I call "outgo." Outgo may be some kind of art expression; or a new attitude; or a seeing of a new relationship, which is thinking. The learning process is not complete without both intake and outgo. (p. 276)

Mitchell studied those occasions when students "do something about it." She

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documented the conditions that surrounded their evaluations of their needs, the options they considered as possible solutions, and the actions they took. Evaluation was central to the decisions the students made.

Monroe (1993) writes about how the present evaluation systems in schools are reflected in narrowly conceived testing, grouping and grading programs. They discourage the kind of sustained, collaborative inquiry that should characterize America's schools. Evaluation programs must change to promote instruction systems that encourage engagement with challenging ideas and student perseverance.

Jamie McKenzie (1998) states, "The ability to frame good questions may be the most powerful technology ever invented, and we must pass it on to our students. Questions are the tools required for us to 'make up our minds' and develop meaning" (27). The basis of evaluation is a good question. Teachers need to help students develop a questioning stance toward learning. When students take on the role of self-evaluator, their questions become the center of teaching decisions. Many students are used to classrooms in which teachers ask most of the questions and already have answers in mind. "When we encourage, support, guide students' natural inquiry and investigation, our students gather evidence and use it to confirm, revise, refute, extend and construct learning" (Routman, 2000).

Roller, Beed, and Forsyth (1996) defined a continuum of "scaffolding" for helping students develop self-evaluation abilities. At one end of the continuum the teacher assumes total responsibility by solving any dilemma or answering any question. Next the teacher invites the child's participation. As the child is invited to self-evaluate, the teacher helps the child by cueing a specific evaluative strategy. This may involve teaching the child questioning strategies, imaging strategies, or writing strategies. Further across the continuum the teacher cues general strategy use, usually by asking a question such as, "What might help you answer your question, or move forward on your goal?" At this point, the teacher begins to reinforce the

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child's independent use of a strategy. Finally, the teacher builds metacognitive awareness in the child, so that evaluation becomes a conscious habit of mind. The authors advocate that for children to learn to be self-evaluators, the teacher needs to offer direct instruction toward those ends.

Costa (1991) reminds us that the "ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students who evaluate themselves." Farr asserts:

> Students need to become good self-assessors if they are to improve their literacy skills. They need to select, review, and think about the reading and writing they are doing. They need to be able to revise their own writing and to revise their comprehension as they read. If students understand their own needs they will improve. Students should, in fact, be the primary assessors of their own literacy development (p. 30).

In *Portfolios in the Reading-Writing Classroom*, Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) emphasize self-assessment again and again:

> A reader or writer's perspective of his or her achievements and meaning-making skills is at the heart of assessment and empowering students to be decision makers. Assessment should be directed at helping students engage in self-assessment and evaluation of their own abilities (p.32).

> Self-assessment helps students to take steps toward becoming lifelong learners and assists students with taking responsibility for their learning processes and the work they produce...Assessment practices should involve the students. If we want students to develop into independent thinkers and successful performers they must have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to evaluate their own processes and products (p.35).

Peter Johnston (1992) states, "Central to both independence and literacy is the ability to monitor and evaluate one's own literate activity and to reflect on what that activity and changes in it mean" (p. 28).

Wade (1995) studied the development of student empowerment and initiative

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with these questions:

- How do students respond to opportunities to initiate their own learning?

- How can opportunities be created that will bridge the present teacher-centered approach to more student-centered, empowered learning experiences?

- Will students respond favorably to these invitations or resist the opportunity to play a stronger role in their school life?

Her findings point to the critical role of the teacher, the importance of understanding contextual influences on student initiative, and the centrality of students' decisions about their learning. When teachers base their instruction on students' expressed needs, the students ability to evaluate themselves becomes paramount.

To teach students to evaluate themselves begets teachers to teach students to do what the teacher has typically done (Hansen and Jenkins, 1997; Jervis, 1996). Donald Graves (1994) points out the importance of these evaluation skills for children. They become our informants as we actively listen to what they have to say:

> Unless children speak about what they know, we lose out on what they know and how they know it. Through our eyes and ears we learn from them: their stories, how they solve problems, what their wishes and dreams are, what works and doesn't work, their vision of a better classroom, and what they need to learn to succeed...We transform what we learn from them into an effective learning history. (p. 16)

Students tell us their wishes, what they need; we teach to those needs. The students know that we take their self-evaluation seriously.

Marie Clay (1993) writes the following about the importance of students' involvement in the evaluation of their work:

> Be careful not to establish a pattern where the child waits for the teacher to do the work. This is the point at which the child must learn that he must work at a difficulty, take some initiative, and make some links. (p. 40)

All children must learn to work out a difficulty, and take steps toward resolution.

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What does the **child** choose to do when confronted with something she doesn't know? Student choice is possible when students can generate options. They evaluate these options and make a choice.

Boersma (1995) bears this out in her report of a series of curricular modifications she made in an effort to increase students' abilities to self-evaluate and set goals. Reviews of current curricular content and instructional methods had revealed an absence of possible alternative strategies and an overemphasis on teacher evaluation of students. Boersma added reflective writing, student literacy portfolios, and student generated questions for study to her curriculum in her effort to help her students become better evaluators of themselves. She was no longer the only evaluator of student work. Her students learned how to generate meaningful evaluations of themselves through their writing, and also to make choices for their learning experiences.

Margaret Donaldson (1978) writes that self-evaluation "typically develops when something gives us pause... we stop to consider the possibilities of acting which are before us...we heighten our awareness of what is actual by considering what is possible. We are conscious of what we do to the extent that we are conscious also of what we do not do--of what we might have done. The notion of choice is thus central" (p. 95-96).

Grubb and Courtney (1996) write about student choices when they evaluate themselves in order to set goals and show progress via their portfolios. These students' engagement in their work increased. Similarly, in their action research project, Phillips and Steinkamp (1995) found that by instituting a portfolio assessment plan with goal-setting components there was a positive influence on the students' academic motivation. Students who formerly demonstrated little confidence and low self-esteem became more engaged in their learning when they learned about their classmates' choices and set goals that interested themselves

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personally.

Sunstein (2000) explains that "portfolio keepers" who evaluate their own work learn (among many things) to set personal literacy goals: reading, writing, thinking, over and over again. She notes that literacy portfolios are the *products* of our *processes*, a notion Dewey (1938) wrote about in this way:

> Keeping track is a matter of reflective review and summarizing, in which there is both discrimination and a record of the significant features of a developing experience. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind."

Sunstein further states that the "crucial piece of portfolio keeping is the critical analysis that comes with reflection (p. 226)." Portfolios enable students to gather literacies, identify and organize them, and catalogue accomplishments and goals-- from successes to instructive failures. Portfolio discussions about questions, choices, and what was done about them generate new strategies and these will generate goals.

Portfolios in other settings have been credited with empowering students (Newman and Smolen, 1993), helping students to plan their own learning, and encouraging goal setting. However, these virtues were only realized in a few classrooms out of entire schools. For most classrooms, student goal setting with the aim of increasing student input and initiative was an ideal on paper only. Students set goals and then were asked to review them some weeks or months later (or not at all). If the goals were reached it is as likely a fluke as it is part of a plan. When student goals are ignored and students aren't helped to learn to value their plans, mixed messages are sent about what we say we want and what we really value. If students are to take more initiative, their goals must be integrated into their daily lives.

This requires new roles for students and teachers. Rogoff (1990, p.34) writes that children's social and cognitive development "occurs through guided participation in

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social activity with companions who support and stretch children's understanding of and skill in using the tools of culture." In this environment, "curriculum and instruction are anchored in meaning and curriculum is negotiated, not predetermined" (Baker and Moss, 1996, p. 3). As Harste explains, "Aspects of this process include making meaning, sharing meaning, extending meaning, savoring meaning, and generating new meaning" (1993, p. 2).

With all the research in support of constructivist theories and self-evaluation as key to student learning, why are many students not taught to make decisions about their learning? Much of what is talked about at conferences and in college classrooms has had limited impact in elementary classrooms. What can be done to foster and maintain self-evaluation processes for students so they actively construct their own learning experiences? What roles do students and teachers need to adopt in order to encourage and sustain motivated, engaged reading? Learning to be co-creators of curriculum and active self-evaluators will be the challenge of the children in the classroom where I will collect my data. They will need to negotiate new roles with their teacher.

# CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH PROCESS

I spent ten weeks collecting data in Jeanne Bennek's third grade classroom at St. Mary of the Lake Elementary School, a non-public, Catholic school in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The classroom was comprised of 27 students, Jeanne, and an assistant. Students came from varied backgrounds and diverse socioeconomic worlds. The elementary school houses preschool through grade five. There is one class each of kindergarten through grade five and a school population of about 175.

The school characterizes their curriculum as "whole language" (St. Mary's Family Handbook). Unlike many of the classrooms I visited and in which I supervised student teachers, the children in Jeanne's school read and write each day for meaningful purposes. The teachers foster "discovery learning" in the areas of math and science as students construct meaning from the varied experiences in which they are involved. At the start of the school year, each family is presented with a folder outlining the school's philosophy and curricular approach. An opening letter to families from faculty states, "Just as the whole child is made up of many individual parts, each of which cannot function without the other, so is curriculum defined by integrating the philosophy with each discipline. This holistic approach focuses on the "whole child," on his or her individual needs, developmental level, and specific learning style. Through this Whole Language approach a variety of teaching strategies and materials are utilized to enable students to develop to their greatest potential."

Jeanne has been at St. Mary's for 25 years and views herself as a learner with her students. She has continued to change and grow throughout her teaching life. Jeanne has struggled with many of the same issues I did as a classroom teacher, issues that face many teachers today. For example, she has tried to give more voice to her students by having them choose their own reading material, writing topics, and spelling words, but was often faced with an administration who feared the worth of students' choices. The principal of

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the school and several school committee members often expressed concern that the children would not be prepared for middle school because when they chose their own spelling words for example, the students would be too easy on themselves simply because they were allowed to choose the words. Assignments created by the teacher were considered more valuable than those designed by the students, and standardized test scores were considered more valuable than the teacher's opinion. Students' opinions were valued even less. Even so, Jeanne wanted to make self-evaluation more central to her students' learning.

Goal setting by the students, as part of self-evaluation, had been a part of Jeanne's classroom practice for many years, yet like many teachers she had been disappointed with the impact it had on the lives of her students. Student goal setting remained on the surface level never delving deeper to help students discover through their evaluations of themselves what appropriate goals would be. Time within the school day was only infrequently set aside to help students as they set goals. Goal setting happened at the beginning of each quarter when students evaluated themselves and decided what they needed to work on. Then students evaluated their progress on those goals at the end of the quarter. The day-to-day happenings of the class may or may have not impacted students' abilities to meet their goals; no one purposefully revisited their goal.

Jeanne wanted the goal setting to become an active force in students taking initiative for and continually evaluating their own learning. Having worked with children on goal-setting for several years, Jeanne recognized that the third graders needed to do more than simply identify their goals. They needed to frequently revisit them. If their visions for themselves were not taken seriously, then it may actually be harmful to ask them to set goals. Jeanne worried as she reflected on her use of goal setting, that when she asked students to create goals, and then ignored the goals within the context of her teaching day, she added to the disinterest students felt. After all, it appeared she wasn't interested in the goals her students set, why should they be?

Jeanne was considering a major change. She was intentionally making her practice

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problematic. In order to honor her students' goals she would need to provide time for them to work on their goals, and these tasks would need to be part of their regular schoolwork. This possibility excited and worried her. She was excited about working on this new professional goal: to teach her students to self-evaluate so they would become more engaged. She worried about the curriculum. Would her students be prepared for fourth grade? Would her students resist or embrace their changing role and her changing role in the classroom? Would her students choose "appropriate" goals? How would the term "appropriate" be defined in this classroom?

It was our prediction that Jeanne would be able to base her instruction on the children's self-perceived needs and redirect some children, if necessary, toward appropriate goals. She would make daily decisions about when to step in and when not. Making these decisions would be problematic, yet it represented the art and craft of teaching. Taped to the side of a file cabinet in Jeanne's classroom were these words which exemplified to her the nature of the kind of teacher she aspired to be:

> Teaching is an art. It is the art of simultaneously co-creating curriculum with learners and of standing outside that process, observing and reflecting, so that action taken serves the learning. Teaching is an intentional act.

Jeanne's decisions would be guided by her overall reason for embarking on this study in the first place. Jeanne, like me, was concerned about the students in her classroom, even though, in this Catholic School, the children were, for the most part, interested in reading and writing and supported by their parents. They were, as a class, good students. In spite of this, Jeanne worried.

Given that for 25 years she had seen her students and their families in church and the community after they left her classroom, she had a sense of how they grew as students and, overall, as citizens. Too many of them did not see themselves as the person responsible for what they did as readers and writers. They got good grades, but many weren't readers. They did not view themselves as agents in their own learning. Reading and writing were

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not indispensable tools that enabled them to enter more deeply into democratic life. The statements above are admittedly anecdotal and intuitive on Jeanne's behalf. However, in the twenty-five years she taught third grade at St. Mary's, she got to know her students and their families well. The small size of the school community, and the close knit nature of parish life afforded teachers at St. Mary's an opportunity to continue relationships with students well beyond sixth grade. Jeanne, for instance, routinely received invitations to high school graduation parties for former students each year. Jeanne's own three children also attended St. Mary's, extending her role of "teacher" to include "mother of friends" as well. Further, Jeanne earned the title of school historian because she followed the local papers and cut out articles, photos of sports teams, honor role lists etc. that included names and stories about alumni. These articles and photos were featured on a bulletin board in the school's main entry. Jeanne was able to gain a sense of what students were doing when they left St. Mary's. It seemed to Jeanne that many students were good at the "grammar of school," but not actively engaged in learning that was meaningful to them. She sensed a 'flatness' in her own teaching of reading. She decided that something fundamentally different must be done for these students, and she would be the one to begin.

In many ways Jeanne shared responsibility for evaluation with her students already. Students led their parents through portfolio conferences and selected their own spelling words and writing topics. They even shared their goals at these conferences, but Jeanne realized that most of the time she transmitted knowledge to her students based upon her goals rather than theirs. She and the students did not co-create their curriculum. Jeanne hoped that by teaching her students to evaluate themselves more frequently, they would be more equipped to initiate meaningful, educative experiences for themselves.

She decided to change the focus of the students' portfolios. They would start to use them as tools to enable their learning, not just as places where they documented their growth toward Jeanne's goals. If the portfolios could become tools, the students could use these sets of information to help them create the kinds of goals that could guide their daily work.

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Then the students' examples of their class work, in their portfolios, would be documentation of their goals.

Portfolios were Jeanne's choice for documentation of her students' growth because they show more than letter grades or numerical scores. Learners set goals, made plans, gathered resources and monitored their own progress. Jeanne felt that her students needed to be able to do these things. If they couldn't they would be dependent on others to initiate and monitor for them. Also, Hansen (1992a, 1992b, c, 1994) had demonstrated that children are perfectly capable of assuming the responsibility for documenting their growth. Her research showed children using portfolios as tools.

Jeanne wanted to explore the impact of the students' goals on their initiative, successive evaluations of themselves, and future choices of assignments. She talked to me about changing her role to support students in taking responsibility for building curriculum.

She said she would not give them assignments for reading class. Her students would analyze their own strengths and weaknesses and decide what they needed/wanted to learn. They would determine what their assignments would be. Jeanne wanted them to evaluate their learning processes on a daily basis and regularly document what they were learning.

