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A whole school approach to literacy intervention

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A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO LITERACY INTERVENTION

BY

G.J. Raison

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of

the Requirements for the Award of

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Abstract

This research project reports on the process of developing a whole school approach to literacy intervention in one multi-ethnic, designated disadvantaged primary school. The study describes how teachers worked collaboratively, using items from a resource package *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*, to critically reflect on their pedagogy in their efforts to better address the needs of those students in their classes who appeared to have difficulties with literacy learning.

A modified action research method was used by the teachers to devise a context-specific school plan. Within the plan, they allocated time and resources to assist them as they shared and developed their knowledge and skills to deal with the social, cultural, emotional, linguistic and cognitive needs of the identified students.

As a result, the teachers developed individual literacy intervention programs for children experiencing difficulties. The programs included all the stake holders and were devised to be used in the mainstream classrooms. In addition, in order to facilitate consistency and continuity of approach from year to year for students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning, the teachers planned a system to store and pass on students' records.

Of particular interest were the actions taken to explore understandings about literacy interventions, the changes in teacher perceptions, and the use of individual literacy intervention programs for children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

As a consequence of their involvement in the project, the teachers developed an integrated literacy intervention policy and a school plan to guide future strategies for literacy intervention.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

GLENDA RAISON

Faculty of Education

Edith Cowan University

Churchlands W.A. 1996

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Glenda Raison
July 1996.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy (1996) is a resource book that together with a video: *Getting Better at... Successful Intervention* (1995), comprise a package designed to assist teachers as they identify and plan to meet, within the mainstream classroom and teaching program, the needs of individual students who are not demonstrating successful literacy development. This study describes the use of the package in the development of a whole school approach to literacy intervention at a culturally diverse, designated disadvantaged school.

Historical Perspectives

The issue of students who have difficulty with literacy development is a complex one. Historically, in Australia, statistics have pointed to a percentage of students who do not acquire literacy or acquire it so slowly that they appear to fall behind others of their age. A recent study claimed that "10% of Australia's population who are over 15 years of age are unable to do even functional everyday reading and writing tasks" (Dawkins, 1991a p. v). In addition, the report of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training (1993) noted that the proportion of students seen to be 'at risk' in their literacy development was higher among particular groups in the community, such as those living in poverty.

In Australia students come from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds and research has shown educational divisions between students who are economically advantaged and those living in poverty. As a consequence, for the past twenty years, the notion of students 'at risk' has been used to target special needs funding. In spite of this, it seems that the social contexts of school and schooling have frequently been overlooked in discussion about the literacy attainment of specific groups and there appears to be little research into literacy teaching in designated disadvantaged schools in Australia.

Over the past two decades, however, there has been considerable investigation into literacy and language development in general (Luke, 1995; Luke, 1993a; Badger, Comber & Weeks, 1993; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Cambourne, 1988; Clay, 1980; Holdaway, 1980; Smith, 1978). In Western Australia, as a result of this research there has been a concentration on literacy teaching in-service and pre-service training programs. These programs generally aimed to assist teachers as they modified or completely changed their teaching practice to reflect current research and better meet the needs of students. The *Early Literacy In service Course* and the *First Steps* program are examples of system-wide teacher education programs that concentrate on supporting teachers of early literacy.

In addition, many specifically targeted programs funded by the Disadvantaged Schools Component of National Equity Programs also focused on literacy teaching. There is evidence to suggest that some programs have led to improvements in teaching practice and students' literacy development (Rowe 1991; Deschamp 1995). However, some research (Badger, Comber & Weeks

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1993) has also indicated that teachers are still concerned that professional development offered for teaching literacy to students from low socio-economic and non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) is problematic.

Some educational research suggests that a focus on educational sociology and cultural studies could lead to the development of context-specific school literacy pedagogy that better fulfils the needs of different students in different contexts. Gray (1985b) for example, used concentrated language encounters to help Aboriginal students see the relationships between texts and the cultural contexts in which they were used. While Bourdieu (1986) cited in Carrington and Luke (1995), identified different categories of social, cultural and economic capital as resources that yielded social power in different contexts. Others, such as Delpit (1988), Christie (1990), Luke, Baty and Stehbens (1989), examined the need to provide access to mainstream culture while promoting cultural diversity. In addition, Heath (1983) described an ethnographic study and argued strongly for increased attention to students' social and cultural backgrounds rather than decontextualised skills based programs.

These studies have also linked school failure to social class. Auerbach (1989, p.167), for example, suggests that "children whose home literacy practices most closely resemble school literacy practices are more successful in school" thus indicating that some school practices could contribute to a student's failure to acquire literacy skills. Furthermore, Bartoli (1986) stresses that expectations are all important in literacy learning and suggests that judgments made from the viewpoint of mainstream culture could adversely affect the programs offered to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Freebody & Ludwig (1995) found that the way teachers view students and their culture could shape the way they interpret students' literacy capacity and the implementation of literacy practices in their classrooms Thus it seems, as Luke (1995) asserts that:

> The need here is for a richer understanding of literacy that recognises and builds on students' prior cultural resources, experiences and knowledge in all instruction and programs ... . That we move away from psychological skills models that identify deficit and lack, towards those sociological models that recognise and capitalise on the varied and hybrid cultural discourse resources that students bring to classrooms (p.184).

In spite of findings such as this, some schools continue to ignore or fail to recognise particular community, social and cultural needs. Explanations previously offered by schools, to account for a student's failure, have attributed blame to the child and/or her or his culture but rarely to the way 'schooling' was 'done'. If we accept that literacy learning is a social practice as Halliday and Hasan (1985), Freebody (1992), Carrington and Luke (1995), Cambourne (1990), Luke (1993a), Gee (1990) and others contend, then it seems that the focus should shift away from the learner to the social institution of school. Of course, this approach does not preclude the identification of children who appear to have special needs in the cognitive and psycholinguistic areas of literacy learning which may not be not be related to socio-cultural background.

Whatever the reasons previously advanced for literacy failure, it could be concluded that it is worth examining the institution of school because, as

stated in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (1996, p.1) "The administration, organisation, curriculum, social attitudes and social practices of the school all influence a student's success in acquiring literacy skills."

In Western Australia there is now a move toward supporting all children within the context of their own classroom. Given the cultural diversity represented in schools, teachers are taking the opportunity to reflect on their views and practice and develop their literacy pedagogy to meet the needs of all the children they teach. In some professional development programs sociological and anthropological theories of literacy learning are being combined with psycholinguistic theories to help teachers and schools as they move towards a more culturally responsive pedagogy. The underpinning principles outlined in the recently developed *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.2) appear to go some way towards helping teachers to reflect on their pedagogy and respond to the literacy needs of their students within a whole school context (details of these principles are on p.20-21).

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document how teachers in one designated 'disadvantaged' school (DSP) in Western Australia used a newly developed, in-service package consisting of a resource book titled *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and video *Getting Better at... Successful Intervention*. (For the rest of this study this package will be referred to as the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package). The school staff agreed to participate in this program because they saw the potential to go beyond the literacy intervention strategies and procedures they had used previously.

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Although the school in this study has students from pre-primary to year six (not K-3) staff felt that the intervention principles from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* could be applied across the whole school context. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* reflects an action research model, thus, pathways selected by schools are dictated by their particular contexts.

Through a process of action research and my involvement as a facilitator and critical friend they examined their personal definitions of literacy as well as their understandings about, and attitudes to, literacy interventions and literacy pedagogy. As a result the staff initiated and implemented a whole school approach to supporting children having difficulty with literacy learning within the mainstream classes. This study describes the processes and some of the outcomes that occurred as a result of the school's involvement. . The following research questions guided the study.

The Research Questions

The research project set out to gather information to answer the following questions:

- *How does one school use the Successful Intervention K-3 package?*

- *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices?*

- *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy facilitate an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention?*

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Definitions

As our understanding of the nature of literacy has developed, definitions have moved from fairly simple statements to a recognition of the complexity of becoming literate. In order to discuss the concepts of 'literacy' and 'literacy intervention' I needed to explore my own understandings of these terms.

Literacy

At its simplest level literacy could be defined as the ability to read and write, regardless of context, but definitions of literacy are not simple. They are complex and evolving. In this study I decided that the definition used in *Australia's language: The Australian language and literacy policy* (Dawkins, 1991a) best suited my understandings. It defines literacy as:

> the ability to read and use information appropriately in
> a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge
> and understanding to achieve personal growth and to
> function effectively in our society. Literacy also
> includes the recognition of numbers and basic
> mathematical signs and symbols within texts. Literacy
> involves the integration of speaking, listening and
> critical thinking within reading and writing (p.4).

I believe that this definition is significant because it explicitly links the modes of language. Furthermore, the use of the phrase "the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking within reading and writing," acknowledges the more complex demands being placed on the community to critically discriminate and use the ever increasing amount of information available in a technological world.

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The teachers in this study reflected on their own understandings of literacy throughout the project.

Literacy Intervention

In this study literacy intervention is defined as a process:

> of identifying and planning to meet, *within the mainstream classroom and teaching program,* the needs of individual students who are not demonstrating successful literacy development. This planned development of a student's literacy skills acknowledges that students learn at different rates, have preferred styles of learning, and need opportunities for successful literacy learning experiences. This kind of intervention is not a remediation process (*Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy 1996,* p.6).

In addition, *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* suggests that there are key factors that underpin successful literacy intervention. These factors are described and demonstrated throughout the package and are included here to further clarify the definition of literacy intervention. The key factors for successful intervention outlined in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (1996, pp. 6-7) include:

- teachers' knowledge of students' language, culture and learning styles;

- teachers' knowledge of the reading process, and their ability to diagnose the nature of a student's difficulty;

- teachers' familiarity with ways of monitoring progress within a public framework of literacy development, several of which now exist in Australia;

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- teachers' purposeful and systematic planning and evaluation across key learning areas (in collaboration with other teachers, the student and the student's parents);

- teachers' selection and planning of effective teaching strategies based on an expanding knowledge and understanding of the student, of text types, of their own teaching practice and when needed, the expertise of specialists;

- home-school liaison, with parents sharing with teachers the literacy practices that work well at home; and

- whole school planning to ensure sufficient continuity of instruction and recording of progress, so that students experiencing difficulty do not 'slip through' the school system.

Identification of children not demonstrating successful literacy development

In this study, each teacher identified children perceived as experiencing difficulties with literacy development. The criteria used for identification varied from teacher to teacher. However teachers commonly cited children's apparent lack of knowledge and understanding about literacy, the inefficient use, or absence of, literacy strategies and apparent problems with attention or attitude to literacy events. In general, teachers saw the identified children as not meeting teacher expectations and less successful in their literacy development than their peers.

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy promotes an integrated view of intervention involving the child, parents or caregivers, teacher, the teaching/learning program and whole school planning. It also advocates that

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interventions take into account the linguistic, cultural, social, emotional, physical and cognitive elements of language learning. Identification of children in need of intervention is based on the teachers' perception of children not meeting their expectations in literacy learning. The package also assumes that early intervention within the mainstream classroom maximises opportunities for students to reach their full potential. In the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package it is claimed that these principles provide the basis for effective and sustainable improvement in literacy development. However the participants are encouraged to explore and develop their own views of literacy intervention using the package as a way of examining their beliefs and practices.

Significance of the Study

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy builds on the understandings and strategies used in *First Steps* (1994), a Western Australian initiative, centrally funded since 1989. The successful implementation of *First Steps*, in many advantaged and disadvantaged schools (Australian Council for Educational Research 1993; Deschamp 1995) has led teachers to look more closely at children experiencing difficulty with literacy learning. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provides a resource that goes beyond *First Steps* in explicitly focussing on underpinning principles for intervention. Given that considerable funds have been used to develop the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package and that funds for dissemination may not be provided after 1996, this pilot study will identify and explore factors that appear critical to the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. This relates to research question one of this study. Question one is:

* *How does one school use the Successful Intervention K-3 package?*

Information will also be analysed to ascertain how well the package has achieved its purposes in one school. The purposes stated in the package are:

> * to provide a resource that will help teachers explore the concepts underlying successful literacy intervention practices.

This purpose relates to research question two in this study which is:

> *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices?*

The second purpose of the package is:

> * to facilitate implementation of an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention in the early years of schooling.

This relates to research question three in this study which is:

> *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy facilitate an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention?*

Due to time constraints the third purpose is not explored explicitly in this research. It is :

> * to assist teachers to provide effective literacy intervention in the mainstream classroom (*Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*, p.5).

Thus, the research is significant as this is the first time that *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* has been used and documented in Western Australia.

The Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy Materials

In February 1990, The National Board of Education and Training published a report by the Schools Council, entitled *Getting It Right - Schools Serving Disadvantaged Communities* which reiterated the effects of poverty and disadvantage on educational outcomes. The report identified the crucial role played by language and literacy in ensuring equitable outcomes for students. This led to the release of a Policy Discussion Green Paper and in 1991 a Policy Information White Paper (Dawkins 1991a) entitled *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP). One of the 1992 ALLP implementation strategies for children's literacy required the collaboration of systems, tertiary institutions and schools and cooperation among states as outlined in separate papers by Milligan (1991) and Nott (1992). These papers were written as a response to the perceived need to develop and implement national literacy programs.

As a result of these papers the Literacy and Learning Program was established and funded, with a focus on early secondary education. In 1993 there was a change in focus and the Literacy and Learning National Component (LLNC) was established to provide a national focus on the early years of schooling. The overall program was managed by Curriculum Corporation and funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training. In the years 1993-1995 a number of products were produced through LLNC to form a professional development program for teachers designed to support literacy teaching focussing on the special needs of K-3 students, in particular those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy,* is one of the LLNC products.

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy consists of a resource book and video developed from data collected in designated disadvantaged schools. The package shows how some schools have dealt successfully with students whose socio-cultural circumstances may have seen them disadvantaged by traditional approaches to schooling. It offers suggestions for implementing planned intervention practices in mainstream classrooms taking into account social and cultural elements of literacy learning. Video excerpts, supported by the resource book also demonstrate how schools have set up structures that build understandings of similarities and differences in home and school literacy practices in order to establish more productive methods of establishing partnerships between schools and their communities. It is interesting to note that throughout the resource book and video the students are constructed as successful learners because of the contexts provided.

Participants using *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* are offered two workshops. The first workshop helps teachers to focus on factors they think are involved in successful literacy intervention for children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning. The second workshop provides a process to develop a whole school approach to literacy intervention and is used if teachers think a whole school approach is appropriate and timely. Participants choose material appropriate to their defined needs.

The next chapter examines some of the available literature in the area of literacy learning with particular reference to the teaching of children from low socio-economic status backgrounds. It also looks at literature pertaining to the action research model as a means of implementing professional development.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

There has been much research and development in the area of literacy teaching in recent years. However, Hornibrook (1995, p.1) suggested that, as the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia found, "There is a paucity of research into schooling, literacy learning and socio-economic disadvantage in the Australian context." This review of current literature focuses on literacy and learning in the primary years of schooling with particular reference to children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Structure of the Review

The review is divided into three sections. The first section sets the context by exploring current perspectives on literacy. It begins by exploring definitions of literacy and briefly addressing the on-going issue of literacy standards. It then examines research literature in the area of literacy teaching as a social and cultural practice with particular reference to teaching children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The second section deals with literacy interventions offered in classrooms.

The third section of the review examines the implications of the research findings for teachers' professional learning with a particular focus on action research as a means of professional development in schools in relation to literacy teaching.

Current Perspectives in Literacy Learning

One of the major tasks of primary school education has been to provide conditions which enhance children's chances of becoming literate adults. Therefore one of the critical question seems to be: 'What is literacy?' The following section outlines some of the significant changes in the way literacy definitions have evolved. These are discussed because it seems that how literacy is thought about is strongly linked to how it is taught.

The Evolving Views of Literacy

The complexities of literacy are reflected in continually evolving definitions. For example, the British Ministry of Education, 1950 described literacy as "the ability to read and write for practical purposes of daily life" and UNESCO in 1951 described a person who is literate as one who, "can, with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life." By 1956, Gray (1956) described 'functional literacy' as "the level of reading and writing needed to function adequately in society." Broader definitions have since emerged but are still contested. It is interesting to contrast earlier literacy definitions with that offered by Wells (1988) who uses the term literacy to "refer to all those uses of language in which its symbolic potential is deliberately exploited as a tool for thinking." (p.84) or with Luke (1993a) who describes literacy as, "a dynamic, evolving social and historical construction. " [It is not seen as] " a fixed body of skills" (p.3). These meanings are further extended by the definition of literacy recorded in *Australia's language:Australian Languages and Literacy Policy* (Dawkins, 1991a).

Even within this definition there are different perceptions of what 'counts' as literacy. For example, 'writing' and 'reading' may be interpreted as diversely as 'the ability to write neatly' and 'read orally with expression' or the ability to "use written text as a means for the construction and reconstruction of statements, messages and meanings" (Luke 1995, p.167). Thus, it could be concluded that definitions and interpretations of what 'counts' as literacy are culturally generated. They depend in perceptions of what is valued in the culture.

In recent literature, Comber, (1994) and Carrington & Luke, (1995) suggest that literacy is indeed a social and cultural construct, that there is not one literacy but co-existing multiple literacies shaped by particular communities and institutions in the context or environment in which the literacy event occurs. This view supports findings by Heath (1983) who found that language and literacy practices in three different communities varied in patterns which related to class, race and religion. Luke (1993b) suggests the selective traditions of school may need to be reexamined. Current definitions provide views of literacy, or literacies that differ, from those espoused in earlier times.

The implications, for schools, of these diverse views of literacy are as complex as literacy itself. Literacy standards are measured according to criteria used for what 'counts' as literacy. As a consequence, diverse understandings about what 'counts' as literacy have led to a number of debates on 'standards of literacy' in Australia (Freebody & Welch, 1993). Different perceptions of what 'counts' as literacy could at least partly explain numerous claims that literacy standards are falling.

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The Continuing Debate on Literacy Standards

Literacy debates are not new and what counts as literacy has long been an area contested by academic theorists, teachers and the public. Literature of particular interest to this study includes that which analyses criticisms of literacy education and standards (Green Hodgens & Luke, 1995; Freebody & Welch, 1993: Cairney, 1992 and Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991). It appears that perceptions about what constitutes literacy and illiteracy have been linked to major changes in Australia and have been shaped by social, cultural and economic circumstances over the years. The literature indicates that criticisms are generally sociologically and ideologically driven and almost always imply that declining literacy standards have caused, or are the cause of, society's social, cultural and economic problems. It appears that in times of economic or political change there are calls for a return to 'the basics'. If folk law is to be believed, schools are considered to be the cause of, and the cure for, economic and social ills (Luke 1993a). Clearly, recent calls for national and state-wide testing regimes could be the result of change in Australia's economic and social conditions, in a move towards economic rationalism. For what ever reason there app.:ars to be an attempt to show that literacy is in decline.

The literature also provides insights into the problems faced by students who are perceived as being disadvantaged by low socio-economic circumstance, language or cultural difference. It is interesting to note that, as Boomer (1991) argues, literacy debates are always diagnosed downwards. It appears that less powerful or less dominant community groups, are unlikely to accuse the supposedly more advantaged sections of the community, of being illiterate.

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Indeed, as Flores, Cousin, and Diaz (1991, p.372) claim it appears that, "blaming the children's parents, the culture, and their language for their lack of success in school has been a classic strategy used to subordinate and continue to fault the victim."

Several researchers examine the different ways in which school contexts construct literacy practices and sanction what 'counts' as literacy thus determining successful literacy learners (Comber,1994; Luke, 1993a; Baker & Freebody, 1993). In this section I will examine literature which explores literacy teaching and learning as a social and cultural practice. Of particular interest is the literature concerning the role of the teacher in children's literacy development, the links between home and school literacy practices and how what 'counts' as literacy is constructed. These areas appear most relevant to the selection of the type, quality and effectiveness of literacy offered to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Literacy Teaching and Learning as a Social and Cultural Practice

When discussing literacy teaching and learning as a social and cultural practice it appears that many different theoretical perspectives and definitions of literacy have informed the structure, objectives and approaches of literacy teaching in everyday classrooms at different times. For example, a study conducted by Badger, Comber and Weeks (1993) surveyed the literacy teaching practices in early years of schooling classrooms of disadvantaged schools across Australia. The study sought to identify practices that were regarded by teachers as useful and effective enough to use in their day to day classes. The national survey, undertaken

in a range of non government and government schools, showed that teachers drew from a wide range of strategies representing a mix of theories and philosophies. The most predominant methodology was a 'whole language' approach, however aspects of a 'genre' approach were evident. There was also plenty of evidence that showed teachers did explicitly teach the conventions of language such as spelling, punctuation and grammar (1993, p.27). The range of practices, such as modelled writing, joint construction of texts, shared reading, teaching word building and phonics and teaching spelling strategies, reported in the study, indicates that teachers are pragmatic and eclectic in their approach to teaching. It also highlights the complexity of literacy programs that teachers planned for their students.

Current debates on teaching of literacy frequently revert to discussions about the effectiveness of particular approaches, often polarising 'top down' approaches, such as whole language approaches, that are said to emphasise meaning, and 'bottom up' methods that appear to focus on phonics or word level reading. For example, in research conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research, (deLemos & Harvey Beavis, 1995) it was argued that declining reading standards are due to the neglect of phonics by whole language teachers. The report cited Donaldson (1989) who asserts that if, as they claim, phonics are taught by whole language teachers then "this teaching is neither structured, nor consistent enough to be effective" (p.28), thus resulting in lesser reading skills. A recent review of research into the importance of syntactic and phonological awareness in early literacy learning Rohl and Milton (1993) found that both were important in the development of the reading process. Indeed Rohl and Milton suggested ways of supporting

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syntactic and phonological awareness through integrated everyday classroom strategies. Few would argue that knowledge of these decoding and encoding skills is not essential to the competent reader, however, as van Kraayenoord (1995) contends there appears to be no clear research evidence that remedial programs based solely on techniques for developing decontextualised phonological skills are particularly effective for children with reading difficulties.

Recent arguments about literacy and language practices, focus on the social construction of literacy. Walton (1993, p.44), for example argues for more unambiguous pedagogies that "confront the social, political and ideological contexts of literacy learning" and also criticises natural learning approaches because they are based on the assumption that students come from literate cultural backgrounds. Others add their criticism; for example, Gilbert (1989) criticises the process approach because it fails to address the social and cultural aspects of classroom literacies. She concludes that schools need to address these aspects by providing more explicit teaching of the texts that have impact in the classroom.

It is interesting to note that according to Comber (1994) the major moves in literacy teaching today are toward:

- explicit pedagogies to equip students to use dominant literate genres;

- pedagogies which have students become researchers of language and literacy;

- pedagogies which incorporate community language and literacy practices; and

- pedagogies which critically question the power effects of literate practices (p. 31).

Although there appears to be a range of competing, although not mutually exclusive, pedagogies that claim to empower disadvantaged students, it seems that context-specific school and classroom based investigations are necessary to inform teaching practice in different contexts. This places great responsibility on teachers to be discerning as they develop programs which are equitable and fair to all students. As a result, it could be said that critically reflective teaching practice is central to the development of effective language and literacy practices.

