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Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities as they transition from a prior-to-school setting to their first year of formal schooling

Lynette Patricia Cronin
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*Investigating children's perspectives of literacy
opportunities as they transition from
a prior-to-school setting to their first year of formal
schooling*

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from
University of Wollongong

by Lynette Cronin

B.Ed. (ECU), M.Ed. Dip Teach (UOW)

**School of Education
Faculty of Social Sciences**

2016

Certification

I, Lynette Patricia Cronin, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Signed:

Lynette Cronin

Date: 2016

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to future generations of young children as they begin their journey into formal schooling.

May they be valued for the unique little people they are.

May they be listened to, and have opportunities to exercise personal agency so they can experience feelings of belonging to their new school communities.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to offer heartfelt thanks to my supervisors Lisa Kervin and Jessica Mantei, who are not only mentors but also friends. This thesis is proof that all things are possible with the support and guidance of these amazing women. I am indebted to you both for giving so generously of your time, knowledge, wisdom and friendship. Without your expertise this important research could not have been accomplished. Our supervisor meetings always began with shared stories and laughter, followed by expert advice, and ended with words of encouragement and a way for my research to move forward. I will miss our regular get-togethers!

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To my family – my husband Michael and my children Patrick, Peter and Molly – you have lived with my 'busyness' for some time now. I thank you for your love, patience and understanding. My thesis is done!

Abstract

Transition to school is a key life event for young children (Turunen, 2014). The research literature on children's transitions to school emphasises the importance of a smooth transition for positive social and educational outcomes, not only in school but also in later life (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). The research on transition to school has previously focused on discussions between educators and parents across settings, and on the concept of school readiness. However, it has now broadened to include a range of stakeholders (Dockett & Perry, 2006) and recent research on the transition to school highlights the importance of including children's perspectives (Murray, 2014). There is a significant gap in the research literature in reporting children's perspectives on the literacy events they engage with at the time of transition from prior-to-school educational settings to formal schooling.

The main participants in this inquiry were seven children who transitioned from the same prior-to-school setting to the same first year of formal schooling. The purpose of this inquiry is to develop an understanding of their perspectives on the literacy opportunities available to them in the two settings. This qualitative inquiry is informed by the theoretical orientation of literacy as events (Heath, 1983) and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) in the educational contexts of the prior-to-school and first year of formal school research sites.

Using a comparative case study approach the primary data were collected through the creation of digital stories, supported by observations, interviews and an analysis of key documents. Digital storytelling provided the children with the space to express themselves as creators of personal texts across visual and oral modes. It allowed the children to share their views, thoughts and opinions of the literacy events they engaged with across the two educational contexts at the important time of their transition to formal school.

The findings indicate that there are both continuities and discontinuities in the literacy opportunities available to children at the time of their transition to school. The children's voices highlighted and documented the continuities and discontinuities in the different forms of literacy practices that were valued in the two educational contexts, and the pedagogical approaches that required the children to participate in literacy

events in very different ways.

The findings also revealed that children's perspectives have the potential to play an important role in informing the development of literacy events and practices that are meaningful and relevant to young learners in both educational settings. As such, the inquiry concludes with the presentation of a model representing an emerging theory about the role of children's perspectives at the important time of transition to formal schooling.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1 Introduction

Purpose of the inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry is to explore, from their own perspectives, the literacy transitions of seven children as they move from the same prior-to-school educational setting to the same first year of school setting. Through case study inquiry, the literacy opportunities available for the children are revealed, as are the literacy events the children identify and describe across both settings, during the period of transition. The definition of transition for the purposes of this inquiry is,

A dynamic process of continuity and change as children move into the first year of school. The process of transition occurs over time, beginning well before children start school and extending to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and when educators recognise this sense of belonging (Educational Transitions and Change Research Group [ETC], 2011, p. 1).

This definition recognises that transition to school is a time of both continuity and change for children and their families as they move to a less familiar context. It is how the children navigate the continuities and changes in the literacy experiences available to them at this important time in their lives that is of particular interest to this inquiry. According to the ETC Research Group (2011) transition occurs over an extended time frame which lasts until children and their families feel a sense of belonging in their new setting. In this inquiry the time frame was bounded by the period of data collection which extended from the last five weeks of the prior-to-school setting to the end of the first five weeks in the primary school context. It is acknowledged however that for some children the time taken to develop a sense of belonging in the new school environment may extend over a longer time span.

This chapter begins by identifying the purpose of the inquiry and presenting the research questions. Then the rationale and background to the inquiry are presented, after which the theoretical orientation that underpins the research is detailed. Included here is a discussion on literacy and the changing focus in what is considered important for children's literacy development in educational settings. The researcher then tells her

personal story in a way which shows how the main tenets of this inquiry evolved. The chapter concludes with the definition of terms and the thesis overview.

This inquiry is framed by an overarching question:

- How do children negotiate the literacy practices of a prior-to-school educational setting and first year of the formal school setting?

And contributing questions:

- What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?

In order to respond to the research questions this inquiry has three aims:

1. To explore the opportunities for literacy learning as young children move from their prior-to-school educational setting into their first year of formal schooling.
2. To capture and examine the children's unique perspectives on the literacy events in which they participate.
3. To explicate the pedagogical and theoretical implications of children's perspectives of literacy in transition to school for educators in the prior-to-school setting and for teachers in the first year of formal schooling.

In consideration of the first aim, the opportunities for literacy learning are explored in the observed literacy events that form the literacy practices employed across the two settings as young children move from their prior-to-school educational setting into the first year of formal schooling. Literacy practices are the broad notions of knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes that cannot be observed but underpin literacy events. They may be inferred from the observed literacy events in the prior-to-school and the first year of formal school sites of this inquiry (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Literacy events are those that can be observed in the social activities, in particular contexts, mediated by texts, for particular purposes (Heath, 1983). In this inquiry, exploring the 'socially recognised ways' (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 33) of doing things in the prior-to-school and the first year of formal school settings involved observing and analysing

children's social activities, the texts used, and the talk around texts associated with the particular literacy opportunities that are made available to the children in each setting.

In pursuing its second aim, this inquiry acknowledges that children should be at the centre of the transition to school process (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002) and as such their accounts of their experiences of starting school are important. Children often interpret the context of school differently from adults (Dockett, Petriwskyj & Perry, 2014) and therefore the perspectives of children *living* the experience will be quite different from the perspectives of the adults who plan and create their prior-to-school and school environments (Dockett & Perry, 2007). However, children's voices are not always listened to, despite the fact that their opinions in matters that affect them are considered important in the discourse about children's rights (United Nations, 1989). Smith and Taylor (2000) observed that much of the research conducted about children positions them as 'invisible and voiceless objects of concern, and not understood as competent, autonomous persons who have a point of view' (p. ix). More recently however, children's agency is being recognised (Harden-Thew, 2014; Smith, 2011) and it is the intention of this inquiry to provide space for the voices of children, not just to be heard, but to form part of the dialogue about literacy transition to school. In doing so this inquiry is acknowledging that children's opinions are valuable, and what they have to say about their experiences should be heard and can influence decisions made concerning them (Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood [CEIEC], 2008).

The third aim of this inquiry is to explicate the pedagogical and theoretical implications of children's perspectives of literacy in transition to school for educators in the prior-to-school setting and for teachers in the first year of formal schooling. The continuities and discontinuities in the literacy opportunities available to children during transition, a vital time in children's learning and development, impact early childhood educators, school teachers, and other key stakeholders including policy makers. This inquiry aims to provide important insights into the ways children's experiences with literacy at the time of transition may be improved. In stating this, it is important to acknowledge that early childhood educators, teachers and policy makers are experts in their fields, and this expertise is vital in defining the implications of this inquiry. Their views are key to interrogating and changing practice and policy regarding children's transition to school (Rickinson, Sebba & Edwards, 2011).

Rationale

The Australian federal government has made a significant contribution to early childhood education for all Australian children by introducing a nationally mandated curriculum in 2013. This curriculum, The Early Years Learning Framework (referred to hereafter as the EYLF) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) is a key component of the Australian Government's National Quality Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b) for early childhood education. This framework is designed to guide early childhood educators to 'provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 5). Within this framework, children are encouraged to actively construct their own learning in the context of play, building on experiences with language and literacy from within their families and communities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a).

To ensure all children experience quality teaching and learning in the early childhood sector, the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) emphasises play-based learning. Through play, educators engage children in sustained shared conversations supporting their language development, creativity, problem solving and overall enjoyment of learning (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a). The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 6) defines play based learning as,

a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

The EYLF recognises the importance of educators in the early childhood sector planning opportunities for intentional teaching. Intentional teaching is defined in the EYLF as teaching that is 'deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 15). Through intentional teaching educators actively promote children's learning using range of strategies such as modelling, demonstrating, questioning and problem solving, to extend children's thinking and knowledge-building. The EYLF recommends that educators document and monitor children's learning.

Children's language and communication skills and social and emotional development, including the development of their early literacy skills, are recognised in the EYLF as important (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a). Literacy is defined in the Framework as 'the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 38). This definition guides educators to provide children with opportunities to communicate using a range of text modes, to connect with those around them, and to build on a range of experiences with language and literacy within their families and communities.

The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) communicates learning expectations for children from birth to five years through to transition to formal school using five learning outcomes. Outcome number five, 'Children are effective communicators' pertains to the development of children's language, literacy and numeracy, and recognises them as being foundational for successful learning in prior-to-school educational settings. The pedagogical practices recommended in the EYLF are holistic in nature and educators are required to establish relationships with children and their families, and to work together to plan curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local contexts.

In the primary and secondary school settings, the Australian federal government has introduced a nationally mandated Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2014) for students from Foundation (the first year of formal school) until their completion of Year 10. The Australian Curriculum has been designed to connect with the EYLF and build upon its key learning outcomes, and to acknowledge, value and build on the diverse learning experiences children bring with them to school.

The Australian Curriculum English (ACE) is organised into three interrelated strands that support students' growing understanding and use of Standard Australian English. Together, the three strands form an integrated framework of disciplinary knowledge. They focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking and writing. The three strands are:

- **Language:** knowing about the English language (Australian Curriculum English Language – ACELA)

- **Literature:** understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literary texts (Australian Curriculum English Literature – ACELT)
- **Literacy:** expanding the repertoire of English usage (Australian Curriculum English – ACELY).

Content descriptions in each of the three strands are grouped into sub-strands that, across the year levels, present a sequence of development of knowledge, understanding and skills (ACARA, 2014, para. 3).

In the New South Wales (NSW) context, the state education body is the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES). BOSTES is responsible for the school curriculum, assessment, teaching and regulatory standards in NSW schools. BOSTES developed NSW Syllabus documents to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in NSW primary and secondary schools. This NSW English K–10 Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES], 2015) includes all the content descriptions from the Australian Curriculum for English as well as additional content descriptions from BOSTES.

Another document developed in NSW to support teachers in developing students’ literacy skills and understandings is the K–10 Literacy Continuum (NSW DEC, 2011). This continuum outlines eight aspects considered by BOSTES to be critical to children’s achievements in literacy. Each aspect is developed along a continuum of learning, with specific learning goals identified in clusters, as markers of student progress. Literacy skills and understandings identified in the K–10 Literacy Continuum can be mapped in Early Learning Plans for use by teachers as their English program. *Early Learning Plans* allow teachers to plan, track and monitor student progress in literacy.

Like the ACARA version of the Australian Curriculum English, the BOSTES version focuses on recognising the knowledge and understanding students develop at home and in prior-to-school settings, and views learning as taking place on a continuum from these settings to the first year of formal school in NSW. This is made explicit in the stage statements. The ‘Prior-to-school learning’ stage statement (BOSTES, 2015) documents that teachers need to become familiar with children’s existing language and literacy skills from home and prior-to-school settings, in order to ensure that as children

commence school, programming in English will meet their individual needs. In both the BOSTES and EYLF curriculum frameworks, teachers are encouraged to use their knowledge of children's family, cultural and community contexts when planning and implementing learning experiences and making pedagogical decisions.

These English syllabus stage statements provide a potential bridge from prior-to-school literacy to school literacy. However, one of the main discontinuities between settings lies in the educators' and teachers' differing approaches to pedagogy and what is expected of the children as curriculum frameworks are interpreted by educators and teachers (Margetts, 2002). The prior-to-school educational context emphasises play and more child-centred methods, whereas the school approach is more teacher-centred and emphasises subject knowledge, skills and assessments (Margetts, 2002).

For example, one program introduced in the first year of formal school in the NSW context is the Language, Learning and Literacy in the Early Years (L3) Program (New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC), 2009). The program was designed by literacy consultants from the NSW DEC (2009) and was informed by a trial project initially led by Dr Gwynneth Phillips from Auckland University. The L3 program advocates explicit and systematic instruction based on assessment data to target reading and writing learning. The main focus of the program informs English sessions in which children are taught in small groups of three students. Each group is given short (10 minute), explicit lessons in reading and writing daily. The teacher works with each group in a focused and uninterrupted way. The small group instruction takes place in the class 'engine room'.

The 'engine room' is a concept introduced in the L3 program. The engine room is usually situated in a corner space in the classroom to allow the teacher to face outwards so as to have the children in the class within view. Teachers organise the classroom environment in ways that allow small group instruction to take place by providing learning experiences that engage students in meaningful and constructive, independent work, related to literacy. The activities provide students with opportunities to work alone, interact with peers, or participate in small groups, whilst the teacher is in the 'engine room'. These literacy activities are independent of the teacher, and are classified as 'choice' and 'must-do' activities. Children have an established routine

where they know which activities they must participate in over the course of the English session and which optional activities they are able to choose from.

In addition to small group teaching, L3 requires children to listen to stories and participate in discussions with the teacher around quality literature texts. This is called 'reading to'. The program also includes time for 'interactive writing', in which the children, led by the teacher, develop the skills and understandings needed to compose and write short texts.

The focus in primary school settings reflects a societal shift to the expectation that children attain increasingly high levels of academic performance in the first year of formal schooling (Dockett & Perry, 2009; Gullo & Hughes, 2011). In today's first year of school, children spend a large proportion of their time being taught and tested on literacy and mathematical skills, and far less time learning through play, exploration and exercising their imagination (Gullo & Hughes, 2010).