Students' roles would need to change a great deal, and I focused my data collection on those changes as I pursued my overall question, "When third grade students become better evaluators of themselves as readers, what new roles do they negotiate for themselves?" In addition to the overall research question I examined several sub questions: What about self-evaluation did children need to know? What happened when students mimicked their teacher's criteria? How were goals negotiated when student criteria differed dramatically from teacher criteria? Who resisted changing roles and why? These were key tensions to be aware of throughout the study.

## Meeting the Students

On a bright, crisp October morning I arrive at the school. It feels bitter-sweet as I recall the ten years I spent teaching fifth grade in this 85 year old building. For today's purposes,

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however, I don't need to climb all three stairways to the intermediate floor. I stay on the second floor and prepare to visit the third grade classroom.

Jeanne and the children are ready for me. They know me already, some because I have taught older brothers and sisters, some through school folk-lore, and all because I spent several mornings as a casual observer in their room the month before.

I had already collected, per Institutional Review Board instruction, assent forms and all 27 children along with their parents had agreed to participate in the study.

I introduce myself again to the children and explain my role in their classroom. "I used to be the fifth grade teacher. Now I am going to school to learn more about how children make sense of learning to read and write." Jeanne joins in and relates that she, too, wants to learn more about them as readers and writers. She wants to be a better reading teacher and she thinks the students are her best source of information. The children look mildly puzzled, but content to keep listening. I explain that I will come to their classroom for about ten weeks. During that time I will talk to them about their reading just like Mrs. Bennek does. Sometimes I will help her teach, but mostly I will be asking lots of questions. I tell them that though I may have lots of questions they can always decide that they don't want to talk with me.

Throughout my data collection, the children knew I was writing about them, and they commented as my purple folder grew thicker each week with sheets of paper full of my scratchy handwriting. I had individual sheets for each child that had his/her goal and plans on one side and my comments on the other. This is where I wrote the details of our conversations, and some students liked to find their sheets and re-read what we shared in conversation. More than one student commented that I could use a dose of Mrs. Bennek's world renowned cursive writing sessions. As I interviewed children, I stopped frequently to ask, "Is this what you meant? Did I get this right?" The third graders corrected me or clarified their answers before I moved on.

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## A Teacher and a Researcher

Jeanne was the teacher and I was the researcher for this study, but in many ways Jeanne acted as a co-researcher. She initiated the question about how to make students' self-evaluations more central to her teaching, and together we decided upon the use of goal setting as the framework. Jeanne read field notes and transcripts and occasionally wrote responses. More frequently, we discussed the data during lunch or planning times. Jeanne knew the children much better than I--she planned instruction, conferred about their reading and writing, talked to their parents, shared their stories about weekend adventures, bandaged their knees, mediated playground disputes--and I valued her insights. I needed her to confirm whether I was seeing clearly, and to provide context for her teaching decisions. She provided another eye, and fresh perspectives on my interpretations. While I was confident about my analysis of transcripts, Jeanne provided meaningful context for conversations and learning experiences that continued in my absence. Her comments were perhaps the most important triangulation of my data.

While this study cannot be characterized as teacher research, there are many elements of teacher research that were present in the relationship between Jeanne and me. Our combined efforts provided a forum for actively reflecting on what was happening in the classroom for these students as Jeanne and I encouraged new roles for them. Simply stated, teacher-researcher studies are attempts by a teacher to illuminate pedagogical acts by searching and re-searching the teaching experience for information about the teacher's actions. "The aim of the teacher-researcher is not to create educational laws (as is sometimes done in physical sciences) in order to predict and explain teaching and learning. Instead, the teacher-researcher attempts to make visible the experiences of teachers and children acting in the world" (Burton, p. 226). Burton further characterizes what teacher-researchers do as a reciprocal relationship between action and reflection. As teachers reflect in a disciplined manner on their teaching (through observations, anecdotal records, reflective journals and conversations with colleagues) these reflections impact pedagogical

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actions. Actions provide substance for reflections. This is the reciprocal nature of teacher research; to be a teacher-researcher is to be a teacher and a learner. Frieire (1985) states:

> I consider it an important quality for virtue to understand the impossible separation of teaching and learning. Teachers should be conscious every day they are coming to school to learn and not just to teach. This way we are not just teachers but teacher learners. It is really impossible to teach without learning as well as learning without teaching. We cannot separate one from the other; we create a violence when we try. Over a period of time we no longer perceive it a violence when we continually separate teaching from learning. Then we conclude that the teacher teaches and the student learns. That unfortunately is when students are convinced that they come to school to be taught and that being taught often means transference of knowledge (pp. 16-17).

Jeanne and I wanted to use the reciprocity between action and reflection to sustain our study of students as they learned to be better evaluators of themselves. It was important to Jeanne that her students see her as a learner with them. She modeled self-evaluation by talking about her own literacy goals and writing her own plan along with students. She also showed her students that her teaching actions were based on her reflections about them and how to support them as they worked on their goals. Action is the content of reflection; reflection is the driving force behind action for it strengthens and gives intentions sustenance and elevates them from their status as mere impressions. The results of actively evaluating Jeanne's experiences with her students brought forth new notions for Jeanne and me about what happens when students set goals for themselves and continually evaluate their progress.

Jeanne and I discussed my role as a researcher in her classroom in limited ways before the study began. In my research notes I wrote, "This feels like a good fit. I hope Jeanne is comfortable enough with my being here to tell me if I intrude in ways she hasn't anticipated." While "intruding" was not a major concern to me, my research ethic was one that allowed Jeanne to take the lead. I respected Jeanne's leadership in classroom, as well as her goal to examine her teaching and change her practice to allow great student

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engagement. Jeanne and I have known each other for fifteen years: nine of those years we taught together. We have always talked "reading and writing" with each other, and I felt comfortable going into her classroom. Jeanne commented many times that she was excited to have someone in her classroom to engage in discussions about theory and practice, someone who was in the trenches with her, not just behind a podium at a conference or workshop. I was glad she viewed my presence as a supportive one and not as someone who was coming in to serve only a personal agenda.

My stance toward research in Jeanne's classroom is captured by Savage's (1988) article, "Can Ethnographic Narrative Ever Be a Neighborly Act?"

> Neighborliness is a kind of praxis, a practical activity having a complex intellectual dimension...As an interpretive or educational activity, neighborliness takes the form of describing, representing, or mirroring a group's understanding of its own circumstances and discussing these so that the group comes to consciousness about the problematic character of their circumstances in ways that assist them in becoming more able to transform these. Changes in consciousness take place, in part, because the difference of the neighborly educator and the abstracting possibilities of the representations assist people both in coming nearer to the circumstances of their lives and in gaining a critical distance in relation to them (p. 13).

I wanted my inquiry to prompt teachers (as it does me) to "reflect on the complexity and promise of their lives, and gather energy and support for the task of envisioning new alternatives for their own practices" (Savage, 1988, p. 15). My inquiry about how to use students' evaluations of themselves to initiate more active roles in their learning, supported Jeanne's authentic questions about how to better engage her students in meaningful learning experiences.

This neighborly stance also directed me on occasions when Jeanne and I had differing opinions about how to proceed in particular situations. I deferred to Jeanne's teaching decisions in all cases because I respected her role as the teacher of this group of children.

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For example, on a few occasions while Jeanne was conferring with a child, she would end a conversation that I thought she should pursue further. As the researcher, I hoped for more information about how Jeanne's role impacted a student's actions, and sometimes Jeanne would miss what I saw as a valuable teaching moment. An example of this follows.

Jeanne (J): What are you working on Anna?

Anna (A): I'm making a list of books I've read so far.

J: Is the list for your portfolio documentation?

A: I haven't decided yet. I'm just making the list first.

J: So you don't know what you'll do with the list?

A: I might just study it to see what I'm reading... maybe write about it.

J: O.K. Let me know if you need anything.

At this point I wished Jeanne had questioned Anna further to explore what Anna meant by "writing about the list." I thought Jeanne missed an opportunity to talk with Anna about her goal to "read more widely" and also to help Anna evaluate her reading choices in several different ways. I thought Anna's list was a wonderful way to begin an evaluation of the types of reading she was doing, and Anna's own suggestion that she write about the list was worth supporting. Jeanne's questioning didn't go beyond goal documentation. I didn't step in with my own questions for Anna, because I wanted to keep up with the flow of student conferences Jeanne was conducting.

Later, during Jeanne's break, I asked her about Anna's conference.

Amy: I thought Anna had some interesting comments about what to do with her list.

J: Yes... I'll need to check in with her tomorrow. I never did find out what she was going to do with it.

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Amy: I thought maybe you'd pursue it longer, talk about how writing about a topic is one way to practice self-evaluation.

J: I suppose I could have, but you know…I looked over across the table and I saw Mitchell just staring into space. I thought to myself, *I need to go see what's up with Mitchell, he's not doing anything,* and I think I just sort of disconnected with Anna. It's hard for me to watch Mitchell staring into space, when I know Anna will figure something out on her own. Most of my teaching questions deal with the "Mitchell" type, not the "Anna" type. I want to keep kids like Mitchell interested, give him a little spark until he can build a fire of his own.

Amy: I see what you mean…do you ever fear that goal setting conferences are turning into a new management technique?

J: I wouldn't go that far, but it is a different kind of management when I don't know what each child is doing because they are the ones choosing. I don't want to see kids floundering with their goals either. I made the choice to end a conference with Anna who I know is capable of sustaining her independence, in order to support Mitchell who is not there yet.

While I thought Jeanne should have talked more with Anna (it suited my interests) Jeanne had a very different way of viewing the situation. She did what she thought best for each student given the limited time she had. Glesne and Peshkin (1988) write about one of the roles of the researcher: the researcher as learner. In this role the researcher does not come as an expert or authority. As a learner, you are expected to listen; as an expert you are expected to talk. The differences between these two roles is enormous. As a researcher I needed to listen to the students and Jeanne much as a curious student would listen. So, even when my own instincts occasionally differed from Jeanne's, I listened and learned about how she viewed her role in encouraging her students to be self evaluators.

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## Preliminary Interviews and Observations

During my first official days in the classroom I interviewed ten of the children about their quarterly goals. I wanted to gain insight into ways in which the students perceived the goals they had been writing each quarter of their school careers at St. Mary's. What did the goals mean to them? I asked the students questions about how they decided on their goals, and what they had done to accomplish them. I will now show three of these interviews to exemplify new roles that children might assume when they begin to spend their reading block of time working on self-selected goals.

1) Lauren shows me her goal sheet which says, "My goal is to read more during DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time." She says she wants to read for longer periods of time. I ask if she is having any success with this and she says she is unsure. "I usually record it when I finish a book in my reading journal but I don't know if I read longer. My journal just says how many pages the book is and if I like it or not. I can't tell how much I read during DEAR." Lauren needs a way to document her reading for herself that will show her that she is reading for longer periods. Sustaining her reading for longer amounts of time is important to her, "because now I am reading chapter books and can't keep track of the story if I only read for a few minutes." I ask her what would be helpful and she suggests that she will make a time chart and write down how many minutes of DEAR time she actually spends reading.

2) Megan leads me through her current portfolio showing me her goal sheet. She tells me about an academic goal she wrote a few months ago. "I will read four books from the Bailey School Kids series." I ask her how she is doing on her goal. "I haven't had time to work on it. I haven't read any BSK books yet. I'm not sure when to do it." Megan is a dutiful student, but she does not see it as her role to revisit the goal she has set. She doesn't know how to use her class time to work on her goals. Jeanne will have to help Megan realize that goals are supposed to provide daily direction about how to spend her time.

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3) Jake shows me a goal sheet and I ask him to tell me about what he is working on. "I'm not really working on any of these goals. I don't really get it." I ask how he chose the goals that are written on his sheet. "My mom helped me write them. She thought it would be good for me to read more books." When I ask if he is reading more books he says, "Not really." Jake is not invested in the goal-setting process. He takes a passive role; he does not see it as his role to co-create curriculum with Jeanne. He lets his mother set a goal for him, and doesn't understand its possible usefulness. Jeanne will need to help Jake find something he is interested in pursuing so that he will set meaningful goals and take initiative in pursuing them.

The role changes exemplified in these scenarios (record keeper, time manager, and co-creator) did in fact emerge from the data after the study began, but time management and record keeping proved to be only mildly important. Issues of talk and community influence became paramount.

## Data Gathering

I employed a wide range of data-gathering techniques each intended to help me answer my question: "When third grade students become evaluators of themselves as readers, what new roles do they negotiate for themselves?" I interviewed, observed, examined and was a participant in the instruction and evaluation processes in the classroom, took field notes, studied school records, met with the teacher, met with the member of my dissertation committee who lives in Minnesota (Marcia Reardon) and constantly analyzed all data (Wolcott, 1992).

### Instructional Sessions

At the beginning of the study, Jeanne and I introduced third graders to the idea of using their portfolios on a daily basis to help them set and meet their goals. Students were invited to take greater responsibility for their own learning and were held accountable for using their time to achieve their reading goals. We introduced five self-evaluation questions

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(Hansen, 1998) to the group.

- What do you do well as a reader?

- What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader?

- What do you want to learn next to become a better reader? (This becomes the goal.)

- What steps will you take to accomplish this? (This becomes the plan, the assignments the student will pursue.)

- What will you put in your portfolio to document your learning?

Whole group sharing responses to the first three on chart paper helped generate options as students independently set learning goals. Students wrote answers to all five questions, placed them in their portfolios and updated them daily, or as frequently as necessary. Jeanne and I also modeled the all class sessions in which students shared their work on their goals. Further instructional sessions included showing how to use portfolios to document progress on goals, how to choose a just right book, and how to do a book talk. As Jeanne taught the students (usually through mini-lessons at the beginning of reading time) ways in which they could choose a book at their reading level, or ways they might document their accomplishments toward their goals in their portfolios, I wrote anecdotal notes to review later. I used these notes to guide my follow-up discussions with students.

**Observations**

I observed the children as they engaged in their daily reading and writing as they set, worked on, and documented their progress toward their goals. In order to better understand the new roles the students assumed I observed three to four days per week for ten weeks. I kept field notes noting such things as what students did as they set their goals, how they managed their time as they and carried out their steps, how they interacted with teacher and peers, and what they used as documentation. I noted the tactics and diversions those students who "don't know what do" used when they were stuck. I asked, "What roles do children negotiate, need to acquire, as they begin this process? Do students resist adopting

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new roles?" Specific facts, sensory impressions, my personal responses and reflections on field notes, conversations and language, questions that arose about people or behaviors--all were included as I looked for emerging patterns of behavior (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein, 1997).

At the end of the reading/writing time block on most days I took notes as students shared what they did in working toward a current goal and how they felt about their accomplishments. Other students' responses to each child's sharing provided opportunities to develop a community of support for each other as they took on new roles for their classroom.

## Interviews

I employed several forms of interview processes: informal interviews which happened during the course of observations and more formal interviews with children about their portfolios, and conversations with Jeanne after observations.

**Observation Interviews.** During observations I used an informal interviewing technique akin to what Graves (1994) describes when he suggests that we place ourselves in the position of being informed by students:

- What did you do today to work on your goal?
- What happened?
- What decisions did you make?

These "evaluation conferences" provided occasions when children could talk about their changing roles in the classroom.

**Conversations with Jeanne.** Twice weekly Jeanne shared incidents when she saw students negotiate new roles as they took initiative on their goals. We discussed how she reacted to student goals and adjusted her practice to accommodate the students' needs (See

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chapter 6, p. 10-11).