This notion is supported by a move away from curriculum directed teaching to outcomes based teaching. There has been a proliferation of national and state outcomes frameworks provided to inform teachers in both their teaching practice and the assessment of students. These include Student *Outcome Statements* (1994) and *First Steps Developmental Continua* (1994) as well as various state and national versions of similar frameworks. When examining earlier versions or drafts of these, Boomer (1991) and Reid (1991) contended that models of broad literacy assessment frameworks, such as these, might be useful for curriculum development but at the same time are problematic because of diverse cultures and backgrounds of children. The question of the efficacy of such frameworks in different educational contexts is still a contested area. This is evidenced by the reluctance of states to agree about either the contents or the use of a national curriculum or assessment framework suggested in Dawkins (1991).

In schools it is teachers who construct particular literacy practices and use direct and indirect ways of socialising their students. Research indicates that some teachers may welcome opportunities to further consider whether or not children whose home activities differ greatly from that of school are affected or marginalised by participation in particular literacy practices (Hornibrook, 1995; Williams, 1991). The literature identifies Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander children as a particular group likely to suffer as a result of a mismatch of home and school cultures (McKeown & Freebody 1988; Harris 1984a). It would appear that, by helping teachers to reflect on how they are 'doing school' and to think about the types of experience these practices assume, there will be a greater focus on teaching practices that incorporate a child's particular strengths and interests (Malin, 1990). Luke (1995), for example suggests that one way of changing the literacies which could be constructed, is to make community texts the basis of study. In this way, he claims, the child is not socialised only as a school student, but also as a member of a valued home community.

It could be claimed that research has shown that an important consideration for educators is the relationship between the children's home contexts and the context of school. The literature in this area indicates a need to explore the competing perceptions of what counts as literacy in different communities and to understand how these perceptions influence the teaching of literacy skills. In addition, there is much evidence to support the premise that a true partnership between family and school enhances children's chances of developing successful literacy practices (Cairney, 1994). Heath (1983) studied home literacy practices in three different communities and found that literacy practices varied in patterns that related to class, race and religion. It

appeared from her investigations that the schools in these areas hardly acknowledged the different home backgrounds of the students and as a consequence particular groups appeared to be disadvantaged by school practices. Hill (1992), reported similar findings in an Australian study which investigated literacy proficiencies of students in poverty in relation to the national profile and state assessment and reporting frameworks.

It is apparent, from the available literature, that teachers and schools have an enormous impact on literacy as a social and cultural practice, that is 'how school is done'. There is a range of research (Harris 1995; Delena 1992; Cairney 1992; Gee 1990; Malin 1990; Delpit 1988) indicating that students whose home literacy practices are similar to those in school do better in the early years of schooling. Therefore schools which look at community practices in order to be aware of, and responsive to, their communities will be in a position to provide literacy contexts that will help students operate as successful literacy learners. Students from diverse backgrounds can then be supported as they learn how to participate in the culture of school.

It seems that much is involved in the selection of literacy and language practices that meet all of the demands of literacy, as it is defined today, and this places great demands on teachers. Perhaps, as Cairney (1994) contends, there is too much time spent in methodological debates and not enough time for schools to engage in "social evolutionary development by providing opportunities and alternative practices that challenge existing educational practices" (p.8).

It can be seen that literacy, by definition, is complex and its acquisition involves a range of skills, knowledge, strategies and attitudes. It seems that teachers use a variety of strategies indicating no hard or fast adherence to particular literacy theories (Badger, Comber & Weeks, 1993). It also appears that competent teachers tailor their knowledge and understanding to meet the needs of particular children. This appears to be an effective way to proceed and reflects the diversity of students and the complexity of literacy learning.

The Influence of the Teachers in Literacy Development

Teachers construct both the students as learners and the contexts in which children learn so the influence of teachers is obviously a major factor in learning. Therefore it is reasonable to explore some of the factors which may shape teachers' beliefs and practices. For example, some research, (Flores, Cousin & Diaz 1991) and (Freebody & Ludwig 1995) found, that some teachers held stereotypical views of children's literacy potential according to a child's social class and cultural background.

In addition, the literature examining the role of the teacher in determining the programs offered in the classroom (particularly to students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning) was particularly interesting and relevant to this research. It suggests that many teachers are not aware of, or do not take account of literacy competencies that children bring to school. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is potential for the creation of deficit myths about children from designated disadvantaged backgrounds which will greatly influence the programs offered to these children.

This view is supported by evidence presented in a two year ethnographic study of designated disadvantaged and non disadvantaged schools in Queensland where Freebody and Ludwig (1995) found that:

> Most school personnel clearly and persistently generated categorisations associated with socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, and general features of students' home background as a point from which to interpret students literacy achievement.... The school's organisation and activities were rarely held responsible by school personnel. The role and conventions of the school went unquestioned (p.4).

In addition, a report on a national survey of literacy teaching and learning conducted in classified disadvantaged schools by Badger,Comber and Weeks (1993) found that:

> Teachers used what could be described as a discourse of disadvantage in regard to students' home backgrounds. For example, they wrote of the 'lack', 'limited', 'non-stimulating' and 'deprived'. These home experiences were translated they believed to students who were 'slow', 'language delayed','inappropriate', language deprived' and often having 'low expectations' (p.79).

Research by Tizard and Hughes (1986); Cairney (1992) and Breen et al. (1994) indicates that such assumptions may be unfounded, misleading and harmful to literacy attainment. These studies indicate that low socio economic status and ethnicity are not automatic indicators of home literacy disadvantage.

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The Western Australian study by Breen et al. (1994) examines urban, rural and remote communities and describes home literacy practices in order to "enable exploration of similarities and differences in these practices across communities" (p.1). The study, involving twenty three case studies, looks at similarities and differences in literacy practices between urban and rural communities. It also looks at the possible influence of variations in language background upon literacy practices. The findings appear to indicate that there was no clear evidence of differing literacy practices that could be assigned to location alone and little conclusive evidence linking social class to literacy practices. Apparently there are similarities and differences in literacy practices between home and school across all contexts.

Furthermore, Freeman (1982) argues that deficit views of children who are not from mainstream cultures often leads to inappropriate classification of children as 'at risk'. On the other hand, Cormack (1992) takes a slightly different perspective as he explains ways in which schools erect barriers to literacy learning thus contributing to problems with students' literacy attainment. While Delena (1992) offers a process framework to explore ways in which teachers construct 'at riskness' in an attempt to help them :

> make explicit their assumptions about the curriculum that is appropriate for a group of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds...[in the hope that]...They will confront the issue of what they can do to meet the needs of children who don't meet their expectations (p.193).

Cambourne (1990) also challenges deficit explanations for school failure that "seek to locate the cause of failure in some flaw, weakness or deficit within the learner or the learner's culture" (p.290). He asserts that a deficit explanation

of literacy failure is based on a theory of learning which is inconsistent with what we currently know about the factors which shape and direct human learning. Findings such as these are disturbing, particularly when combined with other evidence that suggests that the way various students, their cultures or community groups, are viewed by teachers, directly influences the types of programs that are implemented.

In the light of the research findings mentioned, it could be argued that there is a need to provide time and resources to enable teachers to examine their assumptions about students' lives inside and outside of school because as Hornibrook (1995) finds "Teachers shape identity, not just knowledge and power" (p.6). This view is supported by Luke (1993a) who asserts:

> the construction and distribution of literacy has less to do with students' 'individual difference', 'natural development',and 'teacher personal preference' and more to do with stratifying a student population into different kinds and levels of achievement, occupational futures and hence social classes (p.16).

As Slavin (1987) found, teacher expectation of student attainment is a powerful determinant of student outcomes, but clearly as Hornibrook (1995) contends "what counts as literacy for students from low socio-economic [and/or diverse cultural and linguistic] backgrounds is equally powerful" (p.1). She makes a case for a particular type of professional development for teachers stating that "What counts as literacy for teachers is largely shaped by the professional development offered them, but few professional development courses relate school practice in literacy to teachers' perceptions of students' abilities" (p. 6).

Literature in this area (Cairney 1992; Malin 1990) indicates that there is a need to explore the competing perceptions of the what 'counts' as literacy in different communities and to understand how these perceptions influence the teaching of literacy skills. In addition, there appears to be some evidence to support the premise that a true partnership between family and school enhances children's chances of developing successful literacy practices. Such partnerships may also help define what 'counts' as literacy in different communities.

Australia today consists of a diversity of cultures and languages consequently teachers are increasingly challenged about what constitutes literacy and how literacy is taught. The literature goes some way to explaining why particular teaching approaches may marginalise some children and affect their literacy attainment. In addition, there appears to be substantial evidence that teachers hold the power to privilege particular students or groups of students.

Further research into the factors that shape teachers' beliefs and practices is needed, particularly to investigate the effects of classroom discourse on literacy achievements of disadvantaged students. Recent research seems to describe diversity in home literacy practices as 'differences' rather than deficits: whether teachers perceive diversity in this way appears problematic.

Literacy Interventions

Approaches to literacy teaching and learning have changed over the years. It follows that literacy intervention programs have also changed. This is apparent in changing educational philosophies, views of literacy, and from

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research into literacy development that results in different pedagogy. The literature in this area indicates that the underpinning theory of literacy intervention programs very much dictates the forms they take. I will briefly outline some of the major changes and discuss problems that may have been encountered by certain groups of children.

For convenience, I have given each approach a broad name and era although I understand that within each approach there were many theorists and proponents, many different interpretations of the pedagogy involved, and different times when particular approaches dominated in different contexts. The following section examines literacy interventions within three broad approaches to teaching and learning. The broad approaches include the traditional transmission teaching common in the 1950s and 1960s; child centred approaches of the 1970s and 1980s; and genre and critical literacy approaches of the 1990s.

Educational Developments in Relation to Intervention in the 1950s and 1960s

Literacy teaching in the 1950s reflected a fairly narrow view of what is involved in becoming literate. The theorists in this era saw reading as decoding and subscribed to what is known colloquially known as a 'bottom up' theory of the reading process. The term 'bottom up' refers to the flow of information in the processing system from small part to whole text. As Sloan and Whitehead (1986) explain it suggests that reading begins with sounds, which blend to become words, words link to become sentences and so on. The final result is that meaning is made. The resultant teaching practices included a phonic approach and the stimulus response 'look and say'

methods of teaching promoted by a behaviourist view of learning.

It was assumed that some children, especially migrant children and those from low socio-economic backgrounds would only need basic literacy skills as they took factory jobs and became 'assimilated' into mainstream Australia. It seems that students were viewed as raw materials to be standardised, inspected, tested and controlled (Cooper & Henderson 1995). Little was offered to help children accommodate school. This resulted in the same kinds of literacies being offered to different sections of society. For example it was assumed that migrants would acquire English within the regular class, with no special treatment. Teachers did not receive additional training to assist them to accommodate the needs of children for whom English was a foreign language. Grade retention was the most common way of dealing with children with special needs including those who didn't speak English.

Students who failed to meet the grade level were talked about in deficit terms, based on results of psychological tests. They were given sets of graded exercises that involved matching, following directions and phonic practice to cure their 'disability'. As Schonell (1951, p.7) wrote: "Certain backward readers require special scientific diagnosis to discover their difficulties and to plan methods to overcome their handicaps". This model of teaching relied heavily on graded structured reading schemes and phonics-based texts especially written for learning to read. Beginning readers were tested for their readiness to read (Schonell 1951, p. 29). In hindsight, some of the test items appeared to have little to do with literacy acquisition. For example, one 'readiness list' included items such as ability to skip, colour in and arrange beads (Cole 1957, p.146). Tests were generally carried out after six weeks in

year 1. There is a possibility that some children could have been disadvantaged by these 'readiness to read' tests because, having failed the test, children were considered not ready to read and reading instruction was delayed.

Tests administered to children who appeared not to be succeeding in literacy learning focused almost entirely on cognitive aspects of literacy acquisition and were used to assign students to low reading groups. These tests may have been culturally inappropriate because they used language that privileged some students. Thus it is conceivable that certain groups of children were poorly served and were wrongly relegated to lower level classes in some schools.

Educational Developments in Relation to Intervention in the 1970s and 1980s

During the 1960s the definition of literacy became more complex and widened to include all modes of written and spoken communication that made it possible for people to "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in their group and community" (UNESCO 1970).

In response, during the 1970s schools added a social purpose to their economic role. Schools became the institution that cared for victims of social injustice and teachers became carers as well as educators. Research led teachers to develop programs based on child centred learning, including 'the process approach' and 'whole language teaching'. Holdaway (1980); Smith (1978); Goodman (1976); Weaver (1994) and Cambourne (1988) were

prominent proponents of these approaches.

The whole language or 'natural' approach to teaching is one which reflects constructivist theories of literacy learning. Both Holdaway (1980) and Cambourne (1988) offered models of teaching that implied that literacy proficiency could be acquired relatively naturally in much the same way as oral language is acquired. These 'top down' approaches emphasised that literacy is socially constructed and that reading begins in the head of the reader. They assumed that prior knowledge is a starting point for making meaning. The approaches are described as socio-psycholinguistic, indicating increased understanding of the complexity involved in literacy acquisition.

This era of reform has been criticised in a number of areas. The first criticism came from educators who believed that there is too much freedom and 'the basics' were being ignored (Donaldson 1989). The second area of criticism came from the genrist and social literacy theorists who claimed that these approaches assume that students have background knowledge which is typically white and middle class. They claim that without that background so called 'natural learning' is unlikely to occur. Natural, for whom, they asked (Luke 1993b; Martin & Rothery 1985). The third area of criticism was from those who felt that even the definition of literacy was flawed. It was too wide and led to a jumble of information and pedagogy (Reid 1994).

During the 1970s and 1980s many special programs were invoked to cater for the range of students in schools. Remedial classes were set up and special education units were established. There were classes for gifted and talented students. Interestingly, the methods of identification of these groups were

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often the same psychological tests prominent in the 1950s and the labelling continued.

Concerns relating to literacy acquisition by designated disadvantaged students led some schools to assume that there must be a single program of instruction that would solve literacy learning problems. As a direct consequence students were labelled and placed in withdrawal model 'remedial' programs or on-going permanent low ability groups with a heavy focus on the cognitive and psychological aspects of reading and writing.

Many decontextualised, basic skills and direct instruction programs were used in these situations, reflecting a reductionist view of literacy and learning (Gronlund & Linn, 1985, pp. 501-511). Some programs provided set text and teacher dialogue regardless of context. These commercially produced direct instruction sequential skills remedial programs are still in use today.

There have been many studies into the effectiveness of structured, sequential reading methods such as (Distar Reading 1972). Findings documented in Wang, Reynolds & Walberg (1987); Hawke, Maggs & Waugh (1979) and Lockery and Maggs (1982) and others appear to show positive gains in both the short and long term. Gersten and Keating (1987, pp.28-31) also found that direct instruction students scored better on standardised test than their counterparts. The tests could be seen to favour the type of program and once again the complexity of what 'counts' as literacy is in question. Is literacy about getting all the words right?

Criticisms of commercially produced, direct instruction programs focus on their

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prescriptive nature, rigid format and lack of recognition for individual difference. However, Stanovich (1991) found that they may be beneficial when given in addition to, not in place of regular class instruction. Good and Brophy (1991, pp.327-335) argue some outcomes are disturbing as well as positive.

Literature also suggests that some structured approaches can result in students being given less time to practise actually reading and writing, potentially leading to less improvement. Savage (1987) and Slavin (1991), for example argue, in reviewing basic skills remedial programs conducted in the United States of America, that such programs could be seen as exacerbating disadvantage in language and literacy development because they ignore or play down literacy as a social practice. They suggest that there may be more positive and constructive ways of recognising how children learn and what children can do, so that literacy development is supported to an optimum level. Martin (1988) and Taylor (1989) indicate that the validity of reductionist views which claim that children learn to read and write by acquiring an ordered sequence of skills (often out of context) should be challenged. It appears then, that these programs can be effective but should be used judiciously.

It is not surprising that teaching approaches based on skills-based activities could have led to some literacy failure if, as Weaver (1994) warns, some of these methods of teaching may further disadvantage under achieving students. She asserts this mode of teaching is part of a political agenda which is eager to 'preserve the docility and obedience-on the part of the lower classes'. (p.297). She refers to so-called critical theory to support her

hypothesis. Further evidence presented recently by researchers such as Comber (1994), Freebody & Ludwig (1995) appears to strengthen Weaver's argument. It might be concluded that rather than working towards equity in education such approaches have "provided for communities of learners that tended to reflect rather than erase Australia's social difference and cultural diversity" (Green, Hodgens & Luke 1995, p.4).

During the 1980s and early 1990s several programs emerged based on 'natural' and 'whole language' theories. These included intervention programs such as Marie Clay's *Reading Recovery* (1979) and *First Steps* (1994) both of which were recommended by House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training Report, (1993) in *The Literacy Challenge*, as desirable early intervention strategies for Australian schools. It appears that the programs have some similarities and some differences.

Reading Recovery programs require teachers to identify students who appear not to be experiencing success with literacy by the end of their first year at school. Students are then tutored one-to-one in 30-40 minute sessions each day by a trained tutor. Each child is tutored for between 16 and 20 weeks. Results indicate that many students benefit from this program. However, there are a number of areas that are problematic with this and other programs that rely on one to one tuition. It appears likely that any one to one tuition will usually be beneficial to students regardless of the methods used but is it cost effective and equitable in a school system?

It has also been suggested that because *Reading Recovery* programs are

available at a specific year level "teachers could be tempted to relinquish responsibility for particular children in the knowledge that they would be 'picked up' by *Reading Recovery* the following year" (Reading Recovery tutor, personal comment, September 17, 1995). Furthermore, programs such as this appear unsustainable at a whole school level. For example, in *Reading Recovery* programs tutors work with an average of four students each day for each semester which equates to eight children per year per teacher. Moreover, other teachers in the school may, or may not, be able to continue assisting children who require more than that input. It appears logical to assume that continuity and consistency of instruction from teacher to teacher and year to year would enhance the chances of continued literacy development for those students perceived as having difficulties. At the moment, *Reading Recovery* does not seem to address this aspect.

Whilst *Reading Recovery* has apparently shown that students in a one to one situation make measurable literacy gains, it could be assumed that one to one tuition is usually beneficial with most teaching methods. However, it is questionable whether or not such tuition is cost effective. As Hiebert (1994) concludes unless the gains are sustained the intervention cannot be considered successful. There is also research (Slavin, 1987; Cambourne, 1988; Weaver, 1994) that questions the social and emotional effects of withdrawing children from their home classes and placing them in specially labelled groups. This aspect could be examined in further research, from the point of view of the students as well as the relinquishing teacher.

In recent research Freebody (1990, p.262), and de Lemos and Harvey-Beavis (1995, p.26) intimate that there is need for a review of research findings into

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Reading Recovery on the grounds that some earlier research claims may be based on flawed research design and analysis.

The other program that was recommended, *First Steps* , was developed in Western Australia "to provide effective classroom strategies and reduce the need for often ineffective intervention programs" (Commonwealth Government of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1993 p.49). *First Steps* is a professional development program for classroom teachers which provides maps of literacy development and strategies for teachers to use with all children within the classroom context. Much anecdotal evidence was forwarded to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training claiming gains in children's literacy standards due to the implementation of *First Steps.* In addition, research carried out by the Australian Council for Educational Research (1992) into the impact of *First Steps* on the reading and writing ability of year five students provided some evidence to suggest that *First Steps* has led to an improvement in reading and writing. Data was used to compare *First Steps* schools and non *First Steps* schools using TORCH tests (Mossenson, Hall & Masters) in year five classes. The researchers concluded that there was evidence to suggest that: "*First Steps* may be making an important difference in the reading ability of students...that the mean TORCH reading scores of students had moved from 'low' to 'average' in schools that had been involved in *First Steps*" (p.37).

Criticisms of *First Steps* came from two major groups. Those who believed

phonics had not been sufficiently well addressed[1] and those who believed the socio-cultural aspects of literacy teaching and learning have been overlooked. I will examine the criticisms separately.

First, I will address the issue of the failure to teach phonics. One submission claimed that *First Steps* had failed to address "the urgent need, at both pre-service and in service levels, for teachers to be made aware of the implications of the body of research into phonics instruction and procedures for teaching phonics explicitly and early in reading instruction." (Commonwealth Government of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training (1993 p.52).

Rohl and Milton (1993); Bradley and Bryant (1985); Tunmer, Herriman and Nesdale (1988) and others would agree syntactic and phonological awareness appear to be particularly important when children begin to read and write. I examined the *First Steps* (1994) material to see how each of these areas had been addressed. I found the original criticisms difficult to substantiate. Ideas for teachers suggested in the *Spelling, Writing* and *Reading Continuum* books in the first three phases of development incorporated a comprehensive range of activities including many of those suggested by Rohl and Milton (1993, pp.163-166) "to help young children become phonologically and syntactically aware". There were also many other related suggestions. For example, each phase of the *Spelling Continuum* includes a chart showing how a teacher may help build a child's knowledge of phonology. In addition, the *Spelling Resource* book (pp.40-50) focuses

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[1]Two examples are cited in submissions to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training and published in The Literacy Challenge (1993). One submission is from Edith Cowan University and the other from a Tasmanian remedial teacher.

specifically on teaching graphophonic relationships. This book also offers more specific help for children having difficulties with spelling (pp.80-86) and includes quite a comprehensive table of common visual and sound patterns found in English. In addition, the *Writing Resource* book (pp.151-158) outlines numerous sentence manipulation activities which support the development of syntactic awareness. The *Reading Resource* book offers a range of activities to develop both syntactic and phonological awareness (pp.137-207). It appears therefore, that the teaching of phonological awareness and syntactical awareness are included in the *First Steps* material.

It must be mentioned that the critical submissions cited were made based on an early edition of the material. These early editions (1992) were written to accompany workshops for Western Australian teachers. The books were not sold or available separately. During the workshops, specific reference was made to the need to include explicit teaching of both phonics and syntactic awareness (*First Steps Presenters' Notes*, 1992, unpublished). It is possible that critics reviewed the material without attending the workshops. Nevertheless, it appears that in later editions of the *First Steps* material (available for general sale) there is more information about the explicit teaching of phonics than that found in the earlier edition.

It is interesting to note that Weaver (1994, pp.189-215) reviews a number of studies into the complexity of phonics and phonic rules and offers a number of reasons "for not teaching phonics relationships intensively and systematically, much less for teaching phonic rules" (p.197). Thus it appears that development of phonological awareness is essential to reading success but the debate about how to develop this awareness continues.

The criticisms related to the lack of attention to the socio-cultural aspects of literacy also appear to be partly addressed in changes to the *First Steps* material in the 1994 edition. This edition includes some socio-cultural aspects of literacy development. For example, a new chapter in the *Reading Resource* book deals with supporting diversity through reading, writing and spelling. Additional material was also added after a further study into the use of the *Writing Developmental Continuum* and the *Spelling Developmental Continuum* with children from non English speaking backgrounds. This two year study, *The Highgate Project* (1994) provides a much needed socio-cultural perspective to the program.[2]

There has been much research into the implementation of *First Steps* and its effect on teaching practices [3] but little rigorous research is available on which to make judgments about the effectiveness of the *First Steps* program, specifically for children from low socio economic or culturally diverse backgrounds. Many of the strategies suggested in *First Steps* have been used in special classes for some time, the difference seems to be that *First Steps* explains how they can be used within the context of the regular classroom thus avoiding the discriminatory practice of 'withdrawal'.