An example of literacy and numeracy testing in the first year of school is the NSW Department of Education and Community assessment initiative, The Best Start Kindergarten Assessment (NSW DEC, 2009). This assessment is designed to identify each student's literacy and numeracy skills and understanding on entry to their first year of school. It is administered to students individually in the first three weeks of the first year of formal school. The purpose is to provide an accurate starting point for literacy and numeracy teaching for the class, for groups of students and for individual students (NSW DEC, 2009). This information is intended to assist teachers to develop learning and teaching programs that build on each student's current knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy.

In the middle and later years of primary school in Australia the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 is mandated by the Australian Government. This demonstrates the increased attention given to national standardised testing and the focus on students' attainment of knowledge and a range of skills deemed essential for children.

As primary school teachers deal with the increasing pressures of testing regimes and the expectations of curriculum frameworks, educational systems and society, they make

decisions that influence pedagogy and curriculum continuity from the prior-to-school environment, in which play is the leading context of learning, to the more formalised learning structures of the formal school setting. This leads one to wonder how children experience these very different educational contexts, what children's perspectives are on the different literacy experiences within each setting might be, and what implications there are for educators and teachers working to support smooth transitions for children from the prior-to-school setting to the first year of formal school setting.

Recommendations have been made by the EYLF, ACARA and BOSTES for educators to ensure a smooth transition of children entering their first year of formal schooling. The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) states that educators in early childhood settings work together with teachers in formal school settings by sharing information to support children at the time of transition into the first year of school. ACARA (2014) and the BOSTES (2015) encourage school teachers to become familiar with the existing language and literacy skills children have gained from home and prior-to-school settings. However, there appears to be limited attention given to how educators and teachers in the different learning contexts can achieve this. And minimal attention has been paid to the inclusion of children themselves in discussions about their familiar literacy practices at the time of transition from prior-to-school educational contexts to the first year of formal schooling. In addition, there appear to be fundamental differences in the ways different educators and teachers make plans on the basis of these documents. Therefore, there is a need for further inquiry in this area.

Background of the inquiry

Literacy

In exploring the ways children in transition perceive the literacy experiences on offer in the year prior to school and in their first year of formal schooling, it is useful to reflect on current and emerging views about young children's literacy learning. It is well established in the literature that literacy development begins from birth. By the time children begin their first year of formal schooling, they have accumulated a range of knowledge and understandings about literacy from unique experiences in their homes, in their communities and, for those who attend, in their prior-to-school educational settings (Cairney, 2002; McNaughton, 2002). There continues to be a significant

amount of attention paid to the importance of literacy learning in the lives of children prior to school and at the time of transition into the first year of formal schooling. This focus has developed from an awareness of the link between literacy and life opportunities, and of the social context of learning (Arthur, Ashton & Makin, 2000; Cairney, 2002; McNaughton, 2002; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

When children participate in everyday social and cultural experiences with their families and in community contexts, they engage with a range of literacy events and develop their literacy practices (Fleer & Raban, 2006; McNaughton, 2002). As such, children's understandings of literacy practices when they enter educational settings are diverse. To ensure equity in literacy education for all children, their individual experiences with literacy must be acknowledged and built upon in educational contexts, as they transition from their prior-to-school experiences to the first year of formal schooling (Arthur et al., 2000).

Transition

There has been a great deal written about early literacy learning and children's transition from home to prior-to-school settings and then on to primary school. Many of the research findings emphasise the importance of smooth transitions across these settings and their links to positive social and educational outcomes, not just at the time of transition, but into the later school years (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Margetts, 2007; Peters, 2010). Additionally, Turunen (2014) argued that as a key life event, transition to school might affect a child's self-identity and have a lifelong impact on their learning. Dockett and Perry (2005; 2007; 2014) reported findings from a range of studies highlighting the significance of positive relationships between stakeholders as integral to a positive transition for children. In addition, establishing effective communication and collaborative partnerships between home, prior-to-school environments, school and community has been identified as essential for successful transition to school for children and their families (Margetts, 2014).

Hartley, Rogers, Peters, Smith and Carr (2009), in their Centre of Innovation study at the Mangere Bridge Kindergarten, observed the importance of positive relationships and continuity in children's learning experiences. They explored ways for children and families in transition to 'build bridges' across educational settings from prior-to-school

contexts to the first year in formal school. Hartley et al. (2009) identified that teaching and learning approaches need to be compatible. A similar finding was reported by Mackenzie (2014) who argued that continuity in children's learning experiences was vital for a smooth transition from prior-to-school settings to the first year of formal school.

The following points aim to summarise aspects that have been identified through a range of studies that promote a smooth transition for children. A smooth transition is one:

- in which relationships are built between stakeholders, allowing children to feel a sense of belonging to their educational communities (Dockett & Perry, 2014)
- where there is continuity of experience and environments for children as they move from one educational setting to another (Brostrom, 2005; Margetts, 2007; Petriwskyj, Thorpe & Tayler, 2005)
- where there is continuity of learning experiences and pedagogical approaches for children as they move from one educational setting to another (Hartley et al., 2009; Mackenzie, 2014)
- where the educators and teachers have high expectations for all children, recognise children's strengths and make connections to the funds of knowledge children bring from their homes and communities (Hill, Comber, Loudon, Rivalland & Reid, 1998; McNaughton, 2002).

For a child to experience a smooth and successful transition, it is necessary for the child's early childhood educators and primary school teachers to be aware of what is happening in each other's settings, and to reach a common understanding of how literacy learning is represented. When educators in both settings have greater knowledge of their students, and utilise that knowledge, they will be better able to construct an inclusive curriculum in ways that build upon children's existing knowledge and preferred ways of learning (Broström, 2002; Carr & Peters, 2005; Fabian, 2002; Hill et al., 1998; Mackenzie 2011; McNaughton, 2002; Margetts, 2007).

Literacy transition

Children come from a variety of home and community contexts and therefore attribute different meanings to the ‘literacy events’ in which they engage in their homes and communities (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Broström, 2005; Heath, 1982; Hill et al., 1998). However, these events will not necessarily match the opportunities offered for literacy learning in prior-to-school or primary school settings (Cairney, 2002; Hill et al., 1998). A child who enters a new educational community may be faced with unfamiliar social practices. Consequently, tensions may arise for the child as he or she transitions between home and school settings or between prior-to-school settings and the first year of formal school. Clay (1991) and McNaughton (1995) argued that these multiple and diverse pathways to literacy learning prior to school are important factors influencing children’s literacy development in the early years. Whilst this inquiry is primarily concerned with the literacy transition of children from prior-to-school settings to the first year of the formal school setting, the influence of home and community cannot be ignored as children at this age spend significant time in the care of family members, their first educators.

Smooth transitions require more than simply acknowledging the range of literacy practices children experience prior to attending formal schooling. A smooth transition is more likely when teachers are able to *build upon* the different resources children bring with them to school (Hill et al., 1998). This occurs through building relationships in which collaboration is encouraged and open communication takes place between families, children, educators and teachers, (Dockett & Perry, 2006). Placing the needs of children at the centre when planning transitional programs allows learners from different family and community contexts to experience a positive transition to school despite their diverse needs (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Commonwealth of Australia, 2009; Dockett & Perry, 2014).

Children’s voices

One way to ensure that the needs of children moving from the prior-to-school into the first year of formal school context are at the forefront when planning and implementing transition programs is to provide space for the voices of these children to be heard. Children are not passive recipients in the transition process. They co-construct

experiences with other stakeholders (Dunlop, 2003), and if they are included as active contributors, their knowledge about their own feelings and ideas will enhance the authenticity of research on transition to school processes (Murray, 2014).

A strong theme identified in recent transition to school research is the importance of including the perspectives of children. However, it is acknowledged that this area is largely under researched (MacDonald, Goff, Hopps, Kaplun, & Rogers, 2014). A few studies have included the perspectives of the children involved in transition to school research. For example Perry and Dockett's (2007) 'Voices of Children in Starting School' project provided insights into the differing ways children and adults interpret starting school experiences. The project involved children in planning, implementing and documenting transition to school programs. 'Listening to Young Children: the Mosaic Approach' (Clark & Moss, 2001) involved children taking their own photographs of what was important to them in their prior-to-school environments. Einarsdóttir (2005) used a similar research approach whereby children in an early childhood setting participated in group interviews, playing, drawing and photographing aspects of their environments that were important to them. However, she found that by themselves, the pictures only revealed partial stories, and that discussion about the pictures was vital for understanding the children's stories.

Another way to create space for children's voices to be heard in research on transition to school is through the art of digital storytelling. Meadows (2003, p. 189) explains that 'digital storytelling makes use of low-cost digital cameras, non-linear editing software and notebook computers to create short, multimedia stories'. According to Meadows (2003) these are essentially personal stories that use multiple modes of meaning making to give another perspective on who we are (as a society).

This inquiry used digital storytelling to document the lived literacy experiences of children by providing them with the space to express themselves as they transitioned from the prior-to-school setting to the first year of formal schooling. Kervin and Mantei (2015) described digital stories as a powerful means of self-expression that allows children to not only to express themselves, but to evoke emotion from their audiences. Digital storytelling creates spaces for stories about the learner's life experiences and culture to be shared and listened to (StoryCenter, n.d.) and enables children to document their personal stories with confidence (Banaszewski, 2002). In this inquiry the children

tell their personal stories by creating digital stories. They do so by capturing still images of chosen literacy events and orally annotating the images, in order to share their personal perspectives by describing their feelings and opinions of the literacy events in their prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings.

Theoretical orientation to the inquiry

Literacy has traditionally been viewed as the ability to interact with print-based text in reading and writing with a focus on the development of the discrete skills involved. However, expanded views of literacy dominate literature in the twenty first century. Literacy is no longer seen as a unitary skill on a single developmental scale, but as repertoires of practice developed over time (Hill, 2004; Kress, 2003; Nixon & Comber, 2006).

Literacy is now discussed in connection with social practice, and the changing focus in what is considered important for children's literacy development in educational settings.

A focus on literacy

A focus on literacy as meaning making has endured over time, but it is the ways in which this meaning is made that have changed. Traditional definitions of literacy focus on the ability to interact with print-based text in reading and writing with a focus on the discrete skills involved. Knobel and Healy (1998, p. 9) described traditional literacies as 'A fixed neutral system of language rules, symbols and conventions', pointing to the notion of literacy as a finite entity. Scribner and Cole (1981) and Street (1984) described the acquisition of these skills as the development of tools to unlock the language system, enabling the decoding and encoding of written texts. Traditional literacy focused on imparting the skills necessary for the acquisition of reading and writing.

The strengths of this focus lies in the planned and systematic way literacy skills can be taught and acquired. Street referred to these as skills that are 'measurable, transportable and packagable' (1995 p. 6). By focusing on a skills-based approach to the teaching of reading and writing, teachers in schools and communities systematically taught a sequence of predetermined skills that many would say are critical to the development of reading and writing print-based texts (Chall, 1967; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

These skills were assumed to remain constant irrespective of use, and they can be measured and mastered by individuals.

Developing the skills that enabled the consumption and construction of texts was evidence of literacy practice. However, with a greater understanding of the power that is generated by the proficient construction of text, the definition of literacy shifted from its focus on skills acquisition to the application of those skills. ‘Literacy’ came to the fore in educational documents and policy, as teachers came to realise the integrated nature of reading and writing skills and their relationship with social practice (Gee, 2004). Literacy experiences emerged in educational settings that saw reading and writing taught in increasingly integrated ways, linked to particular social purposes.

A major realisation at this time was the notion that literacy development for children began in the home prior to attending school. This recognised that children engaged in literacy practices linked to real life social purposes within their family contexts. This had implications for policy and pedagogy in prior-to-school settings and some researchers have argued the necessity for educators to make connections to, and build upon, the literacy practices that children participated in within their homes and communities (Hill et al, 1998; Jones Diaz, Beecher & Arthur, 2009; McNaughton, 2002).

Supporting these understandings was evidence from various ethnographic and anthropological studies demonstrating that literacy is not a neutral set of skills that can be divorced from the social context in which they are used or acquired (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996; Street, 1995). These theorists found that literacy skills used in homes and communities are particular constructs, rooted in the ideologies and social and cultural contexts of those homes and communities. This understanding led these theorists to a sociocultural view of literacy. It was an understanding which recognised that schools needed to consider how literacy in everyday life could link with literacy in educational contexts (Street, 2012).

Whilst the traditional acts of reading, writing, speaking and listening remain central to being literate, digital texts have emerged as a result of new technologies, as have new ways of engaging with technologies in contemporary society (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Pahl and Rowsell stated ‘Texts can no longer be regarded solely as alphabetic print

books but as coming in many shapes and sizes ... an idea can be drawn, enacted, modeled or spoken' (2010, p. 4). Thus, the multimodal nature of texts suggests meaning is conveyed in ways that are 'linguistic, visual, gestural, audio and spatial' (Bull & Anstey, 2010, p. 23).

Education-related documents acknowledge the interaction with texts across a wide range of modes as well as the connection between home and school. The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 38) defined literacy as, 'the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms', incorporating, 'a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing'. Evident in this definition is a broad range of text modes which children can use in the prior-to-school domain and in society at large.

Recent educational documents, The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2014) and The NSW English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015), recognised the scope of knowledge and skills needed to be effective consumers and producers of a broadening range of texts in a variety of contexts including home, school and the wider society. The need for those texts to be authentic, and the need to make connections between the texts and children's life experiences, are also recognised in curriculum documents, because as children respond to and compose texts they shape their understandings of themselves and their worlds (BOSTES, 2015).

Lankshear and Knobel (2011, p. 33) used the term literacies rather than literacy. They defined literacies as multiple phenomena, as 'socially recognised ways in which people generate, communicate, and negotiate meanings, as members of discourses, through the medium of encoded texts'. They pointed to literacy as a social practice constructed within particular contexts, using texts that are encoded, not only through linguistic processes, but also through some type of semiotic system. Therefore, what was viewed as text expanded beyond the written word to encompass a range of modes, constructed for different social purposes.

This following definition of literacy was adapted from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Education Position Paper (2004, p. 13). Literacy is defined as a set of skills, practices and experiences:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written [and visual] materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge or potential and to participate fully in the wider society.