**Portfolio Interviews.** Portfolio interviews focused on finding out what students were doing to meet their goals. As we studied their portfolios we discussed documentation and revisions of their goals, their plans, and their evaluations of the goal setting process. I looked for evidence that the children found value in what they learned when they took initiative and set their own goals.


## Archival Research

Archival research included past goal setting records and interviews with former teachers. This class has been together for three years previous. I was able to examine records of past goals set and talk with teachers about the role goal setting and evaluation played in their classes. I was able to discuss the teacher's perception of the roles her students played in goal setting and evaluation processes. This was helpful in determining teacher perceived reading ability (discussed in Chapter 7, p. 67).


## Ongoing Analysis

Analysis was ongoing; it took place each time I examined my observation notes or reread my field notes. Because Jeanne wanted the children to become increasingly adept at taking responsibility to reach their goals, she and I talked twice weekly about what I saw, her interpretations, and what she planned to do to help children become self-evaluators who know how to set, plan, and reach their self-selected reading goals.

I wrote field notes during class when possible or soon thereafter. I talked with Jeanne and Marcia (dissertation committee member) about all aspects of the project. I emailed Jane weekly to share data. Constant analysis was part of my data gathering. Our reflections/evaluations on how things were going helped determine what we taught each day, or what questions I addressed to particular students.

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I took notes in a double entry journal and I regularly gave the journal to Jeanne for her review and comment. Because I knew that my thoughts and reactions needed to be a part of the process, the double entry journal also gave me a place to add my comments, impressions and insights. I needed to listen for words that validated my assumptions as well as for those which went against what I thought I might find.

In ten weeks I constantly observed the children as they worked on self-selected goals. My observations and interviews showed what they did on those occasions. Also, I observed several occasions when Jeanne taught self-evaluation lessons derived from the children's needs.

In my dissertation I will show the journey these children and their teacher took as Jeanne strove to help them become self-evaluative learners who 1) were aware of their needs, 2) generated possible ways to address their needs, and 3) took initiative that furthered their learning as they negotiated new roles in the classroom.

# CHAPTER 4

## GOAL SETTERS: READING FATTER BOOKS

This chapter takes its title from the most common goal set by the third grade students. Reading fatter books, and more of them, was important to most of the students in this class. The process students used to set this goal began with self-evaluation. They reflected on where they were in their reading, what they did well, and what they wanted to work on in order to become better readers. They then created goals and plans to support their wishes. Jeanne's beliefs about this learning process provided the basis for their procedure.

### Core Beliefs about Goal Setting

### Self-evaluation Enables Goal Setting

The students needed to be aware of what they did well and possible ways to grow in order to set goals. How did they develop an awareness of what they did well? They used the self-evaluation process developed during the Manchester Portfolio Project (Hansen, 1998), to reflect meaningfully on their achievements. Using concrete samples of work was important so the students' reflections were based on their own learning and progress. For example as students answered the question, "What do I do well as a reader?" they looked through their reading journals, projects, book logs etc. to notice what they did well. Often students were surprised with all they discovered about themselves. Anna makes a discovery about her choice of reading topics. "Look at my book log, I had no idea I only read fiction books about horses. I mean, I know it's my favorite topic, but I didn't realize I never read anything else." Caitlin makes a discovery as well. "I have really gotten better at reading longer books. I've read five chapter books this year."

Students did not only reflect on their schoolwork, however. They also needed to reflect on their hobbies, interests and wishes. Life outside of school often became the basis for

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meaningful reflection and goal setting. When the students were encouraged to bring in their outside interests, their teacher learned more about them and they learned more about each other, making it possible for them to truly individualize their learning plans.

One way students in Jeanne's classroom were invited to formally share about their lives outside of school was through a focus on a "Star" each week. Each week a different "Star" created a poster and a bulletin board display about his/her hobbies and interests. This process is common in elementary school classrooms and does introduce aspects of students' lives outside the classroom, but seldom is it considered central to the reading program.

In addition to this opportunity, Jeanne continually encouraged students to connect their lives outside of school to the classroom by inviting them to bring in photos, artifacts, pets etc. that were important to them, and to share these items during "morning meeting." For example, Emily, an accomplished figure skater, brought in a video of a recent figure skating competition in which she won second place. Emily was so excited to show her friends what she could do. As the students watched Emily spin and jump on the tape, Mitchell commented that it must take a lot of practice time to get that good. Emily reported that she practiced early in the morning before school, usually at 6:30 a.m. Joe cleverly picked up on this and said, "So that explains why you're late at least one morning each week, and a little messy in the hair." The ongoing nature of morning meetings throughout the year helped to maintain a focus on all the children's lives. Various aspects of their conversations also gave Jeanne and the children opportunities to connect their lives to their behaviors as readers. To practice, for example, was an ever-present consideration when they set their goals.

In general, the children's ongoing study of artifacts from their lives out-of- and in-school helped them see value in themselves and each other. This basic nature of self-evaluation enabled them to step forward with new goals.


**Frequent Interaction Enables Goal Setting**

Jeanne believed that effective goal setting required frequent interaction with others,

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helping students realize what various students were learning and what they were doing to learn it. This enabled students to learn about processes they otherwise might not have thought of. They were able to hear about someone's plans for their own learning and thus get new ideas. They discovered new approaches to learning. It hadn't occurred to Abbey that reading non-fiction was another way to learn about the characters she so loved reading about in the *Dear America* series until she learned that Stephanie was reading a non-fiction book about life in colonial America. Stephanie explained that she knew about the kinds of education available to girls confirming Abby's disbelief that girls didn't go to school in "those days."

## Student Initiative is Necessary for Goal Setting to Work

Jeanne believes students will take more initiative for their learning if they have their own interest as the basis for their learning. Students who know their individuality is respected and valued will take more action. An active stance to learning is important in developing a life long love of reading. Jeanne believes that when students early on are given responsibility for their learning and growth as readers they will pursue reading actively on their own. They will have become accustomed to choosing their own paths so when opportunities in school and life come along they will see themselves as the ones who can make a difference, whether that be in the community or by enhancing the quality of their own life and recreation. She hated to admit this, but over the years, too many of her students hadn't become engaged in reading. Jeanne scheduled time each day for students to choose a book and read independently. Part of each day was also devoted to reading a shared literature book and working on projects (writing, art, discussion experiences) as a whole class. In neither of these situations did Jeanne feel her students were inspired by what they were reading. During free reading time many students seemed to drift along purposelessly without engaging themselves. Her students were going through the motions of reading independently, but they weren't reading very much or very excitedly. Jeanne

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wanted her students to not only read more (research told her this was a boon to spelling, vocabulary, comprehension abilities), but to enjoy reading more, to choose reading as something they wanted to do. Through the process of deciding for themselves what they would read Jeanne assumed that the children in this particular class would become especially interested in reading. As you will see, this turns out to be true, in general.

## The Process of Setting Goals

Our teacher instincts told Jeanne and me that the students needed a concrete process to rely on in setting goals for their own learning and so we introduced the third graders to the idea of using their portfolios on a daily basis to help them set and meet their goals. Students were held accountable for using a forty-five minute block of time each day to achieve their reading goals.

We introduced these five self-evaluation questions to the group.

- What do you do well as a reader?

- What is the most recent thing you've learned as a reader?

- What do you want to learn next to become a better reader?

- What steps will you take to accomplish this?

- What will you put in your portfolio to document your learning?

After talking about questions a bit, the students dispersed to study their reading materials, in search of evidence to support their answers to the first three questions. They gathered current books they were reading, reading logs and journals, projects etc. They spent time reviewing their work, looking for evidence of things they were good at, had learned recently, and also things they wanted to work on. After ample time to look at their work the students gathered to list on a chart the things they could already do well (See Appendix A). It was a comfortable, and familiar setting in which to gather. At the top of the chart Jeanne wrote the first of the questions: *What do I do well as a reader?* Each student volunteered an answer. We were surprised by some answers such as, "I really stay involved in a book," and, "I feel

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like one of the characters." We also collected quite a few comments we anticipated, such as. "I read chapter books." Some students piggybacked on others' ideas, such as, "I read to myself well," and, " I read independently." When everyone's ideas were listed on the chart Jeanne posted it on the blackboard.

Later she wrote on a clean sheet of chart paper the second question: *What is the most recent thing I've learned to do as a reader?* Many third graders want to read chapter books and those who could commented on this. Some answers were repeated from the previous chart and many new ideas were brought forth such as, "I know when a book is too hard or too easy." There was a wide range of answers (See Appendix B). The purpose of asking the second of these two questions was to help students realize they are learners. They are making progress, and can move forward.

After the students created this second chart, they reviewed their work again and each wrote a goal as their answer to the third question (See Appendix C). Sharing responses to the first three questions on chart paper helped generate options as students independently set learning goals. Many chose something from the chart, and others chose something completely different. Before the goals went to the teacher for her input, students partnered up, shared the goal they wrote, and then answered question four, which was to make a plan as to how they would accomplish their goal. The students advised each other and supported each other as they planned their steps. The class was very excited about making their own plans as Clare related when she commented, " I like being in charge of myself." Not every student felt that way though. Although no one made specific comments to Jeanne or myself, I sensed that a few of the students didn't think it was as great as the majority of the classmates made it out to be. Jake, for example put minimal effort into writing his plan and used most of the peer planning time to talk about sports. However, each student did have a goal and a plan on which to begin. See Appendix D for samples of student plans.

Jeanne and I lived and demonstrated the process by answering questions along with the students. In addition, we each set a goal and worked on it.

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## The Goal Setting Spiral

I found the process of goal setting to be recursive in nature in that students moved ahead and backward as they set and reached their goals. They spiraled through various phases each time they set a goal. After repeatedly reviewing all my notes and conversations these phases in goal setting emerged from the data: get started, revise, dig in, share, begin again.

### Get Started

Whenever they set a new goal, and especially when they set their first goal, the students required large amounts of time to reflect on their work and interests, and to evaluate themselves based on that work and those interests. It was a period of time in which to re-think their goals and plans. Interaction with others while evaluating provided the space necessary in the very initial days of goal setting and allowed the students to get started. Thus, these days could be considered the "I wonder" days.

Students weren't exactly sure if their goals were what they wanted. Some appeared to set goals they thought Jeanne would want or approve. Some students easily adapted to this new responsibility while others openly resisted this opportunity to decide for themselves what they would pursue. Some didn't trust that the teacher truly wanted them to decide, appearing to fear that she would later say that the student's plan was the wrong process to follow. Everyone was exploring the possibilities. Some students required more direction from Jeanne than others. Some students looked to their peers for ideas, while others were ready to go on their own. For many students, they needed the opportunity to just try it out and see what happened.

For example, Justin knew right off what he was going to do. He heard his friends share their ideas and wrote that he too would read bigger books. He planned to start on the books in the Bailey School Kids series. Chapter books were not his standard reading fare, and so his goal was to read two chapter books.

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However, Lauren wasn't quite as sure about how to get started. She was hesitant to say what she did well, appearing unsure of her ability to judge her own capabilities. With Jeanne's help she determined that she wanted to be able to sustain her reading for longer periods of time. Lauren's plan was to make a chart where she could keep track of how long she was reading. It took Lauren a few days to choose a book she was interested in, and Jeanne helped her choose a book that was "just right."

When many of the children appeared to have created their goals and plans, I took home the students' plans to see if they appeared to be workable. While Jeanne and I both wanted the students to choose for themselves what they would do to become better readers, we also knew it was our responsibility to guide students toward goals and plans that would be achievable within the period of time Jeanne sets aside each day for reading. We later realized that their goals often directed their at-home reading as well, but at this time, we were thinking of them as school goals.

Jeanne and I both noted that Emily and Caitlin had written the same goal and we weren't sure how they would be able to achieve it in school. Their goal was to learn to read out loud better to younger siblings. We were doubtful, but rather than discourage them right away we thought if they talked about their goals together maybe they would figure out that it would be hard to accomplish. In fact we thought perhaps together they could change their goal and do something that would fit into reading time better. The girls worked together for a little while and the next day what they presented after their "conference" surprised us. They created a workable plan, and they provided details. Emily and Caitlin creatively mapped out a course that would help them read better for their siblings and they could accomplish it during class time. Their plan was as follows:

1. Interview the librarian to learn about good books for preschoolers.
2. Ask siblings what some of their favorite books are.
3. Practice reading to kindergarten buddies during standard time each week. (At least one day per week Jeanne's students read to the kindergarteners in their school. These

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kindergarten "buddies" were part of a school wide system where each grade was matched with another, and they coordinated events to promote school-wide community and develop relationships across grade levels.)

4. Make a book list.

5. Make a puppet to go with book.

They had good ideas about how to become better at reading to young children and would gain skill in research and interview techniques.

Initially, in trying to guide Caitlin and Emily through the setting of their first goal, my limited view didn't allow me to see how they could work on their goal at school. However, when I asked them to provide a detailed plan they did. I was so impressed. I had been tempted when I read their original goal that evening at home to add a post-it note that said: Try a different goal. Had I done that I never would have known what creative, determined girls Caitlin and Emily were. When Caitlin and Emily had time to interact using their own desires and plans they had all the skills they needed to solve the "problem" by themselves. A combination of trust and listening was important as we helped students get started as goal-setters.


## Revise

As the students started to work on their goals, they often needed some degree of revision. For some students it brought the realization that the goal they set may have been unrealistic or impossible to achieve. Others set goals that were too easily reached. Revisions almost always involved adding more specific language when re-writing the goal. The third graders needed to try out their ideas before they could know if their plans were going to work. They had begun an experiment and needed time to muddle around a bit. Revisions, as it turned out, were most often achieved without the aid of teacher or peer interaction.

Caitlin and Emily continue to illustrate what the students were doing. Their interview with the librarian led to some interesting data. Mrs. Nelson recommended they choose

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some Bill Peet books. She thought they would be good for preschool aged children. Later, Caitlin tried the *Runaway Caboose* on her sister Maggie, but Maggie couldn't sit still for such a long book. Caitlin gave it another try with a different Bill Peet book; she got the same results. Emily didn't have much success with Bill Peet books either. After talking about the trouble they each had in reading to their four-year-old siblings they decided to talk to Mrs. Nelson again. This time they were not seeking advice, but offering it. They reported to the librarian that Bill Peet books are a poor choice for preschoolers because they are too long.

They decided to trust their own intuition and collected some different (shorter) books. Rather than go back to the librarian, they consulted with the building preschool teacher, showing her their revised list, and she shared a few more ideas with them. The girls tried out these books on their kindergarten buddies and practiced reading with expression. They were ready for the big test: their siblings Maggie and Luke! This time the girls each had greater success. The children liked Dr. Seuss books and many of the others they tried. Later Caitlin and Emily brought Mrs. Nelson a copy of the list they compiled of successful books in case she needed to make recommendations to anyone else. Caitlin and Emily had solved their dilemma about how to manage their goal.

However, some children needed more support than these two assertive girls. About two weeks into the goal setting I pulled a chair up alongside Matthew's desk. I began as usual asking him what he was working on. He had his goal sheet in front of him. He shook his head and told me he was in trouble. His goal was never going to happen. He heard his friends talking about crossing off steps on their sheets, or recording progress in their journals, or reporting progress during group sharing. He said if he kept his goal he would never be able to do those things. Matthew's goal was "to read more books." It had occurred to him that the language he used needed to be more specific. Matthew lamented that no matter how much he read he couldn't finish his goal because he always had to read more books. "It's going to infinity!" Matthew then changed his wording and wrote, "I will read 6 books." This he felt was a reasonable number and something he could definitely

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make concrete progress on.