Current Educational Developments in Relation to Intervention

The definition of literacy has widened in the 1990s to explicitly include thinking skills. The social changes and shifting demographics in Australia

[2] Supporting linguistic and cultural diversity through First Steps-The Highgate Project (1994) recommended modifications to *First Steps* specifically for children from non English speaking backgrounds.

[3] Five reports were commissioned and received in 1995 by the Education Department of Western Australia. They all pertained to the implementation of First Steps (Deschamp 1995).

have resulted in researchers from the 1980s and 1990s examining groups of students who consistently seem to be failed by the education system. In these decades families appear to be more mobile and many children do not stay in the same neighbourhood or have the same family members throughout their school lives. Children are confronted with values that may not match their family values. In addition, the amount of new knowledge in the world is increasing dramatically and most of the jobs that students will do have not been invented yet (Cooper & Henderson, 1995).

As a result, Luke (1993a) asserts that schools must recognise that there is a range of literacies. This is necessary firstly, because the number of children entering schools with linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds is increasing and secondly because society in general is changing. All students, Luke contends, need to have access to the genres of power in schools and in everyday life. They need to access to what Freebody (1992, p.49) has identified as the four roles of a reader in a literate society. These roles add new dimensions, that of a text user and text analyst to the more traditional roles of code breaker and text participant. It seems clear that the role and purpose of schools is to construct a far different student than before. The effective student will take responsibility for his/her learning; be able to critically evaluate and use a range of school texts as well as community texts and appreciate and celebrate diversity in society.

If this is the vision of the 1990s and beyond what are the implications for educators of designated disadvantaged groups? Literacy intervention programs such as those provided for Aboriginal Australians, an educationally disadvantaged cultural group in our society, have been questioned by

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researchers Eades (1991); Malin (1990); and Harris (1984a); (1984b); (1985). Some programs, such as Brian Gray's Traeger Park Language Program (1985a) (1985b), which focus on aboriginal students who are not achieving well at school, address socio-cultural as well as linguistic aspects of literacy by encouraging teachers to use shared concentrated language experiences as a spring board for relevant reading and writing activities and also provide scaffolds for learning. This approach supports the use of language familiar to students rather than relying on school language which may be unfamiliar and inaccessible to some.

Another program being trialled in Western Australia, *FELIKS* or *Fostering English Language in the Kimberley* (Hudson & Berry, 1994), helps aboriginal students and their teachers to distinguish between the Aboriginal English and Kriol spoken by some groups, and school English. Anecdotal evidence appears to suggest that there have been some successful literacy outcomes.

These contextually based intervention programs that equip teachers with strategies to apply to their particular environments appear to address the needs of some teachers in designated disadvantaged schools.

As Comber (1994) concludes :

> Finding practices which help students in socio-economically disadvantaged areas is not simply a matter of finding one true literacy pedagogy and then ensuring that all teachers perform it. How one teacher constructs a whole language or genre or critical literacy will differ from another. There is increasing acceptance of the view that totalising or universal theories do not work in different contexts. Contexts are not static, they are continually renegotiated by participants (p.31).

This section has reviewed current literature on literacy which has defined literacy as a socially constructed phenomena. If the need to recognise and respond to 'different literacies' that children bring to school is accepted, then many teachers may need support in order to bring about change in their beliefs and practices. This is not an easy task, as Fullan (1989 p.149) concludes, "the process of curriculum change is complex and the search to understand it continues." As a consequence, there appears to be a continuing need to search for successful curriculum implementation models and effective ongoing professional development for teachers so that they can meet the needs of students in different contexts. It is possible that these needs have provided the impetus for the current focus on teacher research as an agency for change in school-based action research projects.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

Action research is growing in prominence in education. This section of the literature review explores the process of action research in relation to change in literacy practices in disadvantaged schools.

What is Action Research?

Action research is described as both a process of change and a process of professional learning. Boomer (1987, p.8) contends that action research "is a deliberate group or personally owned and conducted, solution-oriented investigation." Thus, in the context of schools, the objective of action research is to explore classroom or school issues or problems in a collaborative, systematic and responsive way. Although the approach is collaborative, the

action research is achieved through the critically examined actions of individual group members. Thus, according to Kemmis & McTaggart (1988):

> Action research is a form of collective self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality of their own social or educational practices as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p.5).

Grundy (1995) sees the aims of action research as improvement and involvement because it involves both teachers and principals in the conduct of research that is relevant to their particular context. Action research is a constructivist approach based on the assumption that participants bring personal knowledge to the task and are capable of making wise decisions based on that knowledge. A crucial feature of action research is the understanding that when knowledge arises from critically reflective practice it can be acknowledged as authentic. As Grundy and Kemmis (1981, p.85) assert about action research, "The actor alone can be the final arbiter of the truth of an interpretation, not rules or principles or theories." In other words, action research acknowledges teachers' professional judgment.

The process of action research is described as cyclical in nature and generally moves through recognisable phases of reflection, responsive planning, action, and reflection. It begins with the identification of an issue or problem. Following the identification of a common concern, participants describe their concerns and move between discussing (reflecting) and collecting evidence to define an area to target for future action. Next, participants plan together. Planning includes both decisions about actions,

and ways of monitoring the actions. The collection of evidence is used to plan further actions. Group members then act to implement the plan and observe either individually or collectively guided, but are not bound by their plan. They reflect together and reformulate plans which, it is claimed, are often more critically informed than the previous plans. The cycle or loop continues.

How is Action Research Used in Schools?

Action research has been used in schools to develop and implement school improvement plans, to develop curriculum and to guide policy decisions. The action research literature indicates that involvement in this type of research leads to changes in practices, 'improvement' in the situation and in better understanding of both the practices and situation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). It is claimed that this results in worthwhile changes that can be supported and sustained as colleagues work collaboratively. Advocates of action research would agree with Britton (1987, p.15) who claims that "what the teacher does not achieve in the classroom cannot be achieved by anyone else - by a department head, a principal, the writers of statutory guidelines, or anybody else". Thus, it is considered that involvement in action research provides a means of school development.

According to Cooper & Boyd (1996) action research involves a mixing of internally gathered on-site information and externally researched information. The collection of data in the school context takes many different forms. It might include items such as anecdotal records, field notes, student samples, photographs, portfolios of work, journal entries, interviews, questionnaires

and surveys or any other forms deemed useful to the participants. External information could be in the form of journal articles, texts, research papers, videos, student samples, network meetings or visits to other sites. The diversity of data from both sources goes a long way towards countering criticisms of action research as somehow less worthy than other research, Criticisms of action research are, that the value is confined to those conducting it and that the results are somewhat dependent on the research training of the teachers involved. It is claimed that, "True progress requires the development of sound theories having implications for many classrooms, not just one or two" (Gay, 1992 p.11). However, given the diversity of school contexts and the competing educational theories, action research often provides practical answers to concerns that can't wait for the development of theoretical solutions.

Why Choose Action Research as Professional Development?

In a survey conducted in 170 designated disadvantaged schools across Australia, by Badger, Comber and Weeks (1993, p.10), teachers advised that they wanted future in service programs to fulfil the following criteria.
The programs would:

- be relevant to teachers in disadvantaged schools;

- provide a facility for ongoing participation for teachers;

- use processes which encourage interchange of ideas and experiences between teachers; and

- include information about current research in literacy, language and disadvantage.

An action research approach to professional development in schools,

appears to address the criteria requested by teachers.

In this chapter I have outlined the changing definitions of literacy and reviewed some of the changes in literacy interventions and pedagogy particularly related to children from low status socio-economic backgrounds. Of course, there can be no change in pedagogy unless teachers have the opportunity to improve their knowledge base. This leads into Chapter 3 which describes and justifies the methodology used in this study where teachers extended their knowledge base by conducting research for their own use.

Chapter 3

Methodology Adopted

In this section I will briefly outline the rationale for choosing the methodology, describe the study sample and then detail the procedure taken. Following this I will specify the data collection and data analysis used in the study.

Rationale of the Study

The study is a case study in which teachers used *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials. A case study was chosen because it provides a detailed and in-depth account of the implementation of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. The data is descriptive and jointly constructed by the researcher and the teachers, using a number of different methods of data collection. The study will provide information for others who may wish to use *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* but, because of the nature of action research, results are unlikely to be replicated in different school contexts. Although this is a limitation of the study, other schools may find the description and analysis of the process undertaken useful when reviewing intervention in their own context.

Method of Investigation

In the light of findings from a number of studies, action research seemed to be an ideal way of using *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* for two main reasons. The first was that the content of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* includes workshops in which teachers are required to work together to reflect,

observe, plan, act, observe and reflect in order to make changes both at a whole school level and at the classroom level. This method closely followed the action research process described by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988 p.14). *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provides a framework for discussion where teachers have the opportunity to reflect on and analyse their practice using an action research cycle. The second reason was that the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials relies on the premise that teachers are keen to review and modify their practice in order to change. The package provides a range of ideas in the book and on video but is not meant to be used prescriptively, rather as a resource from which schools can choose relevant parts. This enables teachers to conduct their own research and develop new understandings as they systematically reflect on their theories in relation to their own practice. Studies by Bennett (1995); Grundy (1995); and Cooper and Boyd (1996) show that as a result of participation in action research programs teachers judiciously extended their instructional repertoire and implemented and sustained innovations they were researching, if they found them to be effective in the classroom.

In this study I was involved as a facilitator and critical friend. I was able to take on the role of on-going consultant because I had more flexible working conditions than the group of teachers. My role was to help focus the teachers' actions and allow time for meaningful reflection. I did this by organising meetings, collecting and collating evidence on behalf of the group, undertaking observations and interviews and making available readings, video segments, in-class demonstrations and other information from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. I also facilitated the workshops from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* but was careful to check with staff at

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each meeting that my interpretation of their responses and actions matched their understanding.

Having worked previously with the teachers in the case study school I found them to be a committed professional group who shared a common concern over their approach to children experiencing difficulty with literacy learning. In addition, they were prepared to work collaboratively to advance their practice. As a result, the detail of the research process itself was developed in consultation with the staff. I believed that professional development of this type, with this staff, could achieve the two action research aims of 'improvement and involvement' (Grundy & Kemmis, 1981 p.9).

The Study Sample

The school chosen for the study is a designated disadvantaged school; meaning that it meets criteria stipulated by the Commonwealth Government that make it eligible for additional funds. These funds are provided from the Disadvantaged Schools' Program. To provide a context for the reader a description of the school and its community of students, teachers and parents is included.

The Case Study School

The non government school is in a low socio-economic area located in suburban Perth. The school neighbourhood includes few privately owned dwellings, some single dwellings and some multi-storey dwellings rented from the state housing authority. There are other non government and government

schools in the area. This year building extensions have been completed and classes extended to include a composite class of year 5 and 6. Previously, the school was a single stream school accommodating pre-primary to Year 4. In 1996 there will be a Year 6/7 class. The preschool is on the school site but is separate from other buildings. Also on site is a dual purpose church / hall that provides an undercover meeting area capable of accommodating the whole school population. Furniture and fittings at the school are functional if a little spartan. Inside most of the rooms, there are displays of children's work or work that has been jointly constructed by students and teachers. Most students are proud to show what they have done. The staff volunteered to be involved in a pilot program.

The Students

The are 157 students enrolled at the school. Approximately 49% come from an English Speaking Background. The remainder comprise a wide range of language and cultural backgrounds. A range of countries is represented at the school. These include parents or students born in Vietnam, Malaysia, China, Timor, Burma, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Greece, Holland, Italy, Poland, Croatia, El Salvador and Portugal. See Table 3.1: *The Students* for a profile of children at the school classified by year level, class numbers, the number of students from Non English Speaking Backgrounds and the number of children nominated by the teachers as not meeting teacher expectations in literacy.

There is an abnormally high number of students in year three who appear not to be meeting teacher expectations. According to the teachers four of the nominated students are newly arrived migrants who are non-English

speakers. Two other students are intellectually impaired students and have been recommended for a special education unit but their parents have chosen to let them remain in the mainstream class.

Table 3.1. The Students

Year	Total	NESB	St. nominated
Pre-primary	20	9	4
1	18	9	3
2	30	14	6
3	25	14	11
4	32	16	5
5/6	32	15	5

The Teachers

There are seven teachers and one teaching principal involved in this study. Table 3.2 *The Teachers* classifies the teaching staff by year level taught in 1995, years of teaching experience and years at this school. It also indicates whether or not the teacher is employed full time. The principal has been teaching for more than twenty years and has an administrative and a teaching load. Five teachers are employed full time, one is a tandem teacher who works 0.5 and shares the Year 3 class with another 0.5 teacher. The ESL specialist teacher provides support two mornings per week. There is a range of teaching experiences; two teachers are recent graduates, one has been at the school for more than ten years. The teachers are supportive of each other,

responsive to the needs of their children and have undergone recent in-service in *First Steps* and collaborative learning techniques.

Table 3.2. The Teachers

Year level	Teaching exp.	Years at school	Time worked
pre-primary	1	1	Full time
Year 1	2	2	Full time
Year 2	12	11	Full time
Year 3	6	2	Part time 0.5
Year 4	9	1	Full time
Year 5/6	7	5	Full time
Principal	20+	3	Teaching 0.2
ESL Tchr	10	2	Part time 0.1

The Parents and Care-givers

Many parents are the sole providers for their children. Some work outside the home but most are reliant on welfare payments. According to the teachers it seems that in most families women take responsibility for supervising homework and other schooling matters. Some fathers attend teacher parent meetings. This is a low fee paying school and parents' aspirations for their children can be summed up by one parent helper at a class meeting. She said: "I reckon that kids and parents have to give school their best shot. I want the best for my kids and that's why they're here. I really can't afford the fees but I reckon it's worth the sacrifices."

Procedure

The action research process is cyclical so, although the implementation of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* appears linear in nature it is not. The cyclical 'moments' described by Grundy (1995 p.27) are reconnaissance, planning, acting, collecting evidence and reflecting. These 'moments' were repeated many times during the project.

This section will describe how the school uses the Successful *Intervention-K-3 Literacy* package. The description can be broadly divided into three distinct phases:

- The information and planning sessions;
- The implementation and sharing phase; and
- The assessment and review phase.

The following time line summarises the process:

Phase One - Information and Planning

- *Week 1 - Information Session*

    School was contacted and purpose of project outlined to principal.

- *Week 2 - Information Sessions*

    One day principals' workshop conducted to raise awareness of underpinning principles and contents of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package.

School staff invited to attend an introductory session to explain nature and purpose of proposed project. Staff agreed to be involved.

- *Week 3 - Workshop One*

  Workshop One from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (pp.108-203) was conducted so that staff could discuss and clarify their definitions of literacy and literacy intervention as well as reflect on their current practice in relation to literacy intervention They also shared their criteria for identifying children who they perceived as not succeeding with literacy. They then worked together to establish key factors they considered were necessary for successful literacy intervention in their school.

  Outcomes from the workshop were collated for staff perusal before *Workshop Two.*

  A School Survey sheet was distributed to all teachers to be completed by the next workshop.

- *Week 4 - First Interviews*

  Interviews were conducted with teachers to ascertain their initial feelings towards *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and to find how the workshop had helped teachers to explore their own view of literacy intervention.

- *Week 5 - Workshop Two*

    Workshop Two from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (pp.203-205) was conducted to plan for a whole school approach to literacy intervention. First the participants discussed their responses to the School Survey and then identified priorities for a school action plan. A school action plan was produced for an integrated approach to literacy intervention for children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

Phase Two - Implementing and Sharing

- *Weeks 5-15 - Staff Meeting Study Groups*

    Staff meetings held each week took the form of study groups to update information and explore topics of common interest using *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials. The topics were determined by the staff and complemented the school action plan.

    During this time I was available to facilitate meetings, demonstrate in-class strategies and provide information as requested from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials or provide time away from classroom duties for the teachers. Staff had total control of how they used my time. I recorded data in my journal after each meeting. Three staff members also agreed to keep a journal.

- *Week 9 and 13 - Action Plan Reports*

    At these two staff meetings teachers reported on their progress as they implemented the classroom aspects of the school action plan.

Teachers who had responsibility for other facets of the plan also reported their progress.

I compiled and tabled reports from the information presented.

Phase Three - Assessment and Review

- *Week 16 Review and Planning Meeting*

    A review meeting was held to evaluate progress and plan future action.

    The school plan was revised and updated for the following year.

    The staff decided to use this time to draft school policy for literacy intervention.

- *Week 17 and 18 - Second Interview*

    The second interview was conducted pertaining to a whole school approach to intervention and to form an overview of teachers' perceptions about the processes in which they had been involved as they used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package

The following section details how the data were collected in the eighteen weeks in order to answer the three research questions.

In order to record how the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package was used I needed to collect a range of data for different purposes. I collected:

- observational notes recorded in a personal journal throughout the project;
- teachers journals (three teachers volunteered);
- staff decisions about the key elements for intervention from workshop one;
- the school action plan from the second workshop;
- two monthly action plan reports;
- two formal interviews with each teacher; and
- on-going informal interviews and discussions.

I have outlined the type of data collected to address each question in the following Data Collection Plan.

Data Collection Plan

The following section indicates the nature of the data collected to answer each research question.

Question 1.
How does one school use the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package?

Data Collected:

- *Journals*

    - observational notes recorded in a personal journal after each contact with school.
    - sample of teachers' personal journals (three teachers)
    - notes about the processes used as teachers developed their shared view of intervention.

- *Data from workshops-*

    - copies of questions used to focus teachers' discussions in workshop and summary of outcomes.

- *Data from interviews-*

    - formal - after the first workshop and at the end of the project.
    - informal interviews and discussions throughout project. (Tape recorded or as journal entries).

- *Data from staff meeting study groups*

    - documentation of material from *Successful Intervention - K-3 Literacy* used and implemented in classes.
    - collection of individual intervention plans and other evidence from classrooms.

Question 2.

In what ways does *Successful Intervention - K-3 Literacy* provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices?

Data Collected:

• *Journals*

       - observational notes after each contact.

       - teachers' journals

• *Data from workshops*

       - notes about shared view of intervention and school action plan.

       - records of processes and procedures and teachers' reactions to discussions.

• *Data from interviews*

       - after the first workshop and at the end of the project and ongoing informal interviews and discussions throughout project. (Tape recorded or as journal entries)

•

•*Data from staff meeting study groups*

       - action plan reports.

       - documentation of material from *Successful Intervention - K-3 Literacy* used by teachers and implemented in classes.

       - collection of individual intervention plans and other evidence from classrooms.

Question 3.

In what ways does *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* facilitate an integrated whole school approach to intervention?

Data Collected:

• *Journals*

> - observational notes recorded in a personal journal after each contact with school.
> - notes about the processes used as teachers developed their shared view of intervention and school plan.

• *Data from workshops-*

> - all products developed and used in workshops.

• *Data from interviews*

> - formal - after the first workshop and at the end of the project.
> - informal interviews and discussions throughout project. (Tape recorded or as journal entries)

• *Data from staff meeting study groups*

• *Data from review and evaluation*

> - summary of teachers' evaluation of the processes used throughout the project.
> - copy of School Policy.

• *Data from staff meeting study groups*

> - documentation of material from *Successful Intervention - K-3 Literacy* used and implemented.

The range of data provided multiple viewpoints that would enable cross checking or triangulation of evidence and result in insights that may not have been evident using only one type of data. I will briefly describe the nature of the journal entries and the interviews and discussions.

Journal Entries

There were two types of journals used for data collection. I kept an ongoing journal and three teachers agreed to keep journals to record their thoughts, reactions and feelings throughout the project.

In my journal I recorded descriptive data organised into categories adapted from those suggested by Cooper and Boyd (1996, pp.58-60). Entries were organised into the following sections:

> • outcomes and evidence (which contained information about desired outcomes);
>
> • strategies to achieve them (and evidence of achievement);
>
> • process notes and reflections (where I recorded new data and teachers' thoughts, feelings or decisions, plus my reflection and analysis of events); and
>
> • reference notes where I recorded quotes, anecdotes, ideas for future action and relevant readings.

Journal entries were made after each school visit to record principal and staff responses. After each workshop, entries focussed on observation of change

processes and/or outcomes that occurred as a direct result of the workshops. I kept detailed entries of the way the teachers used *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* at the weekly staff study groups. Also noted was information from teachers I met informally and formally at regular intervals during the program.

Teachers' journals were used and shared entirely at their discretion. Their entries often formed the basis of our discussions and informal interviews. They gave permission to copy some journal entries.

Children's work samples supplemented data in teachers' journals and were discussed with teachers. I noted reactions and recorded significant data.

The journal entries were used in different ways to answer all three research questions.

Interviews and Discussions

During the project, because of the small number of teachers involved, I was able to conduct two formal interviews. In addition, ongoing interviews and discussions also occurred throughout the project. Records of these were made as journal entries. The first formal interview was conducted after workshop one. Interview questions were open ended and were often followed up with supplementary ones, however each teacher was asked the same basic set of questions in the first interview (see Appendix A) .

The questions were tried at another school and modified before use. With their permission four participants' responses were tape recorded. Other responses were noted as journal entries.

The responses to the first interview questions were used to answer the second research question: *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practice?*

The second formal interview was conducted in the week of the final review and evaluation meeting to ascertain answers to research question two: *How does one school use the Successful Intervention K-3 package?* and question three: *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices?* By then teachers had implemented some of the the school plan. Teachers were given time to select examples and evidence of implementation to bring to the interview and were given the interview questions the week before the interview (see Appendix B). They were also asked to be prepared to talk about their actions and reflections.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was required to reveal two separate types of information. First it was necessary to follow the implementation process in order to document the pathway selected by the school as a result of their involvement in the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* workshops and subsequent action research.

The pathway was established in each *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* workshop where teachers were required to collaborate and come to shared understandings. Consequently, after each workshop I made journal entries recording my observation of teacher interaction and discussion. In addition, material was recorded during the workshop and shared by teachers on overhead transparencies, or large sheets of paper. Both journal entries and workshop products were analysed and summarised to show which decisions were made, how decisions were made, what actions the teachers planned to take and how individual teachers reacted to the process. The two action plan reports were also analysed. Finally, I documented the materials used and discussed in the weekly staff meeting study groups. This information describes the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and contributes to the answer of the first research question: 'How did one school use *Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy?*'

The second type of information enabled exploration of questions two and three. The data were used to evaluate the ways in which the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package enabled teachers, engaged in a process of modified action research, to investigate the underlying principles of literacy intervention (research question two) and plan a whole school approach to intervention (research question three). First, data from my journal entries were reread regularly to look for patterns and connections. Pertinent information was scrutinised to assess the significance of the events, the teachers' responses, the use of the resource and changes in teachers' practice that occurred as a result of their involvement in the project. The data were summarised under headings which approximated interview questions two and three.