Earlier, the term literacy practice emerged in literacy theory research, to describe the ways people transact with texts for specific purposes in particular social contexts. Scribner and Cole (1981) introduced the term 'practice' to literacy theory in the term 'literacy practice'. They described literacy as 'a set of socially organised practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it' (Scribner & Cole, 1981 p. 236), thus recognising patterns of social activities that include the interaction with some type of text. Scribner and Cole's (1981) definition of literacy practice was reshaped by later researchers who situated literacies within broad social and cultural contexts. They saw literacies as influencing or shaping the ways people engage with written texts for particular purposes (Barton, 2001; Barton & Hamilton 1998; Street, 1984, 2001). Literacy practices are also reported to include broad notions of knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes that underpin 'what people do with literacy' and as such are not wholly observable (Barton & Hamilton, 1998 p. 6). Heath (1983) agreed that literacy practices are not wholly observable but stated they can be inferred from literacy events. Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 9) defined literacy events as events that are 'observable', 'regular and repeated' and 'mediated by written text'. According to Heath (1983) literacy events usually include some type of written text around which talk revolves.

A key point here is that texts are integral to literacy events. In contemporary times the range of texts available has broadened. As new information communication technologies emerge, so does an increasing range of multimodal, digital and media texts. Whilst print-based texts are still important, there is a range of text modes that may feature in conceptualisations of literacy events. Kress (1997) observed that texts can be, not only written texts, but also visual representations with words and images working together to create meaning.

Given the understanding of literacy events and practices based on seminal research, coupled with the broadening range of texts associated with new communication

technologies, a theoretical lens through which to view this inquiry has evolved. It seems evident that literacy events can be observed embedded in social activities, in particular contexts, mediated by texts, for the particular purpose of communicating meaning. The broad notions of knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes that cannot be observed, but which underpin literacy practices, may be inferred from observed literacy events. These events are regular, repeated and socially recognisable, and they take place in the educational contexts of prior-to-school settings and the first year of formal schooling that are the sites of this research.

The literacy practices that are embedded in educational contexts, and the literacy that is learned within particular educational contexts, are dependent on factors which vary in different contexts (Street, 2003). They are also dependent on broader factors which are not as context dependent, like educational systems requirements, and state and national curriculum frameworks (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). For example, prior-to-school educators, school teachers and children make decisions about literacy use within the social contexts of the learning environment, and the mandated programs and frameworks unique to each setting (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). In addition, the ways in which children, educators and teachers interact influences literacy events and learners' attitudes towards literacy. In particular these factors affect the attitudes of young children in relation to the agency afforded them within the literacy-learning environment (Street, 2003).

Children's emerging experiences with literacy develop as they negotiate the different literacy practices required in the social and cultural contexts of home, prior-to-school educational settings and in the settings of formal school (Street, 2003). How children engage with the literacy events on offer, and what these events mean to children in different social contexts like prior-to-school educational settings and formal school settings, are important aspects of this inquiry.

In prior-to-school educational settings literacy events may include:

- talk between the educator and child centred on a shared book, an oral story or an experience
- talk about an artifact brought by a child from home, as information about it is shared with peers and educators
- an instance of socio-dramatic play using semiotic resources such as signs

- an instance of physical play, in which children communicate, negotiating the roles and rules of engagement
- the creation of visual, tactile or multimodal texts
- the joint construction of a multimodal text on a computer.

In the first year of formal school, literacy events are often more formalised (Luke, 2010; Mackenzie, 2014) and may include:

- a shared discussion about text (spoken, print, visual, media, multimedia and digital texts)
- the joint construction of a text between the children and teacher
- children telling ‘news’ as part of the class routine
- children reading, viewing, writing or creating texts (including multimedia presentations and digital texts) for different purposes,
- children engaging in reading and writing for specific purposes guided by the teacher.

Significance of the inquiry

This inquiry occurred at a significant time, given the national curriculum reforms in Australia, both in the prior-to-school setting and the school setting. As noted earlier, three important documents related to these reforms are: the Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2014), the NSW Board of Studies English K–10 Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) and the Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a). These documents will provide a context within which to place this inquiry.

At the time of this inquiry the educators in the prior-to-school setting examined in this study were working with the EYLF, which was introduced to the centre in 2009. The primary school setting examined in this study was in a period of transition as it was moving from the 1998 NSW Board of Studies English Syllabus to the NSW Board of Studies English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum, which was due to be implemented in schools in 2013. For this reason it is the NSW Board of Studies English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) that this inquiry will include as part of the key document analysis.

Significant also is the growing trend for standardised testing to influence the educational agenda in several countries including Australia (Dockett et al., 2014). The increasing pressures teachers face to prepare children for national assessments like NAPLAN as well as the state Department of Education and Community (DEC) Best Start Kindergarten assessment (DEC, 2009), have the potential to influence curriculum content and pedagogical practices as early as in prior-to-school educational settings (Dockett et al., 2014). In addition Dockett et al. (2014) and Peters (2010) have reported that the potential implications of children's performance on standardised tests has influenced the discussion on school starting age in the media and in research. Further to this Hatch and Grieshaber (2002) highlighted the stress children may be under, as teachers feel pressured to assess children on externally established standards. They also warned of the further narrowing of the curriculum in the early years that may result (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002).

Traditionally, literacy learning in prior-to-school contexts and in primary schools have been viewed as contrasting in pedagogical terms. Literacy in the prior-to-school setting is highly contextualised but becomes less so in the primary school as learning becomes more formalised (Tabors, Snow & Dickinson, 2001). The literacy experiences of children within and across these two settings can at times be vastly different, as they are shaped by the contexts in which they occur. In this inquiry, literacy is viewed as a social practice embedded in and shaped by the social context in which it occurs (Makin & Jones Diaz, 2002; Street, 1995). Therefore, providing closely detailed accounts of the context in which literacy practices occur will give insights into the meaning of the literacy events and practices experienced by children as they transition from the prior-to-school context into formal schooling.

Children are well placed to give closely detailed accounts of literacy events in their educational contexts as they are living the experience. However, in seeking to obtain young children's perspectives, researchers are often challenged by their varying communication skills and competencies (Greene & Hogan, 2005). This inquiry actively involved children by using multiple strategies in the co-construction of data. For example, using digital storytelling as a means of core data collection enabled the children to share their personal narratives through visual and oral modes. This enabled the researcher to capture a richer, more in-depth perspective from the children than they

would otherwise have been able to convey through questionnaires or interview techniques alone.

In summary, the exploration of literacy events from the perspective of children is a unique approach to literacy research during the crucial transition from prior-to-school to school. There is a shortage of research from this perspective. Through the medium of digital stories, children were able to tell their own literacy stories. The children's voices highlight and document the connections and differences between the literacy events and practices they encountered in their prior-to-school setting and the literacy events and practices they encountered in their first year of formal schooling.

My personal story and its significance to the inquiry

The initial catalyst for this inquiry occurred during my time as a kindergarten teacher (the first year of formal schooling in New South Wales). It was then that I began to reflect on my students' learning as they navigated the literacy experiences I offered them as they entered their first formal year of school.

After many years of teaching, I was appointed to work in an area of the education system that was new to me - Kindergarten. I viewed this appointment with mixed emotions of excitement and apprehension. As I began to plan, I followed the lead of the experienced teachers that had gone before me, using the files of resources and ideas they had left behind. I coupled this with the knowledge and understanding of how children learn to read and write (from four years as a Reading Recovery teacher) and I began my new job ready and determined to produce the *best group of readers and writers the school had ever seen!*

It was not long before I was wondering why some of the children were engaged and moving ahead in literacy learning so confidently, and others were not. Questions and doubts began to surface. Why would Lizzy hide under the table during the morning session while Amy interacted confidently during whole class discussions around texts? Why would Anna begin to cry when it was time to take out her writing book while others appeared to engage readily with the learning experience? Why would Sam sit with his head buried in his lap and scribble over his attempts at writing while Aaron experimented happily with hearing and recording sounds in story writing?

What was I doing or not doing that that was causing my students to react in such different ways? I wished that I could understand the different attitudes the children appeared to have toward their literacy learning. After much reflection and refinement of my practice, my literacy teaching continued to evolve. However, I was still not satisfied with what I was doing to support all my students' literacy learning at that crucial time of transition to school. The motivation for this inquiry began in earnest after I had completed a Masters of Education (Language and Literacy) in 2008. Studying the coursework for this degree led me to the realisation that I had the opportunity, not only to find answers to my questions, but also to make a contribution to knowledge in the field at the same time. I could influence teachers' established literacy practices at the crucial time of transition to school.

As I embarked on this PhD inquiry, the research literature was telling me to find out what children know and do with literacy at home, in their communities and in their other prior-to-school settings. My reading revealed that when the skills, experiences and understandings that children bring to school are acknowledged, valued and built upon in early literacy programs, children are recognised as capable, confident learners (Cairney, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2003), and when continuity of learning across contexts occurs, children are more likely to experience a smooth transition to school (Hill et al., 1998; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

So in order to make a connection with, and build upon children's early literacy experiences, I decided to investigate what types of experiences children have with literacy in prior-to-school educational settings and how those experiences are built upon when they enter their first year of formal schooling. The research literature on transition to school positioned children as competent in their own views and perspectives on matters that affected them, and it emphasised the importance of seeking their views (Dockett, Einarsdóttir & Perry, 2009; Einarsdóttir, 2007). Therefore, what better way to find out than to invite the children themselves to share their views and talk about their interests and experiences in their homes and prior-to-school educational settings? It became increasingly apparent that the children who were at the centre of transition to the formal school had been overlooked as important contributors to this process. As a result, the children's perspectives on their experiences with literacy at the time of transition to formal schooling became the focus of this inquiry.

Using the theoretical frame of literacy events and practices discussed, this inquiry explores the literacy events that young children engage with at the time of transition from a prior-to-school educational setting to their first year of formal school, and the literacy practices that are embedded within these different social contexts. The children's perspectives on the literacy opportunities available to them across settings were captured and examined by providing space for their voices to be heard at the important time of transition to school.

Definition of terms

Key terms used throughout this inquiry are defined in alphabetical order. These definitions underpin the use of these terms throughout the thesis.

Educator

In this inquiry the term educator refers to early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.

Literacy

This inquiry uses a condensed version of the UNESCO (2004) definition included earlier in this chapter. In this inquiry, literacy is seen as comprising the individual's repertoire of social practices and experiences, including skills that are essential for effective participation in life. Central to being literate are the functions of speaking and listening, reading and writing, and viewing and representing, as well as the skills related to a range of multimodal texts associated with digital technologies (BOSTES, 2015).

Furthermore, literacy is viewed as a social practice that is embedded in the wide context of society, and culture and place (Street, 2012), in alignment with Street's (1995) Ideological Model of Literacy. This model identifies the multiple characteristics of literacy practice which are influenced by different communities and are shaped by the dominant discourse and the power relations that influence literacy practices in social institutions (Street, 1995).

Literacy practices may be defined by the contexts in which they occur through the interactions between family, community members, and children and teachers in

educational settings (Cairney & Ruge, 1999). These practices vary across home, community and educational settings. These practices are now defined.

Community Literacy

Community literacies are the ways in which people use literacy in carrying out their daily lives. They include events within social settings, and they include leisure activities (Barton, 2001). Young children as members of families, groups and communities experience the multiple modes of language, sound and images embedded in the literacy events in which they are involved at home and in the community.

Family Literacy

Family literacy is the term used to describe the literacy practices that pervade the home. It is argued that through everyday family activities children develop early literacy practices and their personal and cultural identities (McNaughton, 1995). Family literacy practices may include experiences such as bedtime reading, engagement with media and popular culture texts, games and play. Cairney (2011, p. 119) defined family literacy as:

Opportunities for literacy learning that family members have through the provision of resources and experiences, the recognition and valuing of members achievements, the interactions surrounding literacy events, and the models of literacy demonstrated by family members.

Play

Play is an abstract concept and can be defined in a multiple of ways, depending on one's social, cultural or professional context (Fleer, 2013). This inquiry defines play in the context of young children and its relationship to learning in educational settings.

Play is an essential part of children's lives (Verenikina, 2010). It is usually enjoyable and derives from the experiences of everyday life (Van Oers, 2010), but can be imaginary activity in which new meanings are given to objects and actions (Fleer, 2010). Play may advance children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Verenikina, 2010). Wood and Atfield (cited in Fleer, 2013, p. 23) defined play as,

child driven, child invented, focuses on the ‘doing’ (process not product), is done by children and not adults, requires active involvement, is fun and is a form of pretence that is felt to be real by the children.

Teacher

In this inquiry the term teacher refers to primary school practitioners who work directly with children in the primary school setting.

The first year of formal school English sessions

An English session is an uninterrupted block of time dedicated to teaching English and literacy skills using a balance of direct, explicit instruction, teacher modelling, shared instruction and guided, as well as opportunities for children to practise and apply skills and strategies, and make choices in their learning (NSW DEC, 2009a).

Transition to school

The major focus of this inquiry is the ease with which children make the transition from the year prior to school to the first year of primary school. For the purposes of this thesis, “transition” refers to a child’s move from the prior-to-school educational setting to the first year of formal schooling. The focus is mainly on how the literacy needs of the child are supported at this time. The definition of transition for the purposes of this inquiry is:

a dynamic process of continuity and change as children move into the first year of school. The process of transition occurs over time, beginning well before children start school and extending to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and when educators recognise this sense of belonging (ETC, 2011, p. 1).

The Australian formal school year begins at the end of January and ends in December. Therefore, in this inquiry, for the purposes of data collection, the focus was on November and December in the prior-to-school educational setting and on February and March in the first year of the formal school context.

Children's ages

Children may enter the first year of formal school in NSW at the beginning of the school year if they turn five years of age on or before July 31st in that year. By law all children must be enrolled in primary school by their sixth birthday.

Children finish primary school in NSW after seven years of schooling, from the first year of formal school to the end of Year 6. At this time children transition from primary school to secondary school aged from 11 to 12 years of age.

Thesis overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

This first chapter identified the purpose of this inquiry and outlined the importance of young children experiencing a smooth and effective transition from their prior-to-school educational setting to their first year in the formal school setting. As this inquiry occurs in a significant period of national curriculum reforms, key documents relating to the educational sites of this inquiry were introduced.

The background information in the first chapter highlighted the importance of young children having opportunities to participate in literacy events that build on the strengths and literacy knowledge and understandings they bring with them from their home and community settings in order to successfully transition from prior-to-school to school settings. Therefore, the intention of this inquiry is to obtain children's perspectives on their experiences with literacy, as they transition between educational contexts.