Even though I was present, Matthew revised his plan without input from me. He taught me that given the chance, students can make sophisticated revisions and judgments about the quality of their goal setting. When students actively experience the frustration of a goal that "doesn't work" they learn for themselves about using more specific language. Matthew chose to quantify his goal as a way to make it more specific and attainable. Attainable goals were important for students to feel successful, and to relate positively with peers about their learning. These specific goals encouraged students to do more, or challenged them more because they got excited about sharing with friends all they could accomplish. Matthew wanted a "ticket" into the sharing community, but couldn't get that without making his goal attainable. Achievable goals created momentum for students to produce more and become more independent.

## Dig in

When students have gotten the hang of working on their goals and writing more specific reasonable goals, they get excited and work hard. This phase involves really digging in. Students had to do the nitty gritty work of the plan they set out for themselves. It was a time to log their progress in their goal setting journals, cross off steps on their plan, and "just do it." Interestingly, for many, this stage brought about the initial stages of competition. Many students compared their progress and rated themselves as being farther along than others, or defended their progress based on the difficulty of the goal. They made comments such as, "My goal is harder so it's taking longer," or, "I'm reading harder books than you are so I'm not done yet." This competitive theme emerged to a greater degree as the weeks went on and will be presented in the next chapter about the children's talk.

Many students during this time were completely engrossed in their work. Jeanne was constantly surprised by how much reading was going on, and she had not been the one to assign it! She had, however, carefully created the setting. The third graders were telling us

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about books they were taking home so they could keep reading. They did not confine their work on their goals to class time. Robby solved the dilemma of not remembering to bring his book back and forth from home to school by checking out multiple copies so he could have the same book at home and at school. It reminded me of Graves' (1983) observations about children rehearsing their writing all the time. Kids were working on their goals all day. They worked intensely.

I sidled up to Joe one morning to see what he was working on. Joe had his nose stuck in a Laura Ingalls Wilder book and a pencil in his hand hovering over his goal plan sheet. He fascinated me. He was intently focused and I wanted to learn about his progress. Before I could even ask him a question Joe politely asked if he could take a "pass" on my questioning. "Right now I'm really into it and I don't want to stop."

Joe taught me so much in that comment. He didn't want to be interrupted. He was doing his work. He was invested, and engrossed. My queries would have been an intrusion into his time. So many students were focused on their reading in a way they hadn't been before. Jeanne wondered whether the sudden burst in enthusiasm for reading was due to the novelty of goal setting or because kids were taking a stronger interest because they were in charge. This question stayed with us throughout the next few weeks.


**Share With Pride**

As the students worked hard they began to achieve their goals and document their successes in their portfolios. See Appendix E for sample portfolio documentations. They shared their accomplishments in a group setting and began to feel proud. They celebrated with their classmates and came up with new ideas for the future.

An interesting phenomenon developed as these sessions became increasingly important. Child after child made certificates of achievement congratulating themselves on the work they had done. "Congratulations Stephanie! You reached your goal!" "You did it Clare" and, "World's Greatest Reader Award" appeared. Even the reluctant Jake after finally

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finishing the book *Face Off* declared himself the next "Great One" after his hockey idol Wayne Gretzky. These certificates surprised us because until now no one had made anything similar to a certificate to add to their portfolios, but the certificates represented how proud students felt upon completing their goal.

Marie was one of the students who certified herself. Her goal was to read harder books. Marie said she would know she was reading harder books if she began to come across words she didn't know. She said that in most of the books she had been reading she knew all the words easily. She wanted the challenge of tougher vocabulary. Her plan focused on how she would find out the meanings of words she read in the harder books. She would look up words in the dictionary, ask other people for meanings, or check the Internet. To document what she learned Marie planned to write a story with the words she had learned. She was excited about beginning to read a harder book.

The first book Marie chose was the *Diary of Anne Frank*. Her reading journal showed steady progress and she was pleased with her accomplishments each day. When I checked in with her during the first week she had found only one word that was giving her trouble. She asked her mom what it meant. The word was *etc*. She said she had to find out what it meant because the author used it a lot. I asked if there were any other words that she needed to know in order to understand what she was reading. She said no, because she had learned something about harder words. She learned that she could usually figure out what the author meant because of the way words were used in the writing. She knew she was reading tougher books because there were unfamiliar words, but she didn't need to look them up or ask because she could figure them out herself. We talked about knowing words from context and she identified that was what she was doing to figure out words.

Marie finished the book about a week later. She was so proud of her accomplishment. She beamed as she told me about it, and described it as a "heavy" book. She decided not to read another hard book as part of this particular goal; she had learned a strategy that would apply to many books. She also decided to change her documentation plan because she

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didn't have many words to write a story with. Instead she included a photocopy of the cover of Anne Frank and wrote a description of the story. She also read a picture book about Anne Frank.

The day Marie finished her goal was not an official sharing day but she ran up to Jeanne and asked, "Please can we do some sharing today?" Marie was hard to refuse...she was so excited. A few other students joined the chorus that they too wanted to share today. The class convened on the carpet and Marie took her place in the red rocking chair.

Marie began by explaining about W.W.II and how the Jewish people went into hiding because Hitler was killing them. People who were not Jewish were arrested and persecuted for helping or hiding Jews. She explained about the deaths of Anne Frank's sister and father. The class was silent. Marie paused a moment and then asked if anyone had questions. Emily noted the size of the book and wondered how many pages. "283," answered Marie. Joe wanted to know about the title, "What's a diary?" Marie explained about how Anne wrote it when she was in hiding, and later someone found it and had it published. Anna asked what her next goal would be and Marie said she wanted to keep studying about Anne Frank. She loved really getting into a topic and felt accomplished and in control as she addressed the group. She invited others to read it, or the picture book (being sensitive to the reading ability of her friends) and offered help if anyone needed it.

Later in line for lunch Joe further questioned Marie, "Is it a true story?" Marie thought for a moment and said, "It is true in history that Hitler did persecute the Jews and that Anne and her family did go into hiding." This satisfied Joe but Marie still looked thoughtful. The next day I asked her to elaborate on her explanation to Joe. She said she couldn't decide if it was true like non-fiction or not. She thought about her own diary and how it shows just her side of things the way she remembers it. She wondered if when people write about events and feelings in a diary if it is considered non-fiction. It's so personal she says.

Marie wrote in her evaluation that she was so happy that she reached her goal. She didn't think she would have read a book like *Diary of Anne Frank* if it hadn't been for her

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goal. She told me she often read the same types of books her friends were reading and didn't really think about branching out until she had the chance to choose her reading plan. She said her mom and dad were also very proud of her for challenging herself and following through on her plan.

## Begin Again

The momentum of achieving their goals carried individuals and the group forward. The children were interested in what each other was learning and they all felt proud and wanted to share. It was simple: the children got excited for each other and when they learned about each other they learned about themselves.

These many phases occurred repeatedly throughout the study. "Getting Started" seemed to go more quickly with successive goals as students became more adept at choosing what they were going to work on. Students continued to revise their goals throughout the year as they became better judges of time. Robby knew when soccer season started that his plan to finish all the Laura Ingalls Wilder books needed revision; the end of the school year was approaching. However, the "revision" phase was present even in the last weeks as students set goals for summer reading, but most students had a relatively easy time of defining their goal and making workable plans. The "digging in" phase became the focus for most students. As they practiced goal setting and had time to work students got better at sustaining their own learning experiences. The momentum carried from goal to goal and continued to renew students' enthusiasm and pride.

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# CHAPTER 5

## TALKERS: TYPES OF TALK

The supportive nature of Jeanne's classroom community is critical to the success of this goal-setting classroom. The many forms of talk they engage in helps the students set meaningful goals. They become self-evaluators who are aware of their needs and can generate possible plans to improve their learning. As I stated earlier in the introduction, the reason she engages her students in the goal setting process is to use it as a strategy which allows them to explore and experiment with making decisions and taking responsibility so that in the end the students will be more confident and accomplished self-evaluators. For them to use their self-evaluations to take an active role in their learning is Jeanne's goal.

In order to accomplish this goal of creating better self-evaluators, several other key elements had to be in place, as it turned out. Jeanne needed to create an environment in her classroom community that allowed for many types of interactions, for we believed that it was through their interactions that students learned. Students in this study interacted in many settings: in partners, in small groups, in large groups, with their teacher, with their texts, and through their writing. By interacting I mean they participated in exchanges of talk and active listening. The students grew to expect response from each other, not just their teacher. Conversations were the bedrock of the creation of this classroom community.

I see the self-evaluation, a supportive community, and talk related to each other cyclically. As self-evaluators, the children think about what they are learning, and based on those evaluations, make decisions about what and by what means to learn next. The chief way in which self evaluation happens is through their conversations with each other; they talk. The talk these students engage in supports their community of learners. They learn

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about each other and what each other is doing to achieve their learning goals. They are able to support each other through talk, and also to self evaluate through this same talk. The community and the self-evaluation are fueled by their conversations. This talk, in turn, generates and regenerates the community when both positive and negative peer and community incidents influences them. The peer and teacher influences are played out in different types of talk (competitive, encouraging, and informative, for example, on the part of the students, and directive, guiding, and nudging on the part of the teacher), which emerged from the data. These types of talk will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. The cycle of community, self-evaluation, and talk is begun first by opening up conversation among students and students, and students and the teacher.

All of the players need to have opportunities to converse. Productive conversations happen when students have time to reflect, plan and share. They require that students learn how to talk to each other about their work, a process that is lived and demonstrated by the teacher often. Jeanne consistently expects and models meaningful dialogue (examples follow later in this chapter). Thus her students become teachers of each other by sharing their own knowledge and interests with their peers. When Jeanne allows and expects her students to have meaningful dialog with each other possibilities expand for greater learning.

Conversing with each other enables students to know each other better, to find common interests and to find value in each other's knowledge. A silent classroom does not support the kind of talk that is required for self-evaluation. Nor do rows of single file desks and a physical room arrangement that isolates students from one another. Through talk Jeanne's students gain valuable insights into each others' thinking, and their own thinking as well. When they have an opportunity to talk to each other they are also processing their own

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ideas. This kind of talk yields benefits to all involved.

An integral part of conversation is listening. Students need response from many sources to validate, question, and expand their thinking. When peers listen to the plans their classmates make and hear about the successes, mistakes and false-starts they experience, they must think carefully about these events and the person who is talking before they can reply. They must also think about the goals of response: 1) to support the classmate's current plan, which may mean wondering aloud whether it will work, and 2) to spur their classmates on to expanded and more challenging goals. Sometimes hearing others' plans motivates students to set goals they otherwise would not have tried. Through knowing themselves and each other self-evaluation can flourish. The listening and talking that students engage in allows them to know each other better and form a more cohesive community.

## Student Talk

Whether mediated by artwork, or no visuals, or portfolio entries, talk has often been seen as a central tool of reflection, planning and then action. Douglas Barnes (1995) writes, "The talk that students engage in during school lessons goes far to shape what they learn. Or to put it differently, the kinds of participation in the classroom conversation that are supported and encouraged by a teacher signal to students what learning is required of them" (p. 5). Jeanne's support of verbal inquiry and reflection as opposed to only written reflection helped students to deepen their understandings and learning.

Barnes further states, "Children's ability to use language develops more readily when they talk or write about a topic that matters to them for an audience with whom they want

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to communicate" (p. 7). Jeanne's students talk about goals that matter to them and work purposefully; they aren't passive participants in contrived lessons (Britton, 1998).

Wells (1992), suggests that to achieve literate thinking (literate thinking refers to all those uses of language in which its symbolic potential is deliberately exploited as a tool for thinking) learning should be "problem oriented" with choice among alternative solutions an essential part of the task. Conversation with other students often helps the students to make sense of new information. Although we sometimes arrive at a meaning alone, we more often do so in collaboration. Students talking to each other about their ideas and plans helps cement and reconfirm ideas and meanings reached. Barnes notes that this kind of thinking talk has two forms. First, in the struggle to make ideas plain to other people who have not yet grasped them, we may reshape them for ourselves and improve our understanding of them. Second, those topics that generate differences of opinion during discussion provide a special opportunity for learning.

For example, Justin and Zach were both reading *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, when they had a disagreement about an issue in the plot. Justin was trying to explain a chapter to Robby and Zach strongly disagreed with the information Justin was sharing. Justin and Zach each went back to the text to read the sections that would support their arguments. In doing so they found that each of them had part of it right. They talked about how their ideas could be combined and explained the chapter to Robby together. The "debate" went as follows:

Justin (to Robby): In one chapter there's a giant snowstorm with a sound so loud that it wakes Laura up in the middle of the night. By morning the snow turns to rain and the creek in front of the sod house almost covers the house.

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Zach: No, that's not how it is. There is no snow at all. It's a spring rain and it almost causes a flood and the sound is just thunder. The creek makes the noise too, because it's so full of water.

Justin: Well, how come Pa is using his axe to cut the ice in the creek open so the horses can drink, if there isn't any snow. It's before spring.

Zach: No, it's spring and it's raining not snowing. (Gets his book) The title of chapter 14 is "Spring Freshet." I had to look it up because I didn't know what freshet was. It means a sudden flood that happens because of heavy rain or melting. So, this is spring.

Justin: Well, chapter 13 is called "A Merry Christmas" and Pa does use his axe to break ice off the creek. It's page 96. I bet the rain melted the ice on the creek and then it caused the flood. It's just between winter and spring.

Zach: Yeah, and they are all afraid the sod house would go under water. It sounds really freaky. I wouldn't want to live underground like that.

When the students gather to talk about their learning subtle negotiation often occurs. The students negotiate meaning between what they initially understand, and the perspective that another student or the teacher brings to the discussion. Conversations such as the one I just related provide a sense of the ongoing, natural talk that characterized Jeanne's classroom. As I studied my transcripts, I found specific types of talk within the children's many interactions.

## Effortless Talk

To a large degree the portfolio sharing sessions were the heart of the conversations that students benefited from. When Megan went before her class to share her progress her talk

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was important to the growth and progress of setting her goal. The portfolios helped the students by providing a starting off point, but the portfolios themselves became secondary to the talk that ensued. It was surprising to Jeanne and me that the documentation students were placing in their portfolios did not figure in predominantly, so while the portfolios were the basis for sharing, the portfolio mediated the talk that took the lead. A student might begin by showing a certificate that stated she had reached a goal, but then the conversation would turn to questions from classmates. Did you like the book? Who is the author? Have you read other books by the author? Do you want to? Is it a series? Who do you think would like this book too? What are you going to do next?

The questions came effortlessly as students talked, interacted, and responded to each other about their books. Jeanne and I noticed that this type of talk came easy to students. They were accustomed to this type of interaction because they used it in writing workshop and general book discussions.

But as portfolio sharing times continued we noticed the expansion of **when** students talked about their goals moving from just during designated sharing times to their own free time as well. Sharing time usually took place just before the lunch break. As students lined up and got ready to go to the cafeteria talk of goals and books continued. Anna queried Megan, "Did you really read all those books on your list or did you just skim them? Eighteen books is a lot to read." Megan responded, "Well they're mostly Bailey School Kids books so they go kind of fast. Two of them I had read before so they went really fast. I read a lot at home too." Anna had read only 15 books in comparison to Megan's 18. The look on her face remained unsettled. She had been thinking about Megan's comments when she shared with the class, and wanted to continue the conversation.

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Slowly students began to use other forms of talk. Had the girls continued on perhaps they would have engaged in some of the "competitive talk" that became evident during the study. Two other types of talk emerged as well, "friendly/encouraging talk" and "informative talk." These types of interaction/response are the focus of the following section.