Interviews and discussions provided additional information. The formal interview data, gathered after workshop one, were used to investigate how teachers explored the concepts underlying successful literacy intervention (research question two)while the second interview provided information to answer both questions two and three. All interview information was transcribed and read to identify common areas and any patterns of response. This analysis also became part of the triangulation process. I was interested to see if my journal entries reasonably reflected the principal's and the teachers' interview responses. I felt that the interviews and discussions also gave me feedback on each individual teacher's attitude to both me and the project. These data were noted in the reflection sections of my journal. They were used to analyse the process used to implement *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. General and specific responses provided a report for the school. The draft report was checked with teachers to ensure an accurate report.

Chapter 4

The Description, Discussion and Analysis of Data

The following outline shows how each research question was addressed using the data collected.

Question 1: How does one school use *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* ?		
WHAT WE DID	**HOW WE DID IT**	**DATA COLLECTED**
Conduct meeting with project school principal to introduce project. Information session for principals to outline program.	Show and discuss materials. Disadvantaged Schools Program principals attend one day workshop.	Journal entries to record on-going observations and reflections.
Facilitate session with staff to discuss project and agree involvement.	Whole staff meeting. Show materials and discuss support available.	Journal entries.
Workshop 1. Build a shared view of key elements for successful literacy intervention. Examine one school's approach to literacy. Distribute school surveys.	Whole staff meeting. • small group collaborative decision-making and group reflective practices. • framework from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. Child,teacher,parent, whole school and teaching/learning program. Watch and discuss video using focus questions.	Journal entries to record staff decisions about key elements for literacy intervention using workshop charts. Record interviews after first workshop.
Workshop 2. Critically evaluate current school practices. Develop a school improvement plan. Implement and review school plan. Assess progress and update plan. Formulate intervention policy.	Use *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. School Survey to discuss school situation and work together to make improvements. Use action research planning process. Use sample school plans from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. Conduct weekly staff meeting study groups using critically reflective teaching practice to explore alternative ideas from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. Monthly action plan reports. Use group processes to reflect, review and plan at final meeting.	Journal entries after workshop 2. Ongoing informal interviews and discussions-in journal. Collect: •school action plan. • monthly action plan reports on progress. Collect classroom evidence and final interviews. Examine school literacy intervention policy.

Question 2: In what ways does *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provide a resource that helps teachers explore concepts that underlie successful literacy intervention practices?		
WHAT WE DID	**HOW WE DID IT**	**DATA COLLECTED**
Provide framework for analysing, challenging and reflecting on current assumptions and practices in teaching.	Workshops 1 and 2 Discussion and brain storming processes. Provide opportunity for teachers to match beliefs to current practice and critically analyse teaching practice.	On-going journal entries showing teachers' reactions and documenting changes as they occur.
Demonstrate aspects of successful literacy intervention. Facilitate and implement school plan so that school determines own pathway throughout project examining current school situation, identifying needs and selecting focus for action at whole school and classroom levels.	Use video with questions to focus discussions in each segment. Use proformas, surveys, video segments, exemplars, case studies and individual intervention plans from *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* resource book and video.	Journal entries and informal discussions. Interviews with individual teachers. Teachers' journal entries.
Offer a range of models and ideas for successful practice at whole school and classroom level.	Share, discuss and evaluate *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* to select materials for individual teachers and whole school needs.	Observation in classrooms and at staff meetings.
Use *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* Video and resource book to : • demonstrate explicit planning and teaching for whole class, small group and individual students. • focus on parent/school relationships. • offer suggestions for involving students in monitoring and evaluating their own literacy development.	Model, share, reflect on and select ideas for literacy intervention in mainstream classes from *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* resource book and video segments. Use socio cultural surveys. Video segments showing parent involvement in intervention process. Model, share, reflect on and select information from video segments and resource books for individual intervention plans.	Keep a record of teacher requests for assistance from *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* materials in journal. Collection of individual teacher's products, reflections and reactions at final interview.

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Question 3: In what ways does *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* facilitate an Integrated whole school approach to Intervention?		
WHAT WE DID	HOW WE DID IT	DATA COLLECTED
Principals information session.	Principals meet and share experiences as they preview *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy.*	Interviews and discussions.
Workshop 1. Developing a staff view of literacy intervention pertinent to the context of the site.	Use of *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* framework and suggested processes of discussion, brainstorming, focus questions, critical reflection and sharing. The package focuses on assisting schools to review current structures and practices and provides a systematic process for change if it is needed. Use of collaborative learning structures and the *Successful Intervention- K-3 Literacy* framework for staff to list their essential elements for successful intervention in their context. Action research process. Use of elements from Workshop 1 and the results from the School Survey, teachers review current practice at school as well as classroom level.	Journal entries recording on-going observations. Journal entries to show my assessment of success of workshop processes.
Workshop 2. Suggesting ways to gather whole school baseline data. Reviewing current practice. Identifying needs. Selecting a focus for future action. Developing a school plan to ensure continuity and consistency of approach.	Staff cooperatively planning to develop strategies for continuity and consistency of literacy intervention throughout the school. Modelling, sharing and selecting successful practices developed by teachers in the school and introducing new relevant practice to meet students and staff needs. Sharing regular updates and additional information in Action plan reports.	Perusal of action plan reports. Final interview.
Session for reviewing and reflecting. Planning a policy. Making plans based on the school policy for intervention.	Development of a school policy for literacy intervention to assist staff to plan for - professional development requirements - identification of students - data gathering, analysis, record keeping, passing on of records and information - use of individual intervention plans - use of support staff and resource allocation - class groupings - teaching strategies - parent school links.	Assessment of success of implementation by teachers and my observations of changes.

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Introduction to the Description, Discussion and Analysis of Data

The project will be described in three phases.

- Phase One - Information and Planning;
- Phase Two - Implementing and Sharing ; and
- Phase Three - Assessment and Review.

Data from phase one, two and three of the project will be presented under the following headings: *Description* , *Discussion and Analysis of Data* and *Summary*. The data from each phase yielded information that relates to the three research questions and will be included where appropriate. However, the *Description* sections reveal information which relates mainly to question one:

How does one school use the Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy materials?

Phase One - Information and Planning

The first phase of this project aimed to provide the principal and teachers with the opportunity to discuss the scope of the proposal, to examine the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials, and to plan an implementation program that would suit their school context. During this phase participants were involved in a principals' information session, a staff information session, two workshops and an interview. Data from each are described below.

Principals' Information Sessions

Description.

After the initial contact meeting with the principal of the case study school, a principals' information session was arranged. It was a one day session attended by thirty five government school principals and one non government school principal (from the case study school). All were from designated disadvantaged schools. The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and its likely implementation in schools. My role was as a group facilitator.

Discussion and Analysis of Data.

After the initial meeting and principals' information session, I had an informal discussion with the principal of the target school to gauge her reactions to *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. Her response was very positive and provided me with some encouragement. She was keen that the teachers should hear about the program and make their own decision about participating. Her initial reaction was to applaud the idea of collaborative staff decision making in order to address literacy problems as a whole school. She was enthusiastic because in dealing with students having difficulty with literacy learning she said, "*Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* appears to fit with my personal philosophy of inclusion in the mainstream rather than withdrawal." The issue of the use of 'in-class' support or 'withdrawal' of children was an ongoing source of discussion in the school. I noted her expression of concern about the feelings of the part time designated E.S.L. teacher, who currently withdrew two or three students at a time for particular language activities. She also remarked that one or two teachers appeared

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very threatened and overwhelmed by the prospect of change. In addition, she was sensitive to some problems with staff cohesion, in spite of her best efforts to include new staff and part time teachers in the decision making process. The principal was also aware of the range of teacher knowledge about current teaching methods and was endeavouring to at least give all teachers access to *First Steps* materials and professional development sessions. She left the final decision about whether or not to participate in the pilot project to the staff.

Staff Information Session

Description.

I was invited to the next staff meeting to briefly outline the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* pilot program. I answered questions such as 'What support will we get if we go ahead with the pilot?' I clarified my role as facilitator and critical friend which would be to follow guidelines from the text of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and to show relevant excerpts of the video. In addition, I explained that I would be available one morning each week for the duration of the project to provide support in any form the teachers required that would enable them to implement their plans.

During the meeting the staff mentioned the school improvement plan which documented the need to look critically at how children experiencing difficulty with literacy learning were being supported. Staff at the school had undertaken some whole school in-service in the *First Steps* program but there had been staff changes in the past year and two new teachers had not attended the in-service. It appeared that there was a feeling that some children were slipping through 'the literacy net' and continued to have

difficulties. This provided an ideal catalyst for the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* as an action research pilot project. The staff agreed to participate and the meeting ended with a date set for the first workshop.

Discussion and Analysis of Data.

I felt that the staff response was generally very positive, however two comments from one teacher sounded a cautionary note: 'I suppose this means more work!' and 'It's the parents fault. They don't even help with homework!' The comments reinforced the need to refer to findings in research conducted by Hall,Wallace & Dossett (1973) and Fullan (1993) about the process of change in educational institutions. I needed to recall the information to help me track the concerns expressed and take appropriate actions. I decided that any anxiety expressed by teachers during informal discussions would be recorded in my journal and used to help me plan suitable responses.

Summary.

It appeared, from the data collected, that the principal believed in a whole school approach to teaching and saw collaborative decision making as a process to be nurtured. She also valued opportunities for access to school based professional development. It seemed that she would support staff decisions. Moreover, the data indicated that staff were ready to critically reflect on the way they addressed the needs of children experiencing difficulties. On the whole, teachers appeared willing to explore new information and to use it to help address their particular needs.

Workshop One

Workshop One had two parts. In the first part, participants were asked to establish a shared view of the key factors involved in successful literacy intervention. In the second part they were asked to consider the implications of devising a program that would address the key factors they had identified. I will describe the procedure in each part of the workshop separately and discuss and analyse the staff responses after each part. To conclude this section, I will summarise my reflections and discuss the teachers' responses to the interview conducted after *Workshop One* before moving on to describe *Workshop Two*.

Description - Workshop One, Part One.

Workshop One is entitled *Determining a View of Intervention.* As suggested in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy,* the room was set up with overhead projector, large sheets of paper, felt tipped pens and video player. The participants, consisting of the teaching principal, seven classroom teachers, two of whom shared a class, an ESL specialist teacher, a part time support teacher, and two part time teaching assistants, were seated in groups of three. Groups were seated around a central area to enable whole group participation.

The first part of the workshop had a brief introduction and discussion about the definition of 'literacy intervention'.

Groups were then asked to reflect on and discuss the following question: *What do you think are the key factors underlying successful literacy intervention?* Teachers were asked to consider these factors in relation to *the child, parent, teacher, the teaching/learning program* and *the whole school.* To model the process, we began by considering key literacy intervention factors in relation to the *whole school.* After some small group discussion participants rejoined the large group. The staff brainstormed ideas to add to the list on a large sheet of paper. The resultant chart was pinned on the wall and participants were invited to add further ideas at any time during the session.

I then allocated each group a large sheet of paper and each group chose to focus on one of the remaining components suggested in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* framework - *child, teacher, parent-caregiver* and *teaching/learning program.* Groups considered the same question, *What do you think are the key factors underlying successful literacy intervention?* from their chosen perspective. A recorder in each group listed ideas as they were suggested. When the task was finished, the papers were passed in a circular manner so that each group had the opportunity to add information, seek clarification or challenge items on every other paper.

The completed brainstorm charts were displayed and participants were invited to reflect and note how (or whether) their responses encompassed social, emotional, cultural, physical, cognitive and linguistic elements involved in literacy learning. This completed the first part of the workshop.

The data collected comprised lists of key factors that staff agreed should underpin literacy intervention in their school as well as my journal entries reflecting on the workshop discussions and processes. These data were analysed to answer research question two: *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy provide a resource that helps teachers explore concepts that underlie successful literacy intervention practices?* and research question three: *In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy facilitate an integrated whole school approach to intervention?*

The workshop began with a definition of 'literacy intervention' from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* which was accepted without comment. However, after the definition had been presented two staff members wanted clarification of the definition of 'literacy'. They argued that it was necessary for staff to clarify their definition of literacy in order to explore the concepts that underlie successful literacy intervention. After a short discussion teachers agreed to adopt the broad definition from *Australia's Language - The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* which describes literacy as:

> the ability to read and use information appropriately in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of numbers and basic mathematical signs and symbols within texts. Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. (Dawkins, 1991a, p.9)

This definition best suited their understanding of literacy as a tool for learning in all areas. They agreed that literacy was not a single entity but that there were multiple literacies and that particular contexts dictated the language used. Probably because their students came from diverse backgrounds, they were very aware of the impact of students' background knowledge on reading and writing events and of different perceptions of what counts as literacy in different cultural settings.

The workshop then provided a framework and process to develop a shared view of essential factors to consider in relation to literacy intervention. The teachers were asked to consider these factors in relation using the following framework:

- *the whole school context;*
- *the child;*
- *the teacher;*
- *the teaching learning program;* and
- *home - school relationships.*

The data discussed here are from the staff brainstorm charts. The items have been slightly reworded because the original brainstorm was recorded using only key words and some of the intention may have been unclear in this context. The essential meaning has been retained. The factors will be discussed and analysed using the framework above as suggested in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.*

I will list the key factors of each component suggested during the brainstorm and analyse each in relation to research questions two and three. The following comprehensive list resulted from the first component discussed by the staff.

The teachers said that the following factors should underpin literacy intervention in *the whole school context:*

- teachers must work together to develop common understandings and beliefs about literacy intervention;
- there must be some consistency in major teaching strategies used throughout the school;
- school organisation must be flexible to ensure needs of children are catered for;
- there must be some continuity in the approach to intervention from year to year with meaningful records passed on;
- the school must facilitate open communication between children, parents and teachers; and
- on going professional development for all staff is crucial.

From this list of factors for the *whole school* area it appeared that the process from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* facilitated a whole school approach to intervention (research question 3) by giving staff the opportunity to discuss the way in which school contexts impact on students. Based on their past experiences, the teachers also indicated that other educational innovations in their school had been sometimes put at risk when whole school issues were not addressed.

It appears that in this school, by engaging in the sharing process, teachers:

- were able to consider the responsibility they have as part of a larger group;

- decided that if there was a need for change in the way they dealt with literacy intervention, then it had to be done systematically and with staff commitment;

- acknowledged that every one of them had something to contribute and that they could support each other as changes were implemented;

- acknowledged there would always be different levels of expertise and confidence depending on the context; and

- saw themselves and the principal as interdependent.

Therefore, I felt that the *whole school* responses seemed to indicate that there was a willingness to collaborate and cooperate in order to build a shared view of literacy and some of the ways in which it could be taught.

In the next section, key factors for intervention teachers felt were essential for *the child* are outlined. The teachers agreed that literacy interventions should ensure that:

- the child's self esteem is preserved;

- the social and emotional needs of the child are considered alongside academic needs;

- the child has effective strategies to use for reading and writing;

- the child should feel that reading and writing are possible and achievable;

- the child feels free to take risks and have a go at tasks without fear of criticism;

- the child feels valued as a member of the class and is not made to feel different or stupid; and

- the child should be involved in self monitoring and goal setting and in taking responsibility for his/her own learning.

From this list of factors for *the child* it appeared that the process from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* had enabled teachers to share their views about important conditions for children. I felt that the factors selected by teachers reflected the theoretical assumptions, philosophy and basic principles used in the *First Steps* project. There was, however, extra attention paid to the social and emotional aspects of literacy teaching.

During the discussions accompanying the compilation of this list, one teacher asked the question: "How can we balance explicit teaching with independent learning so that the students will become critical learners and thinkers?" This question seemed to sum up the frustrations felt by a few teachers.

As the discussions progressed it was interesting to hear two distinct views on literacy 'failure' emerging. The larger group of teachers consistently blamed the child, his/her culture or parents to explain a child's failure to acquire literacy while the smaller group insisted that we should look at the way we 'do school' to see if the social and cultural mores of 'school' were marginalising the children who come from backgrounds dissimilar to that of teachers. This group asserted that the school could be erecting barriers to learning and may indeed be the cause of some problems.

Opinions expressed by the larger group of teachers appeared to confirm the findings of some research into young children's literacy development and teacher attitudes. Attitudes held by teachers appear significant particularly if, as McLaughlin and Talbert (1992) and Slavin (1987) claim, the way teachers think about and understand the children they teach will lead them to construct children in particular ways. It follows that different teachers will construct the same child in different ways. The evidence seems to indicate that if teachers view a child in a deficit way, then it is possible that this will be reflected in the student's achievement. It seems that deficit views about children from so-called disadvantaged backgrounds appear to be prevalent (Cambourne 1990; Freebody 1992; Freebody & Ludwig 1995; Delena 1992; and Cormack 1992) so it could be assumed that there is a real possibility that these children could receive an impoverished curriculum which may further diminish their ability to participate in society. Alternatively, they could receive extra support. However, ultimately a teacher's attitude will influence the child's view of him/herself as a successful learner

The second group of teachers who felt they needed to look at changes in school practices, would possibly agree with Freebody (1992, p.246) who claims that: "The location of 'risk' in the cognitive space or skill repertoire of the learner appears to be one of the cultural habits of mind in the mainstream study of learning disabilities". These teachers, it could be argued, may be less likely to look at social and cultural variables in children as a problem to be fixed, and more likely to build their programs on to what the children bring to school with them. Thus the links between home and school literacies could be emphasised rather than ignored or undermined.

As teachers have a key role in deciding how students experiencing difficulty are portrayed in the classroom, it was interesting to analyse the two different explanations offered to account for these children's perceived problems. It could be argued that if literacy is socially constructed, then according to Baker and Freebody (1993, p.280) "students will be credited and credentialled differently according to how well they can match the formal academic literacy curriculum as taught and listened for by teachers."

This school context showed students from culturally diverse backgrounds who operated between home and school literacy events which in some cases were totally dissimilar. Studies by Au (1993) and Malin (1990) showed how the lack of continuity of language and literacy teaching between home and school can lead to students being incorrectly placed. The problem of cultural difference leading to lack of educational opportunity was also an on-going concern to some teachers in this study. They claimed that there was no doubt that some children from so called 'non-mainstream' cultures suffered from the different uses of language and literacy in the school.

The teachers' concerns mirrored findings by Comber (1994) that indicate students from homes in which literacy events closely parallel those of school appear to do better than those whose home literacies are different from school literacies. It could be suggested then, that teachers who know about their school communities would be able to plan what Au (1993) describes as 'culturally responsive instruction'. The research, when considered alongside the concerns expressed by the second group of teachers, indicates that a case could be argued for a change in some school perceptions and practices.

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This part of *Workshop One* from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provided information to answer research questions 2 and 3. Teachers had discussed their different viewpoints and shared their concerns about teaching children from culturally diverse backgrounds. By asking teachers to nominate key factors for intervention related to *the child* it had:

- provided a catalyst for teachers to scrutinise current practice and beliefs;

- encouraged teachers to confront their attitudes to children from diverse backgrounds;

- introduced the notion that if change in practice is to be sustained core assumptions must be made visible and considered;

- indicated that at a whole school level teachers felt the need for some sort of professional development to assist them to address cultural diversity; and

- helped teachers to think about the learning contexts they are creating.

The opportunity for teachers to reflect in this way seemed beneficial in that it allowed time for them to challenge and share their beliefs about children and literacy.

In the next section, key factors for *the teacher* were discussed. Not surprisingly, it seemed that everyone had an opinion on what made a good teacher. The staff agreed that teachers should:

- believe that every one can learn;

- be fair;

- build good child-teacher relationships so that each child's social and emotional needs are met;

- understand how literacy develops and give adequate and accurate demonstrations of literacy;
- try to cater for children's different learning styles and know how children learn best;
- recognise and value cultural differences;
- know a lot about the children they teach so teachers need to be able to focus their observations;
- give positive, realistic feedback that concentrates on children's effort and improvement, or focuses on their strengths;
- have a wide repertoire of strategies from which they can choose the most effective for each child;
- use effective monitoring strategies to keep track of children's progress;
- use organisational strategies that will enable them to spend time with students having difficulties;
- endeavour to create a collaborative, supportive learning environment;
- make effective use of additional support staff;
- work collaboratively to share ideas; and
- know how to support all children within the context of the regular classroom.

The extensive list of key factors for *the teacher* seemed to fall into three main categories:

- teachers' knowledge of how children learn and how literacy develops;
- strategies for teaching and organisation; and
- teachers' knowledge about building relationships with staff, parents and students.

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It seemed that this part of the workshop process from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* had encouraged teachers to critically reflect on their role in intervention. This appeared beneficial because

- it helped teachers formalise what they already knew and reflect on what they needed to find out ; and
- teachers began to reflect on their own skills and talk about aspects of their teaching that they saw as needing attention.

By reflecting on what made a good teacher, staff were able to talk about their own experiences and knowledge and informally set common goals. The data also indicated that there were different needs for teachers' professional development in the area of literacy teaching.

As well as considering their own role teachers were asked to list key factors for parents with regard to literacy intervention. The list of key factors identified in relation to the parents' role in literacy intervention included:

- parents must be included in devising intervention programs;
- parents need to know we care about their children;
- parents need guidance to understand how children are taught these days;
- parents need to encourage and support their children not make negative comments which make children feel bad; and
- parents need to think about providing a stable environment for their children.

Teachers had tried many ways to get parents involved in the school and were feeling frustrated at the lack of response. They felt strongly that parents should be more involved. Research by Snow, Barnes,Chandler, Goodman

and Hemphill (1991, p.7) echoed their sentiments. "Studies of failure in literacy achievement tended to shift the blame back and forth between home and school, in cycles of about twenty years". Some of the teachers appeared to be in the middle of a 'blame the parent' cycle.

The general discussion about parents took the line "The parents need to ..." which I felt was quite a deficit way of constructing parents. In the light of this, the teachers' comments that they were largely unsuccessful in building strong parent-school relationships seem hardly surprising. There appeared to be a great need for some of the teachers in the study to take more interest in the community as, for example, some appeared not to be aware of the linguistic backgrounds of their children. Other teachers who were closely involved with the parents argued that they had benefited greatly from gaining understanding about home literacy practices and had made changes in their teaching practices.

The journal data I collected in this area showed a range of teachers' views about parents place in education. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* promotes the views that, in education, parents are equal partners with teachers. This section of the workshop had raised a number of issues to do with parents and literacy. Teachers were able to consider:
- how 'good' relationships with parents could inform teaching practice;
- that children operate in the contexts of home and school and these contexts may be quite different;
- how information about the cultural and linguistic background of children could inform their teaching; and
- how some teachers' attitudes to parents could mitigate against the

establishment of an equal partnership in education.

Thus, the workshop was able to provide a forum for the discussion of different perspectives. As a result teachers were able to explore their own concepts and think about ways to involve parents as part of a whole school initiative. The package has a number of suggestions for working with parents and building on special episodes that work for different families. These could provide some further avenues for exploration.