The theoretical orientation of the inquiry is then taken up, followed by the significance of the inquiry and the researcher's personal story which provided the impetus for the inquiry. Following this are definitions of terms to guide the readers as they seek to understand the logic of this inquiry

Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter reviews the literature with the aim of locating the inquiry within the broader context of what is known about literacy opportunities in educational settings at the time when young children transition from prior-to-school educational settings to

their first year in formal schooling. This chapter discusses the literature pertaining to young children's literacy development in the context of play and the relationship between context and practice as children move between the home, community settings and educational settings. The chapter concludes by exploring the engagement of children at the time of transition, and by investigating the tensions that arise and the role of children as agents in their own transitions to their first year in the formal school setting.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines and justifies the design of the inquiry. It describes the methods used in data collection and introduces the children who are the focus of this research. This inquiry is qualitative in nature and used a comparative case study approach to the collection, analysis and presentation of the data. Utilising a case study approach, core data were collected through the creation of digital stories, supported by observations, interviews and analysis of key documents. Each of these methods is explained and justified. The limitations and delimitations of this inquiry are discussed and the chapter concludes with an explanation of the ethical considerations associated with the research.

Chapter 4: The learning environment

Outlined in this chapter are the findings in relation to the literacy events and practices situated within the educational environments of the prior-to-school educational setting and the first year of formal school setting.

This chapter provides insights into the nature of the learning environments within which the data were collected and the educational settings within which the literacy events and practices were explored in connection with the key curriculum documents associated with each setting.

The physical spaces of the research sites are described, as are the personal philosophies of the educators and teachers, and their interpretations of mandated curriculum documents. Examples are provided of the types of literacy events available in the educational settings as experienced by the child participants.

Chapter 5: The case studies of seven children

This chapter outlines the cases of the seven child participants in transition from their prior-to-school educational setting to the first year of formal schooling. The core data, which are the digital stories created by each of the participants in their prior to school setting and in their first year of formal school, are presented along with the findings which emerged from this data.

The cases have been organised in alphabetical order according to the names of the child participants. Following each child's two digital stories is an interpretive summary capturing the child's unique perspective of the literacy opportunities available to them in both settings at the time of transition.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

The discussion and conclusion chapter considers the research questions first presented in the introductory chapter in the light of the findings of this inquiry. This chapter firstly highlights the literacy events that were available to children at the time of transition. It then discusses the unique perspectives of the seven children as the cases of this inquiry and the ones who lived the experiences of literacy across the two different educational settings.

Finally, this chapter explores the implications of the inquiry for educators, school teachers, and policy makers. It also draws conclusion about the implications that the methodology of this inquiry has for future research designs, and how the theory of literacy events and practices used in the analysis of this inquiry continues to be reshaped with the advent of new literacy technologies. These implications have the potential to inform research, practice and policy.

Before concluding, this chapter presents an emerging theory about the role of children's perspectives informing literacy events and practices in educational settings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction to the chapter

As discussed in Chapter 1, the purpose of this inquiry is to explore literacy transitions from the perspectives of seven children as they move from the same prior-to-school educational setting to the same first year of the formal school setting. This chapter positions the current inquiry within the body of relevant research about young children, their literacy development and their participation in prior-to-school and primary school settings.

The review begins with a focus on the young child as a literate person in connection with the nature of child development, their interactions with others, and with literacy artefacts in the context of play. It then explores the reported literacy opportunities available to children in home and community settings, the prior-to-school educational setting and the first year of formal schooling. The review then narrows its focus to the implications for young children as they negotiate the literacy practices available in different contexts, and the tensions that may occur as children transition into their first year of formal schooling. Finally, the review of the literature examines children as agents in their own transitions when they are recognised as being competent to express their views in matters that affect them. This chapter is organised under the headings identified in Figure 2.1.

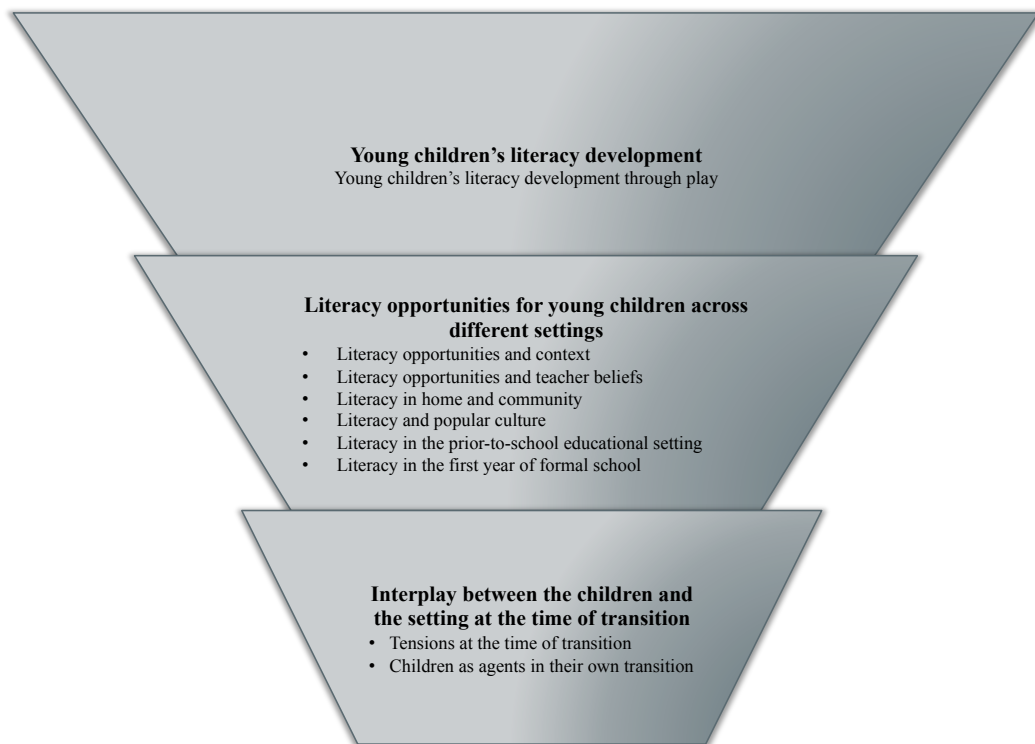


Figure 2.1 Literature review model

Young children's literacy development

For children, learning and development take place through their relationships with family, community, culture and place. This section examines literature related to young children's development, their interactions with others, and the ways in which they develop literacy knowledge and understandings through play.

From birth, children are in a significant period of development, physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally (Dickinson, McCabe, & Essex, 2006). This impacts their engagement with literacy as they experience a range of literacy practices in the different social and cultural contexts of their worlds. Physically, with the development of fine motor skills, young children exert greater control over the implements used in engaging with literacy. For example, they develop the ability to use digital devices such as computer mice and track pads, and they develop the dexterity needed to manipulate books, pencils, and other writing, drawing and creating implements. Similarly, the development of a child's gross motor skills allows them to participate in a wider range of literacy activities such as constructive play. Physical growth and cognition go hand in

hand, as physical changes facilitate the progressive complexity of mental structures (Piaget, 1964). Vygotskian theory (1978) linked this cognitive development with the power of social interactions that lead children to new understandings about the world and about themselves through their social interactions.

During a child's early period of life, social and emotional competencies and a sense of belonging develop as a result of nurturing relationships with parents and carers (Bulkeley & Fabian, 2006). Through the secure attachments formed in these relationships, children develop language and interpersonal skills (Halliday, 1973; Jones, 1996), enabling them to communicate and form relationships with peers and others beyond the familiar home setting (Danby & Farrell, 2004).

Honig (2007) and Hill (2012) observed that language skills develop rapidly in the years prior to school, as children interact with parents and carers, and experiment with sounds, words and word order, building their vocabulary knowledge, and communication skills. Beyond the home setting, Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) identified well-developed vocabulary and communication skills, as important for children's literacy learning in educational settings, because they allow children to access the competencies necessary for the complex task of learning to read. And finally, the development of language skills also supports children's social interactions with peers during play (Verenikina, 2010; Wood, 2004).

Play is a very important part of childhood and many researchers attest to its prominent role in children's literacy development (Beecher & Arthur, 2001; Neuman & Roskos, 1990; Roskos & Christie, 2001; Roskos, Christie, Widman & Holding, 2010; Wood, 2009). The following section examines the literature related to play and the development of children's understandings of literacy knowledge.

Young children's literacy development through play

Play is a leading context for children's learning and development (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009) and a rich site for literacy learning and teaching (Beecher & Arthur, 2001; Wood, 2009). Vygotskian theory (1978) identified play as the most significant activity impacting children's psychological achievements in the early childhood years. Play has more recently been credited with offering learning potential for young children across cognitive and social domains, enriching their understanding of the world (Johnson,

Christie & Wardle, 2005; Roskos & Christie, 2001; Wood, 2009). And contemporary literature highlights the importance of adult support for children during play (Fleer, 2013; Hill, 2012; Raban, Brown, Care, Rickards & O'Connell, 2009).

There is a consistent link in the research literature between play and children's language development (Roskos & Christie, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Verenikina, 2010). Bruner (1983, p. 65) stated that, 'the most complicated grammatical and pragmatic forms of language appear first in play activity'. When children enter the discourse community of play, social interactions demand intentional use of the lexical and syntactical features of language (Roskos & Christie, 2001), advancing children's ability to engage in communication with others (Verenikina, 2010). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that through pretend play a broader zone of proximal development is created and children's thinking, imagination and communicative skills are advanced. Consequently, communication and collaboration skills are improved, as well as interpersonal relationships, as children scaffold each other's problem solving strategies (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

Roskos and Christie (2001, p. 59) reported a range of ways in which play serves literacy. They argued that play promotes literacy 'by providing settings that promote literacy activity, skills and strategies; serving as a language experience that can build connections between oral and written modes of expression; providing opportunities to teach and learn literacy'. This situates play as offering opportunities for literacy learning. This is an argument that is supported by Wood (2009) who described the different affordances of play as those that are dependent on the planning of the play environment, the resources and materials that are available, and the ways in which children use the materials by applying their particular knowledge and expertise.

A variety of contexts for learning through play are important for children in developing literacy skills (Roskos, et al., 2010). Hill (2012) explained that children acquire literacy skills through the varied contexts of play because, as social discourses are enacted, young children negotiate roles, reproduce cultural knowledge and convey meaning through their interactions with symbols and literacy artefacts. Fleer (2013) asserted that during play children create shared meaning through the use of signs and actions that are commonly understood. For example, when a tissue box is used to represent a shoebox in role-play scenario (Van Oers, 2008), the players understand the sign created (the

shoebox). The shoebox is then placed near the feet of the player and the players understand this associated action. Fleer (2013) argued that this understanding is foundational for further literacy learning, as children engage with commonly agreed symbols and signs during their interactions with texts. As such, a replication of the ways literacy is used in everyday life can be experienced through play, offering children insight into the forms and functions of literacy in their world (Raban, et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Hill (2012) explained that when play is enriched with literacy artefacts in 'real life' play centres, children develop their understandings of the connection between oral and written modes of communication. For example, Neuman and Roskos (1993) observed that children learn to recognise printed words in play centres that incorporate written texts into the activities on offer. Similarly Scull, Nolan and Raban (2013) noted that before formal lessons in reading and writing begin, children develop their own understandings of the purposes and functions of literacy in play activities with others, allowing them to experiment with oral and written language in authentic real life situations. Wood (2009, p. 33) further explained the link between play and reading and writing as children move between settings where literacy practices may be different, stating that 'as children learn to negotiate different communities of practice, play provides a bridge between the possible (for example acting as competent readers and writers) and the actual (being readers and writers)'. From these studies it may be concluded that children know a great deal about literacy through their play experiences.

Recent findings highlight the importance of adult support for children during play (Fleer, 2015; Hill, 2012; Raban, et al., 2009; Siraj-Blatchford, 2008). For example, Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2008), in an extensive study of early childhood programs in the United Kingdom, found that children's progression in learning came as the result of a balance between freely chosen play by children and by play led by qualified teaching staff. However, Raban et al. (2009), recommended caution when adults interact with children during play, as it may be perceived as the adult 'taking over', resulting in a loss of interest by the child. Brown, Rickards and Bortoli (2001) agreed, stating that by carefully providing supportive scaffolds through talk, strategies for problem solving, sharing examples and purposefully introducing literacy ideas, adults can enrich children's play experiences in unobtrusive ways.

In another example of adults providing supportive scaffolds in play, Yelland, O'Rourke and Harrison (2008) described the learning of a young boy who had a preference for designing and making a range of constructions with blocks. Independently and with the support of the educators, he created elaborate plans through print-based drawing, computer-based design and animation to represent his ideas in both two and three dimensions. The constructive play context organised by the educator created a rich learning environment for this child to make meaning and extend his understanding of the world, and, as a result, this play enhanced his opportunities for literacy learning in ways that built upon his particular interests and strengths as a learner. In this example the connection between literacy opportunities that build on children's interests and strengths provided motivation and engagement for literacy learning.

It is evident from the research literature that play supports young children's development of understandings and competencies with literacy. Many children have opportunities to play in contexts such as the home, community groups and prior-to-school educational settings. These experiences afford children significant opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of the purpose and function of literacy in their lives and the lives of others. The following section examines the research literature related to the literacy opportunities available for young children in the range of contexts they inhabit, from home and community to prior-to-school educational settings and then to the first year of formal schooling.

Literacy opportunities for young children across different settings

Literacy opportunities and context

The context in which young children are situated influences the learning opportunities available to them (Neuman & Celano, 2001). The relationship between literacy practices and home and community contexts, prior-to-school and school settings, is important to this inquiry, as it influences the literacy opportunities available for children at the time of transition from prior-to-school educational settings to their first year in formal schooling.

Neuman and Celano (2001) observed that the unique nature of each child's family and community influences the literacy opportunities they experience from their earliest

years. Consequently, the literacy practices that children engage with in their personal contexts are different from each other, and they depend on what is preferred and valued in their home and community settings (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Hill, et al., 1998). These experiences can also be different from what is on offer within educational contexts prior to school and at school (Jones Diaz, Arthur, Beecher, McNaught, 2000). A range of studies have linked literacies to spaces or domains of practice including home, community and school, and findings show that the settings children inhabit shape their first literacy experiences (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Jones Diaz et al., 2000; Hill, et al., 1998; Neuman & Celano, 2001).