## Intentional Talk Supports the Community

As Jeanne's students continued to talk with each other about their learning the talk that students engaged in became more intentional. Jeanne and I noticed a transition between the effortless talk discussed above to more intentional types of talk, such as competitive, informative, and the most common, encouraging talk. While effortless talk and encouraging talk seem very similar we noticed a difference in intent. The intent of effortless talk seemed to be to find out about the book a classmate had read, or the portfolio goal a person was pursuing. It was a natural type of questioning. The student making the request really wanted to know something. The encouraging talk went beyond curiosity and its intent was to intentionally support a classmate in reaching his/her goal.

**Encouraging Talk.** Encouraging talk involved students and their teacher in slightly more formal conversation about their progress and plans. Students became very accustomed to talking to each other this way and some typical exchanges included: "I like the way you described the book you just finished. It made me want to read it too." "If you need help with any words let me know because I read that book already and I can help."

Gina and Caitlin encouraged each other when they decided to read the same book *Strawberry Girl*, a book that for Gina was a challenge. The librarian had recently invited the

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third, fourth, and fifth graders to read books from a list of Newbery Award winners, and if students read at least three they could vote for their favorite in a school election. Many of the books on this list were out of reach for Gina, but she wanted to participate. Caitlin and Gina talked every other day or so about how the reading was going. In one of their first conversations Gina suggested they could look for clues about why the book was called *Strawberry Girl*, and about why strawberries were important in the story. Caitlin would explain words and plot to Gina, making the reading less cumbersome. Caitlin encouraged Gina as is evident in the following dialog:

Caitlin: This story has characters in it that talk different than we do. They have an accent and the author writes it just like they sound. If you read it out loud it makes it easier to understand what they're saying like this: (Caitlin reads from the book "hamming-up" the dialect).

Gina: Hey, that sounds funny. Do the next part.

Caitlin: "Ain't them flowers right purty Ma? I jest got to come out first thing in the mornin' and look at 'em. "Purty, yes" agreed her mother. "But lookin' at posies don't git the work done!"

Gina: Let's read this chapter together and take parts.

Gina reported to me that she would not have read the book without Cailtin because it was too hard, but with a friend helping you could read harder books. This episode provided an instance for Jeanne to step in and support both girls' literacy experience. She gave them a mini-lesson about dialect, and also provided some historical context for the book that allowed them to understand the plot.

**Informative Talk.** Informative talk developed as the students learned more about what each other liked to read about and were interested in. The more cohesive their community became the more their talk was of the informative type. Some examples of informative talk include: Collin reporting to Joe, "The Laura Ingalls Wilder series is really good. The next book in the series is *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. When you finish *Farmer Boy* you should read it." Later that week when Joe finished *Farmer Boy*, Collin informed Joe further: "I found out what a sod house is. In the next book Laura lives in the ground. I'll explain it so you understand the story better."

Mitchell accomplished his goal to find books that he liked by talking with Joe. Mitchell's goal is to learn how to pick books he likes. He says that he mostly has a "hard time sticking with a chapter book because he doesn't find books that are interesting." He started on the Bailey School Series and read a few but they weren't "too good." Then he has his talk with Joe. Joe is reading *Farmer Boy* and says even though it's in the Little House series it's still really good because the main character is a boy. Joe tells Mitchell about some of the story informing him of the "really good parts." Mitchell decides to give it a try and ends up reading several Laura Ingalls Wilder books. I asked later about his goal and he said he learned the best way to pick books that are interesting is to find out what other people are reading and then see if you like it. "It's easier if you have someone who read it before and can tell you about it before you start."

Other students became more and more familiar with each other's reading interests through talk and then were able to inform each other of books they may want to read. Taylor related to Lauren: "I know you like mysteries so you should read the book I just

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finished." Alicia supplied Anna with information to help her reach her goal of reading more widely (not just horse stories): "If you're getting tired of horse stories you should read the "Shiloh" books because they are still mostly about one animal, dogs, so you would probably like them."

Clare wants to share her new knowledge about dolphins with Abbie. Clare's goal was to "remember information better" when she finished a non fiction book. She wrote reports from memory each time she finished a book. While writing a report about dolphins Clare related to Abbie, "I did a report on dolphins and learned a lot. Did you know that dolphins can hear really small noises? They can hear a pebble rolling or a fish gliding through seaweed."

In another example Chelsea's sharing of information about the books she was reading led to a whole new world for Stephanie. Chelsea was hooked on the Animorphs books, a series of science fiction adventure stories. During a sharing session in which Chelsea described the series Stephanie's interest was piqued. Later, Stephanie approached Chelsea to find out more.

Stephanie (S): Those books you talked about sound really cool. I never heard of them before. Where did you get them?

Chelsea (C): The one I'm reading now is from the school library. Mrs. Nelson doesn't have very many, but the public library does. I got a few from the book order last year.

S: Could I borrow one of your books to see if I like them?

C: Sure...ah...I'll try to remember to bring one tomorrow. Do you read any other science fiction?

S: I don't think so. What is it?

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C: Animorphs is science fiction. It's like reading books about things that can't really happen, or there are strange creatures and stuff.

S: I thought that was fantasy.

C: I think science fiction is fantasy but a little different. It's has scientific information in it…it has like aliens and other worlds or planets in it too.

S: If you bring one in for me I'll read it and then we can talk about it and maybe do a partner share during portfolio time.

C: Sure. Call me and remind me tonight.

Stephanie went on to read the book that Chelsea brought in for her. Stephanie really liked the book and read another. Her next goal was to read three science fiction books, and although she didn't finish the goal before school was out, she had read *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle and was part way through the second book in the trilogy. Stephanie told me later when I asked about what she was reading that Chelsea had turned her into a real "science fiction fan" and that before third grade she never even knew there was science fiction. Through their informative talk the children shared much information about the world and books with each other.

## Talk that Challenges the Community

Competitive talk centered mostly around the quantity of work completed. Students often compared the number of books read and how quickly they read them. They attached status to reading large numbers of chapter books and liked the recognition they received during portfolio sharing times. While they were competitive, this competition encouraged many students, especially the boys, to read more and to set more challenging goals. Some

samples of typical competitive questions included: "How many goals have you done?" "How many books have you read?" "Are you going to finish on time?" "I finished my portfolio already, have you?"

One afternoon I sat down next to Robbie who was looking through his goal-setting portfolio. I intended to hear about his plans and progress on his goal, however, soon after this conversation began his table-mate Travis joined in and the conversation became quite heated.

Amy (A): Robbie, what are you looking at?

Robbie (R): This is my reading log. I'm keeping track of all the chapter books I read because my goal is to read 8 (books).

A: How is it going?

R: So far I've read 5. I'm pretty sure I'll get to my goal.

A: Have you chosen a new book?

R: I think I'll read a "*Horrible Harry*" book. I haven't picked one out yet.

Overhearing our conversation Travis joins in.

Travis (T): You can't count "*Horrible Harry*" books!

R: Why not?

T: Those are second grade chapter books. Those are way easy. You could read one in one day.

R: They're books and they have chapters so I can count them if I want.

T: If you count those you should at least read two to count as one. Those books aren't hard enough to count as one.

R: I can count each one as one because they are books with chapters. Why do you care

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anyway?

T: I'm reading chapter books for my goal too, but I'm not reading baby books. My books will take longer to read. You'll finish and I'll finish but I'm reading harder, longer books so my goal is harder than yours even though they sound the same.

R: So what. It's my goal and I'll count those books if I want.

T: Yeah...whatever.

At this point both boys turned back to what they were doing. I debated whether to step in and mediate the boys' disagreement but it seemed unnecessary. While Robbie and Travis didn't agree, they diffused their argument themselves and didn't seem much bothered anymore. Travis's concern about "equal" goals didn't come up with any other students. As Jeanne and I discussed this conversation between Robbie and Travis later that morning we realized that had it come up more often perhaps it would have led some students to quantify goals even further to include numbers of pages read instead of number of books. However, at this point in the study, students' comments during sharing time showed greater interest in reading and more enjoyment in reading than we had seen previously. We were pleased. Travis and Robbie's competitiveness did not appear to represent a problem we needed to address. Next, Clare demonstrates a more common kind of competitiveness among students in this classroom.

Clare worked very hard and very quickly to accomplish her goal to "learn to read and remember information better in non fiction books." She read five non fiction books and wrote a report from memory after she completed each one. She shared her reports with the class and liked knowing a lot about the subjects she covered. Clare always volunteered to share at portfolio time and shared her work at all stages. On several occasions she asked me

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if I knew how many goals she had done, or whether I knew how many books she had read. I didn't always have the correct answer so she gave me a solution to this "problem" in her end-of-the-study evaluation form. When asked for suggestions to make the goal setting process better she offered this idea, "I think there should be a big chart on the wall and whenever someone completes a goal they can write their name and what they did. This way everyone would know how much I did." Whereas Jeanne and I could not detect any negative consequences from Clare's competitiveness, or similar behaviors by other children, if I had continued data collection, I may have found more information about this kind of talk.

## Talk that Involves Status

As the study continued peer influence became more and more evident. Students were often sharing their goals and students knew what each other was doing. As students accomplished goals and publicly stated new goals friends or "wanna be" friends jumped on the bandwagon.

Sometimes peer influence was not necessarily helpful. For example, Clare began a trend in book choice for some girls that was clearly based on her status. Clare was a very competent reader who easily adapted to goal setting and seemed to enjoy the orderly progression of following her plan. She did each step and crossed it off as she accomplished it. She was a class leader and many girls sought her as a friend. Clare was very confident. After she completed her first goal she announced at a sharing session that she would read *Gone With the Wind* for her next goal. Jeanne and I were curious. I asked her why she chose it: "My older sister is reading it so I wanted to also." "How old is your sister?" I ask.

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"She's 12, in middle school. I can handle a middle school book."

Later, I query as to whether she's enjoying the book. "Well, it's fairly complicated, but I really like it." I ask what she likes about it. "I like that it is such a big book. Most third graders can't read a book like this." She never mentions the plot, characters or anything specific about the content. Her classmates were notably impressed with the thickness of the book when she showed it during sharing time. A few girls made audible sighs when she showed them the spine. There was status attached to this goal. Within the next few days three other girls in the class decided they would read *Gone with the Wind* too. None of these new girls had the skill to carry through this plan but they all wanted to try. Within the next few days the goal was dropped, or saved for summer reading, by most of the girls.

Usually peer influence served positive ends. Collin was also a leader in the class, well-liked by his peers. He was athletic, musical, and the other students thought he was cool. He does well in school. As part of a third grade group literature study the children read *Little House in the Big Woods*. This also corresponds to Minnesota history in social studies. After reading the book Jeanne showed the students where she had multiple copies of the other books in the series and suggested they might like to read one. Typically Jeanne has a few girls who really get hooked and try to read the series. Few boys ever carry through on the suggestion. Collin decided to read *Farmer Boy*. Soon one or two of his desk mates noticed and started to read them also. After Collin finished *Farmer Boy* he announced that he would try to complete the series before school ended. Soon six or seven of the boys were on their way to finishing one or more of the series, including Robby who explained, "I wanted to read what Collin was reading."

Jeanne could not believe the amount of reading the boys were doing. They swapped

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books, helped each other with difficult words, and read together on the "porch" (a wooden structure built by parents that looked like the real thing). This was a great example of the positive influence peers can have over each other. If Jeanne had required them to read more of the series it is likely most of the boys would not have tried. But because it was their choice, and they followed a popular classmate, the quality of reading and the quantity increased. It was as though Collin's reading of the Laura Ingalls Wilder series gave permission for others in the class to do the same. The peer culture shifted to make reading those books cool.

What does this mean about the importance of self-evaluation? Is the peer culture more important to some students than their own evaluation of their needs as readers? Is the desire to fit in with classmates stronger than the desire to plan one's own learning? Do these two forces act together to help students accomplish their goals? In the case of Robby, his goal was to read more chapter books. He did that. The chapter books he chose to read were modeled after a classmate. Robby's desire to read more chapter books was made manifest in reading books from the Laura Ingalls Wilder series.

Zach and Justin could often be seen sitting on the floor next to each other reading books from the series. By the end of the study they had each read six or seven of the series. As Justin read *The Long Winter* he commented that it was hard and he didn't really like it, but he wanted to read more in the series because Zach said they got better. Their partnership encouraged them to keep going and keep reading.

Joe was mostly at his desk reading a Laura Ingalls Wilder book. He really had to plow through his book, but he journaled about it and kept track of his progress by crossing off chapters. He was very proud of himself when he finished. Occasionally he would ask

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Collin for help with a word or for understanding the plot. "It was harder than I thought but I did it."

Like Robby, Zach, Justin, and Joe, followed Collin's lead to guide their book choice. They each also fulfilled their own reading goals to read chapter books, and more of them.

The results of Clare's and Collin's sharings were different, but began from the same source. Students who have status in the classroom yield some power over what other children consider as options for their learning decisions. In some cases this is a negative influence, but in the case of Collin and his friends it opened a new genre of reading to a group of boys who otherwise may never have picked up the Laura Ingalls Wilder series.

## Teacher Talk Promotes the Well-Being of the Community

Jeanne's talk was similar to that of her students with some added types: guiding talk, directive talk, and nudging talk.

### Guiding Talk

Guiding talk was the type that helped students make decisions, "What will you do next?" "How will you show that in your portfolio?" "What steps will you take?" "How can I help you best?" Guiding talk was essential to many students, particularly in the initial phases of goal setting, as they learned how to make plans that would help them reach their goals.

Libby set a goal to read at least two "Maude Hart Lovelace" nominees. She told me she had read one already and really liked it, and she thought others would be good because, after all, these books had been nominated for an award. Jeanne talked with Libby several

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times over the next few days guiding her as she refined her plan.

Jeanne (J): I see you've written your goal, what's your next step?

Libby (L): I need to choose a book, but I'm not sure which books are "Maude Hart Lovelace" nominees.

J: Do you have any ideas about how to find out?

L: Yes, Mrs. Nelson has a list, but we don't have library until Wednesday (two days away). Can I write her a note and put it on her desk?

J: That sounds like a good idea. After you write it do you have some ideas about how to use your time while you wait for her response?

L: I can finish my goal plan I guess.

J: Great. Let me know if you have any trouble.

Throughout this conversation, Jeanne never told Libby what she should do, nor did Jeanne solve any of Libby's problems for her. She guided Libby with questions, and let Libby take the lead. Jeanne discussed this, and other similar conversations, with me noting that while they may have seemed insignificant on the surface, she considered them small steps toward student independence from her. She related that she was tempted to quickly help Libby by telling her what to do, but she believed she was giving better help by allowing Libby to come up with a plan using her own ideas. Jeanne's guiding questions enabled students to draw upon their own resources and thus become more engaged in planning their learning experiences.

**Nudging Talk**

Nudging talk was like guiding talk but slightly different. While guiding talk helped the

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student make decisions about what to do, nudging talk was more specific with the intent of helping the students challenge themselves a little more, or provide specific guidance for those students who really seemed stuck. "You've written that you want to read harder books. You like horse stories, have you considered reading *Misty of Chincoteague*? I think you'd find it challenging and interesting." Or, "Here are three books you might enjoy. Why don't you pick one and I'll check back in a little while to see what you have decided."

On one occasion, Jeanne gave this nudge to Taylor, "You say you want to read for longer periods of time. Lauren has that goal too. Why don't you meet with her and she can show you the chart she is using to keep track of her reading. Perhaps that will help you too. Make a plan after talking to Lauren and come and tell me what you decide to do."