The final area discussed was the *teaching / learning program*. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* takes a socio-cultural perspective which recognises the complexity of literacy teaching and learning and draws on a range of teaching approaches. The implication of this view of literacy means that the *teaching / learning program* is much more than the construction of learning episodes. It values responsive teaching that acknowledges that different children will react differently to the same event depending on the social, emotional, cultural and linguistic background they bring to the event. An analysis of their suggested *teaching / learning* factors showed that these teachers shared this understanding.

They indicated that the *teaching/learning program*:
- should meet children's cognitive, emotional and socio-cultural needs and be developmentally appropriate;
- should connect current knowledge to new knowledge;
- must include effective and useful literacy demonstrations with which children can engage;
- must be embedded in contexts that are meaningful to children;

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- should integrate the language modes of reading, writing, speaking and listening so that they make sense to the child;

- should include intervention plans that are embedded in the mainstream class program;

- should include a range of whole class, small group and individualised strategies to meet each child's needs; and

- use a range of relevant texts.

When discussing this part of the workshop staff mentioned the well known and widely accepted *Reading Recovery* program as a successful intervention program. I was asked my views on the program so I referred the teachers to studies by Hiebert (1994) and Freebody (1990) which both suggested that further studies were needed to substantiate claims made by Clay (1985). I also asked them to share their views of this in their school. Given the recent theorising of language as a social practice by Luke (1993a) and Gee (1990) I thought it was reasonable for teachers to question intervention programs that were based on a withdrawal model. The teachers raised several areas of concern.

They commented that *Reading Recovery* relied on withdrawal of children from mainstream classes and relied on one tutor to address 'the problems' in sixteen weeks. One teacher who had experience with the program reflected that the prescribed texts may, or may not be culturally inclusive depending on the particular context. She added that there was little evidence of continuity of teaching once the sixteen week period expired. The teachers in this discussion concluded that *Reading Recovery* would probably not meet the designated key factors for successful literacy intervention that they had just

developed.and the cost of training one tutor who could attend to ten children per year would be impossible to fund and difficult to justify in this school.

Description -Workshop One, Part Two.

After the compilation and discussion of key factors for successful intervention, workshop participants were asked to reflect on the key factors they had specified and then consider the educational implications of this integrated view of intervention.

The staff then viewed section one of the video, *Getting Better at....Successful Intervention* and followed the guiding questions to provide a focus for discussion with the whole group.

The questions related to the video were:

- *What key points were made by the teachers and the principal?*
- *What is challenging about this approach to intervention?*
- *How were the needs of stake holders addressed?*
- *In what ways could the restructuring of the learning situation meet the child's social, emotional, cultural, physical, cognitive and linguistic needs?*

Informal discussion of these questions was used as a way of summarising and bringing together important aspects of the workshop.

A *School Survey* sheet (Appendix C) from Successful *Intervention K-3 Literacy* (pp. 216-219) was distributed to gather baseline data and information about current school practices and conditions. All staff agreed to complete the survey and were prepared to share their insights at the next workshop. They decided that no formal analysis of the responses would necessary because of

the small number of teachers involved.

The session concluded, as recommended in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*, by reiterating key points made in relation to an integrated view of intervention and briefly explaining the purpose of the next workshop. Handouts from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* which directly related to an integrated view of intervention were provided for each participant.

Discussion and Analysis of Data - Workshop One, Part Two.

The discussion following the workshop question : "*What are the implications of an integrated view of intervention that would include the key factors you have specified?*" proved quite enlightening. The question required teachers to critically reflect on the rhetoric about key factors for successful intervention which now had to be examined in the light of current practice in the school. For example, there was a withdrawal arrangement for the part time ESL teacher. Teachers asked how this arrangement could persist if they agreed that: "*Teachers need to know how to support all children within the context of the regular classroom?*" The E.S.L. teacher said she was willing to work alongside teachers but needed to be given common planning time so that her expertise could be used profitably. Teachers seemed to agree that this could work but did not see how they could have common planning time with someone who only came to the school two mornings each week. They noted that this was a concern that needed to be addressed.

A further discussion began when two teachers insisted that children in their class needed to get back to doing the 'basics' because they had 'missed out'. They favoured a withdrawal decontextualised phonics program. Teachers

discussed whether these views could be reconciled with: *"All learning must be embedded in contexts that are meaningful to children; The language modes of reading, writing, speaking and listening must be integrated so that they make sense to the child"* and *"Intervention plans must be embedded in the mainstream class program."*

Other teachers, including the principal challenged deficit explanations and the reductionist solution offered. There was a good deal of discussion about literacy failure and its causes. Research by Cambourne (1990) indicates that some teachers have one explanation for how students learn successfully and a different theory to explain literacy failure. This appeared to be the case in this instance.

It was interesting to note that the teachers who favoured a withdrawal solution to intervention were new to the school and had not been involved when the school had undertaken staff development in *First Steps*. This program, which has an emphasis on language and its relationship to learning and how reading and writing 'work', is used to develop teachers' observational, interpretive and reflective skills. Rather than concentrate on withdrawing children for a decontextualised skills based approach, it promotes child centred education where learning is embedded in classroom contexts with which the child is familiar. Any available specialist teachers work alongside regular classroom teachers to support children experiencing difficulty. Comments from the other teachers seemed to indicate that their involvement in *First Steps* had helped them consider the way they saw their role and they way they looked at children. I heard assertions such as *"You find out what kids can do and build on from there"* and *"You still teach phonics but you do it*

in the context of writing and reading. Not on its own. But it's still phonics and it's explicit teaching" The comments implied that these teachers did not agree with the suggested 'back to basics' idea of withdrawing children from the class for decontextualised skills based phonic instruction.

Discussion then moved to the issue of grade related curriculum. There was a tension expressed that 'they' still expected children to be able to perform at their grade level. I questioned who 'they' were and the replies surprised me. 'They' were described by different teachers first as the principal - who appeared very surprised to hear that she was 'they'. She quickly explained that she was interested in students' progress and so long as teachers could demonstrate that students were developing she was satisfied. The next 'they' was the system. This time the principal explained that as far as she was aware the system had no mechanism or desire to check grade level performance. She explained that the system may require a broad picture from time to time, but that was all. The final 'they' were parents. 'They' compared children in the same year and wanted to know if their child was 'going to pass grade two'. It was apparent that work needed to be done to help parents understand what the teachers were trying to do. Several teachers who had face to face interviews with parents and used *First Steps* continua records together with children's work samples to describe progress said that they found parents were satisfied with the information they gave. It appeared that some teachers needed permission to deviate from the grade related syllabus which they felt they had 'to cover'. My experience has taught me that this is not an uncommon issue.

The most contentious issue was that of building parent-school relationships. Theorists who claim literacy is a socially constructed practice (Luke 1993b; Gee 1990; Freebody & Welch 1993; Heath 1983) demonstrate that literacy is intertwined with culture so it follows that literacy can not be separated from the people who use it. It appeared in this school that some teachers had made great progress in developing home-school relationships while others had made little progress in building relationships with parents. Some teachers' reactions to including parents in 'devising intervention programs' was not enthusiastic.

To end the workshop the staff watched a video segment from *Getting better at...Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.* The segment showed how one school had used a range of innovative ideas and structures to provide early literacy assistance to its students. This stimulated interest from several teachers who expressed a desire for more information.

The First Interview

The first formal interviews were conducted with each teacher after *Workshop One-Part Two* in order to gauge their reactions and to evaluate the use of these workshops as a process to explore concepts underlying successful intervention practices.

<u>Description.</u>

The first interview explored the following questions:

"In what ways did the workshop help you explore your view of intervention?"

"What did you learn about literacy intervention?"

"What are your main concerns?"

Teachers were encouraged to add comments as well as answer the questions.

<u>Discussion and Analysis of Data.</u>

The answer to the questions generated quite a range of responses. Some responses mentioned the use of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* framework for deciding on the key factors for intervention, while others talked more about the processes of brainstorming and small group discussion. Some sample responses are included here to indicate the general feeling about the workshop.

> "I guess I've never really thought about the big picture of intervention. I'm so busy trying to do little bits. I liked the way we have our say in small groups too."

> "When I thought we had to think of all the elements that affect kids I thought it was a bit overwhelming. Doing each one separately was a good idea and passing the sheets around gave us a chance to build on other people's ideas. I liked doing that. I tried it [passing the sheets from group to group to add information] with my class in social studies and it worked really well."

> "I really liked the opportunity we had to explore intervention in a different way. I'm pretty sure the rest of the staff thought that the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* framework to think about our kids was great."

"It really worries me that we came up with so many
things that are important for successful intervention.
What is it going to mean for my teaching?"

"It made me realise that I don't know much about my
kids away from school. May be I should."

"I've never really thought about intervention as
something as complex as this before. It all makes
sense though. I know 'one off' programs don't work
but I think the time we had to talk things through has
been great."

"I know all the teachers here do their best. I can't wait
to get to the whole school planning. That's the missing
link here. We don't really know what every one is
doing, or has done. It will focus all the effort."

The responses left me feeling that some teachers appeared a little uneasy
about some of the pedagogical implications of their key elements list while
others were enthusiastic about looking differently at intervention.

Summary.

In summary the data collected from the first workshop and the interview relate
to all three research questions because they:

- indicate the steps taken so far to use the *Successful Intervention K-3
Literacy* package (Question 1);

- describe the ways in which teachers used the package to explore
concepts underlying literacy intervention (Question 2); and

- outline the ways the school used the package to facilitate a whole
school approach to literacy intervention (Question 3).

The data are summarised below. The discussion and analysis of data suggests that, in *Workshop One, Part One,* by considering key factors for successful literacy intervention under the sections: *the whole school, the child, the teacher, the parents and the teaching / learning program,* teachers had begun to build a shared view of intervention, and had also reflected on possible changes in whole school practices which could guide their future actions. Their enthusiastic participation indicated that they were committed to the project. I felt that the list of key elements they suggested was very comprehensive and quite similar to a list offered in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.*

The data discussed and analysed from *Workshop One, Part Two* indicate that the process provided teachers with the opportunity to discuss and critically evaluate their classroom practice in the light of the key factors they had devised for successful literacy intervention. This opportunity proved valuable in that major issues and concerns were clarified. It also provided the principal with a chance to demonstrate her support for staff decisions. In addition, the video segment and the discussion questions, based on the video, proved suitable to focus teachers on the underpinning principles of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.*

The content of the resource book *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* appears to be based on a broad view of literacy, however, it would have been advantageous if a definition of literacy had been provided as part of the introduction to *Workshop One.* Had this been provided it may have strengthened teachers' understanding that this intervention program was one which clearly acknowledged the complexity of literacy.

The first interview conducted after *Workshop One, Part Two* provided supplementary data that confirmed my interpretations of the previous sessions.

Reflecting on the answers I received to the interview questions, in conjunction with the list of key elements for intervention and my observations I concluded that the first workshop had provided a resource that helped teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices (research question two) by being involved in a process in which they had:

- established key factors for successful intervention;
- reflected on current practice in relation to literacy intervention; and
- discussed an integrated view of intervention.

Most teachers appeared to see themselves as facilitators of learning even though they were still grappling with implementation issues in terms of time and resources. It seemed that the exercise of describing key elements for intervention had provided an opportunity to move towards a major change in focus and practice for at least two teachers and had given further direction to others who were keen to expand their repertoire of skills and strategies.

In addition the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy Workshop One* had begun the facilitation of an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention (research question three) by:

- enabling discussion about change in the way they dealt with literacy intervention at a whole school level;
- acknowledging the vast amount of knowledge that could be pooled

and shared if time was allocated to the process; and

• providing a *School Survey* to establish baseline data.

Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy does not promote one program as the prescription to cure all literacy learning difficulties but seeks to support teachers as they develop their ability to appreciate and work with the social, cultural, linguistic, physical, cognitive and other factors which impinge on the teaching and learning programs in schools. As a consequence, I believe that, in this case, *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* enabled teachers to thoroughly explore their understanding of literacy intervention practices (research question 2) and build towards an integrated whole school approach (research question 3).

Workshop One, (Part One and Two) appeared to be well accepted. It was interesting to note that throughout the workshop sessions, the principal worked alongside the staff. She gave support but also let it be known that she placed absolute trust in staff decisions. I believe this was a major factor in providing a context for change. Teachers were willing to try new ideas and discuss their findings with each other and the principal. On some occasions they agreed to disagree indicating that there was still room for different individual views.

Workshop Two

The second workshop entitled *'Planning for Intervention'* was conducted a week after the first. I will describe the procedure and discuss and analyse the staff responses concluding with a brief summary.

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<u>Description.</u>

The purpose of this workshop is outlined in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.203), it is 'to produce an action plan for a whole school approach to intervention'. The action plan provides guidance for implementing school literacy practices and processes in a systematic way. Schools are advised to work on a limited number of objectives so that teachers are not overwhelmed by changes. After a period of monitoring the implementation there is a planned review which enables teachers to reflect on successful practices and make future plans. The planning cycle begins again. At this time schools can also choose to update or develop their literacy intervention policy to suit their contexts. The case study school did not have a literacy intervention policy so one was developed after the first planning cycle was completed at the end of this project.

The session began by recapitulating the main points made from *Workshop One* which had provided a forum to develop an agreed view of intervention. Each teacher was given a copy of the school's *Key Factors for Successful Literacy Intervention* developed in the first workshop. The following session objectives were outlined:

Participants will:

* discuss the *School Survey* and identify key issues;
* identify school needs relating to intervention;
* select a focus for a whole school approach to intervention; and
* develop a school action plan.

An overhead transparency was used to show the following stages of the planning cycle:

- determining a view of intervention;

- gathering baseline data;

- identifying needs;

- selecting a focus

- developing and implementing an action plan;

- reviewing progress and outcomes; and

- writing a policy

Having decided the *Key factors for successful intervention* in the previous workshop and then gathered baseline data using the *School Survey*, participants were ready to move to the third part of the cycle and analyse their data to identify needs. This was done using the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* proforma *School Survey - Discussion Guide* (p.221) with the headings *'What's working', 'what's not working', 'what could work better'* (Appendix D). Two groups were formed and invited to use the proforma to summarise findings of their *School Surveys*. Groups worked for 30 minutes to complete the proforma. Each group then presented its conclusions to the whole staff and the results were recorded on the board using the headings "Cause for Concern" and "Positives".

The next step was for staff to select one or two priorities to work on during this session and to place one area of concern 'on notice' for future planning. After a short discussion, the staff agreed that *whole school planning* and *development of student individual intervention plans* were immediate priorities. They agreed that *developing home school relationships* would be the next focus area for their school plan.

Before they worked on their own school action plan teachers perused the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.176) checklist for developing an action plan. This was followed by group discussion. After analysing and evaluating the sample whole school plans each school priority was phrased as an objective and each objective written on a prepared sheet of paper with the designated headings recommended in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.223). The staff formed two groups and worked on completing the action plans. The groups then swapped and added to or questioned information on each other's action plan. This meant that each group had input into the action plan to achieve each objective. The session concluded with a summary of key decisions.

I promised to type the plan and distribute it to all staff for discussion before the next staff meeting, which was was scheduled in two weeks, and staff agreed to bring data about one child from each of their classes who they felt was having difficulty with literacy learning. I was available during the two weeks to assist teachers to gather data to be used to identify and assess children they perceived to be 'at risk'. Teachers used assessment tasks and contexts they had agreed on and written into their *School Action Plan* (Appendix E).

Discussion and Analysis of Data.
The workshop resulted in a number of very positive outcomes. Although the staff chose not to compile School Survey results in a formal way, where each item would be tallied, the shared responses showed clearly that there were several areas of concern.

The survey items are grouped into four sections :

- Supporting intervention at the whole school level;
- Building home-school relationships;
- Intervention in the mainstream; and
- Classroom management.

The following summary, from the survey, shows the information which was used to develop a relevant action plan. Some items have been reworded, however the essence of the meaning has been retained.

1. Supporting intervention at the whole school level
   - Cause for concern:
     - lack of consistency in identification and monitoring of students experiencing difficulties;
     - lack of access to meaningful records;
     - lack of a system to convey student information;
     - criteria for class groupings;
     - allocation and use of support staff; and
     - lack of coordinated approach to allocation of resources.

   - Positives:
     - staff now shared a view of successful intervention; and
     - whole staff professional development.

It appeared that teachers felt strongly that a whole school approach was necessary for successful intervention and they chose this as their first priority

2. Building home-school relationships

   Staff felt that this area needed attention. They highlighted the following

   aspects for future consideration:

   • Cause for concern:

   - lack of professional development in this area;

   - ways of getting parents to share their literacy observations; and

   - sharing current educational practice with parents.

   • Positives :

   - parent interest in parent information sessions.

Teachers decided that they would concentrate on this area next year.

3. Intervention in the mainstream

   • Cause for concern:

   - identification of children experiencing difficulties;

   - little guidance for developing literacy plans for identified students;

   - availability and use of student portfolios;

   - level of cultural knowledge and understanding;

   - lack of student acceptance of individual differences; and

   - lack of access to all First Steps in-service for all staff.

   • Positives :

   - useful ideas from First Steps 'Reading Difficulties' module.

This was an area that provided a range of responses. Some teachers felt

comfortable and others required a lot of support. All agreed that the

development and implementation of individual intervention plans would be a

priority.

4. Classroom management

    • Cause for concern:

    - methods of grouping children within the class; and

    - planning and programming.

    • Positives :

    - class management ideas from *First Steps*; and

    - professional development in collaborative learning techniques

The staff had been involved with professional development in the area of collaborative learning and most felt comfortable with their group management skills within the classroom.

After examining the baseline data from the *School Survey*, which gave a broad view of the current school position, teachers were in a position to choose priorities for future action. The priorities they chose were, to *develop a whole school approach to intervention* and *to develop individual literacy intervention plans for students who were causing concern*. After choosing the priorities, teachers were asked to look at two sample action plans from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. Each group was asked to examine and discuss the sample plans using the following focus questions:

> • *How does the plan take into account the needs and perspectives of all stake holders?*
>
> • *How have short and long term consequences been considered?*
>
> • *What has been done to ensure that initial enthusiasm for the action is maintained?*

It was interesting to see how the teachers used the samples. Most looked closely at the objectives and began to talk about them in terms of their own context. One teacher said: 'That's just what we need here let's just use it.' However the suggestion was not accepted by the group. The questions guided the discussions and proved a useful way of exploring the concept of school planning.

It was then time to revisit the chosen priorities and frame them as objectives. The following objectives were chosen by the staff:

• to produce a whole school policy for literacy intervention that would lead to consistency in identification and continuity in teaching and monitoring of students experiencing difficulties;

• to develop the school wide use of individual intervention plans for students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning; and

• to begin looking for some simple ideas for improving parent school relationships (which they said would become their next priority).

The teachers chose to work on their first two objectives in this session. They agreed to use the same headings as the plans which were in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.223) They were: *Objectives, Strategies, Achievement of Strategy, Evaluation and Resources*. While developing the action plan they often referred to their *Key factors for successful literacy intervention* list from workshop one. As a result, they tried to make their

intervention strategies compatible with their key factors for intervention. The links are clear in their *School Action Plan* (Appendix E).

The sample action plans were used as examples and several teachers' remarks indicated that these plans from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* were very useful. They didn't copy the plans but often referred to them for ideas. They also referred to the *Action Plan Checklist* from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.176).

I was pleased that the action plan they devised provided time and structures, such as staff meeting study groups, to enable teachers to choose areas for development and to learn at their own pace with support from colleagues.

The final two steps of the planning cycle (reviewing progress and developing a policy) were scheduled in the action plan for the end of the year. The staff chose a continuum reviewing structure from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* to evaluate the implementation of their plan.

Summary.

This summary relates to data collected mainly to answer the third research question because the data are primarily concerned with information related to developing a whole school approach to literacy intervention. In addition however, during the planning process, teachers were continually reflecting on their beliefs about successful literacy intervention to ensure that their whole school plan was congruent with their beliefs. Thus some data was relevant to the second research question about teachers exploring concepts that underlie literacy intervention. Finally, the process recommended in *Successful*

Intervention K-3 Literacy and used for *Workshop Two* describes the way in which the school used the package (research question 1).

By the end of *Workshop Two* I felt that the objectives for the session, outlined in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* had been met. The teachers had discussed the baseline data from the *School Survey* and had indicated the key issues for this school. They had gone on to identify school needs relating to intervention and selected a focus for a whole school approach to intervention. Tasks had been allocated and short term goals set. Finally, they had shown considerable skill in planning to link their pedagogy to their beliefs about the key factors for successful intervention in their school action plan.

Workshop One from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* had provided a resource that enabled teachers to explore the concepts underlying literacy intervention and together with *Workshop Two* had provided a process to help a whole school approach to intervention. As a direct result of the planning decisions made in the workshops teachers decided to participate in staff study groups to begin implementing their *School Action Plan.*

The first staff study group meeting scheduled two weeks from the workshop began the second phase of the project, the implementation and sharing. Teachers were required to select a student who they felt was experiencing difficulties in literacy and use the assessment tasks they had agreed on, in their school action plan. They were asked to find out as much as they could about the student . I was available to work with teachers on two days during this time. The data they gathered was to be used at the next meeting to collaboratively plan and develop individual literacy intervention plans.

Phase Two - Implementing and Sharing

In this section I will describe, discuss and analyse how the school implemented their *School Action Plan* for literacy intervention using items from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. Demonstrated changes in whole school practices, classroom practices and information from interviews about understandings of the teachers involved in the study, were taken as evidence of implementation.

The two objectives identified by the teachers in the *School Action Plan* were:

1. To produce a whole school policy for literacy intervention that would lead to consistency in identification and continuity in teaching and monitoring of students experiencing difficulties; and

2. To develop the school wide use of individual intervention plans for students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

Central to the process of implementation and sharing were the weekly staff meeting study groups.

The Staff Meeting Study Groups

Altogether there were nine staff meeting study groups held before school at weekly intervals throughout the project.

Description.

The purpose of these meetings was to support teachers as they implemented their *School Action Plan* (Appendix E) that had been developed in

Workshop Two. The agenda of each meeting was negotiated by the staff to meet the teachers' needs. The format of each staff meeting was similar. Each week, the first twenty minutes was used to review progress in implementing the action plan. The use of the remainder of the time was negotiable. Staff met for one hour before the students arrived and the principal volunteered to take all students in the school together for music and hymn practice, for one hour after each staff meeting so that teachers could use that time for collaborative planning or the study group meetings. This meant that two hours per week could be used to explore selected parts of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. I was available, on those mornings, to provide additional information from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* if it was required. My role was as a tutor and facilitator responding to teacher requests.

During the first two meetings, teachers were introduced to information from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package to help them to develop individual intervention plans for children experiencing literacy difficulties (*School Action Plan:* objective two).

To start the first meeting, we watched a segment of the *Getting better at... Successful Intervention* video that showed teachers collaboratively planning for and implementing intervention strategies. We again used focus questions to facilitate discussion in small groups.