In certain spaces, literacies can be ‘invisible’ as they are embedded within the routines of daily living (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Pahl, 2002). For example, the everyday home rituals of mealtime, watching television, playing, cooking and children and parents sharing stories are practices in which meaning is shared and understandings accrue. However, these are not always recognised as literacy events. According to Pahl (2002) children engage at home in literacy events that involve an interplay between oral, visual and artifactual modes, including those that are ephemeral, like texts that are created during play. This differs from educational contexts, in that literacy opportunities are influenced by the physical and social boundaries of school and the curriculum (Jewitt, 2008). Literacy practices in the school context are usually planned and evidence in the form of texts is visible in association with prescribed curricula (Pahl, 2002).

Neuman and Celano (2001) viewed literacy as circulating within spaces; that is, they argued that the opportunities that are available for literacy are dependent on the setting, the local practices and values. The literacy opportunities available in spaces are influenced not only by the physical surroundings and the resource materials available, but also by the purpose for literacy use, in serving different communicative functions within settings (Neuman & Celano, 2001; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Subsequently, Leander, Phillips and Taylor (2010, p. 332), explained the classroom space and its relationship to teaching practice, stating,

For teachers, the classroom is the domain of everyday practice and design – the space within which activity must be managed and the space which can be potentially transformed into a rich place of learning.

Further, Edward-Groves (2010) reported that children learn what counts as important in the classroom context through the actions and interactions that occur. For example Edward-Groves (2010, p. 3) explained,

They hear what is given priority through the talk of the teacher, they experience what is given priority through the activities and routines implemented by the teacher, and they understand their place in the classroom and in the world through interpersonal relationships.

Edward-Groves (2010) also noted that how children behave in relation to the teacher's rules and expectations has a bearing on their success or otherwise in literacy learning. Danby (2002) agreed, explaining that the ways children operate in classrooms is determined largely by the space, resources and time available. These variables are dependent on the control of the teacher and particular institutional practices.

Literacy opportunities and teacher beliefs

Teachers' beliefs come from a combination of prior experiences in personal and educational settings, and interactions with formal knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Shaw, Barry & Mahlios, 2008). Kagan (1992, p. 65) found teaching practices to be greatly influenced by teachers' personal beliefs, describing the development of these practices as 'an intensely private affair'. Additionally, Stipek and Byler (1997) claimed that how teachers plan and implement literacy opportunities for young children is definitely associated with their beliefs about literacy and the literacy practices associated with the settings in which they operate. Johnson (1992) argued that as teachers' beliefs translate into practice, what is implemented might be affected by implicit and explicit curriculum mandates that may limit options. Stipek and Byler (1997, p. 144) added that 'teachers' pedagogical practices have the potential to limit or expand children's literacy experiences'.

More recently Foote, Smith and Ellis (2004) argued that what teachers do is likely to stem from their particular beliefs about what is best for young children's literacy learning, and comes from their experiences in their social and cultural contexts. Shaw, Barry and Mahlios (2008) agreed, reporting that children's experiences in classrooms are uniquely based on the teachers' beliefs. Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta and Mashburn (2010) found that the quality of teaching programs is driven by the teachers themselves.

Literacy in home and community

Young children as members of families, groups and communities experience the multiple modes of language, sound and images embedded in the literacy events in which they are involved. Families model as well as engage children in interactions with a range of literacies as they talk, watch television, use the internet and mobile devices, make lists, listen to music, play games, cook dinner, read newspapers, magazines, brochures and road signs. Children engage with the literacies that are valued within their specific home and community contexts.

Young children develop the particular literacy practices that are valued in their homes and communities, influenced by the differences that exist across their unique environments. This is well documented in the research literature. For example Heath's (1983) ground breaking research about the literacy practices of children in different home and community settings found a wide range of literacy events associated with particular community and cultural beliefs. Heath found that there were different types of uses for reading and writing in which children participated in different communities. Different literacies appeared to prepare children differently for school because of the values placed on certain literacies over others within the school setting.

More recently, studies by Hill et al. (1998) and Jones Diaz et al. (2000) noted a range of literacies involving children with traditional spoken and written texts, as well as engagement with digital texts and media technologies associated in particular home and community contexts. Hill's (2010) collaborative project, *Children of the new millennium* explored children's use of new technology in their homes, prior-to-school settings and schools across a range of geographical and socio-economic sites. Hill found that most children had opportunities and the ability to transact with information and communication technologies, with televisions and computers being the most popular forms. Young children reportedly accessed websites linked to television shows, played online games and used search engines to locate information. Hill (2010) noted that the everyday literacy experiences in which children engage in their homes continue to evolve and change with the advent of new technologies.

Literacy and popular culture

The everyday literacies available to children are often accessible through popular culture (Jones-Diaz, Beecher & Arthur, 2009) and through engagement with television,

videos, computer games, comics and magazines (Arthur, 2001; Jones Diaz & Makin, 2002). Children's interest in popular culture commonly involves them in interacting with texts and literacy artefacts that are bound to broader social practices important to their families, communities and friends (Jones-Diaz, et al., 2009). Consequently, through their interactions with these texts, children take up literacy opportunities associated with popular culture, often embedded in or influenced by media and digital technologies (Arthur, 2001; Verenikina & Kervin, 2011; Marsh, 2014). For example, the characters children experience in media texts often also appear as books, comics and toys, and on clothing, thereby permeating children's literacy events (Marsh, 2010).

Children's play often includes engagement with popular culture. Beecher and Arthur (2001) explained that children take on the roles of superheroes or Disney princesses in imaginative play, or through the creation of multimodal texts using characters from popular narratives often accessed through multimedia. Marsh (2010) observed that there is a fluidity of themes and characters in play that uses new technologies and in traditional play contexts. For example, she reported that young children integrate media-related popular culture characters, texts or artefacts into traditional play such as socio dramatic, imaginative and constructive play, and into play using new technologies. Similarly, Verenikina and Kervin (2011) found that when young children use iPads to engage in imaginative games, their play often extends beyond the screen to other play contexts. This happens when children take the role of characters from the games and create physical representations of the game to further their play activities. For example Verenikina and Kervin (2011) noted that children in their recent study extended their play beyond the screen into pretend play by taking on the character 'Buzz' from the movie *Toy Story* and creating a similar play environment in the garden. These findings may help us to understand the ways children engage extensively with popular culture texts and how these texts connect across traditional text modes as well as with new media technologies.

Hedges (2011) argued that using children's existing practices with media-based popular culture texts is a way for educators to engage children in meaningful literacy activities. Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Richie and Roberts (2005) reported that when popular culture and aspects of media technologies are used in educational settings, children's literacy understandings improve. This supported Marsh's (1999) earlier assertions that children's engagement with popular culture added a rich dimension to their literacy

learning. These findings suggest that providing opportunities for children to engage with popular culture texts across forms of media will allow them to develop literacy knowledge in meaningful ways connected to their personal interests.

Literacy in prior-to-school educational settings

Opportunities are maximised for children's literacy learning when educators build on familiar home and community literacy experiences (Makin & Groom, 2002; McNaughton, 2002). Martello (2007) described the provision of these opportunities as a prime responsibility of the educator in prior-to-school settings. Makin and Groom (2002) argued that children are more likely to experience rich literacy learning when educators facilitate children's engagement and motivation in a range of familiar, relevant literacy activities adapted from their home and community settings. Raban et al. (2009) observed that planning the prior-to-school curriculum according to the interests of children is an established practice. In order to facilitate opportunities for children to experience familiar literacy activities, educators in prior-to-school settings develop ongoing communication and relationships with children and their families, and listen to and observe children closely to find out what they do and say in their everyday activities (Jones Diaz et al, 2000; Martello, 2007). This assists educators to plan for the incorporation of the interests and practices children bring from their homes and communities (Jones Diaz et al, 2000).

Further, van Oers (2007) argued that engagement with and creation of texts connected to activities that make sense to children and have personal meaning for them allows them to participate in experiences which enhance their literacy learning. It is apparent from the research that diversifying literacy opportunities by making connections to children's personal interests supports their literacy development.

The literacy experiences available to young children in prior-to-school educational settings include opportunities for speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing, creating, singing and movement (Foote & Smith, 2002; Makin & Groom 2002). The research literature pertaining to this range of literacy opportunities in prior-to-school educational settings, across oral, multimodal, visual and written texts, will now be reviewed.

Opportunities for oral language

Opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening with peers and educators are a vital part of literacy development in prior-to-school educational settings (Honig, 2007; McNaughton 2002). It is well established in the literature that children learn most effectively when they have frequent opportunities to engage in talk with educators and peers (Wells, 1986). In prior-to-school educational settings, conversations with educators and peers are frequent and afford opportunities for children to hear and use rich language, and to develop narrative abilities as they engage in activities of particular interest to them (Barratt-Pugh, 2007; Honig, 2007). The opportunity to hear and use language often occurs within the context of play. Johnson et al. (2005) contended that play can oblige children to use their maximum language abilities as they intentionally use syntactical and lexical features of language to interact with objects and people in play scenarios. As children negotiate shared play activities with peers, they have opportunities to engage in rich language scaffolded by educators. This optimises children's language learning and concept development (Beecher & Arthur, 2001; Hill, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

Other ways educators extend children's vocabularies and concept knowledge through language are by sharing stories in storytelling and initiating discussions of shared reading experiences (Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith & Fischel, 1994). According to Smyth (2005) stories can be shared in many ways, including song, dance, drama, puppetry and prose, and the telling of stories is more sophisticated than everyday dialogic exchanges because the vocabulary is often broader and more complex, and supports the development of language and literacy. Through regular storytelling, young children develop an understanding of the language used in different genres (Mallan, 1991). For example when storytellers use 'Once upon a time' and 'happily ever after' they are developing a sense of story and a schema for what the fairytale genre is about (Phillips, 2000) based on an expectation that their audience will understand these genre signals. Further to this Glazer and Burke (1994) stressed the value to children's literacy development of opportunities for children to retell stories they have listened to, enabling them to develop their own storytelling abilities.

Nicolopoulou (1997) reported that children's narrative abilities are developed through the practice of educators regularly sharing stories. In a common practice described by

Rosenquist (2002), teachers share stories with children and plan discussions and activities using words and images from texts. This encourages children to dramatise certain aspects of the stories. Along similar lines Broström (2005) described a research project that combined literature, play, drama and dialogue. This entailed the educator reading to the children a piece of quality literature, followed by a structured discussion of the story and the creation of illustrations by the children to demonstrate their understanding of the text, and finally the children were encouraged to turn their literature experience into play. This resulted in the play being expanded and thus the literacy learning expanded for the children involved (Broström, 2005).

Opportunities for engagement with multimodal texts

According to Kress (1997 p. xvii) children make meaning ‘in an absolute plethora of ways, with an absolute plethora of means, in two, three and four dimensions’. Anning (2004) observed that children regularly design complex visual representations in their preferred media, for example by spending time organising blocks or creating artefacts using various mediums, or in dramatic play in the sandpit. Martello (2007) argued that visual representation through drawing, painting and three-dimensional construction is a powerful means of self-expression and communication that allows children to successfully create meaningful texts. Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) believed this to be important because young children are able to create meaning more successfully using visual representations due to their inexperience with written symbol systems. Educators often integrate the modes of speaking and writing during such literacy events so that children develop understandings of how meaning can be represented across multiple modes (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013; Martello, 2007; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). It can thus be suggested that opportunities to make meaning in creative ways is significant for children’s literacy development in prior-to-school educational settings.

Bowman (2002) argued that music and movement in prior-to-school settings supports children’s language and literacy learning and can strengthen links to home and community. In fact Makin and Whiteman (2006) and Tomlinson (2013) reported that music and movement allowed children to communicate, explore feelings, express themselves and build relationships, enhancing understanding about literacy in everyday life. Educators use songs, nursery rhymes, chants and music to engage children in a variety of activities with language and movement, for enjoyment as well as for learning

a range of literacy skills including phonological skills, prosody, pitch, rhyme and rhythm (Makin & Whiteman, 2006). Songs and music can also be integral elements of children's play (Makin & Whiteman, 2006). Tomlinson (2013) explained that when educators plan creative music experiences through play-based learning and investigations, children are intrinsically motivated to extend their understanding when negotiating meaning in multimodal texts. These findings help us to understand the significant place music has in engaging children in multimodal literacy learning in prior-to-school educational settings.

It is apparent that in prior-to-school educational settings, as educators and children explore a range of multimodal texts including stories, poetry, drama, works of art, songs and dance, educators often plan further literacy activities around the characters or settings involved to advance children's language competencies through activity in their areas of interest (Honig, 2007).

Opportunities for engagement with visual and written texts

A well-established literacy practice in prior-to-school educational settings is the creation of visual texts through drawing and painting as means of communication and expression (Anning & Ring, 2004; Kervin & Mantei, 2015). In earlier research Kellogg (1969) argued that children should be allowed freedom of expression when creating art works, adding that in the prior-to-school context, children are usually given that freedom to choose the subject and the medium of their creation. According to Anning and Ring (2004) many educators have the expectation that drawing must lead directly to writing, however these researchers believe that by listening to children, educators will realise that their drawings communicate a great deal about the children themselves. Therefore, it may be concluded that drawing is a valid mode of communicating meaning, and may stand alone from writing even after children have acquired the skills for creating written texts (Anning & Ring, 2004).

Kervin and Mantei (2015) argued that children's drawings are a form of writing as they create 'marks' on the page. Much earlier Graves (1981), affirmed the importance of young children's desire to communicate through drawing before they could write. Consequently, there is a strong relationship between drawing and emergent writing as both modes use similar cognitive and psychomotor skills, and marks or symbols that carry meaning (Dyson, 2001; Jalongo, 2007; Kress, 1997, Mackenzie, 2011). As young

children begin to experiment with making letter shapes they make no distinction between drawing and writing, and use both modes in order to communicate their messages (Dyson, 1986). Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) maintained that by using both modes simultaneously, children are able to convey more sophisticated messages whilst developing their understanding of multimodal texts.