Taylor approached Lauren and asked her what she was doing to keep track of her reading time. Lauren, who initially really struggled to set a goal, was glad to help.

Lauren (L): I made a chart with three columns. See. One for "Date," one for "Title," and one for "Number of Minutes." If you make a chart you should add some other columns too for "Start Time" and "End Time" because then you'll have space for the math part. I've been putting that in the margins because if I forget what time I started reading I can't figure out how long I've read.

Taylor (T): What?... I'm not sure that makes sense. What do you mean by the math part?

L: You have to figure out how many minutes by doing a math problem. If I start reading at 10:06 and stop reading at 10:45 I have to figure out how many minutes that is. You have to find the difference.

Taylor goes back to her desk and thinks for a minute. She begins her chart. When finished she brings it to Jeanne.

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T: I talked to Lauren like you said, and she showed me her chart. It was a little confusing about how to figure out how many minutes. I was thinking I could just draw one column that has clocks in it and make a mark of the time when I start and stop. Then I can shade the space in. Then I can count up how many minutes without doing math problems.

J: I think that's a fine idea. Finish drawing it up and give it a try. You might want to show Lauren too.

Once again, Jeanne did not solve Taylor's dilemma. Taylor needed some nudging so she could get a start. Lauren helped Taylor who then created her own solution for keeping track of time. Jeanne connected two students with similar goals and with her comments nudged the students to take the lead in moving forward on their goals.


**Directive Talk**

Directive talk was talk in which Jeanne made decisions or ordered the time. For example, "No you cannot trade books every five minutes." Or, "Be sure your final portfolio is ready for our last sharing before summer vacation."

Jenny was a student who needed much direction from Jeanne. Jenny could not settle on a goal and stick with it. She changed her mind about her goal or book choice after almost every sharing session. She was influenced by what she heard her classmates say they were doing to achieve their goals. Jenny was excited to try many new ideas. She was not resistant to setting a goal and making a plan, she just couldn't use her evaluations of her own reading to narrow her choices. Everything sounded like a great goal to Jenny. However, when Jenny started work on her goal, she didn't usually sustain her reading for more than a day before telling Jeanne that she had changed her mind and wanted to switch

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her goal to what someone else was doing. Jenny continued in this pattern for several weeks. Jeanne decided she needed to step in and give Jenny some direction about her goal:

Jeanne: Jenny, you say you are ready to change your goal again, and as I look at my notes I notice that this will be your seventh revision. You haven't really given any of your goals a chance.

Jenny: I want to read the book that Megan was talking about (*Stuart Little*). It sounds so perfect.

Jeanne: Well, I understand that when people share what they are reading it might make you want to read the same book, but if you continually change your goal, you won't have time to complete it. You need to decide on a goal and a book. I've looked through your previous goals and it seems you want to read chapter books. I want you to take about ten minutes to choose a chapter book to read and then we'll talk again.

About ten minutes later Jeanne continued her conversation with Jenny.

Jenny: I decided I want to stick with *Stuart Little*.

Jeanne: How can you write that as your goal?

Jenny: I'll write that I want to read one chapter book called *Stuart Little*.

Jeanne: Great. I think this book is a good match for you. When you change the book you are reading often, it doesn't give you a chance to get into the story. I'd like you to stay with *Stuart Little* for at least five days before you consider revising your goal. We can talk a little each day so you can tell me how it's going.

Jenny finished her book and accomplished her goal of reading a chapter book. She needed direction from Jeanne to stay on track. Jeanne understood that Jenny was floundering in a sea of choices and required more direction than most of her classmates. As Jenny set

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subsequent goals, Jeanne was able to step back and let the new sense of accomplishment Jenny experienced propel her forward.

Often directive talk was coupled with guiding talk. For example, when Jeanne conferred with Jake and Matthew about their unorthodox plan for sharing a book she directed and guided their planning process, "No you can't trade books every five minutes. Can you think of another way you can read as partners? What other options have you considered?" The boys decided to trade books each day and spend the entire reading period on one book each day while they looked for multiple copies so they could read together if they found another copy of the book.

Jeanne's guiding, directing and nudging helped students build forward momentum when they were stuck, and often reinforced their community building by bringing children together who had similar goals or problems.

## A Look Ahead

The community thrived on self-evaluation which was influenced by Jeanne, peers, and their talk throughout the goal setting process. As time went by the influence of talk expanded and the community was made stronger by the various roles played by Jeanne and the students.

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# CHAPTER 6

# NEW ROLES FOR THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS:

# SELF-EVALUATORS BECOME INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT

## New Roles for Students

As the learning theory of constructivism (Calkins, 1991; Mills & Clyde, 1990; Short & Pierce, 1990) exerts a growing influence on educators the roles that teachers and students play have begun to change. In classrooms where students are partners in constructing curriculum teachers and students take on new roles. When I analyzed my interviews and observations of Jeanne's students I found the following roles for them and her :

- Constructors: create and plan learning experiences based on self evaluations

- Reflectors: reflect critically about what is and isn't working in their goals and make revisions as necessary

- Connectors: bridge learning and goals to other areas of curriculum and life

- Resistors: challenge and resist the invitation to take a more active stance as a learner

Jeanne's belief that evaluation is the base of her own teaching and her students' learning became reality as these roles emerged. She used her evaluations of herself and her students to determine her teaching practice. It flowed from this that she valued her students' evaluations as well. Jeanne wanted students to use their self-evaluations as the base of their learning too. The classroom community that she established required these roles of everyone, and provided opportunities for Jeanne to live, demonstrate, and teach these roles to her students.

## Students as Constructors

The students become constructors as they used their evaluations to take a more active role in their learning. They constructed their goals for reading based on their evaluations of

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themselves as learners. They co-created with Jeanne what it was that they would learn about themselves as readers and what skills they needed to learn to strengthen their reading abilities. They set goals based on their interests and perceived needs.

Gina, very eager to please, was happy to try setting goals. She began by reflecting on what she could do. "I read to myself quietly." Most recently Gina has learned to read bigger books, and for her goal she wanted to get better at reading to other people, particularly her kindergarten buddy. She worried that her buddy didn't really pay attention to her. Her buddy seemed to look around the room and not at the book. She believed that if she practiced and got better at using expression, her buddy would be more interested. Gina had a real and definite purpose for her goal. Her plan was to "just read to herself on Monday and Tuesday, and use Wednesday and Thursday to practice books she would read to her buddy on Friday." Gina struggled a little with reading and Jeanne saw this goal as an appropriate one to help Gina construct a new image of herself as a reader.

After Gina saw one of her desk mates make a chart to record her reading time, Gina was keen on the idea. She developed an elaborate chart to record her personal reading and her buddy reading.

| Date | Book I'm reading | Book read | How long read | How I'm doing | Buddy book reading | Book read |
|------|------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|
|      |                  |           |               |               |                    |           |

She added the column titled "How long read" mimicking her desk mate Lauren even though time is not involved in Gina's goal to read to other people better. During reading each day Gina could be seen carefully recording her efforts on her chart. She was serious about it and she enjoyed the sense of order, control, and importance it gave her. She often talked out loud to herself partly out of needing to organize her thoughts and partly to draw

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attention to herself.

Gina was the first in the class to add a self-evaluation component to her chart. She titled one column "How I'm doing." In this column she wrote short notes to herself such as: read a lot today, good book, change book--too hard. She valued her chart a great deal at the beginning of this study. After a month had gone by I approached Gina as usual to ask her about her goals. She usually directed me promptly to her chart to show me what she had been doing. This day however, she simply started telling me about a book that she had read to her kindergarten buddy and how he had listened to the whole book and really liked it. I asked if she documented this on her chart and she said, "No, I threw the chart away, I don't need it anymore." My heart stopped for a moment because I hadn't yet made a copy of her chart for my records. I wanted that detailed record of her thinking. When I asked her if she thought she might be able to find it she retrieved it from the recycling bin and looked at me wondering why I would want that piece of paper. I asked her why she didn't need it anymore. Gina decided to discontinue her record keeping because she said she could do it all in her mind now. She could construct an image of where she was going without the chart itself. Gina said she "kept her stuff together in her portfolio" so she always could find her book and page number, and also that since her buddy now listened when she read it was not important to keep track of the books. She told me that without looking at a chart she knew that her buddy enjoyed books that were a little harder and she could read those slightly harder ones because she practiced them before going to the kindergarten room.

This pattern of discontinuing use of record keeping tools was consistent with Taylor and Lauren as well. They each were using charts to keep track of how long they read each day. After about a month they each felt comfortable that they knew how long they read without having to write it down. Lauren, Gina and Taylor did keep records of their progress on their goals in their portfolios, and each of them grew more confident in herself as a reader as a result of their documentations. The records served as a concrete example of how they had

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improved, learned, and grown as a reader. There seemed to be a direct relationship for these girls in their new found confidence and the evidence their documentation provided of how they changed. They had their own proof of their progress.

For all three girls this signaled a boost in self-confidence as a reader. Through their own documentation they proved to themselves that they were getting better at their self-selected goals. They had begun to internalize their written self-evaluations and construct an increased awareness and deeper knowledge of themselves as readers. Gina's comments supported this. When she accomplished her first goal, I asked her what she had learned about herself as a reader and she replied, "If I try reading I really can do it. I'm proud because I did my goal. I've made a new goal to read harder, fatter books to challenge myself. I'm going to start with *Strawberry Girl*, and read it with Caitlin, and then maybe do some of the books in the Little House series. I never thought I would be able to read those books, but if you take it one day at a time you learn that you can read them."

## Students as Reflectors

Students became reflectors as they learned to revise their plans and goals based on their experience and evaluations. They knew it was OK to change if something was not working or if they get a better idea. Often the reflection was demonstrated through student talk, but also in their goal setting journals. Every few days the third graders would document how they were doing and write a brief statement about their plan for the next few days. I collected the journals once a week to get a sense of where students were, and make decisions about who to talk to over the next few days.

Hannah's journal told an interesting tale. Hannah was quiet but attentive during portfolio sharing sessions. She didn't often choose to share her own goals, but she did ask questions of others. She appeared interested and focused on her reading. Her journal began with a step-by-step documentation of how many pages she read each day and how many pages she would read the following day. Therefore, I was startled one day when I looked at

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her journal and found the following entry: "My goal is going terrible. I never have enough time to read and I'm never going to finish. I changed my goal once to bring my book with me to day care so I'd have more time, but it's too noisy there and it's just not working." Hannah's goal was to read more chapter books and she appeared to be stuck. At this point Jeanne and I needed to decide whether to step in and work on this problem with her, or to see if she could make some progress on her own. We decided to wait.

The following day during portfolio sharing time as Jeanne asked, "Who would like to share" she looked right at Hannah. Hannah raised her hand and then went before her classmates. She repeated to them what she had written in her journal about how terrible her goal was going. The other students jumped right in with their questions. "Why don't you have enough time?" "Is your book too hard so you read it slow?" "Are you talking to your friends instead of reading?" Hannah answered their questions and in so doing discovered a reason for her time crunch. Just before reading each day the students had math workshop. Following math there was a ten-minute break to get a snack, get your books and portfolios together and to begin reading. Hannah was using this time to finish math work and did not begin reading each day until she finished. This was the cause of her time crunch. It didn't happen everyday, but it did happen often enough to make a difference in how much reading she got done. She saw her classmates finishing books and couldn't understand why she wasn't keeping pace. With this much discovered, Hannah stepped back into the group to think about this while her classmates continued the sharing session. Her journal entry following this sharing session explains her plan: "Now I know why I'm not getting very far. I am going to bring my math work to do at day care because it's easier for me to do. Then I can use my whole reading time to read my book like everyone else. I think this will work better." Hannah used her reflections in her writing and her conversations with classmates to solve her "terrible" goal problem.

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## Students as Connectors

Students who connected what they knew to something they wanted to learn were moving ahead in their thinking.

Anna's goal was to "read more widely." Up to this point Anna's third grade reading was exclusively centered on horse stories. She read all of the books in the Marguerite Henry series and any other books she could that had a horse for the main character or focus. Anna decided it was time to branch out. She tried reading some books from the Dear America series (historical fiction related through diary entries) and read several other novels. However, in her goal-setting journal she wrote that she really missed reading about horses. She wanted to keep pursuing her goal however. One day Anna had an "aha" moment during her writing and came over to talk to me. She told me that reading more widely did not mean she couldn't read about horses. She could read non-fiction or historical books about horses because this was something she had never done before. She thought her new idea started when she was reading the Dear America books. "I thought, these are things that really happened. I was reading about the westward movement in America and I know the pioneers depended on their horses a lot. I thought, I can read about that!" Anna had a new direction. She connected what she had just read with her goal and determined a new plan for how to accomplish her goal. Anna was no longer someone who "reads lots of horse stories," but rather someone who expanded her learning by branching out into other areas such as the role of horses in the westward settlement of the United States. Anna was connecting her old love to a newfound interest.

## Students as Resistors

Jeanne and I were pleased with how well students seemed to take on more responsibility as their skills as evaluators grew. However, we had to question ourselves as well: because these were the roles we wanted for students, did we only see evidence of ways in which students exemplified them? Were there roles students adopted that we misread, didn't

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notice, or encourage? Did students simply participate in goal setting because they were expected to? Was there a role for the "resistor?"

Jake was an active, sports-minded, energetic nine-year-old. He liked working with a partner, but had a hard time staying on task. Jake rarely was involved in doing what he was supposed to be doing. While good-natured about being in school, he clearly enjoyed school because of the social aspects, not the academic. With support, Jake set a goal, to read *Face Off*, by Matt Christopher, a book his friend Matthew was reading. After talking to Jake for a few minutes, one thing was clear, he loved hockey. I was hopeful that his choice of book would be motivating because the main character played hockey and the book focused on hockey as well. Part of Jake's plan was to get a copy of the book; this proved to be the most difficult part. Jake checked the school library but the book was checked out. He lived near the public library and said he was going to check there. Two days passed. Jake wrote a note to himself to stop and look for the book. Two more days passed. During goal setting time Jake spent his time browsing the bookshelves reading only a page or two and then returning books to the shelf. At this point Jeanne could easily point out two or three goals that would be great for Jake: learning to choose a good book for yourself, sticking with a book, etc. However, when Jake was asked if he wanted to set a different goal, he said he really wanted to read *Face Off*. Jeanne stepped in and told Jake that if he wanted to keep his goal the book had to be at school the next day. We wondered why Jake, who was so certain of his goal, did not take the necessary steps to achieve it. The next day Jake had a new plan. Matthew had a copy of the book and the two of them had talked. They decided they could read it together by taking turns every five minutes. By taking turns they meant they would each read *Face Off* and also read a book from the Bailey School series and trade books every five minutes. Jeanne stepped in. The three worked out a plan where the two boys would trade books every other day.

Jake had spent more than a week getting to the point where he could begin his goal. Was this resistance? Would Jake have reacted the same way to any new reading program?

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Newkirk (2000) writes, "Boys may perceive the invitation to self-evaluate their development as something less than an open request" (299). Jake was not engaged in the goal setting process, even though he had the opportunity to select his own reading and set his own pace. Did he, as Tannen (1992) claims is often true of boys, question the point of self-evaluation from a clearly subordinate position of power? Was he suspicious of Jeanne's intent in allowing him more say in what his reading plans were? Did he not believe he had the opportunity to construct his own goal? Or, did he honestly not know how to find a copy of this book? To do so, was something he had never done before.