The questions included:

- *What do teachers need to know about students' literacy strategies?*

- *How are the students involved in the implementation of intervention plans?*

- *What role do the parents play?*

- *How are individual intervention plans integrated into daily learning episodes?*

- *How do these teachers ensure that the interventions are meeting the students' needs?*

Following the video, I provided each discussion group with a number of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* case studies of students experiencing difficulties and we discussed the intervention plans provided in the package. We then revised their list of *Key factors underlying successful literacy intervention* developed in *Workshop One.*

After this, teachers worked, collaboratively in pairs, to devise individual student intervention plans for their chosen students using data they had gathered. They had followed the list of suggestions for gathering data from the *School Action Plan.* By the end of the second session teachers had completed at least one intervention plan each which they agreed to trial for four weeks (Appendix F).

At subsequent meetings, in weeks three to nine the teachers continued to work collaboratively as they shared ideas and modified or updated their

children's individual intervention plans. In addition, they explored aspects of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. The items they chose to explore were selected by teachers to meet their individual needs as well as components that could be used to address the needs identified in the School Action Plan. I offered in-class support to demonstrate strategies they wanted to explore and continued informal discussions with all teachers. Throughout this phase of the project I made journal entries to record data after each staff meeting as well as after class visits and informal discussions.

Discussion and Analysis of Data

Rather than describe the weekly meetings separately, I have analysed and synthesised the data collected to show evidence of changes brought about as a result of these meetings to facilitate the implementation of the school plan. The data could generally be classified into two main areas. First, data showing evidence of changes at a whole school level, and secondly that which show changes in classroom practice. I will examine changes in whole school procedures first in an attempt to ascertain the ways in which the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package facilitated a whole school approach to literacy intervention (Research question three). I will then discuss and analyse some significant changes in classroom practice because it appeared that these changes demonstrated that teachers were further exploring concepts underlying successful intervention (Research question two). Some of the data contributed information to answer both questions so I will conclude the section by drawing general conclusions and examining the outcomes related to the implementation and sharing phase of the project before going on to describe the assessment and review phase.

The first objective of the *School Action Plan* indicated that the teachers wanted to establish a school-wide, systematic and consistent way of dealing with students perceived as having difficulty with literacy development. This led them to the exploration of a range of examples of data collection methods, assessment techniques and individual intervention plans for children experiencing difficulties with literacy. They used a range of information from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package.

The question that concerned the teachers most at this time was, "What makes a good assessment and diagnosis?" I felt that this was question was central to issues of literacy and equity because as researchers such as Freebody and Ludwig (1995), Comber (1994), and Luke (1993b) contend, the way in which teachers construct learners and their literacy could, in part, explain children's differential achievement and access to literacy. To answer their question teachers spent time discussing and examining the procedures demonstrated in various parts of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. As a staff they agreed that the following points should guide assessment and diagnosis practices.

As a result of their investigations they decided that assessment and diagnostic practices should:

- occur over time, in the context of regular classroom activities as far as possible;
- be useful to the teacher, learner and parent;
- reflect the learner's literacy development;
- be able to be interpreted by the teacher and parent in a way which does not prejudice the learner;

- be recorded coherently so that reports on progress can be made and understood;

- include information from all stake holders;

- take account of the social, cultural and linguistic background of the learner; and

- be able to be used to inform whole school decisions about allocation of resources.

It was interesting to follow the animated discussions that lead to the composition of this list. Teachers agreed that the list provided a sound basis for future actions. It became an addendum to their *Literacy Intervention Policy* (Appendix N).

In order to develop their own individua. ..ervention plans, all teachers selected a student who they considered was having difficulties with literacy learning. They then identified the critical issues for each child by completing a number of agreed assessment and evaluation tasks. They agreed to complete a socio-cultural profile using a proforma from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (pp.46-50). They collected children's work samples, analysed the student's miscues, and observed children in the classroom context to collect other data. In addition, the students were interviewed and parents were asked for information about home literacy events. Teachers also sought information from teaching assistants who dealt with the child. They recorded literacy indicators on the *First Steps* continua and brought all information to the first two staff meeting study groups.

The teachers then examined case studies and sample intervention plans from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.* An agreed format was selected to make

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intervention plans easily understood by all staff. The examples from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* formed the basis for systematically addressing each child's needs. Pairs of teachers worked collaboratively to develop their own plans. As they developed their plans, teachers frequently referred to their *'Key Factors for successful intervention'* list from *Workshop One.* I felt that this was an indication that they were developing an integrated whole school approach to intervention as they collected data using a range of assessment contexts, as described in their *School Action Plan,* and then used an agreed format for the plans.

Next, the teachers discussed ways that they could effectively store and pass on information about the identified students from year to year. They appointed a literacy coordinator and that person purchased files and individual plastic storage pockets that would accommodate individual intervention plans, work sample books, socio-cultural profiles and other records. Teachers then decided to allocate time to handover files so that individual portfolios would be shared with new teachers. Photocopies of files would be held in a central storage area where the principal could have easy access and hold regular conferences with teachers to ensure that there was follow up for each child deemed to be 'at risk'.

After examining samples of intervention plans from each teacher I noted a significant area of change, throughout the school. In each intervention plan the students themselves were to be involved in developing, monitoring and assessing their literacy progress. The idea of the student having some say in learning is one area that a number of researchers feel strongly about. The *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package offers both video and written

examples of how these ideas may be translated into classroom practice. The teachers in this study decided to show children that they trusted them as learners, by including goal setting and self evaluation opportunities in the daily program. According to the teachers, learners had not previously been included in intervention programs in this way. The outcome was that teachers were rewarded by children who appeared to appreciate the opportunity to take control of their learning and make decisions for themselves.

So, plans that teachers developed included much more than reading and writing activities (See Appendix F for a sample of the individual student intervention plans). Plans attempted to address the social, emotional and cultural needs of each student by including such elements as goal setting and skills for the development of group cohesion and tolerance. Teachers were not only acknowledging the social, linguistic and cultural diversity among children, but were fostering it through their general classroom programs.

In the classrooms I observed some memorable moments as I moved around. Perhaps the most telling was a year two student who had been causing the teacher most concern. During a visit to the classroom, the child tugged my arm and announced very loudly, "I've already got my goal this week and it is only Tuesday!" I asked what the goal was, and was told, "To read one book on my own." This remark was followed by a very confident reading by a very confident reader. I knew that this child's intervention plan had included many activities to address the social and emotional aspects of literacy learning. The teachers had chosen to concentrate on building confidence and empowering the student and it seemed to be working. This is not surprising given Cambourne's (1988) findings that learners need to make their own decisions

about what to learn and those who lose the ability to make decisions are 'depowered'(p.33).

In all classes there were examples of students actively encouraged to take responsibility for their literacy learning and showing that they were able to support each other as they moved towards achieving personal goals. If as Lowe and Blintz (1992, p.17) suggest, "Evaluation should be based on an 'insider's' perspective and should be conducted by those closest to the learning process" and "the ultimate form of evaluation is self-evaluation" then these innovations appear to provide a useful tool in moving the student towards self evaluation and competence in literacy.

Child centred learning is not a new concept, but recently educators such as Woodward (1993) and Gibbs (1995), have highlighted the need to extend this concept to include parents in the education process. This involves three way communication with the student, parent and teacher working as part of a team to determine what learning is to occur and how it is to be planned. To do this some teachers tried ideas suggested in the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. Examples of communication books are included (Appendix G), learning journeys (Appendix J) and annotated work samples (Appendix H). All seemed very effective for children, teachers and parents.

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy also provided a number of strategies to involve parents in the education programs of school. After viewing video segments and sharing ways of monitoring students from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* during a staff meeting, teachers decided to try and develop three way communication involving teachers, parents and children.

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Research conducted by Badger et al., in 1993, found that teachers needed more information about students' lives out of school. It seemed from my observations and by the discussions I had, that as teachers gained this information about their students they began to understand how the students' diverse resources could be advantageous in the classroom. Also by communicating more effectively with parents, and acknowledging parents as equal partners in education, they were able to gain additional insights into the things that worked well at home for their children experiencing difficulty at school. Teachers remarked that this additional information proved very useful in guiding their planning.

The additional information was gained by the introduction of a number of school-wide innovations from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. The first was the introduction of communication books which involved on-going communication between the teacher, child and parents (Appendix G). The emphasis in these booklets was always on the positive aspects of the students' development. The next innovation was the use of assessment portfolios in the form of work sample books containing annotated work samples (Appendix H). The sample books replaced fortnightly tests and parents were encouraged to contribute information about home literacy events. Student led conferences were also trialled with the use of student constructed learning journeys (Appendix I). These strategies provided teachers with an insight into the amount of information parents had to offer about their children.

The communication booklets in particular, provided interesting information as they recorded parents' reactions and reflections as well as teachers' and children's comments. Over a period of eight weeks there was a noticeable change in several books. Parents comments that had focussed at first on 'untidiness' or 'sloppy handwriting' gradually moved to comments about the content of the sample or noted the improvements shown. I believe this reflected the teachers efforts to always focus on significant items and improvements in the child's work. Children's comments also indicated that they were taking responsibility for their learning and often working at home to improve an aspect of reading or writing.

Figure 4.1 shows two excerpts from a communication booklet. It is included because the entries show typical changes in attitude from parents and children involved in the project.

Aug 9
Huong shared his new book with me today and he wrote about it in his journal. Miss J.

I liked writing today but I'm not much good at it.
Huong

I think you should try harder to improve your writing. It is messy. Mrs G

Sept 28
Huong brought in a fantastic article about flight. He finished his project today and shows that he has learnt a lot about flight. Miss J

I think my project is the best thing I have ever done.
Huong

You have gathered a lot of information for your project Huong I think it is excellent. Mrs G

Figure 4.1 Communication books

The work sample books containing annotated work samples provided an excellent source of information for parents, teachers and children because improvements were obvious and made sense to all stake holders. At staff meetings teachers used the sample books as a basis for sharing and comparing the progress being made by the selected children. The samples were discussed and analysed and teachers often noted that when working with a colleague they were able to notice different things about the samples.

The teachers' actions and comments also appeared to indicate that there had been a change in ideas of assessment. Teachers chose a number of different assessment techniques from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*. They began to use more ongoing contextually based assessments and multiple forms of assessment. They used their own judgment as a valid and reliable source of information and consistently included children and parents in the assessments. It appeared that the range of assessment techniques they conducted over time, in the classroom, helped to ensure that children were not disadvantaged by unfamiliar or unsuitable test-type situations (as they may have been in the past). One teacher remarked that the assessment and evaluation itself proved to be 'a learning experience'.

A successful whole school strategy was the production of *Action Plan Reports* in week five and week nine. In order to prepare the reports, I circulated a proforma similar to one recommended in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.179), based on the details of their *School Action Plan*, and asked staff to evaluate their own progress and make recommendations for changes (see Appendix J). I collated the information into *Action Plan Reports*. These reports provided a forum to discuss any difficulties that teachers had

experienced in implementing the *School Action Plan*. The reports were retained for future use when the school intervention policy was framed.

The changes in classroom practice could be summarised by describing them as becoming more 'inclusive'. Children experiencing difficulties remained in the classroom and teachers were assisted by support staff who previously withdrew these children. Specifically, the changes included targeted planning for intervention within the mainstream classroom, inclusion of children in the intervention process, use of mixed ability groups and cooperative learning and longer periods devoted to integrated language sessions.

Teachers appeared conscious of their list of *Key Factors for Successful Intervention* and consequently attempted to use it as a benchmark for intervention strategies as they reflected on the role of the major stake holders in education. An example of action following reflection occurred after the introduction to multi-aged grouping in the video and the use of socio-cultural profiles from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. These proved to be catalysts for a change in this school's organisation. The pre-primary and year one teachers decided to trial multi-aged grouping in a bid to meet the socio cultural needs of their children. They sought relevant literature and gathered information about multi-aged grouping, visited schools, talked with parents and joined a network of teachers with similar interests. They then modified their program to include a 'multi aged day' once each week. Their aim was to modify their practice to make a smooth transition from home to school. This action has since developed into an additional action research project encouraged by the principal.

Another example of change in classroom practice, occurred when a middle primary teacher negotiated with the selected child to keep a learning journal to reflect on what she had learnt and how she learnt in particular lessons. Rather than have the student feel she was different, the teacher provided a journal for each child in the class. Each day students wrote their reflections for about ten to fifteen minutes as the teacher moved around the classroom and entered comments and questions in the journals. The targeted student provided valuable insights into her learning for herself and the teacher. After a few weeks the teacher was impressed by the amount of information she could obtain from reading all journal entries.

Other teachers modified their timetables using examples from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* (p.76-79) to focus using organisational structures that would ensure they had more time to deal with individual students and small groups of learners. They adopted integrated teaching and collaborative learning which facilitated learning episodes where the learner was involved in speaking, reading and writing to complete tasks. Because of the lengthier sessions, teachers explained that they were also able to conduct regular conferences where learners were encouraged to reflect on their successes and identify future goals. Teachers remarked that the changes allowed them to implement the individual intervention plans more rigorously because they were able to plan for explicit teaching in relation to the learners' identified needs.

The changes in classroom practice indicated that teachers were examining their underlying assumptions about successful literacy intervention. They expressed concern that some of their intentions could be lost if there was a

change of staff in the future. Therefore, they felt that it was necessary to document their understandings in the form of a school policy for literacy intervention, so the final staff meeting study group aimed to draft an intervention policy for trial in the following year.

In the first part of the meeting teachers revisited their *Key Factors for Successful Intervention* lists from *Workshop One*. After a short discussion they agreed that these factors were still important and should be considered when they drafted their policy or whenever they updated their *School Action Plan.* They then reviewed the second *Action Plan Report* and decided to maintain the same objectives for next year adding an objective that aimed to enhance parent-school relationships. They then began to draft their school literacy intervention policy.

A sample policy from another school was discussed. As the staff had worked on policy making before, they chose to use a format with which they were familiar. They used the headings *Rationale, Aims, Implementation and Evaluation and Monitoring.*

The process they chose to use was also familiar to them. Working in two groups they used large sheets of paper with two headings, *Rationale* and *Aims.* They brainstormed to share ideas and recorded items on which they agreed. The groups then exchanged papers and added, reworded or deleted items from the other group's lists. The results were shared and agreed to by the whole group. They repeated the process with the remaining two sections, *Implementation and Evaluation and Monitoring,* finishing with a sharing time. They elected three staff members to revise and edit the draft policy before the

next meeting, to be held after the completion of this project, where final ratification would be sought.

Summary.

The summary of data related to the *Implementing and Sharing* phase of the project relates to all three research questions.

Firstly, to address question one concerning how the school used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package, the data from the weekly staff meetings was analysed. It appeared that deciding to act on their shared objectives by the commitment to use twenty minutes from each weekly staff meeting as a whole staff sharing time proved invaluable. During this time teachers reported on their individual student plans and discussed any problems related to the implementation of the *School Action Plan*. This encouraged staff ownership of the project and ensured flexibility to make changes or seek additional support. For example, time lines were adjusted if it appeared that any staff member was becoming overloaded. Each week teachers were also able to select relevant material from the package and adapt it for their needs and as a critical friend I was in a position to offer other support where it was needed.

I felt that the planning, the actions and the observations that occurred when teachers had a chance to critically reflect each week kept the project going. There was little delay between the identification of a problem and beginning to find solutions. This meant that enthusiasm was maintained and there was also a reasonable balance between collegial support for change and collegial pressure to change.

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The teachers who used professional journals as a source of evidence found them difficult to maintain in the first instance, however after they had persevered for several weeks I noted a change in the comments they made. They began to use more reactions and feelings about the changes they were making. Thus, evidence gathered from the teachers' journal entries, my staff meeting observations as well as informal discussions with teachers led me to conclude that the weekly staff meetings were an important part of the answer to how the package was used (Question 1).

Data documenting other actions taken by teachers indicated that they had thought deeply about factors that underlie successful intervention (Question 2). For example, in the light of findings from researchers such as (Malin 1990) and Meek (1988) who have found that a pedagogy that empowers enables individuals to openly acknowledge the importance of their cultural heritage, they decided that involving the learner was paramount to success. . This aspect of literacy teaching appears significant particularly as many of the children experiencing difficulties in this school are from different ethnic backgrounds. It would appear that empowerment is especially important to their future success. The *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* resource book and video provided a variety of ideas that teachers could use to promote child involvement in literacy interventions.

Another example of teachers using the package to explore factors underlying literacy intervention occurred when the teachers drafted a list of criteria for a good diagnosis. They used the package as a resource for ideas to generate the list. By their actions, they acknowledged that data gathered systematically over time in a variety of contexts through teacher observation, student-teacher

interactions, student self evaluation, information from parents and analysis of products provided a wealth of information that was worth passing on. The data show that they wanted to ensure continuity and consistency in teaching approaches. Their adherence to the school plan also indicated that teachers felt it was important to continuously monitor children's development and to be assured that children identified as experiencing difficulties were consistently supported throughout their school life to ensure continued success. It appeared that teachers had been guided by the assessment and diagnostic principles they had devised after critical reflection on the factors underlying successful literacy intervention.

The implementation of the *School Action Plan* (Appendix E) provided data related to question three of the research. The data show that as a result of its involvement with this project the staff had first developed a shared vision for literacy intervention and then identified relevant, specific actions or strategies from *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. They then set aside time which enabled them to work collaboratively to implement a sustainable plan for children experiencing difficulty with literacy. The *School Action Plan* appears to accommodate actions and strategies that address the *Key Factors for Successful Intervention* that teachers had developed as a whole staff. The data suggest that they have considered all the stakeholders involved in literacy intervention so it could be claimed that the use of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* products had facilitated an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention (Question 3).

The third phase of the project describes, discusses and analyses data

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gathered from interviews held to enable teachers to comment about the process of action research and their use of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* products.

In this section I will examine the teachers' perceptions of changes they had made as a result of implementing aspects of *Successful Intervention-K-3*. Journal entries and teacher interviews provided the data for this section.

The Interviews

The interview questions were developed from informal discussions that happened throughout the project. I chose the questions to verify and expand my journal reflections

Description.

Interviews were scheduled to last not longer than twenty minutes and were tape recorded with the permission of each teacher. The interview questions provided the basis for discussion, although teachers were invited to comment on any other aspects of the project.

Discussion and Analysis of Data

Question 1.

How do you feel so far about the Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy project?

Responses to this question ranged along a continuum from positive to negative. Of the eight teachers interviewed six felt positive or very positive, two had mixed feelings. While it was important to know how *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* is generally regarded by teachers it is equally

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important to know the reasons for these responses. To identify the reasons typical responses are quoted:

The general feeling is positive.

> "The time we had to work together was invaluable. I think we feel more like a team and that it's O.K. to ask for help. It's amazing how much easier it was when two of us worked on the intervention plans. Teachers feel much more confident about intervention now." Year 5/6 First Steps Focus Teacher.

> "I think all of us know, in more detail, how to determine the children 'at risk'. The strategies and management ideas were great. The video and support material has given us ideas about school organisation. Did you know that the pre-primary and year ones want to trial multi-age grouping now? They see that school has to be done differently to cater for our diverse population. Isn't it great?" Principal.

> "It's good to have all the staff working together and get some agreement about what should be happening. It (*Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy*) made us all realise that there is lack of continuity and consistency and it could be so harmful. I think the video segments really opened our eyes and made the ideas seem real." Pre-primary teacher.

The general feeling is mixed.

The ideas, materials and strategies that *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provides were generally well received by teachers. The problems that led to a mixed response were mainly to do with time constraints.

> "I think everyone has benefited from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* project, especially the intervention plans. The thing is, we took all that time to do one intervention plan. I've got at least six kids who need intervention plans. It will take forever!"

"I think I recognise the value of the program...(but) the workload this term is too much and staff might get a bit negative."

"I felt that there was too much recording of information and not enough time to really teach. I didn't have *First Steps* in-service so I'm struggling a bit."

Although it appeared staff felt that the process and strategies employed in the project were generally well received, there were some differences in the teachers' responses due to lack of time and disparity in access to previous in service courses.

Question 2

What do you believe were the most significant features of the use of Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy in your school?

One of the features of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* is the attempt that it makes to support a whole school collaborative approach to literacy intervention using a combination of theory, demonstration, practice, feedback and ongoing coaching. The answers reflected the importance teachers placed on these areas.

The following sample of responses provides a sense of how teachers viewed significant aspects of their use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.*

"It provided us with time to sort out a plan of attack. We've never had a whole school intervention plan before."

"I thought the best thing about *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* was the video and demonstrations I had in my class. It was good to see the video and then choose things to focus on for my class. I've learnt a lot."

"The regular sharing sessions at staff meetings kept me honest! I felt that I had to try things so that I could report and ask more questions."

"I hadn't really thought much about the socio-cultural aspect before but when you have a multicultural school like this one I realise it's essential."

"*Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* has shown us how collaborative planning can make such a difference. I think we will all try and fully implement the school plan because it makes sense to us. We wrote it."

"The best thing is seeing the children when they set and achieve their goals. I honestly didn't think my year ones would be able to do this. They can and they do."

"My year fours are really working well together since we introduced the idea of cooperative learning. They are including the kids who weren't included before."

Throughout the responses there was a pattern of agreement that staff collaboration and planning were valued as was the opportunity to have in-class demonstrations and access to the video. Responses were generally very positive.

Question 3

In what ways, if any, did this school based implementation model of professional development assist you with your work with children experiencing difficulties?

The following quotes indicate a general view that an action research approach was considered, by most teachers, to be helpful in exploring strategies for their identified students.

"It made me feel more confident about going back to my classroom and trialling the strategies. I knew I could ask someone when I got stuck."

"I needed a framework that was compatible with my beliefs. I had always hated my kids being withdrawn. They missed out so much. Now the school supports in-class intervention. I'm much happier and so are my kids who are having difficulties with literacy."

"By writing the intervention plan somehow I was much more aware of how I could use incidental as well as planned teaching time to address the student's needs."

"The focus on student involvement was something I thought would be useless with this kid, but I was amazed at how well she responded. We started with class goals and moved to personal goals with the whole class. Before very long the kids were helping each other and asking "Have you got your goal yet?" The class support was great too. Everyone was part of the learning community."

"I really began to look at the children and their parents differently."

"It [Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy] gave me insights into things like socio cultural aspects of literacy learning and learning styles."

"I didn't realise how much I could really do before. I particularly like the whole class, small group and individual idea. [from Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy intervention plans] I think I can cope better with my tricky kids now."

The responses indicate a change in teachers' attitudes to dealing with students experiencing difficulties. I felt that teachers were gaining confidence

as they began to focus on an integrated approach to intervention. I believe that the first workshop, where teachers used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* framework to clarify and share their view of the key elements for intervention, was crucial to this change.

Question 4

In what ways did this model of professional development differ from other professional development with which you have been involved?

An important feature of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* is that it is meant to be a stand alone professional development package. It provides schools with a range of materials and a process by which they can choose to implement the most appropriate parts for their context. This contrasts with the school's most recent professional development which was *First Steps* so it wasn't surprising that some teachers compared the two. The responses were mainly positive with one exception.

Typical positive comments included:

> "I really didn't think of this as professional development until you asked this question. We definitely had more staff input than we had with *First Steps*. I like the idea of more staff input-well I do with this small staff anyway. I think it gives us more say in what we'll do."