As young children create texts through movement across sign systems, they explore multiple ways to construct meaning (Albers, 1997). Harste (2014) explained that art is able to capture meaning that is not readily communicated through spoken or written language. According to Mackenzie (2011) children in prior-to-school educational settings are experienced with the communication modes of drawing and talking, and this experience can be used by teachers to scaffold children's early writing skills. Kervin and Mantei (2015) acknowledged the powerful relationship between children's drawings and the talk that surrounds their text creations. In their research, Kervin and Mantei (2015) considered the content of children's drawing and their associated talk, in terms of the process of production, and the sharing of meaning. They argued that children's talk surrounding the creation of their drawings provides powerful information about the topics and experiences that are important to them, as well as how they share the 'stories' they create by articulating their ideas in meaningful ways. Genishi and Dyson (2009) and Kervin and Mantei (2015) found that when children are given the opportunity to talk whilst drawing, they share information about themselves, their interests and their understandings.

The years prior to school are vital for learning about the functions of literacy and the concepts of reading and writing that are integral to later more formalised reading and writing achievement (Clay 2002). Clay (2001, p. 12) described writing opportunities in the prior-to-school setting as being 'open-ended, allowing the learner to surprise the teacher and expand any aspect of his or her existing knowledge'. Similarly, Mackenzie (2014) reported that early childhood educators view their role in children's writing development as providing opportunities to explore writing through play, but not to interact with them in ways that would purposefully develop specific knowledge or skills. Raban and Coates (2004) reported on the way they developed, in collaboration with educators, planned learning activities for children to experience print-rich play environments to give them opportunities to develop understandings of the purpose and functions of literacy, without explicitly teaching the skills of reading and writing before

they begin school. Children in the study experimented with print, using written symbols as they engaged with writing for authentic purposes. For example, they wrote notes as they role-played being doctors, police officers and teachers. They wrote messages to each other and were observed to reread books, engage in story reconstruction by using puppets and felt pieces, as well as by writing and drawing. The study concluded that children extended their repertoires of literacies through play, enriched by the provision of appropriate resources and supportive interactions with more knowledgeable others, through a range of social everyday experiences.

Highlighting the value of providing opportunities for children's early interaction with written and visual texts, Collins and Svensson (2008) argued that engagement with reading and enjoyment of narrative is vital for children's reading development and for developing positive attitudes towards reading. Their recent study exploring the reading behaviours of young children in nursery and reception classes in the United Kingdom revealed that children were happy to talk about book choices, both popular fiction and narratives linked to television and DVDs, and could 'lift the story off the page' (Collins & Svensson, 2008, p. 4) through representation in imaginary play. Consequently, the young children's interactions with narrative allowed them to develop an understanding, not just of narrative structure, but also of issues that were relevant to their lives and the lives of others. Martinez, Roser and Dooley (2003, p. 225) agreed, stating that 'through engagement with narrative, children build bridges between their personal experiences and the stories they read'.

Educators in prior-to-school educational settings traditionally take a less formal approach to literacy than teachers in school settings (Wilde & Sage, 2007). However, with an increased focus on high stakes testing and accountability in learning and teaching seeping down to prior-to-school educational settings, current ideologies of play-based pedagogies in early years contexts are increasingly challenged (Johnson, et al., 2005; Jones Diaz, et al., 2000; Yelland, 2011). A great deal of attention is focused on the importance of the early years in children's literacy development and many researchers have expressed concern at what has been described as the 'push down' curriculum (Elkind, 2003; Geneshi & Dyson, 2009) influencing literacy opportunities for children in prior-to-school educational settings.

In summary, children in prior-to-school educational settings have the freedom to engage with the literacy events on offer in ways that are of particular interest to them, often through play. Play opportunities for children engage them in literacy events often associated with their interest in popular culture. However, traditional forms of play appear to take precedence over those associated with newer digital technologies. Opportunities for engagement in literacy across a wide range of modes is evident in prior-to-school educational settings offering children experiences with written, visual, oral, three dimensional and multimodal texts associated with their particular interests. Freedom to choose from a range of opportunities on offer that are linked to experiences from home and community, characterises literacy events in prior-to-school educational settings. How children engage with the range of literacy opportunities affects their literacy pathways, as they move into the first year of formal schooling. The next section will now review the research literature related to the literacy opportunities for children in their first year of formal school as the teaching focus appears to narrow by prioritising a more structured skills-based approach to literacy learning

Literacy in the first year of formal school

Children enter formal school with a range of literacy experiences

McNaughton (2002) observed that children enter the first year of formal schooling from a wide variety of contexts with a diverse range of experiences with literacy in their home, community and prior-to-school educational settings. The concepts about literacy that young children bring to school are determined by their experiences with the purposes and functions of literacy in their world (Raban & Coates, 2004) and play an important part in how they connect with the literacy events on offer in the first year of school (Comber & Reid, 2007). Kennedy and Surman (2007) asserted that children enter school with high competence in play, including fertile imaginations and skills for organising real life scenarios. Goodman (1986) argued that children enter formal school as practised language learners and meaning makers who understand that print and images convey meaning. Kress (1997, p. 10) stated that children come to school as 'competent and practiced makers of signs in many semiotic modes'. Mackenzie (2011) argued that children are usually capable of creating oral and visual texts but have varying levels of skill in creating written texts. Hill (2010) observed that children's funds of knowledge from home include considerable use of a range of communication

technologies, with young children able to use internet search engines and play interactive computer games. From the work of these researchers it can be concluded that a great deal of literacy learning takes place before children enter formal schooling. How children's literacy knowledge acquired before attending formal school connects with those literacy practices valued by schools at the time of transition is of interest to this inquiry.

Literacy in formal school looks different from literacy in prior-to-school educational settings

School literacy is literacy which has been developed through prescribed curricula and standards and it involves the skills that lead to success at school (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Linked to mandated curriculums, the literacy opportunities available for children to engage with in primary school may be markedly different from prior-to-school educational experiences (Petriwskyj, Thorpe & Taylor, 2005). Curriculum documents across the two educational settings have arisen from different ideologies, with the EYLF framing learning based on holistic content and learner-centred ideologies, whereas the Australian Curriculum focuses on isolated academic subjects, and scholarly and social-efficiency perspectives (Petriwskyj, O'Gorman & Turunen, 2013). That is, in the prior-to-school context there is a focus on developmentally appropriate experiences such as playful pedagogies and children's wellbeing, whereas in the early years of formal school the focus is on academic instruction which aims to prepare students for their future in schooling and then into later life. Luke (2010) explained that evidence of the difference in curriculum ideologies is present not only in the documents but also in the enacted curriculum – that is, in the pedagogies of educators and teachers in the respective settings that emerge as tensions are negotiated. Tensions may arise at the time of transition from prior-to-school settings to formal school settings as educators and teachers with diverse ideological positions, plan and implement experiences for children in their respective contexts (Luke, 2010).

Mackenzie (2014) explained that schools' approaches to planning for learning are more structured than the approaches of their early-years colleagues, with children having a limited influence over their learning opportunities. Margetts (2002) argued that the difference is that in prior-to-school educational settings, the approach to learning is through play, and in primary schools the emphasis is on teaching for explicitly identified learning gains. Gullo and Hughes (2011, p. 2) reported that the first year in

formal school 'is all about learning specific skills and structured materials in structured ways' with little reference to play, creativity and active learning. Furthermore, Margetts (2002, p. 105) suggested schools provide

a cognitive curricula approach including restrictions on the use of time, which emphasise the work/play distinction, confining gross motor activities to physical education lessons and playtime, less art and tactile experiences, and less opportunities for imaginative play.

The work of these researchers indicates that a child beginning the first year of formal schooling may face considerable differences in the types of literacy experiences on offer in comparison with those in their prior-to-school settings.

Jewitt (2008) explained that school literacies are constructed through the valuing of different kinds of texts and interactions in the classroom. Hill (2012) reported that in schools, teachers included a range of types of texts when teaching reading and writing, including narrative and information genres. She explained the importance of children developing knowledge of the language and structural features of information texts from their earliest school years as this knowledge becomes increasingly vital for success in later schooling. However, Hill (2012) argued that as texts have become increasingly multimodal, teachers must engage children in viewing and creating multimodal texts from their earliest school years. In contemporary digitalised society, what should be valued in school as literacy is increasingly debated, and concerns have been expressed about the dominance of print based literacies, when children's out of school communicative practices involve a range of modes, including still and moving images, sound, gesture, and movement (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 1997; Marsh, 2005).

Consequently, it is acknowledged in the literature that in the early years of formal school children need to acquire the traditional skills associated with print literacies as well as a developing knowledge and understanding of digital, visual and spatial literacies (Hill, 2012; Kress, 1997). Further, print and digital literacy teaching should occur simultaneously through the integrated use of technology (Labbo & Place, 2010; Walsh, 2010). This section will now review the research literature pertaining to the literacy opportunities in the first year of formal schooling across the following modes: oral, written, visual and multimodal.

Opportunities for oral language

Spoken language is central to teaching and learning in school (Fisher & Larkin, 2008). However, children enter the first year of formal schooling with great disparities in their oral language abilities (Hill & Launder, 2010). Clay (2004) recommended that teachers design experiences that provide maximum opportunities for children to compose and construct language. However, patterns of classroom discourse continue to reveal teacher-led and controlled interactions, which allow limited room for children to explore their own interpretations of the concepts discussed, and which require less cognitive engagement by children (Fisher & Larkin, 2008).

Danby and Davidson (2007) argued that as teachers focus on the formal outcomes of literacy, less attention is given to children's oral language communication. They observed that teachers often focus on certain skills involved in speaking and listening, for example phonological skills, and this overshadows the social function of children's language. Hill (2010) agreed, reporting that oral language learning is not prioritised in school, as writing is considered a more valuable life skill in written cultures.

Additionally Hill (2012) maintained that the teacher plays a vital role in children's vocabulary development through reading books aloud, and through discussion and play. She argued that teachers who listen more and talk less create necessary oral language opportunities for children. Hill (2012) reported on a common oral language genre in the first years of formal schooling, 'news talk'. She explained that children's language use improves as a result of teachers modelling the structure of 'news talk' and by explicitly teaching children how to construct questions.

Opportunities for engagement with written texts

Reading and writing are described as 'foundational' literacy skills that are important for success at school. Barrett-Pugh (2007) argued that participation in 'school literacies' such as composing and comprehending written texts is crucial for ongoing success at school, and more importantly, participation in society. Identified in the research literature is the need for students to become effective readers and writers. For example, the explicit teaching of phonological skills has been identified in studies as important to early reading acquisition (Ehri, 1991; Goswami, & Bryant 1990). Further, Sanacore (2010) argued that young children's literacy development is assisted when they have

opportunities to use phonological skills in meaningful and engaging contexts.

Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Literacy Resources Model identified four practices or 'resources' drawn on by effective users and producers of texts. The model draws on a repertoire of literacy practices that are interrelated, and as children read and write texts they draw upon different skills and understandings outlined in the model. This model supports a systematic and explicit approach to the teaching of literacy as well as one that is balanced and integrated, and which aims to equip students with a full range of skills and strategies in order to engage successfully with a range of texts (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

Paris (2005) referred to the constrained and unconstrained skills of literacy, observed in classrooms in Australia. Like Luke and Freebody (1999), he drew attention to the fact that literacy development requires the orchestration of a variety of knowledge and skills. He concluded that there are constrained skills like phonological knowledge that should be mastered by children whilst they simultaneously develop unconstrained skills such as vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, as they engage with written texts. He observed that an over reliance on grapheme-phoneme correspondence skills, creates a 'minimum competency' approach to children's literacy development, and may see skills compartmentalised in teaching and learning. Vernon and Ferreiro (1999) observed that the task of becoming literate cannot be reduced to cracking a code, as there is a need to incorporate wider linguistic, cognitive and social contexts into literacy practices. Further, McNaughton (2002) argued that the activities selected and deployed by teachers may restrict or narrow children's emerging expertise with literacy. Lever-chain (2008, p. 1) added to this argument, asserting that a skills-based approach to literacy teaching ignores the 'motivational elements that make a real reader' and that as a result young children's attitudes toward reading may become negative.

Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax and Perney (2003) attested to the importance of early literacy instruction with meaningful activities around texts, including frequent purposeful writing. Further, Xue and Meissels (2004 p. 222) stated that 'In order to engage effectively with written texts, children need a balanced instructional approach that includes learning to break the code and engaging in meaningful reading and writing activities.' This view was established earlier by Freebody and Luke (1999), who stated that literacy teachers must ensure they use an approach that is balanced and integrated.

Freebody and Luke recommended that literacy experiences be embedded in real and meaningful contexts. Further to this Louden et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of literacy instruction that is balanced and integrated in its provision of systematic and explicit instruction in a range of skills and strategies for decoding and encoding texts. More recently Simpson, White, Freebody and Comber (2013, p. xxviii) reported that the ‘key to productive literacy development is the practical use of skills in order to achieve successful communicative outcomes matched to an authentic audience’. They further emphasised the importance of literacy skill development and the application of these skills in relevant and authentic contexts.

Opportunities for engagement with visual and multimodal texts

In many classrooms, engagement with written texts takes precedence over visual texts (Mackenzie, 2011; Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013), and activities involving the creation of visual texts may be seen by teachers as time fillers or as artistic representations of life, not as the communication of meaning (Einarsdóttir, Dockett & Perry, 2009; Kress, 1997). Eisner and Descollonges (2003) asserted that teachers often work with art in formulaic craft-like activities whose main purpose is to decorate classroom walls.

However, Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) argued that creating visual texts through drawing is a valuable literacy practice that should continue as a method of communicating meaning, even after students have mastered written text creation. Findings from Mackenzie’s (2011) study, in which teachers were challenged to incorporate drawing as central to their writing programs in the first year of formal schooling, concluded that drawing is an important means of expression for young children, and one that builds a bridge from familiar ways of creating meaning in prior-to-school settings (drawing), and new ways of creating meaning in school (writing). Adding to these conclusions, Harste (2014) observed that the young children in his study used the varied communications systems of art and drama in the creation of meaningful texts.

As this review of the research literature related to the literacy opportunities available for children as they enter the first year of formal schooling continues, there is a noted shift in the evidence reported in the literature. This shift reveals a focus more on teacher

pedagogy and the organisational structures of the learning environment than on the children themselves and their experiences with literacy.