I never found the answers to my questions, but I checked in with Jake daily. Shortly after he began the shared reading with Matthew the boys gave it up in favor of reading one book at a time. Matthew gave Jake his copy of *Face Off* and Jake started to make progress. His journal shows that he was reading each day, but he was still definitely avoiding as much reading as possible during reading time. Jeanne noted that reading was tough for Jake, but that he was not significantly below grade level, nor did his book appear to be too hard. Jake just wasn't interested. However, when he eventually finished his book, he was very pleased. While most children completed two or three goals and many books, it was an accomplishment for Jake to finish just one. He was very proud of himself which he demonstrated by making a certificate claiming he was "The Great One," a reference to his favorite hockey player, Wayne Gretzky. This experience didn't mean, however, that Jake became an avid reader.

He remained for quite some time, a puzzle, but in my final days of this study when I took group pictures of the children something interesting happened. The students enjoyed arranging themselves in different configurations of rows and poses. When I had only two pictures left, I did a head count to be sure everyone was in the picture. We were missing one student. Where's Jake? I walked to the other side of this double classroom and I found him sitting at his desk reading! I knew how to use my last two shots.

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# Teacher as Creator

In order for students to adopt the positive roles, Jeanne needed to create conditions in which students felt safe to take risks, make mistakes, and have time to try again. The classroom community Jeanne created with her students determined whether or not students would critically evaluate themselves and generate options for their goal setting. In order for students to set their goals they needed to know that Jeanne trusted their evaluations and respected their learning desires.

These students needed to make their own decisions about how they would proceed based on their own evaluations of themselves. This required an active stance on the part of each learner. As decision makers, Jeanne's students had to take a more active role than is typical in a classroom. This co-decision making, coupled with responsibility, helped students to take seriously the changing role Jeanne wanted each of them to play in their learning. She found that she needed to do a lot more listening to students in order for them to assume the active, reflective stances of constructors, reflectors, and connectors. Her own short conferences with students became opportunities to listen to students' plans and help them construct, reflect, and connect their ideas creating viable goals and plans.

Jeanne found she was supporting her students in another different way than she had in previous years. She created space for them. Often this meant, as in the case of Hannah who wrote about her problems with finishing goals in her journal, not directly stepping in but encouraging students themselves to find a way to solve their own problems. With her eyes, Jeanne invited Hannah, at that moment, to bring her problem to the class. Jeanne learned to trust that her students usually could find solutions. This was a big change from the days when she was the center of instruction.

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## Students' Confidence Increases

Perhaps what Jeanne and I noticed most about the students as they assumed these new roles for themselves was the newfound confidence they had in their own evaluations. These students became more willing to make decisions in this reading community and as they continued to practice self-evaluation they grew in confidence. They learned that they could make the important decisions about what they would work on next. Their self-evaluations propelled them forward and they had a vivid sense of themselves as learners in forward motion, students who could construct, reflect, and connect.

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# CHAPTER 7

# BENEATH THE SURFACE OF STUDENT GOALS

As mentioned in the previous chapter students were at many different phases of goal setting at any one time. Some moved fluidly; some jerked, stopped and moved more slowly. Many factors influenced them but all of the students got better at setting and achieving goals with practice. As I examined the first goals students set, two features of them emerged: lateral and quantifiable. As students accomplished their goals, began to set new ones, and started to share within their community, several additional features of their goals emerged: single, copycat, and partner goals.

## Features of Initial Types of Goals

### Lateral Goals

Lateral goals were broad in nature. They were the types of goals in which students wanted to expand an idea. Some students decided to read many books on one topic in order to learn more about it, or chose to expand their knowledge of a genre by reading many types of poetry. These were the kinds of goals in which students could spend a good deal of time focusing on one subject or area of study, providing a broad array of experiences for themselves. For example, Anna set a goal to read about horses in different genres: fiction, non-fiction, and poetry and then to write a poem of her own.

### Quantifiable Goals

Quantifiable goals featured numerical results. For example, many student goals were to read ten books, or to read for a particular period of time, or to read all the books in a series. These goals were characterized by quantifiable results, often specified by the number of titles or pages being read. Robby determined he would read five chapter books that were each at least ninety pages. He would know precisely when he accomplished this goal.

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Table one shows the distribution of the students' first goals. Nineteen of twenty-seven students set quantifiable goals. While the third graders seemed eager to quantify their goals, making it easier to write a plan, when asked about this trend none of them commented as such. The almost unanimous answer to the question, "Why did you choose your goal?" was something like, "Because that's what I want to work on." However, those students who set these easily quantifiable goals did have a less complicated task in making a plan.

**Table 1:**

| Number of Students | Lateral | Quantifiable |
|---|---|---|
| 27 | 8 | 19 |

## Features of Later Goals

While lateral and quantifiable goals were two rather broad distinctions I found in students' goal setting patterns, nuances developed over time. This happened because as students set more and more goals they became aware of more possibilities. The three most prominent features of their goals over time were the development of single, copycat, and partner goals.

### Single Goals

Single goals were those where students chose independent of anyone else a goal to pursue on their own. After evaluating their options, students decided on their own what they would work on. For example, Shannon wanted to read two versions of *Oliver Twist*. Shannon noticed that the version she received for her birthday was different than the version

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Jeanne had in the classroom. She had also, recently, with Jeanne's assistance, decided that the book, *Secret Garden*, was too difficult, but still she wanted to read a thick chapter book. Shannon scanned the first few pages of *Oliver Twist*. I noticed she was using her fingers to count words she didn't know and asked her about this. Shannon said, "When I couldn't understand *Secret Garden*, Mrs. Bennek taught me how to decide if a book was too hard. I put one finger down each time I don't know a word and if I use all the fingers on one hand before I finish the page then I know it's probably too hard." I asked her about how she rated *Oliver Twist* based on her five finger strategy. "I am going to try this book because I didn't use all my fingers in three pages. I think I can do this one." Two weeks later Shannon was ready to read the second version of *Oliver Twist*. I asked her if she was going to try the five finger strategy this time and she replied, "No, I already know the story so it will be easier to read this version even if it is harder. I already have in my head what's going to happen so it should go easy."

After she finished the second version Shannon proudly shared her accomplishments with the group. She explained, "Maybe it sounds boring to read the same book twice, but it's not. I read a harder book than I thought I could because I knew the story. It's like if you see a movie and then read the book of it. It's fun to read it two ways." Alicia asks her if she is going to do this goal again. Shannon answers, "I'm going to try to find an easier version of *Secret Garden* so I will learn the story then maybe I can read the harder one that I tried earlier." Shannon set a plan, chose books and began this unique goal. Shannon's sharing of this individual goal inspired others to try similar goals, or what is described in the next section as "copycat" goals.

## Copycat Goals

Copycat goals were those where someone decided on an independent goal to pursue based on a goal that someone else was also pursuing. Beyond the initial copying of the goal, the students did not interact to pursue the goal together. Chelsea set a goal of reading books

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that would challenge her and get her ready for fourth grade. When Chelsea shared that idea with the class Alicia thought "it sounded good." She, too, would like that goal. After talking they decided to read books in series. They discussed what book series they would choose, and selected different series. Chelsea read from the "Animorphs" series, while Alicia chose the "Shiloh" trilogy. In the end, Alicia chose to do some revising of her goal because she found the "Shiloh" series to be a little out of reach. "I have to work so hard on the words, I lose the story, so I'm going to try some of the Bailey School kids books first. Maybe after I do those books I'll be able to do the "Shiloh" books." Chelsea and Alicia did confer a few times about how their goals were going during the ensuing weeks, and Chelsea was encouraging when she learned Alicia had changed series. Beyond those interactions the girls singularly pursued the same goal.

## Partner Goals

Another type of goal the students set was partner goals. Partner goals were those in which students teamed up with one another to work toward the same goal. Jeanne sometimes brought students who had identical goals together, and sometimes students worked together to find a topic interesting to their partner and then together they developed a goal. Caitlin and Emily (described earlier) did this. They were able to accomplish their multi-step goal to learn to read better to younger siblings partly because they had each other to rely on when setting interviews with the librarian and preschool teacher. Their interest and initiative was supported by one another's presence.

## Complexities that Influenced both Initial and Later Goals

Further complicating the features of the goals the students set were characteristics that influenced their decisions throughout the year. These were gender, interactions with friends, and reading ability.

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**Gender**

**Table 2:**

|  | Lateral | Quantifiable |
|---|---|---|
| **Number of Girls: 19** | 7 | 12 |
| **Number of Boys: 8** | 1 | 7 |

As noted in Table 2, boys wrote almost exclusively quantifiable goals at the beginning of the study. There were eight boys in the class and seven of them created quantifiable goals. Only one boy wrote an initial lateral goal, "I want to learn that I don't have to finish a book if I don't like it." However, his next goal was quantifiable, "To read 3 books in the Laura Ingalls Wilder series." The boys' preference for quantifiable goals did not change nor fluctuate. They heard the same conversations and sharing that the girls did, yet they continued to write goals that had a numerical end result.

One third of the girls initially wrote lateral type goals. However, as time passed, the girls too, began to write goals that were more quantifiable. Generally speaking, after analyzing the goals set by Jeanne's students, girls were more likely to set lateral goals than boys, and boys wrote almost exclusively progressive goals. Girls were more likely to fluctuate between types of goals, and as successive goals were set they geared more toward quantifiable goals. This evolution intrigued Jeanne and me. The goals that seemed more thoughtful and deep to us were the lateral goals. I was drawn toward students who wrote goals such as "to read more widely." It sounded more complex than "to read 4 books." However, my personal bias and interest in lateral goals did not seem to influence students, because they set more and more quantifiable goals.

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Table 3

## Type of Final Goals Set

| | Lateral | Quantifiable |
|---|---|---|
| Number of Girls: 19 | 3 | 16 |
| Number of Boys: 8 | 0 | 8 |

## Friends

Another big influence on the goals students wrote arose from their interactions with each other. As noted in an earlier chapter, students often wrote goals to identify themselves with their friends. I initially termed this peer influence, but upon closer examination, the word peer did not fit the situation. All the students in the class were peers, yet, predictably, it was friends who influenced goal setting more. In other words, students picked up on what their friends were saying more than on what classmates said who were not in their circle of friends.

## Reading Ability

Reading ability (determined by teacher opinion, including Jeanne and students' past teachers) also seemed to have a direct influence on the type of goals students set. Those readers who were the more competent, confident readers were the ones who set lateral goals. No "average" or struggling students set lateral goals. There were some really good readers who did not set lateral goals as well, but the reverse was not true.

In thinking about this, it makes sense. Those readers who are more skilled and began the year reading advanced chapter books had a greater depth of skill knowledge and background to work from. Those students who had a harder time with reading seemed to be building confidence in themselves as they quantified what they were able to accomplish. Lateral goals would not have allowed them this ready access to successful accomplishment.

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# CHAPTER 8

## CONCLUSIONS: THIRD GRADE EVALUATORS THRIVE AS READERS

So what about all this goal setting? Were the efforts made by Jeanne and her students to become better evaluators of themselves and more active participants in their learning experiences worthwhile?

### Jeanne's Insights

Jeanne and I had many opportunities to talk about what was happening in her classroom while students were engaged in goal-setting. As time went by she identified three factors that were new to the classroom since she set aside time for her students to actively reflect on their reading goals:

1. Students were reading more, not only at school, but at home. In their drive to accomplish goals, students carried books back and forth extending their roles in the classroom to home. Student initiative toward accomplishing goals increased and students read more books.

2. Students were more aware of what others were interested in and what others were reading. As a result, students were able to recommend books to each other, and read books simultaneously so they had partners to talk with. They developed a culture interested in "book talk."

3. Students were more confident in themselves as readers. Jeanne noticed an emotional response to the success students felt when they accomplished their goals, and excitement about reaching goals inspired confidence. Confidence brought energy to the reading workshop that had previously been lacking.

Overall Jeanne said the greatest benefit of using goal-setting to encourage self-evaluation was the responsibility students took for their learning. They readily assumed the initiative

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necessary to choose their own books, set their own goals, and write their own plans. They wanted to write goals for their writing workshop. In social studies students began to bring in their own books that supported what they were studying. A unit on the different regions of the United States prompted Anna to bring in a book of poetry about the New England states. She explained that if you read the poems you would learn about the climate, agriculture and geography of the northeast. Mitchell connected his book about the Oregon Trail to the settlement of the west. These students demonstrated the **connector** role we noticed during reading class. Students began to see themselves as constructors of knowledge who could contribute to the resources in their classroom. They now believed they had a role in creating the curriculum. They were **constructors.**

Further evidence of student initiative and excitement about taking responsibly for reading growth was demonstrated by the number of students who set goals for summer reading. Jeanne was amazed during the final sharing session of the school year by the plans students continued to make. Shannon told the class that she accomplished her goal of reading bigger books. She explained that she read two versions of *Oliver Twist* and showed a certificate she made for herself. Next she explained that over the summer she would read *Skylark*, and then give *The Secret Garden* another chance. Earlier in her goal-setting, she (with Jeanne's help) decided *The Secret Garden* was too difficult, but she felt more confident now after reading other big books. Shannon thought she'd be better prepared to read it and be more successful this time. She said she learned about herself as a reader, and now she knows that if she sits in a quiet area and reads a chapter and then asks herself what the chapter was about she can make sense of harder books. Shannon was a **reflector** who could look at her goals and revisit them with the intent of completing what she started.

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# Student Insights

At the end of my data collection I had many opportunities to talk informally with the third graders about their reading and their goals. Mostly students were so happy to have time to read good books of their choosing.

In addition to these informal conversations I asked the third graders to answer some questions on paper as a final self-evaluation. See Appendix F. When asked, "What's the most recent thing you've learned about yourself as reader?" four responses were most common:

1. I like to read more than I used to.
2. I can read harder books than I used to.
3. I can read for a longer period of time than I used to.
3. I am a better reader than I used to be.

Each of these responses was stated by at least half of the students.

When asked to write an answer to the question, "Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?" all the students answered "yes." The overwhelming reason sited (23 out of 27) was:

1. I can read more.

Three other responses were also key:

2. I can read harder books.
3. I am a better reader.
4. I know I have more choices for what I read (types of books).

A third question answered on the self-evaluation sheet was, "What helped you reach your goal?" Again, there were two overwhelming responses:

1. Talking to my teacher, Mrs. Smith and my friends.
2. Having more time to just read, reading more.

Additionally, 20 out of 27 students added additional comments on the backside of the

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paper. Of those 20 children 17 wrote that they wanted to set goals in writing as well. Eight of those 20 also wanted more time to read. Many also recommended Mrs. Bennek do goal setting with next year's third graders.

Particularly gratifying to Jeanne were the student comments on the evaluation form that stated a greater interest and enjoyment in reading. In response to the question. "What helped you reach your goal?" Chelsea wrote, "Determination and the love of reading!" Twelve other students answered the question. "What have you learned about yourself as a reader?" with statements such as: "I learned that I love to read." "I never knew there were so many great books" "I learned that I'm happier when I have a good book to read."

## Researcher Insights

The students are telling me something. What helped them reach their goals? They value time and talk. These two elements were especially influential in helping these third graders develop reading confidence and excitement that they hadn't experienced before. They wrote that because they had more **time** to read, they read more books. Should that be a surprise? Of course not, but in many classrooms so much of reading time is spent on breaking reading down into isolated skills to be mastered via drill and practice, that little time remains for reading books and talking about learning. Jeanne was able to teach skills at the point of need, while students were engaged in meaningful evaluations of themselves as readers. Having time to read allows students to learn more about their skills and needs. Reading more books, actually practicing reading, developed readers who like to read and want to read more. The essential element of time to read was key.