> "The good thing about this project is that we are all in it together. It was good to have spaced learning and collaborative sessions - not like First Steps where we did too much too quickly. When we did hit trouble it was only a week at the most before we had a chance to sort it out."

"It is so much better to have everyone involved. We can usually only afford to send one or two teachers and they have to report back. It's stupid that way. Someone goes to a full day course and has to tell the staff about it in 10 minutes of a staff meeting. The people who go get the benefit I suppose but even then they can't compare notes and get collegiate support. I think this model of in school professional development will at least see some changes in practices. I like it."

"We've never had such regular follow-up before. I think that's the key. I am actually doing what we planned."

These comments need to be balanced with:

"I felt that using staff meetings instead of a special professional development day made things a bit disjointed and rushed. I wish we'd taken a full day to start with and then had our weekly meetings. I was confused after the first session because I didn't have a clue what the end result was likely to be. I still don't think I am doing everything and I feel guilty every time I see you."

It seemed clear that most of the teachers' responses reflected research by Fullan (1991) who argues that in any innovation participants need to feel that they are valued as learners throughout the process. The format of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* workshops mandates this by relying on teacher reflection and input for the final products. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* also follows Fullan's recommendations of spaced learning to allow time for practice using the innovation and discussion with colleagues to clarify thinking.

Fullan (1991); Caldwell and Spinks (1988); Hargreaves and Fullan (eds. 1992) also claim that in order for sustainable change in practice to take place teachers should be made aware of factors governing change. In this project this was necessary after the collaborative planning staff meeting when two teachers reported to the principal that they felt overwhelmed and inadequate. Fullan describes this as the time when things get worse before they get better. The principal was so concerned that she called a meeting to sort out the problems. She later told me that she was worried about the two teachers who felt incapable of implementing their intervention plans and another who had disturbing family problems which were dominating her life. In order for this project to work it was important to build and support working relationships within the school staff as well as to find ways to address the needs of children experiencing difficulty with literacy. We decided to use one staff meeting to address teachers' concerns.

The principal was able to explain the typical stages in the change process and the staff talked through their problems. I was able to provide readings as discussion papers about change, but these were not from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials. The teachers' attitudes changed after we had discussed typical stages of implementation. Two teachers commented that they felt that it was nice to know they weren't the 'only ones' and that it was normal to feel the way they did. The lack of information about change in the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials could be perceived as a weakness as the package is all about changes in practice. It was the action research process that enabled the staff to reflect on their learning and address problems as they arose.

I believe that being able to stop, reflect and change direction is a great advantage of the action research process. This process enables teachers to locate data to answer their particular needs and through being involved in their own research they develop understandings that contribute to their professional growth and legitimise their expertise and experience. The quote by Welsh in Pinnell& Matlin (1989) was certainly true in this case.

> When you get to the bottom line, teachers make or break a program. If they believe in what they are asked to do, if they are given opportunities to verbalise and resolve their professional conflicts, if they are supported rather than be dictated to by the school leadership, and if they are sufficiently trained, the program will succeed. If those ifs are not met, interest in the program will stop outside the classroom door (p. 65).

Question 5

What impact, if any, has your involvement with Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy had on your confidence in working with students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning?

Almost all teachers commented that having the opportunity to explore literacy intervention using the suggested framework (child, teacher, parents, whole school and teaching learning program) provided a different perspective from their usual narrower focus on the child, and his or her deficits or apparent lack of isolated sub skills. Their comprehensive list of *Key Factors for Successful Intervention* indicates that given time and perhaps a basic framework teachers are able to contribute suggestions that reflect contemporary educational research into literacy and equity (Freebody & Ludwig 1995, Luke

1993b, Comber 1993). It appeared that most teachers had developed a view that some learners failed to thrive because 'School settings put learners at risk by erecting barriers to learning' Cambourne (1990, p.291) and had adjusted their pedagogy accordingly.

Representative comments included:

> "I think I'm better at observing learners and learning now. I know what I'm looking for. All signs of progress are worth noting.I know that some of these kids are going to need ongoing support and I feel confident that they'll get it now we all know what's going on."

> "I can't believe the difference those intervention plans made...such a simple thing really."

Perhaps less enthusiastic but still quite positive:

> "I think I am getting the idea now. I wonder if I'll keep it up when you're not here to support me."

> "I can see that they work. (the intervention plans) but they take time to prepare."

The overwhelming majority of responses to questions were positive.

Summary.

These data suggest that the contents of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* and the processes involved have been very well received by the classroom teachers.

It was interesting to note that the teachers who reported positively had all completed *First Steps* in-service. As *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* was designed to build on to *First Steps* information these responses are probably not surprising.

Criticisms cited lack of time and lack of in-service of *First Steps* as a great disadvantage. The lack of time to implement an idea appears to be a common problem with many education initiatives. As Bennett (1995) writes: "We know that the simplest innovations take three to five years to be effectively implemented within a school culture".(p.2). This project had only run for seventeen teaching weeks.

Teachers indicated that the development, across the school, of individual intervention plans was useful. They commented that they were now conscious of planning learning opportunities for the identified student in small group or individual teaching times. It seems that the process of planning and committing the plan to paper had made the teaching much more targeted and effective for the students. The evidence of teachers' successes using individual intervention plan became apparent when I noticed that most teachers had devised intervention plans for other students in their classes (even though they had originally agreed to trial intervention plans for one student.)

Teachers insisted that they were able to demonstrate noticeable improvement in student performances after implementing plans for eight weeks. However, it must be noted here that because of the short duration of the project, improvements in student performances have not been claimed or documented.

A commonly mentioned aspect of this project (mentioned by all teachers) was the learning as part of a team, and the access to ongoing coaching. The former is inherent in the process recommended by *Successful Intervention K-*

3 Literacy, however, the latter would depend on the expertise of an in-school facilitator. It appears that the teachers found the process of workshops followed by regular staff meetings and discussions was a helpful way to plan for literacy intervention. They also felt that the video and follow up demonstrations offered a practical way of establishing strategies for integrated intervention. It seemed that the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* in a pilot program with access to a 'critical friend' enabled teachers to feel supported as they tried different approaches.

Teachers felt that by being involved with the project they had expanded their own literacy horizons, developed expertise in dealing with students experiencing difficulty with literacy, systematically planned for changes in whole school practices and improved staff cooperation and cohesion.

Chapter 5

Summary and Concluding Discussion

Teachers of all students face the challenge of providing and managing learning experiences that will support each learner to achieve expected levels of literacy. This project set out to find how one designated disadvantaged school used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package to take up that challenge.

In the brief summary and concluding discussion that follows, the three research questions are addressed separately. It will be noticed that some items are reiterated under different questions. This was not unexpected as some outcomes were interrelated. The summary will highlight pertinent aspects which arose during the conduct of the project.

Question One

How does one school use Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy package?

The analysis of data showed that the school staff was able to use the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package using the process of action research. They identified their needs and created their own pathway, selecting from the package only the information that they perceived to be relevant.

The workshops served several purposes. Firstly, *Workshop One* provided a framework that enabled teachers to explore and critically evaluate key factors they deemed necessary for successful literacy intervention for students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning. The framework, involving all stakeholders, whole school complexities as well as the instructional program, appeared to offer a much wider perspective on literacy development than the school's previous attempts at intervention programs. Secondly, during this process, the staff and principal were able to review their own beliefs about the nature of literacy and literacy learning. This reflection appeared to help teachers broaden their understandings about literacy. As a result they began to make explicit their own guiding theories of teaching and learning. Thirdly, through sharing information about current research into literacy and disadvantage, the staff had the opportunity to reflect on their beliefs in relation to their own students who come from diverse backgrounds. This led some teachers to examine their own assumptions about designated disadvantaged students' and the way they function away from the school context. It appeared that this workshop had enabled teachers to challenge their current understandings and to share new information with their peers.

Workshop Two provided a process for conducting a situational analysis using the *School Survey Sheet*. The results of the survey were used by teachers to consider possible barriers to learning both at classroom and whole school level in their school. Having identified barriers to learning, staff used the information to collaboratively design a *School Action Plan* for literacy intervention. The *School Action Plan* provided a significant starting point for changes to literacy intervention policy including curriculum matters

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and school organisation. Thus, by clarifying underlying principles for literacy intervention at their school and then devising a clear pathway the staff were able to work together towards their shared goals. As a result teachers felt that the project directly addressed their needs in a disadvantaged school.

The staff meetings and the additional time gained when the principal took the whole school to allow collaborative planning and sharing provided ongoing impetus to the program. Teachers developed their collaborative skills as they worked to develop individual intervention plans for students experiencing difficulties. They also shared and clarified ideas about data collection and storage. They modified teaching practices and used many ideas from the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. They viewed relevant parts of the video and discussed them in relation to their needs.

The culmination of the project was the drafting of a school policy for literacy intervention. The staff decided to trial their policy for one year and then undertake a review before deciding on a final policy. The draft policy (Appendix N) indicates an attempt by the staff to link their underlying principles for literacy intervention to their classroom and whole school practices.

In conclusion, *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package enabled teachers to:

- share and modify their perceptions about literacy and literacy interventions;

- identify specific areas of need at a whole school level and classroom level;

- collaboratively refine their methods of identifying children experiencing difficulties;

- select items from the package and trial a range of intervention strategies involving the child, the teacher and the parent/caregiver;

- plan and implement literacy intervention practices in mainstream classrooms in their school;

- change the environment in which the literacy practices were occurring through sharing their understanding of both the practices and the situations where appropriate;

- plan pathways that ensure continuity and consistency of approaches to literacy intervention;

- critically reflect on their actions during staff study groups; and

- to develop a draft policy for literacy intervention which provides shared guidelines for dealing with children experiencing literacy difficulties.

Most staff indicated that they saw the action research process combined with access to the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* materials as a facility for on going participation for teachers in relevant professional learning.

Question Two

In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy package provide a resource that helps teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices.

The data collected during this project suggests that the resources used enabled teachers to identify a number of key concepts that underpin successful literacy interventions in this school. Major concepts examined were the teacher attitudes; the development of inclusive assessment practices; planning for, and implementing explicit teaching in the mainstream classroom; developing independent learners as part of the intervention process; and working collaboratively to ensure a systematic whole school approach to literacy intervention.

These concepts were examined by analysing key factors for successful intervention in this school's particular context and then critically reflecting on the current school practices.

Firstly, *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy Workshop One* provided a framework which began a process of exploration of key factors for successful literacy intervention. Teachers took the opportunity to examine aspects of intervention that, by their own admission, they had not previously considered. Through this process they were able to investigate reasons for apparently unsuccessful learning and then plan to address the causes. In doing this, teachers combined their knowledge of the cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects of literacy learning with the socio-cultural factors in early language

learning. Teachers then consciously tried to make their classroom practice more inclusive by retaining all students within the mainstream classroom, introducing collaborative learning and making use of heterogeneous grouping. Thus, by providing a framework and process for analysing key factors for intervention, *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* was able to provide opportunities for teachers to articulate and formalise some basic underpinning principles to guide future intervention policies and practices.

Secondly, recent studies into literacy as a social and cultural practice have confirmed that a teacher's view of a student directly influences student outcomes (Delena 1992, Cambourne 1990, Luke 1993a). Of great concern are findings from a study by Freebody and Ludwig (1995) who claim that teachers equated poverty with students' poor literacy achievements. Badger, Comber and Weeks (1993) also claim that, "teachers used a discourse of disadvantage in regard to students' home background" (p.79). While research has indicated these assumptions are largely unfounded (Breen, Louden, Barratt-Pugh et al 1994, Cairney 1992) it appears that few literacy intervention programs address this aspect of teaching in designated disadvantaged schools. Recent recommendations made as a result of a nation-wide survey, claim that in order to improve literacy and language teaching practices for students in designated disadvantaged schools there need to be programs that help "teachers to explore and understand the widening definitions of literacy and the related demands they make on school literacy programs" (Badger, Comber & Weeks 1993 p.83).

Given the diverse range of initiatives in this area it could be argued that literacy intervention programs could do worse than starting with processes

which allow teachers to critically reflect on their assumptions and beliefs about the community in which they teach. As one teacher in this project remarked:

> "I think the whole staff liked the way we constructed our own view of intervention... but getting it into practice is a bit overwhelming at the moment. I believe it has made a difference to the way we look at these kids and talk about them."

In this project, by considering intervention from the aspects of all stakeholders *(Workshop One)* teachers were examining their own assumptions about, and social attitudes to, the students and parents in this school community. Video excerpts in *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package also showed how teachers in one school worked closely with parents and community members. It was interesting to see changes in this school, as teachers took steps to improve the parent school communications using suggestions from the Successful *Intervention K-3 Literacy* package.

The teachers in this study said that they appreciated the chance to analyse their current assumptions and practices. They also commented many times that they felt that they were valued as learners and that their expertise was acknowledged. As suggested by Bennett (1995) this aspect of professional development programs appears to be crucial if programs are to be accepted by teachers. Bennett (1995) concludes that teachers need to look at current research findings, as well as experience and intuition and "select only those innovations that directly affect student learning through attention to curriculum, instruction, classroom management and valuing the teacher as a learner"(p.2). I believe that these teachers did this and more as they

consciously adapted their pedagogy to suit their particular context. According to Cooper and Boyd (1995) using a critically reflective process such as this will contribute to on-going professional growth and in this case help teachers to clarify their role in literacy intervention. The evidence so far supports this notion.

Identifying students who need assistance and finding out what learners know are prerequisites to successful literacy interventions. Many traditionally used assessment tasks have been culturally inappropriate or misleading and have led to students being incorrectly classified as 'at risk'. The teachers in this school used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package to assist their investigations into the use of assessment strategies so that they could find ways that appeared more equitable and useful than previous strategies, but which still enabled them to identify special as well as general literacy needs.

The assessments were then used by teachers to develop individual intervention plans. These provided critical frameworks for explicit teaching. As recommended by *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* the plans included learners and parents/caregivers in the intervention programs. Another significant aspect of the plans was the teachers' attention to the social, emotional, linguistic and cultural aspects of literacy learning.

According to the teachers these aspects of learning had not received great attention in the past. As a result of this project children were encouraged to take control of their learning by setting and monitoring academic and social goals. There are some examples of this shown in Appendix L. In addition, as shown in Appendix M, parents were included in monitoring children's

progress. These innovations appeared to be important and the data suggested that including all the stakeholders in this way, helped move towards successful intervention.

In conclusion the analysis of data suggests that teachers as a result of their involvement with this project were better able to:

- explore their perceptions and practices with a view to changing literacy pedagogy where appropriate;
- gather extensive data and use them to identify student needs;
- select teaching strategies relevant to the context and the child's needs;
- monitor and assess individual children deemed to be at risk in literacy learning;
- plan and organise inclusive classroom language programs and practices chosen explicitly to address particular nominated needs of students;
- demonstrate an awareness of the social, emotional, linguistic and cultural elements of literacy and their impact on language learning outcomes; and
- include all the stakeholders in developing literacy programs.

Analysis of responses to interview questions and examination of other data indicated that the use of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package, in conjunction with an action research process, had helped teachers explore the concepts that underlie successful intervention practices and more closely match their pedagogy to their beliefs.

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Question Three

In what ways does Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy package, facilitate an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention?

The *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package does not claim to provide predetermined answers to meet the special needs of all children. Nor is it meant to be seen as a substitute for special programs for special-needs children. Rather, it provides a number of case studies and other items which demonstrate how some teachers can provide integrated, specially-focused programs for specific children in the mainstream classroom. It particularly encourages teachers to consider the social and cultural aspects of literacy learning as they plan their programs.

It seems that this area of literacy intervention has not been well addressed in the past. However, because it is evident that teacher attitudes and school cultures do affect learning (Hornibrook 1995; Freebody & Ludwig 1995; Comber 1994; Badger et al. 1993; Luke 1993b; Malin 1990; Gilbert 1989) the socio-cultural aspects of literacy are important. Thus *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* could be seen as a useful part of a whole school approach to supporting children with difficulties in literacy learning as it demonstrates the need to consider all aspects of the child's development in literacy intervention programs.

Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy relies on collaborative approaches to professional learning using modified action research, peer support groups

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and networks to assist teachers as they reflect on their practice. Judging by their responses, the teachers in this study were beginning to understand that they (not the syllabus) were the final arbiters of what counts as literacy in the classroom and, as Cooper & Boyd (1995) also found, these processes serve to empower teachers as they build teaching and learning contexts that serve learning goals based on their students' needs.

Luke (1993a) proposes that different contexts may mean that teachers may need to 'do school' differently rather than try and make children fit into a predetermined mould. These teachers certainly did modify their practice and reported good results. It appeared that the weekly staff meetings and staff study groups provided the stimulus needed to keep the project going. I believe that allocation of sufficient time and access to information chosen by teachers to meet their needs, plus teachers' commitment to the systematic review of the school plan provided enough impetus and support for teachers to make changes. The collaborative nature of action research combined with access to new material and a 'critical friend' meant that people acted together to bring about a much broader understanding of the key elements for successful intervention and as a result there were some observable changes in practice.

At a whole school level teachers and the principal used *Workshop One* to establish key elements for successful literacy intervention in this school. The *School Survey* and *Workshop Two* were used to assess current practices and the needs of the school. The resultant school plan for intervention provided a focus for actions. The process of brainstorming and sharing information after group discussion used in the workshops and at staff

meetings, appeared to be successful. It was interesting to note how participants built on to each others ideas and generated different ideas.

The allocation of time to implement the school plan provided teachers with the opportunity to work collaboratively and share their expertise. They made use of the examples of teaching practices provided by the video and resource book from the Successful *Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. It appeared that by gaining access to a range of ideas, and having time to share them, teachers were able to see how they might modify their own practices and adapt new ones for use in the classrooms. The use of case studies showing how teachers had developed intervention plans and various video excerpts proved to be useful items from the package.

In conclusion, it seems that the implementation of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* facilitated an integrated whole school approach to literacy intervention in a number of ways. It appeared from the data that staff including the principal were better able:

- explore their own practices and examine a range of instructional strategies selecting those which seemed to meet the needs of their children;
- work as a cohesive group accepting compromises in order to make important pedagogical decisions;
- examine some recent research into literacy learning and teaching;
- clarify literacy perceptions and make a substantial contributions to the development of a school policy;
- use a range of expertise by collaboratively planning for literacy

interventions for specific students;

- establish routines and processes across the school for exchanging information about students experiencing difficulty with literacy;
- jointly plan to ensure consistency and continuity in teaching and monitoring of students from year to year; and
- develop an integrated policy for intervention which involved all stakeholders.

It could be concluded that as a result of their involvement in this project teachers questioned the continuity and consistency of instruction and record keeping for children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning, as well as the methods of transmitting information throughout the school. To address their needs they devised a systematic way of record keeping, storing and sharing student information. In their effort to ensure that the changes made as a result of their involvement with *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* would be sustained the whole staff developed a policy on literacy intervention in their school (Appendix N).

Conclusion

Schools are made of people who come from diverse backgrounds who have different values and beliefs. Each member of the school community has a contribution to make. It seems that the drawing together of beliefs and work practices into sustainable effective policies is often difficult and time consuming but it appeared worthwhile in this school. As Seymour Sarason observes:

> "When one has no stake in the way things are, when one's needs or opinions are provided no forum, when one sees oneself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to suggest one would rather be elsewhere" cited in *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform* quoted in *Motivating Schools to Change* Cooper and Henderson (1995 p.24).

It appears that the processes undertaken in this school were successful because staff had control of the decisions and were supported by a committed principal. The data showed that there were changes in some teaching practices, the depth of understanding about literacy intervention and staff interactions. The teachers had ownership of the project and were determined to make strong links between policy, curriculum and practice. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provided useful support.

Throughout this project it was obvious that there were many reasons for differences in the rate of children's literacy development. Consequently teachers were required to examine a range of strategies and apply them. *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* provided a process for this, but the intervention programs designed by teachers largely depended on their knowledge of how reading and writing develop. So, the resultant programs

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varied. Some intervention plans, for example, emphasised phonemic awareness or teaching of common sight words, while others focussed on children's self evaluation, goal setting or the development of social interaction skills. The variation in responses can be seen as an advantage or disadvantage. It appears advantageous that teachers were supported in exploring differences and seeking a range of solutions and disadvantageous that the resource package assumed particular knowledge and could not provide all the answers teachers required.

Finally, although on the whole the majority of the staff found the action research process and the use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package worthwhile, it was obvious that throughout the project there were different levels of involvement. In addition, although the planning involved the whole school staff there were dissimilar outcomes. Some teachers appeared self assured and willing to make significant changes. For example, in the lower primary and preschool teachers made the decisions to adopt multi-aged grouping in the final term of the year. Several teachers decided to pursue professional development in collaborative learning techniques. Other teachers were content to ask questions and reflect on their practice with a view to making small changes over time. Thus the impact of a project such as this will ultimately depend on the time allocated, the teachers' commitment to refine and expand their professional learning and their willingness to be involved in making changes in pedagogy.

Throughout the project it was evident that change was not always easily achieved and that it took time. Equally obvious was that although the action research process was not always enjoyable or steadily predictable,

fluctuations and regressions were a necessary part of the process. In discussing their experiences during the project the teachers described their feelings about their progress in many different ways. They found it challenging, rewarding, tiring, exhilarating, interesting, frustrating and threatening. Nevertheless, the general consensus reached was that they had gained much from the experience and they decided to examine ways of continuing collaborative planning in the following year. To do this, they changed the school starting time and all staff agreed to remain at school for a set time each day for collaborative planning time.

The focus of this research was always to observe how teachers used the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package. The action research process used in conjunction with the package accommodated a wide range of responses as teachers examined and critically reflected on their literacy understandings and practices and the school structures. However, and most importantly, they worked together to make a long term commitment to support children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

Future Use of *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* Package

The *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy package* offers some useful ideas for schools dealing with children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning but there are a number of important considerations for the future use of this package.

In this project a modified action research approach was used. It is possible that there could be tensions inherent in the notion of using action research

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in conjunction with a resource package. More particularly, as with any whole school approach there is the obvious danger that staff members could be pressured into actions with which they do not agree. Therefore the size and composition of the staff could affect the outcomes.

The leadership style, commitment and level of involvement of the principal appear important to the success of a project such as this because it is generally the principal who ensures the availability of planning time where staff members can work together. It needs to be remembered that this project involved a small staff with a committed principal who allocated time to the project.

The role of the facilitator was another important variable. It appears that the facilitator needs to know the package well in order to assist teachers. There also needs to be flexibility in the role because the demands would vary from time to time depending on teachers' needs. Currently the Western Australian Education Department is offering some training in the use of the package through its Early Literacy Project for disadvantaged schools. However, it seems that individual teachers and schools could still use the package to some extent.