Literacy and school-based routines

A critical part of literacy programs in schools is the pedagogical strategy of meeting with students in small groups in order to scaffold their learning needs for reading and writing instruction (Cunningham, Hall & Cunningham, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Mooney, 1990). According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996) guided small group instruction is associated with 'best practice' as part of balanced literacy programs. Small group guided teaching in writing and reading provides teachers with the opportunity to observe and teach intensively, with large amounts of applied practice for each individual student, as well as instruction in the mechanics of spelling, sentence structure and text structure (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Mooney 1990).

However, Ford and Opitz (2002) argued that implementing teaching with very small groups of children means that the teacher's time with individual students is dramatically reduced when compared with traditional whole class models of instruction. Students not involved in the small group teaching may be situated in self-regulated learning centres (Hill & Crevola, 1998). These centres require students to work independently on activities without direct assistance from the teacher. According to Morrow (1995), in order to advance students' knowledge about literacy these centres need to be based on activities that stem from teachers' knowledge of the students' abilities and interests, the curriculum requirements, and a cycle of tasks that are accessible and purposeful. For example, students may engage at this time in independent reading or writing activities matched to their particular interests (Hill & Crevola, 1998).

For example, one early years literacy research project (Hill & Crevola, 1998) involved teachers in trialling a two-hour literacy block with a focus on small group teaching. The block involved modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies for oral language, reading and writing. The students showed development in early print literacy and reading ability on levelled texts which have a finely graded continuum of text difficulty. However, criticisms of this model of instruction included that the teaching practices supported a narrow view of literacy by largely ignoring student interests and other discipline areas and that it over-emphasised the level of text rather than the content, with little attention given to the multiple modes used in contemporary texts (Cloonan,

2008). Moreover Glasswell, Parr and McNaughton (2003) contended that even in classrooms where multiple sites for learning about literacy are available, learning may not be effective if students are not provided with ways of participating that take into consideration the particular ideas of the teachers and of the children.

More recent research findings appear to favour pedagogical instruction that is direct or explicit. Research into such approaches reports superior effects on student literacy learning (Rowe 2006). Explicit instruction has been cited in literacy teaching guides as a part of the balanced literacy approach, in which new learning is explicitly modelled and demonstrated by the teacher, followed by guided instruction involving teachers scaffolding of the learning, and by students independently practising the concepts they have been taught (NSW DEC, 2009).

It is evident from the research literature reviewed that the opportunities for children to engage in literacy events and practices in home and community settings, prior-to-school educational settings and the first year of primary school can be quite different. What this discontinuity means for young children's literacy learning at this significant time in their lives as they make the major educational transition into their first year of formal school is of prime interest to this inquiry. The following section broadens the focus around transition. It reviews the research literature related to the tensions that may occur in young children's lives due to the discontinuity in the literacy events and practices on offer across educational settings.

Interplay between the children and the setting at the time of transition

Transition to school has undergone much scrutiny in recent years and attempts have been made to move from a general focus on 'school readiness' to a view that acknowledges its complexity. When 'readiness' for school is seen as a static characteristic, it may be considered to be the child's responsibility to acquire certain skills or abilities. The onus may be put on the children to either possess particular skills and abilities (Dockett & Perry, 2006). However, the acknowledgement that 'school readiness' encompasses a range of influences including families, prior-to-school educational settings, school and community settings as well as the children themselves, means that the concept of readiness for the transition to school broadens (Dockett & Perry, 2006). Recommendations that transitions become more 'multilayered' emphasise the need for adjustments between settings and for making connections with families in

order to prepare families as well as children in a more context specific manner, over extended time frames, with a focus on the relationships that occur across these settings (Broström, 2005; Kirk-Downey & Perry, 2006; Petriwskyj, et al., 2005). Dockett (2014) also argued that the period of transition should continue until children and their families feel a sense of belonging to their new environments, and that this sense of belonging should be recognised by teachers in the new setting. The notion of children needing to be 'ready' for school is one that has now broadened to encompass the readiness of a range of stakeholders (Dockett & Perry, 2006). This multi-layered approach to transition seeks to eradicate boundaries that have existed for some time between people and educational institutions, and to alter the perceptions of what needs to occur at the time of transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2009). Dockett and Perry (2009) argued that a blurring of the boundaries will enable the emergence of new planning ideas involving parents, children and community members as well as teachers and other school staff from both prior-to-school educational settings and school settings. This would help children to develop a sense of continuity between their prior-to-school setting to their new and different school environment.

Continuity of experience for children as they move from their prior-to-school educational setting to school is identified as critical for a successful transition. Margetts (2014) explained that the greater the change that must be negotiated by children and their families, the more difficult it becomes to make a successful transition. Einarisdóttir (2014) and Dockett and Perry (2007) stressed that continuity in relationships with peers is important for children's successful transition to school. Relationships between children and teachers, and between parents and teachers, are also integral to a smooth transition process according to Dockett and Perry (2006). Broström (2005) called for continuity of curriculum and pedagogical practices in order for children to feel confident in their new school environments. Peters (2010) argued that it is imperative that teachers build on what children have learnt in their home and prior-to-school settings when planning learning experiences in the first year of formal schooling. A similar point was made by Thompson (2002). She argued that when children arrive at school with 'virtual backpacks' of knowledge, experiences and dispositions from home, that are valued and built upon by teachers, there is a likelihood that they will experience a positive start to learning in the first year of school.

Lam and Pollard (2006) explained that when what is learned in the first setting is

appropriate in the second setting, and when the ways adults respond in both settings is consistent with expectations already established in the first setting, children will experience continuity across environments. Conversely, when environments are incompatible and children's experiences have not prepared them for appropriately responding in their new environment, the likelihood of a smooth transition is reduced. For children to feel competent and capable in their new environment, they must possess the skills and understandings necessary to meet the demands of their new setting (Margetts, 2009).

Supporting individual children to experience a smooth transition, and for them to have continuity in their learning across the educational settings of their early childhood, is a challenge for educators. Consequently, Briggs and Potter (2003) argued that teachers require more guidance to make connections between literacy and numeracy learning in prior-to-school educational settings and learning in the first year of formal schooling. Further to this, Sanders et al. (2005, p. 11) recommended that schools,

encourage staff to adopt similar routines, expectations and activities ... allocate resources to enable children ... to experience some play-based activities that give access to opportunities such as sand and water, role play, construction and outdoor learning.

However, Mackenzie (2014) argued that schools should not replicate early childhood centres, and nor should early childhood centres become schools. Rather, a shared understanding of the literacy practices in both settings is needed in order to create some congruency and continuity across the learning environments.

Continuity in the form of communication across settings, in order to develop shared understandings, is an essential element in children's successful transition to school (Brooker, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2014). Lack of communication between prior-to-school educational settings and school sectors, and differences in understandings about what is required to be successful in these settings, have been cited as significant issues for transition to school (Broström, 2005; Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith & Carr, 2009). Britt and Sumsion, (2003) observed that communication between early childhood educators and teachers is hampered because of differences in their philosophical underpinnings and pedagogical structures. This is an argument reflected in Henderson's (2014) findings that, through open and honest discussion in which educators and

teachers across settings share understandings, more meaningful relationships can be forged. Therefore, communication is the bridge to support children as they move between settings. This communication provides opportunities for sharing professional information about children (Dockett & Perry, 2014). Margetts (2002) warned that when communication is restricted, there may be difficulties related to a lack of coherence within the curriculum, as well as in the enactment of pedagogy and in children's experiences.

Tensions at the time of transition

Transition to the first year of formal schooling can be considered a 'culture shock' for many children (Broström, 2005) because it requires children to negotiate multiple changes in their physical environments, their learning environments, their relationships, and their social status (Niesel & Griebel, 2005). These changes will now be discussed.

Children encounter many changes in their physical environments as they move from their familiar prior-to-school settings to school. Factors like the size of the environment, the physical layout of the buildings and the playground, as well as the number of children may overwhelm children and their families (Dockett & Perry, 2006). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) described the school and classroom context as being very different from the prior-to-school context, not just physically, but also socially and culturally. This involves significant challenges for some children.

Niesel and Griebel (2005) argued that transition into formal school means a change in identity for children, and they require specific social skills to navigate a successful transition, including self-reliance, problem solving and coping with stress. Tensions may occur for children if their identity does not transfer from one learning context to the next (Ecclestone, 2009). For children starting school, their relationships and social status are very different to what they experienced in their prior-to-school setting as they become part of a much larger social system (Niesel & Griebel, 2005). Their roles change and so do their ways of participating in their learning communities (Rogoff, 2003) as they and their families negotiate a set of practices that are unique to schools. Pianta (2003) described this time as one when demands increase and support decreases.

The shift in children's identities is described by Ecclestone (2009) as a change in agency at the time of transition to school. In the prior-to-school setting children appear

to have a great deal of agency compared with the more controlled school environment (Ecclestone, 2009). Agency in this discussion refers to the ways in which children respond to the possibilities afforded them in the social context of the classroom (Fisher, 2010). Fisher (2010) explained that when children actively make choices based on their experiences, their agency as learners is fostered. For example, as children participate in literacy events in educational settings they are actively negotiating their control and position, and they are making choices based on their experiences of the context (Fisher, 2010). However, according to the findings of Danby, Farrell, Powell and Leiminer (2004), there is a high level of adult regulation and control impacting on children as they participate in daily life of school, and as a result children's sense of autonomy may decrease as they transition from prior-to-school educational settings into the more formalised school context. Danby et al. (2004) argued that being allowed choice is an important part of self-regulation for young children, and that choice is essential for learning.

As young children transition into formal school for the first time, how they gain access to the literacy practices of the new setting impacts on how successful they will be as learners, and this affects their identity as learners (Fisher, 2010). Fisher (2010) asserts that how well children understand their new and different roles as learners, and how they are able they shape and influence their learning, is related to the constraints of the new learning environment (Fisher, 2010). Fisher (2010) argues that children's agency develops when they actively make sense of the new literacy experiences on offer and appropriate the tasks, making them their own.

In research conducted in Sweden, Pramling and Williams-Granelds (1993) reported that as children enter formal school for the first time, the most valued aspect for some is the opportunity to learn new things. Peters (2000) observed that the nature of support children receive when engaging with new learning has a bearing on the success of children's transition into formal schooling. It would seem from the work of these researchers that it is not the new learning that may be problematic for some children but rather the support they receive in navigating the new learning. The nature of this support may determine whether or not children experience a successful transition to formal schooling.

In another study examining children's feelings about events that are typical in starting school and children's coping strategies, Harrison and Murray (2015) concluded that the majority of children reflect positively on their experiences in the first few months of transition to formal school. However, they further reported that the minority who were negative increased in numbers over time. These researchers also explained that in order to cope with the challenges of starting formal school it is common for children to rely on their knowledge of school structures, like rules and routines, in order to feel confident in the first few weeks of school.

Something that may cause tension for children and families at the time of transition to school is the concept of 'readiness'. Perry (2014, p. 180) reported that in the conversation about transition to school, the emphasis appears to be on the 'readiness' of the child, which equates to a focus on 'what the children are to become rather than on what they have been'. According to Perry (2014) the assumption that children need to learn to 'fit' the school in order to be successful is a valid one.

Conversely, Graue (2006) described the need for schools to be 'ready'; that is, they need to be prepared for the reality that the children coming to school bring a diverse and complex range of knowledge, understandings and experiences. To ensure a positive, effective transition to school, the 'ready' school will have supportive transition structures, including an inclusive curriculum and a pedagogical approach which supports all students (Petriwskyj, 2014). Petriwskyj (2014) suggested a gradual change from the play-based experiences of prior-to-school to the more formal learning in schools whilst respecting the curriculum focus of the pedagogies of both settings. Dockett and Perry (2007) explained that children expect to 'work' at school and they want school to be different. However they argue that if school is too different, children may lose their positive self-identity.

As previously discussed, children do not enter school as a homogenous group of learners. They enter the first year of school with a wide range of experiences in literacy which they underwent in their homes, communities and prior-to-school settings (Clay 1991; McNaughton, 2002; Timperly, McNaughton, Howie, & Robinson, 2003). Clay (1991) argued that 'a starting program should be so designed that it provides for engagement of different children in different ways on different levels from the beginning' (p. 203). Further to this, McNaughton (2002) stated that in order to make

school literacies accessible to all students, teachers must design a ‘wide curriculum’ (p. 42). A wide curriculum is one that offers children multiple pathways to literacy learning. For example, McNaughton (2002) described a wide curriculum as providing a range of diverse opportunities for learners, providing them with the scope to try out ideas and bring personal connections to their learning. Conversely, a narrow curriculum limits students’ decision-making and reduces their ability to transfer their learning from home, community and prior-to-school settings. Further research by Timperley et al. (2003) identified a wider array of literacy opportunities on offer in prior-to-school settings compared to first year of school settings, reflecting a narrowing of literacy choices when children enter their first year of formal schooling.

Mackenzie (2014) also reported that a successful transition into school literacy often leads to ongoing success and a positive attitude towards literacy. In contrast, a difficult transition may lead to ‘frustration, avoidance and an ongoing negative attitude towards school literacy’ (Mackenzie, Hemmings & Kay, 2011, p. 284). Kennedy Ridgway and Surman, (2006) asserted that when teachers design curricula and pedagogies that are familiar and accessible to students, and which make use of knowledge and practices already acquired, children's literacy development is enhanced.

In summary, the ability to navigate unfamiliar experiences, and to make connections to familiar experiences, is a marker of successful transition. When the skills, experiences and understandings that children bring to their educational settings are acknowledged, valued and built upon in the first year of formal schooling, children are recognised as capable, confident learners (Cairney, 2002; Docket & Perry, 2003). It would seem that the most effective school learning environment is one that allows children to build on what they already know and can do, and which develops their sense of ‘fit’ and of belonging to the new environment (Brooker, 2008; Broström, 2002; Bulkeley & Fabian, 2006; Carr & Peters, 2005; Mackenzie 2011; Margetts, 2007; McNaughton, 2002). Additionally, when schools are ‘ready’ for the diversity of skills, knowledge and understandings children bring to school, and when they have structures in place to support children in acquiring new learning, children are more likely to experience a successful transition to school literacy.

The opportunity for children to be a part of the conversation about transition to school will now be discussed in line with the recent research literature.