The second element of **talk** is not only recognized as key in my findings, but, also, in those of other researchers. We as educators are beginning to realize that talk is an important factor in all learning areas. Talk aids cognition. It helps students think about their reading, share their ideas, and learn from each other. Students want people to listen to

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them. Jaggar and Smith-Burke (1985) wrote many years ago about the importance of listening to children. "The key to effective teaching is building on what children have already learned. The best way to discover this is to listen and watch closely as children use language" (p. 5).

Traditionally, the talk that surrounds children as they read and write has created dependence rather than independence. The teacher talks, and the students wait for the teacher to tell them what to do. However, Jeanne's use of guiding, directive, and nudging talk supported her students in making their own choices, setting their own goals, and monitoring their own progress. Her talk directly impacted her students' abilities to take control of learning to read and write. Through her talk, Jeanne supported and valued her students' verbal inquiry, not just their written reflections or portfolio documentations. By paying attention to student talk, Jeanne expanded the possibility for student self-evaluation, and elevated the talk that happened in her classroom to a place of increased importance. Changes in the quality of student reflection was a benefit.

Time and talk allowed these third-grade students to become better at the process of **evaluation**. It also gave them confidence in themselves and what they could accomplish. Jeanne and I wanted to see if students would take more initiative if they were better self-evaluators. I see now that an important part of self-evaluation involves the confidence a student has in himself/herself. When students are confident they are more likely to see themselves as agents of action, purpose, and change. The student confidence that developed (because of the elements of time and talk) was the single most influential element in engaging the third graders in their reading. The success students felt supported their continued engagement, and propelled them through a reciprocal cycle of confidence and motivation to read.

The **structure** of the classroom **community** was also very important in supporting students as evaluators. Jeanne had predictable, clear expectations for reading workshop. Because the children knew what was expected they were free to concentrate on the complex

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task of literacy learning rather than trying to figure out "what the teacher wants me to do today."

These connected concepts of **evaluation, talk, time** and **structure** all lead toward confident students who take initiative in their learning decisions. Students negotiated new roles, and new ways of viewing themselves as learners as they worked through their goal-setting. Their evaluations of their own needs became central to their reading progress, and students made themselves responsible for continuing their progress by setting new goals, and even summer goals. Think of the difference these third graders may make because **they** value their own abilities to make decisions. These learners have started to move beyond their reading class to develop active roles in other areas of school life. By negotiating new roles and bringing confidence to their ability to make decisions, these third graders, if given support in future grades, will see themselves as people who can make a difference. Not just a difference in their academic lives, but in their lives outside of school as well.

## Implications for Other Classrooms

For teachers who are exploring the notions of how to engage students more actively in their reading, as was Jeanne, teaching students to evaluate themselves is key. The increased facility to know what they wanted and needed to learn next by evaluating their work, enabled students to grow in confidence and engagement in their learning.

Student goal-setting, based on evaluations of themselves as learners, provided a manageable process for offering students more choice and ownership. Teachers beginning this process with students will need to create an environment in which student talk and ideas are valued. As I demonstrated in chapter five, the goals that students set gave them an opening to engage in evaluative conversations with each other as the quality of their talk changed. This "verbal inquiry" when supported by the teacher, moves students along the goal-setting spiral (getting started, digging in, revising, sharing with pride) yielding benefits in the form of greater confidence and engagement in their learning.

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It is important to note, that as teachers open their classrooms to evaluation through goal-setting, important role changes on behalf of the teacher and students are necessary. For meaningful goal-setting to occur, teachers need to co-create curriculum with their students, and students need to take more responsibility for learning decisions.

The recursive nature of goal-setting also deserves mention. Students move through the goal-setting spiral at different paces. They also need opportunities to continue the process over time so that different aspects (like the beginning phase of writing a plan) become easier and more familiar.

I am reminded of Lucy Calkins' reflections during a workshop presentation about how beginning any innovation based on research and theory takes time and patience on behalf of all involved. Lucy related her experience with implementing student led book discussions (literature circles) and how excited she was to begin. Mid-way through the process her assessment of the book groups was dismal. This innovation in her practice was not working. She put it quite bluntly, "The book discussions stunk!" However, after spending more time with the process, she noticed the quality of discussion improve and yield the benefits she hoped for.

Time and patience are necessary for the goal-setting process as well. The first goals students set may be very general and surface level, but as students gain experience in evaluating themselves, as they take time to reflect upon their learning needs, as they interact with each other and their teacher, tremendous strides can be made.

With my account of these engaged readers, I hope I have opened the possibility for other teachers to explore the benefits of teaching students to be evaluators of their own reading. Jeanne's third graders became increasingly invested in their learning, recognized themselves as competent evaluators and decision makers, and gained confidence and skill in their reading abilities. Perhaps best of all, they enjoyed reading and spent more time involved with books.

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# APPENDICIES

# Appendix A

## Answers to Self-evaluation Question 1

**What do I do well as a reader?**

read chapter book   3
read more at home
reading big words     3
reading to myself     6
read chapter books in my head
read a lot   3
read fast
write good stories
staying involved in a book
write stories on the computer and read them over and over
staying up late to finish a book
read bigger books
read to my little sister/brother   2
read big books for a long time
read mystery and adventure books

# Appendix B

## Answers to Self-evaluation Question 2

**Most recent thing I've learned as a reader/writer**

read more at home  2
reading call numbers
read small chapter books
write bigger words
get into a good book
writing more adjectives
read faster in my mind   2
find information faster
read more and more thicker books  (chapter books)  3
read mystery books slow so I can solve it
find books I like   2
sound out bigger words  2
read more challenges  2
like bigger books better
bigger books might be more interesting
can't stop, have to read whole book
have more fun in a book
read to others
read poetry
read harder books

# Appendix C

## First Goals Set

- ❏ Read fatter book
- ❏ Read more
- ❏ Read more chapter books
- ❏ Read bigger chapter books
- ❏ Read an hour a day
- ❏ Read harder books
- ❏ Read to Luke more often
- ❏ Read bigger chapter book
- ❏ Read for longer period of time
- ❏ Remember information better
- ❏ Read to my sister more
- ❏ Read to other people
- ❏ Read chapter books
- ❏ Read a lot of chapter books
- ❏ Read bigger books
- ❏ Like reading to other people
- ❏ Find more books I like
- ❏ Read more books
- ❏ Read a lot more dog books
- ❏ Read more widely
- ❏ Not finish a book if I don't like it
- ❏ Read more chapter books
- ❏ Read harder books
- ❏ Read for a longer amount of time
- ❏ Read really long books

Appendix D

Evaluator _Clare_

Date _4-9-99_

**1. What do I do well as a reader/writer?**

read long words.

**2. What is the most recent thing I learned to do well as a reader/writer?**

find information faster.

**3. What do I want to learn next to become a better reader/writer?**

remember information bette

**4. What steps will I take to learn this?**

1. read the sentence over.
2. close my eyes and say in head.
3. write 6 reports until the end of school.

**5. What will I put in my portfolio to show I have reached my goal?**

1. a tape of me reading one of my reports.
2. pictures of me and my reports.
3. some of my reports.

Evaluator  Hannah

Date_____

1. What do I do well as a reader/writer?

read a lot

2. What is the most recent thing I learned to do well as a reader/writer?

I want to write bigger words.

3. What do I want to learn next to become a better reader/writer?

read a hour a day

4. What steps will I take to learn this?

read ten min. more each day. Read whenever I get a chance. Read longer books.

5. What will I put in my portfolio to show I have reached my goal?

I'll put the I read in it
I can read to my mom.
I can make a video.
I can receit a sentence.

Appendix D

Evaluator Anna

Date 4-9-99

1. What do I do well as a reader/writer?

Read big books for a long time.

2. What is the most recent thing I learned to do well as a reader/writer?

That bigger books might be more interesting.

3. What do I want to learn next to become a better reader/writer?

Learn to read more widly.

4. What steps will I take to learn this?

Just read more and more books like that
Pick out a series that arent about horses and read them.
Have my Mom take out books like that so I can read them at school
I Just wont read as many horse books

5. What will I put in my portfolio to show I have reached my goal?

A list of the books I read like that.
A picture of my favorate book. like that
A peace of paper telling what my favorite book
was about.

# Variety Books I have read

1. In a Stone Circle
2. The Boys Start the war.
3. The Girls get Even.
4. Laura Up-Sidedown
5. Kitty From the Start.
6. Kitty in the Middle.
7. Kitty in the Summer.
8. The Keepsake Chest.
9. Kitty in High School.
10. The Girls Revenge.
11. Little House On the Prairie.
12. Dreams in the Golden Country.
13. By the Banks of Plum Creek.
14. By the Shores of Silver Lake

Mustard

I Loved this book. Reading I...

This is me reading

Mustard it was the favorite book I read
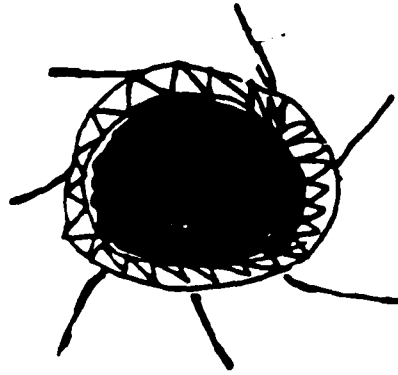
Mustard

Self Evaluation for: Marie _____ date: _____

1. What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader? How have you changed?

I can read a lot harder books. I like talking about my books that I've read

2. Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?

Yes it has helped me it makes me whant to talk to people about my books.

3. What helped you reach your goal?

By reading the Diary of Anne Frank that book kind of pushed me on.

4. If you were to do this again what would you do the same? Different?

I'd probley have the same gole but I wouldden't read the same books.

Appendix  F

Self Evaluation for: Shannon Richter  date: June 3, 1999

1. What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader? How have you changed?

I learned that you can do any thing you want to If you try because I thawt that I could not finish the Book Oliver twist but I did!!

2. Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?

yes it did because I was so tide up on reaching my Goal I did not talk to any of my friends most of the time!!

3. What helped you reach your goal?

Mrs. Bennek helped me decide that the Secret Garden Book was to hard for me.

4. If you were to do this again what would you do the same? Different?

Different!! or the same

Self Evaluation for: Ursliana                                    date: 6/3/11

1. What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader? How have you changed?

The most recent thing I have learned
as a reader is to find more exiting
books and longer books. I can stay
up late to finish a book.

2. Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?

Setting a reading goel has helped
me because now I am not
scared to read bigger books.

3. What helped you reach your goal?

Determanation
and the love of
reading.

4. If you were to do this again what would you do the same? Different?

I would change my goel to read all
of the Animorphs.

Self Evaluation for: __Joe_____ date:_____

1. What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader? How have you changed? I've been reading bigger books than I usually do.

2. Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?

Yes because now I can read bigger books.

3. What helped you reach your goal?
People were reading lots of Laura Ingall's Wilder books and I wanted to toa

4. If you were to do this again what would you do the same? Different?
Read another Laura Ingall's Wilder book, it would be a differen book.

Self Evaluation for: **Mitchell**   date: **6-3-99**

1. What is the most recent thing you have learned as a reader? How have you changed? I have been reading harder chapter books Like Laura Ingles Wilder books!

2. Has setting a reading goal helped you? Why or why not?

Yes because I have been reading harder chapter books! I was not reading chapter books I was just reading easy books.

3. What helped you reach your goal?
D.E.A.R. reading Laura Ingles Wilder chapter books.

4. If you were to do this again what would you do the same? Different?
I would change my goal to read the hole pack of Laura Ingles Wilder books

# UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building
51 College Road
Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
(603) 862-3564 FAX

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **LAST NAME** | Smith | **FIRST NAME** | Amy |
| **DEPT** | Education - Morrill Hall | **APP'L DATE** | 5/7/99 |
| **OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS** (if applicable) | 2332 Clearwater Creek Circle Lino Lakes, MN 55038 | **IRB #** | 2150 |
| | | **REVIEW LEVEL** | FULL |

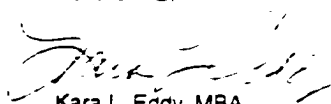**PROJECT TITLE**    Third Grade Students Take Initiative for Their Learning

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research reviewed and approved the protocol for your project. The IRB noted the following in its review (these are not contingencies of approval, but are recommendations or comments from reviewers)

The investigator should include the right to refuse in the child assent process 'when briefing children on the study and inviting participation.

Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. Please refer to the Assurance of Compliance and the Belmont Report, enclosed.) If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003.

For the IRB,

Kara L. Eddy, MBA
Regulatory Compliance

cc:    File
      Jane Hansen, Education - Morrill Hall

# UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Service Building
51 College Road
Durham, New Hampshire  03824-3585
(603) 862-3564 FAX

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAST NAME** | Smith | | **FIRST NAME** | Amy |
| **DEPT** | Education - Morrill Hall | | **APP'L DATE** | 5/30/2000 |
| **OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS** (if applicable) | 2332 Clearwater Creek Circle Lino Lakes, MN  55038 | | **IRB #** | 2150 |
| | | | **REVIEW LEVEL** | EXP |

**PROJECT TITLE**    Third Grade Students Take Initiative for Their Learning

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this protocol. Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation. If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB.

Kara L. Eddy, MBA
Regulatory Compliance

cc:    File                                                                            ORIG APP'L    5/7/99

       Jane Hansen, Education - Morrill Hall

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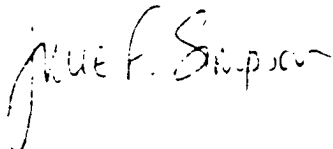| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAST NAME** | Smith | **FIRST NAME** | Amy | |
| **DEPT** | Education - Morrill Hall | **APPROVAL EXPIR. DATE** | 5/30/2002 | |
| | | **IRB #** | 2150 | |
| **OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS** (if applicable) | 2332 Clearwater Creek Circle Lino Lakes, MN 55038 | **REVIEW LEVEL** | FULL | |
| | | **DATE OF NOTICE** | 5/8/2001 | |

**PROJECT TITLE**    Third Grade Students Take Initiative for Their Learning

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this protocol. **Approval for this protocol expires on the date indicated above.** At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. **Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and receive written, unconditional approval prior to implementation.** If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please fee free to contact this office at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB.

Julie F. Simpson
Regulatory Compliance Manager
Office of Sponsored Research

cc:    File                                                                ORIG APP'L    5.7.1999
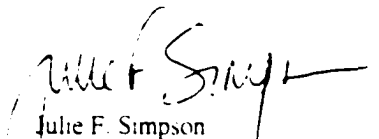
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| **LAST NAME** | Smith | **FIRST NAME** | Amy |
| **DEPT** | Education - Morrill Hall | **LAST APP'D** | 5/30/2001 |
| | | **IRB #** | 2150 |
| **OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS** (if applicable) | 2332 Clearwater Creek Circle Lino Lakes, MN 55038 | **REVIEW LEVEL** | FULL |
| | | **DATE OF NOTICE** | 6/10/2002 |

**PROJECT TITLE**    Third Grade Students Take Initiative for Their Learning

Thank you for returning your completed annual continuing review form to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) indicating the above project is closed. We would appreciate receiving a report of findings for this study for audit purposes. Copies of abstracts, articles, and or publications specific to the project are acceptable.

Thank you

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Regulatory Compliance Manager

cc    File
      Jane Hansen, Education - Morrill Hall