Finally, the findings indicate that some teachers found it easier to manage the construction of individual intervention plans than others because they were accustomed to observing children's literacy behaviours in a particular way. It may be that some teachers require further training on the nature and dev :lopment of literacy and literacy difficulties to assist them to identify and plan for children experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

Implications for Further Research

Further exploration of the concept of disadvantage could lead to constructive curriculum changes. One of the main issues concerning teachers of groups of students currently disadvantaged in schools is to develop ways of teaching that lead to improvements in students' literacy development. Future research is needed to see whether or not the programs and strategies that the teachers developed through collaboration in this project, have led to improved literacy outcomes for their children. This would provide information about the third stated purpose of the *Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy* package which is: "to assist teachers to provide effective literacy intervention in the mainstream classroom" (p.5). The research is needed to further determine the effectiveness of the package.

It appears that teachers' perceptions of students greatly influence their teaching. Therefore, in the interests of social justice, there seems to be a need for further research into the provision of suitable pre-service and in service professional development for literacy teachers of students in designated disadvantaged schools. This may go some way towards helping teachers to redress some of the inequality of educational outcomes that prevail.

Furthermore, there needs to more information made available to teachers about suitability of literacy intervention programs such as *Reading Recovery* and *First Steps*. It seems, at the moment, that there is a paucity of independently conducted, comparative research about these and other

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literacy interventions within mainstream classrooms. Some research appears to describe teacher training in the use of resources rather than its effect in the classroom. The implication appears to be that if teachers receive training there will be improved literacy outcomes for children. In the light of other studies previously mentioned in this report, this assumption needs to be closely examined.

There also needs to be further research into the whole area of what 'counts' as literacy in and out of schools. Literature in this area is currently causing teachers much anxiety. On one hand they see a range of centrally developed profiles, continua, outcome statements and bands which claim to represent outcomes of the valued curriculum while on the other hand they read of the merit of acknowledging 'multiple literacies' and 'community literacies'. The dilemma of what to teach appears to be just as complex as how to teach it. Therefore, it seems that there is a need to further explore the literacy events in homes for practices that match or contrast with those in schools.

Further research may help clarify what is, or is not, possible and practical to include in literacy teaching within the social institution of 'school' so that it better address the diverse cultural, intellectual and communication demands of different communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions for the First Interview.

The First Interview Questions

Question 1

In what ways did the workshop help you explore your own view of literacy intervention?

Question 2

What do you see as the essential elements of intervention?

Question 3

What are your main concerns about literacy intervention?

Question 4

What do you know about the social, cultural and linguistic experiences of the students in your class who are experiencing difficulties with literacy learning?

Question 5

What sort of professional development, if any, would help you to work with students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for the Second Interview.

The Second Interview Questions

Question 1.

How do you feel so far about the _Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy_ project?

Question 2

What do you believe were the most significant features of the use of _Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy_ in your school?

Question 3

In what ways, if any, did this school based implementation model of professional development assist you with your work with children experiencing difficulties?

Question 4

In what ways did this model of professional development differ from other professional development with which you have been involved?

Question 5

What impact, if any, has your involvement with _Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy_ had on your confidence in working with students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning?

Question 6

With what aspects of this project were you satisfied? What strengths of yours contributed to this satisfaction?

Question 7

With what were you least satisfied? How could these weaknesses be overcome?

Please share your evidence of implementation of the school plan for literacy intervention.

<u>Appendix C</u>

The School Survey

School Survey

Students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning

This survey has been designed to collect information that will help us to address the needs of children who are experiencing difficulty in the area of literacy. The results will be made available to the staff and the school decision making group and be used to direct planning decisions.

We are looking for your honest perceptions of the existing situation so that we can make plans for improvement. There is no need to use your name. Individual surveys will not be published as results will be collated to obtain an overall view.

Instructions

1. Items have been clustered under headings. Please read each item and decide how you feel about the current situation in our school.

2. Place a tick in the column that best describes the situation as you see it. You can choose from five categories. The column headings have been abbreviated.

    Unsat - Unsatisfactory
    Concern - Some concerns
    Satis - Satisfactory
    Good
    Exc - Excellent

3. Additional space has been provided of you to add any comments or items that will help to provide a clearer picture of the situation.

4. Please return the survey to .... on ....

Thank you.

This school devised a systematic approach to identification of children experiencing difficulties.

Supporting intervention at a whole school level	Unsat	Concern	Satis	Good	Exc
Provision of professional development in this area					
Staff view of intervention					
Planning for intervention					
Consistency in identification					
Consistency in evaluation strategies					
Consistency in approach					
Monitoring children's development from year to year					
Access to meaningful student records					
Assessment portfolios including intervention plans					
Relevant system to convey student information					
Criteria for allocating children to classes					
Use of staff to support intervention					
Building home-school relationships					
Provision of professional development in this area					
Home school liaison and communication					
Community perceptions/expectations of the school					
Parent/caregiver expectations					
Reporting to parents/caregivers					
Parents sharing their literacy observations					
Teacher understanding and respect for cultural diversity					
Sharing current educational practice with parents					
Intervention in the mainstream					
Provision of professional development in this area					
Level of cultural knowledge and understanding - teacher					
Level of cultural knowledge and understanding - student					
Teacher acceptance of individual differences					
Student acceptance of individual differences					
Teacher-student relationships					
Interaction between students					
Identification of children experiencing difficulties					
Assessment practices					

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	Unsat	Concer	Satis	Good	Exc
Monitoring of children experiencing difficulties					
Availability of student portfolios					
Use of intervention plans					
Matching preferred learning style to strategies used					
Involvement of students in self evaluation and goal setting					
Involvement of students in decision making process					
Peer support					
Student expectations					
Making evident that which the child does well					
Knowledge of appropriate teaching strategies					
Matching identified needs to strategies					
Culturally appropriate resources					
Resources relevant to children's interests					
Negotiated curriculum					
Inclusive curriculum					
Classroom management					
Provision of professional development in this area					
Methods of grouping children, i.e. class groupings					
Methods of grouping children, i.e. within the class					
Collaborative learning					
Opportunities for risk-taking and experimenting					
Catering for a range of learning styles					
Organisation and class management strategies					
Timetabling					
Knowledge and use of major strategies					
Planning and programming					
Further Information - Please add					

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Appendix D

The School Survey Discussion Guide

School Survey Discussion Guide

	What's working?	What's not working?	What can we do better?
Supporing literacy intervention at a whole school level			
Building home school relationships			
Intervention in the mainstream			
Classroom management			

<u>Appendix E</u>

The School Action Plan

ACTION PLAN

Achievement of strategy

Monitoring and evaluation

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	WHAT/HOW/WHEN/WHO	RESOURCES	WHAT/HOW/WHO	WHEN
1. To devise and implement a literacy intervention policy to support students experiencing difficulty with literacy development.	Develop teachers knowledge and understanding of key factors for successful intervention.	Staff meeting. SI workshop. Facilitator. Staff meeting - week 3 July	LLNC- Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy.	List of key factors decided by staff to be given to teachers by facilitator.	Week 1
	Select priorities commence school action plan.	Staff meeting SI workshop -examine sample plans. Facilitator.	School Survey LLNC- Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy.	Collation of School Survey results by principal.	Week 2
	Decide assessment contexts, type of data and methods of collection to be used to identify students.	Staff meeting SI workshop. What: Teachers to collect data in the context of classroom work using: • observation • socio cultural profiles • parent information • student's retelling, miscue analysis, student work samples, tapes, videos • student self evaluation • information from First Steps	First Developmental Continua and related modules for all teachers. LLNC- Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy. Getting Better at ... Successful Intervention-K-3 Literacy.- video	Report regularly at staff meetings. Journal entries.	Week 2 As required Aug - November On going
	Decide what information will be passed on and how it will be shared.	Developmental Continua in Writing, Spelling and Reading To be passed on: • children's work samples. • First Steps continua. • socio cultural profiles • individual intervention plans • other relevant information	Individual files. A3 size folders with plastic inserts for record sheets and children's work samples. First Steps continua-individual record sheets	Principal to collect copies of intervention information from teachers and store in central filing cabinet. Use Successful intervention checklists and review strategies at staff meetings.	As required
	Staff formulate policy for literacy intervention	How: • staff to remain in school until 4.00 p.m. each day to allow time for collaborative planning in 1997. Sharing and informal meetings • teacher and support (ESL) collaboration • time at end of year (if staff is changing) or in week 2 for teachers to pass information to new class teacher.	Standardised tests if required.	Staff meetings. Staff meeting to complete School Survey. Staff meeting. Evaluate and review effectiveness of plans.	November November

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ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES		RESOURCES	WHAT/HOW/WHO	WHEN
2. To develop individual intervention plans for students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.	Collect data using assessments as decided	WHAT/HOW/WHEN/WHO Class teachers, support staff, ESL teacher, principal, parents, students.	Action plan	Observation, record in journals. Facilitator to assist as required.	On going
	Examine Successful Intervention sample plans.	Workshop Reading Difficulties module - First Steps. Collaborative learning at staff meeting.	Successful Intervention K-3 Literacy.	Regular collaboration in staff meetings. Successful Intervention facilitator to assist teachers by relief teaching, on going consultation, discussions and regular staff	
	Staff meeting to discuss criteria for identification of students experiencing difficulties with literacy .	Provide professional development for teachers who require additional information about reading and writing development.	Students' files	meetings.	Aug - November
	Trial the development and implementation of plans for individual children experiencing difficulty with literacy.	Teachers work collaboratively and use the 'Key elements for intervention' list to guide the writing of an intervention plan for one identified student or group of students in each class.			
		Plans need to address: • social, emotional, cultural, physical, linguistic and cognitive areas • parent/school relationships • student self esteem, autonomy, self evaluation and goal setting • classroom management strategies to be			
	Collaboratively review use of individual intervention plans to identify successful and unsuccessful practices.	used • use of First Steps Developmental Continua in Writing, Spelling and Reading to plot progress.		Use Successful Intervention framework (What's working? What's not? What could we do better?) to assess use of individual intervention plans.	End of year

Appendix F

Four Examples of Individual Intervention Plans

Key Reading Strategies to be developed

Attending to environmental print

Developing concepts of print - word, letter, space, sentence, picture

Attending to print by pointing to words as she reads

Learning letter names.

Developing Knowledge and Understanding & Strategies	Whole class	Small group	Indiv
Develop class alphabet banks & refer to them daily	✓		
Involve children in word work eg. all the words that start with 'b' or 'sh' etc - from reading texts or own writing	✓	✓	
Model writing of children's news by talking out loud when writing "I think I start here," "This is a capital T," "I must leave a space between words.	✓	✓	
Use alphabet songs to identify letters in words children are reading or writing. Teach names of letters using rhymes, songs, charts			✓
Read the room each day	✓		
Read familiar 'big books' over again and use them to locate words, letters etc.	✓	✓	
Draw attention to sound symbol relationships in the context of text being read/written eg. On the board, scribe the news & ask chn to identify the letter eg. who can find S are there others - circle and decide what sound is made by the different S in the news. Find more words with S.	✓	✓	
Oral cloze when reading big books - miss a word	✓	✓	
Use first letter clue to find a word or confirm a guess.	✓	✓	
Make sets of letters for manipulating and making words		✓	✓
Ask child to match words from text to words around the room.		✓	✓
Count the words in sentences - ask chn. to point to each word as it is read.			✓
Use reading/writing opportunities from language experience activities	✓	✓	✓

Intervention Plan

Name _____ Date from _Oct_ to _____

Phases/Outcome levels _____

```
+----------------------------------------------------------------+
|                  Focus for Intervention:                       |
| Autonomy  To engage, self monitor, goal setting                |
|                                                                |
| Belongingness                                                  |
|                                                                |
| Competence  Plans in writing    Monitor Comprehension          |
|                                 (Syntactic awareness)          |
+----------------------------------------------------------------+
```
class group indivd

Strategies to encourage

Individual writing and reading goals
Re read to clarify meaning
Written conversations

Communication book
Use of record planner to plan oral →
written activity

Have a go reading / spelling
Develop self questioning
Self selection of reading material
Partner reading

Development of knowledge and understanding

What to do if you don't know a word
Predict before reading
Use planning sheets
Checklist for reading goals
activities for syntactic awareness
 - sentence manipulation act.
 - cloze - parts of speech

Student conferences

.

Parent conferences

Name _____   Date: from _Oct_ to _____

Phases Outcome levels _Role play - Reader \ Writer._

Focus for intervention:
Autonomy
Belongingness
Competence   Concepts of print letter names

class group indiv

Strategies to encourage

Finger point to each word   ✓

Re read old favourites - predictable text   ✓

Chants + rhymes   ✓

Cut and rearrange known sentences   ✓

Alphabet song + games - sing, manipulate   ✓

Choose own letters to focus on - keep own   ✓
   record of known letters and set goal for
   next ones.

Identify words in environmental print   ✓   ✓
   - detectives

Work with partner in writing time   ✓

Label work.   ✓

Development of knowledge and understanding

Count words   ✓

Identify high frequency words   ✓

   „   letters and letter clusters   ✓

Letter sorts / word sorts   ✓

Shared / Modelled reading   ✓

Daily writing   ✓

Card / word matching after reading   ✓

Student conferences

   .

Parent conferences

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Intervention Plans	Whole Class	Small Group	Individ
Name ⸺ ⸺ Phase _Early_			
Key Reading Strategies to be encouraged.	✓		✓
Have·a·go	✓		✓
Picture clues	✓		✓
Context clues	✓		✓
Responding on text meaning	✓		✓
Self-correction	✓		✓
Developing Knowledge and Understanding			
Retelling		✓	✓
Shared book	✓		
Story planning. who, what etc	✓		
Focus on main idea	✓		✓
" " interpretation	✓		✓
Writing	✓		✓
Language games	✓		✓
Specific Strategies for Developing Word Identification Strategies			
Stop and think			✓
high frequency reading			✓
Making sentences from word bank	✓		✓
Matching activities		✓	✓
Text innovations		✓	✓
Reading for different purposes	✓		✓
Language games	✓	✓	✓
Specific Strategies for Making Meaning			✓
Have·a·go			✓
Oral · written cloze	✓		✓
Sequencing - chunks of text·	✓	✓	✓
" " sentences	✓	✓	✓
Comparisons of texts	✓	✓	✓
Readers theatre	✓	✓	✓

Appendix G

Two Examples of Communication Books.

Janna like to watch mov
and Agro.
Agro is funny
♡ Miss ██████

Janna gets up early mornin
and get ready to school without
other help.

4.12.95

Janna worked well in the play today
♡ Miss ██████

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22.11.95

Bryan made his reading book
quickly today. ⟨signature⟩ Miss ████.

BRYAN IS MAKING GOOD PROGRESS AND ENJOYS
THE TASKS SET FOR HIM.

a m happy

becos I doo

nisse werck

Appendix H

Two Examples of Annotated Work Samples.

26-6- P3

I got a microfone and
I Hafa sum stickes I
am gon to giv paall m,
stickas hoo is fren
or paall that u goll

Great

You are very kind,
What a clever writer you
are too. Mrs S. 26/6/95

26-6-15

yustday I foust Went
to my mum's
wou£k n£l
and then I Went to
the moorseuum
but foust I Went
to See a baby
Share and
then I Seen
the pugwins
and then I
Went to See
a big chrah
and then I Went
to See and th£ brouds
and £u£th£ is the dinsou£s£

You had
a very busy
day Fan

You are lucky to
be able to visit
the museum. You
are a clever writer.
Miss S. 26/6/15

We have been writing in our diaries every day.

___.__.__1___:

Demonstrates one to one correspondence between written and spoken words. ☑
Writes about personal events. ☑
Attempts to use some punctuation. ☐ apostrophe
Talks with others about writing ☑
Can read back own writing. ☑
Has a go at spelling hard words. ☑

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<u>Appendix I</u>

An Example of a Learning Journey.

My Learning Journey

What I did	What I learnt
Made a pattern	Patterns go on and on and on
Diary writing	Some letters make lots of sounds
Painting	Be careful
Science	About floating
Music	I wrote a song

Next I want to get mettor

Appendix J

An Example of Staff Evaluation Forms

Reviewing and Modifying Plans

On-going reviewing processes help sustain the momentum of any school program. The following examples show how a school used simple techniques that could be adapted for use by individual teachers or by whole staffs. Objectives and actions in the examples are taken from the agreed school plan and used as a basis for the review process.

The first example 'Staff Review' was used prior to staff meetings and circulated to be filled in anonymously. Staff placed one tick on the continuum for each element to indicate their perceptions. At staff meetings the information was presented on an overhead transparency and provided a starting point for an informal review of the implementation of the program. The completed review included shows clearly that there were some areas that needed attention. By addressing these areas during the year the school was able to modify the plan and support teachers who required assistance. Teachers felt comfortable with this informal method of review.

In the second example 'Individual Teacher Review' the school chose to have teacher principal interviews covering a range of topics. Review forms composed from the school plan provided guidelines for part of the interview. Teachers felt that they had an opportunity to explain their progress and to seek extra support or modify time lines if it seemed necessary.

On-going reviews help to ensure that programs are successfully implemented.

School Review

The following actions were part of our school plan for addressing the needs of students experiencing difficulty with literacy learning. So that we can review and modify our plans could you please indicate how you see the current situation by placing a tick on each continuum. Please sign and pass to another staff member when you have completed the review.

OBJECTIVE
To identify students at risk in literacy development.

ACTION
Use of the Developmental Continua to plot children having difficulty

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful
////	//	/	

Collection of dated work samples

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful
W/////	/	/	

Identification of children with difficulties

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful
/////	///		

OBJECTIVE
To make specific plans to address needs of students experiencing difficulty

ACTION
Devise intervention plans, using agreed guidelines, for students experiencing difficulties

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful

Implement intervention plans for students experiencing difficulties

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful

OBJECTIVE
To further involve parents in the education of their children

ACTION
Conduct meetings with all parents/caregivers

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful

Implement communication booklets with parents

Very useful	Useful	Undecided	Not Useful

Please add any comments you feel will help this review.

I have completed this review.

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INDIVIDUAL TEACHER REVIEW

In our school plan it was decided that the following actions would be taken. Please take the time to review your progress towards implementing our objectives and bring your review to your teacher principal interview.

OBJECTIVE
To identify students at risk in literacy development

ACTION:
Plot children using all indicators on the Developmental Continua

yes	some	not yet

Collect and date work samples for portfolios

yes	some	not yet

Identify children using agreed criteria

yes	some	not yet

OBJECTIVE
To make specific plans to address needs of students experiencing difficulty

ACTION
Devise intervention plans for students experiencing difficulty

yes	some	not yet

Implement intervention plans for students experiencing difficulty

yes	some	not yet

OBJECTIVE
To further involve parents in the education of their children

ACTION
Conduct class meetings with all parents/caregivers

yes	some	not yet

Implement communication booklets with parents

yes	some	not yet

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Appendix K

An Example of a Monthly Action Plan Report

Action Plan Report

School: **Phone:**
Contact Person: **Fax:**
Date:

Outcomes	Planned Actions	Achievements to date

•Develop a whole school policy for literacy intervention	•Whole staff meeting to establish a view of intervention using SI Workshop One
	
	•School survey to establish focus for action
	
	•In service teachers:
	    First Steps Writing
	    Use of Reading Continuum
		•Professional development meeting to decide important factors for successful intervention. Listed for staff perusal.

•Identify students at risk in literacy development. •Develop individual literacy intervention plans for identified children.	•Establish school procedures for identification of children experiencing difficulties •Use work samples, retell, miscue analysis, interview, observation, cloze and other information. •Use First Steps Continua in writing, Spelling and Reading to record data collected. •Staff meeting workshops. Collaboratively develop intervention programs for individual students. •Use project officer visits (one per week) to help implement programs. •Devise system to monitor progress of identified children during year. •Devise system for tracking children from year to year. •Staff meeting workshops to choose suitable strategies from SI	Consensus on objectives for school plan for intervention Decision on data to collect for identification of children.

Appendix L

An Example of Student Goal Setting.

Name

When I read this text I can:	ALWAYS	USUALLY	NOT YET
Predict what might be next		✓	
Use my background knowledge to help me		✓	
Use the pictures and diagrams to help me	✓		
Have a go at tricky words	✓		
Think of sensible words to fill the gaps		✓	
Sound out some words if I need to		✓	
Correct words that don't make sense			✓
Stop and reread if it doesn't make sense			✓

How I feel about my reading

I think that I am getting much
better because I am reading
harder books like novels
and stuff.
Next time I read I will try and
stop when it doesn't make
sense

Appendix M

An Example of Student, Parent Goal Setting.

Two stars and a wish

Dear Parent,

Please look at ███████ work sample book. ███████ has already chosen two good things about the work and one thing that ~~he~~/she is going to work hard to improve. Could you do the same please.

I like my project because it looks very attractive.

My research was good I learnt a lot.

I want to do more research.

███████ / PLEASED YOU DID GOOD PROJECT THIS MAKE ME FEEL PROUD

YOUR INFORMATION IS VERY GOOD

I WISH YOU CONTINUE

MR ███████

The School Policy for Literacy Intervention.

SCHOOL POLICY FOR LITERACY INTERVENTION

1.   RATIONALE

1.1
Children learn best in the context of the mainstream classroom.

1.2
Students' literacy skills and strategies will be maximised if difficulties are recognised early and ongoing plans implemented.

1.3
Students' literacy skills and strategies will improve if children, parents, teachers and support staff work together to achieve common goals.

1.4
Confidence and participation by children, parents, teachers and support staff will enhance children's attitude to literacy learning and their literacy development.

1.5
A whole school approach to literacy intervention will result in consistency and continuity of programs for children experiencing difficulty with literacy learning.

1.6
Students' literacy skills will improve if they are involved in setting and monitoring their own literacy goals

2.   AIMS

2.1
To enable children to develop skills, attitudes and strategies necessary for them to become competent literacy learners

2.2
To involve students, parents, teachers and support staff planning and implementing literacy intervention plans in the classroom

2.3
To assist children to take responsibility for their own learning

2.4
To provide on going monitoring, evaluation and feedback on children's progress, to the child, parent and staff involved

2.5
To build children's self esteem and develop their confidence as literacy learners.

2.6
To use developmentally appropriate teaching and learning strategies

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1
Identify students who may be experiencing difficulty with literacy learning by:
monitoring literacy development using First Steps Developmental Continua;
observing;

> formal or informal interviews, conferences and one to one discussions with child,
> analysis of children's work samples;
> attitude surveys;
> child's self evaluations;
> 3 way conferences-parent, child, teacher;
> teacher made tests;
> diagnostic tests such as miscue analysis and running records;
> using information from previous intervention plans;
> talking with previous teachers and support staff; and
> other appropriate actions.

3.2
In consultation with students, parents, teachers and support staff devise individual intervention plans to be implemented.

3.3
Include support staff in the implementation of the program using whole class, small group and individual plans. (Incorporate collaborative learning strategies where appropriate)

3.4
Involve the child in self monitoring and give regular feedback to parents and child

3.5
Regularly review intervention plans (about once a month or as required)

3.6
Handover plans and other relevant data to following teachers.

3.7
Keep duplicate records in central storage area.

4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

4.1
Use monthly staff meetings to review plans and collaborate to plan for future actions

4.2
Principal to undertake informal surveys and interviews with staff and parents to review progress of the plan

4.3
At the end of first and second semester evaluate use of intervention plans and assess future needs.

4.4
Review and update action plan at the end of each term, using headings as described in sample.