Children as agents in their own transition

Childhood is an important period of life in its own right, and children have the right to express opinions and be heard, particularly on matters that affect them (United Nations, 1989). With policy reform in the early years education sector, the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) positions children as active decision-makers, as they foster a sense of belonging and connectedness in their educational contexts (Theobald, Danby & Ailwood, 2011). When children are viewed as active participants and constructors of their own social experiences they are recognised as competent to express their views about their social worlds (Danby & Farrell, 2004). According to Fisher (2010) children make their own interpretations of their new school contexts and they make decisions about how to respond to the new expectations and opportunities available to them. Danby and Farrell (2004, p. 35) stated that ‘Children are competent interpreters of their everyday worlds’ and argued that when young children are invited to express their views, and when these views are listened to and considered important, children’s agency is recognised (Danby, Ewing & Thorpe, 2011). They point out that when children are recognised as having agency, their perspective is more likely to be sought (Hull & Katz, 2006).

Einarsdóttir (2010) and Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry (2009) concluded that children’s views and perspectives are different from each other and from those of adults, who often interpret their views on their behalf. Prior to 2003, only a limited number of studies had considered the views of children regarding the transition to school. However since then, several studies have explored children’s perspectives on moving into the first year of formal schooling. These include Dockett and Perry (2003), Einarsdóttir (2010) and Mantei and Kervin (2010). These studies revealed that children’s perspectives were very different from those of parents and teachers. In 2003, the Starting School Research Project (Dockett & Perry, 2003) aimed to capture children’s views and perspectives on starting school. This research captured photographs and texts in order to create books, with each book specifically linked to a particular school site and representing the things that mattered to the children. The project highlighted the role context plays in determining children’s focus (Dockett & Perry, 2003), as well as the competence of young children in knowing what is happening around them and their ability to articulate their many experiences for others (Dockett & Perry, 2003).

More recently Einarsdóttir (2010) explored how children's views of transition to school were represented in the media, and observed that despite the fact that children were the ones starting school, very few of them were asked for their opinions. Einarsdóttir (2010) found that the media representations in her research positioned children as 'cute' but unable to make noteworthy contributions to the conversation about their own transitions to school.

To investigate the views of children further, Mantei and Kervin (2010) asked children in a prior-to-school educational setting to share their personal interests and their learning preferences with their future school teachers via digital stories. Their aim was for teachers to get to know and develop relationships with their new students, as they prepared to plan learning events for them. Mantei and Kervin (2010) argued that children's voices are often overlooked in this planning process. Evident in their findings were children's different learning styles, activity preferences and individual ways of interacting with the environment both physically and interpersonally. The planned opportunity for children to use their language skills to communicate personal learning information to their future teachers is supportive of recommendations for a smooth transition process recommended by McNaughton (2002), who argued that meaningful connections between settings should be made by teachers for their new students.

Through the use of digital stories, the children in Mantei and Kervin's (2010) study were able to have their voices heard and their feelings made known. Consequently, a digital story was documented, for future teachers to connect with, to inform their pedagogical planning. To expand upon the research of Mantei and Kervin (2010) and Dockett and Perry (2003) this inquiry will report with rich detail, individual cases of children as they participate in literacy events, both in their prior-to-school educational setting and in their first year of formal schooling, an area about which little has been written from the perspective of children (Fisher, 2010). By making space available for the children's voices to be heard via digital storytelling, the children's personal views and opinions will be sought. The ways children negotiate the literacy practices in the prior-to-school educational setting and in their first year at school will be closely examined, as will the connections between the literacy events and practices the children engage with across the two educational contexts.

As the previous discussion has argued, for smooth transitions across educational settings to occur, it is vital that the many and varied experiences with literacy that children have in prior-to-school educational settings and then take with them to their first year of formal school are recognised and valued. As the transition process itself is developing from traditional concepts of 'school readiness' towards more multi-layered approaches in which a variety of stakeholders are included into the planning and implementation of the process, the focus is placed more on the children themselves and their particular needs. It is now recognised that children have a right to be heard in matters that affect them, and it is therefore important to make space for the voices of children to be heard in this crucial time of transition to school. In doing so their agency is being recognised. When children have opportunities to articulate their thoughts, feelings and understandings around the literacy practices they engage in, educators in prior-to-school educational settings and teachers in school classrooms will be better positioned to plan and implement learning programs that are meaningful and relevant to these young learners. Danby and Farrell (2004) argued that when what is important to children as they go about their everyday lives is considered, there is potential for their perspectives to inform research in the area of early childhood education.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction to the chapter

This chapter presents the methodology used in this inquiry to investigate children's perspectives on the literacy practices they engaged in at the time of transition from their prior-to-school setting to their first year of formal school. It begins by outlining the research questions and research design, and then describes the locus of the inquiry in both educational settings and introduces the child participants. Following this, the procedure of the inquiry is outlined, including the methods of data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes with information dealing with ethical considerations.

The conceptual understanding of literacy that frames this study has been addressed in Chapter 1. Discussion of how literacy is contextualised in prior-to-school and school settings was discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter argues that there is a need to examine literacy in the context of the specific social and cultural events and practices of prior-to-school and school settings. In addition, understanding the contexts in which literacy occurs (Street, 1995) enables us to recognise the multiple characteristics of literacy as re-contextualised by the literacy events which take place in the prior-to-school and school contexts. In this inquiry, the collection and interpretation of the data were undertaken within the identified theoretical framework. The concepts of literacy events and practices are included in this framework.

This inquiry examined the question:

- How do children negotiate the literacy practices of a prior-to-school educational setting and the first year of the formal school setting?

And contributing questions:

- What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?

The first sub-question arising from the review of the literature and the new policy initiatives asked:

What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?

The literacy opportunities available to children within the boundaries of their educational contexts were explored using a conception of literacy as comprising particular events that are observable, regular, often repeated and mediated by some form of text (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The cases which are the seven children who were on the same transition pathway were examined by building thick and rich descriptions of them participating in literacy events, viewed through the lens of literacy as social practice, situated in real social contexts (Street, 1995).

The second and third sub-questions asked:

- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?

By providing space for the voices of children to be captured (via digital storytelling) as they participated in literacy events across both settings, insight was provided into the literacy practices children engaged in as they transitioned from one context to another. Facets of multi-modality within the digital stories were examined. This enabled the discussion of the connections between the verbal and visual modes represented to provide a deeper analysis of the data set in both educational settings.

Research design

A qualitative approach

Qualitative methods are exploratory and descriptive, enabling the researcher to look deeply at the topic and provide a detailed view of the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative methods enable the researcher to understand the perspective of the participants across different contexts and settings (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The research design acknowledged the need to match the design to the purpose of the inquiry (Creswell, 2003). In this inquiry, the qualitative design enabled the

exploration of socially constructed meanings (Burns, 1995), and made it possible for the researcher to represent a firsthand account of the inquiry within the chosen educational contexts (Merriam, 1998). This approach, according to Freebody (2004), offered a means of capturing ‘the unpredictabilities ... built into the experiential lifeworlds of human beings’ (p. 37). By situating this inquiry in the qualitative paradigm, the researcher could sensitively respond to the research questions as detailed accounts from the perspectives of the children were gathered (Burns, 1995).

In qualitative research, the researcher is viewed as the key instrument of data collection (Merriam, 1998). The researcher engages directly with participants and observes them in situ. Qualitative methods provided the opportunity for the researcher to gain insights into the way the young children made sense of their experiences in both familiar and new educational contexts (Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2003). Examining this time of transition from the perspective of children is novel and required a detailed and thorough examination to elicit as much data as possible from this perspective.

Comparative case study

In this inquiry, a comparative case study design enabled the researcher to examine the two contexts from the perspective of each child. Each child’s identification of literacy events and practices in both settings were examined. The use of a comparative case study approach (Stake, 1995) allowed for small-scale but in-depth investigation of the research questions. According to Stake (1995, p. xi), ‘Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances’. Creswell (2007, p. 73) defined case study research as ‘a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time’. By choosing multiple cases the researcher can explore the similarities and differences between the cases, making the conclusions more robust and powerful (Yin 2003).

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 25) described the case as ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’. The cases in this inquiry were bound by their contexts. These children were in the final months of attending the same prior-to-school educational setting, and moved to the same first year of the formal school setting. The contexts within which the cases were studied influenced the opportunities and activities

of the children. Therefore, the contexts of the unique learning environments were also examined in this inquiry (Stake, 2006). By exploring similar cases, a deeper understanding of the case findings was possible, and this added confidence and stability to the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this inquiry the cases were bounded in the following ways:

- by the time frame of the transition from prior-to-school to school, which was from November 2011 until the end of March 2012
- by the ‘literacy focus’ of the observation conducted, excluding any event not deemed to be a literacy event according to the criteria described below
- by two educational settings, which were influenced by the curriculum documents pertaining to each context.

In this inquiry seven children were on the same transition pathway, and so seven cases are reported here. The cases provided examples that were examined to identify the literacy events and practices these children recognised individually within a shared context, to show how they talked about these events and practices, and to present their opinions and perspectives about them. Each context was analysed by the researcher in connection with mandated curriculum and policy. It was this initial analysis that was used to examine the nature of the events and practices identified by the participants. The participants were not compared with each other. The cases were the children (aged between four and five). This inquiry sought to hear the children’s stories and to understand the similarities and differences in their experiences as they went about the business of participating in literacy events in their educational contexts. The aim was to thoroughly understand the cases through vigorous field-based data collection methods and then to analyse the cases with patient reflection and careful interpretation (Stake, 1995).

Through observation, the ways in which these children articulated their views on participating in literacy events in their prior-to-school and first year of school classrooms were explored. Pivotal to this inquiry was the use of digital stories to capture the children’s interpretations of the literacy events in which they engaged, first in the prior-to-school setting and then in the first year of school setting. Digital stories are a powerful means of self-expression and they provided the space for children’s

voices to be heard in the conversation about transition to school (Kervin & Mantei, 2015).

Locus of the inquiry

Prior-to-school site

The prior-to-school site is in a small town located in the Illawarra region on the South Coast of New South Wales, Australia. The seaside town had a population of less than four thousand people at the time of the inquiry and is surrounded predominantly by dairy pasture. A total of fifty-three children attended the setting each week, with a maximum number of twenty children per day. The clientele were mainly from middle-income families, with several families travelling from outside the area to attend the centre. The prior-to-school setting is a mentoring centre for Early Years Bachelor of Education students from the local university, and the educators within the centre worked strictly within the guidelines of the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a). The children who attended the prior-to-school setting typically attended the same primary school due to their geographical locations. This was of interest in this inquiry as the children were exposed to the same range of literacy opportunities across the two settings and their individual interpretations of these contexts were well suited to the comparative case design.

School site

The primary school is the local Department of Education and Community (DEC) primary school. The primary school is located two kilometres from the prior-to-school setting and at the time of the enquiry had an enrolment of 398 students from the first year of school to Year 6. The school is situated in a residential area at the end of a cul-de-sac. It has large grassy areas and playing fields as a part of the school campus, as well as play equipment and a covered outdoor learning area.

The school has students from both town and rural settings. In the annual school report for the inquiry year, the school nominated literacy and numeracy learning and teaching as key focus areas, and described the school as having an excellent kindergarten to Grade 2 program that provided ‘strong foundations for future learning’ (school website, n.d). During this time the school community engaged in significant professional

development related to the new Board of Studies English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015). The annual school report also described a strong partnership between school, parents and the wider community (school website, n.d). In the year of this inquiry, the NAPLAN results ranked the school as equal in performance to schools with statistically similar socio-economic backgrounds in reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation. The school performance in persuasive writing was above average.

Participants

The primary participants in this inquiry were the child participants (the cases). They were in their final term in the prior-to-school setting and were all transitioning to the same primary school the following year. The number of child participants was determined by the number of children enrolled in the prior-to-school setting who aligned with the set criteria at the time of the inquiry.







These criteria required that participants were:

Children in their final term at the prior-to-school setting in 2011 who were going to begin the first year of formal schooling in January 2012 at the same local Department of Education and Communities Primary School

Seven children met these criteria. All consented to be participants in the inquiry and were recruited to become the seven case studies.

The seven child participants are now introduced in alphabetical order.

Table 3.1 The child participants

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Hannah</p> <p>At the time of the inquiry Hannah was five years of age. She is the eldest of two siblings and attended the prior-to-school setting three days per week on the same days as her younger brother aged three.</p> |
|  | <p>Ivory</p> <p>Ivory was five years of age at the time of the inquiry and attended the prior-to-school setting two days per week. She lives on a small acreage with her parents, and has two older and one younger sibling.</p> |
|  | <p>James</p> <p>James attended the prior-to-school setting three days per week. He is the younger of two siblings and was five years of age at the time of this inquiry.</p> |
|  | <p>Lee</p> <p>Lee attended the prior-to-school setting three days per week. He is the younger of two brothers.</p> |
|  | <p>Maddy</p> <p>At the time of the inquiry, Maddy was five years of age. She attended the prior-to-school setting one day per week and is the middle child with two sisters.</p> |
|  | <p>Skyla</p> <p>Skyla was five years of age at the time of the inquiry. She attended the prior-to-school setting two days per week and is the youngest of three siblings.</p> |



Tommy

Tommy is the eldest of three siblings and attended the prior-to-school setting two days per week. He was five years of age at the time of the inquiry

The other participants in this inquiry were the educators in the prior-to-school setting and the teachers in the school setting. They are introduced in Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

Table 3.2 The educator participants in the prior-to-school setting

| Educator pseudonym | Role at the prior-to-school setting |
|---------------------------|--|
| Kylie and Angie | Educators who are also centre directors and owners |
| Sharon | Educator in the prior-to-school setting |

Table 3.3 The teacher participants in the first year of formal school setting

| Teacher pseudonym | Role at the school setting |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Julia | Teacher in the first year of school classroom. |
| Karen/Bernadette (Job share) | Teachers in the first year of school classroom. |
| Jemima | Teacher in the first year of school/second year of school classroom. |

The research design incorporated two phases, one for the prior-to-school setting and one for the first year of formal school. Two distinct phases were designed to follow the participants from one context to the next during the period of transition.

Phase one: The prior-to-school setting

This phase captured the preferred individual literacy practices as identified by the child participants in the prior-to-school educational setting. Data were collected as: digital stories, interviews, observations and document analysis. The duration of data collection in phase one was five weeks. Figure 3.1 outlines the procedure for phase one, which began after ethical consent was given for the research, as well as parental consent for child participation and consent from the educator and teacher participants.

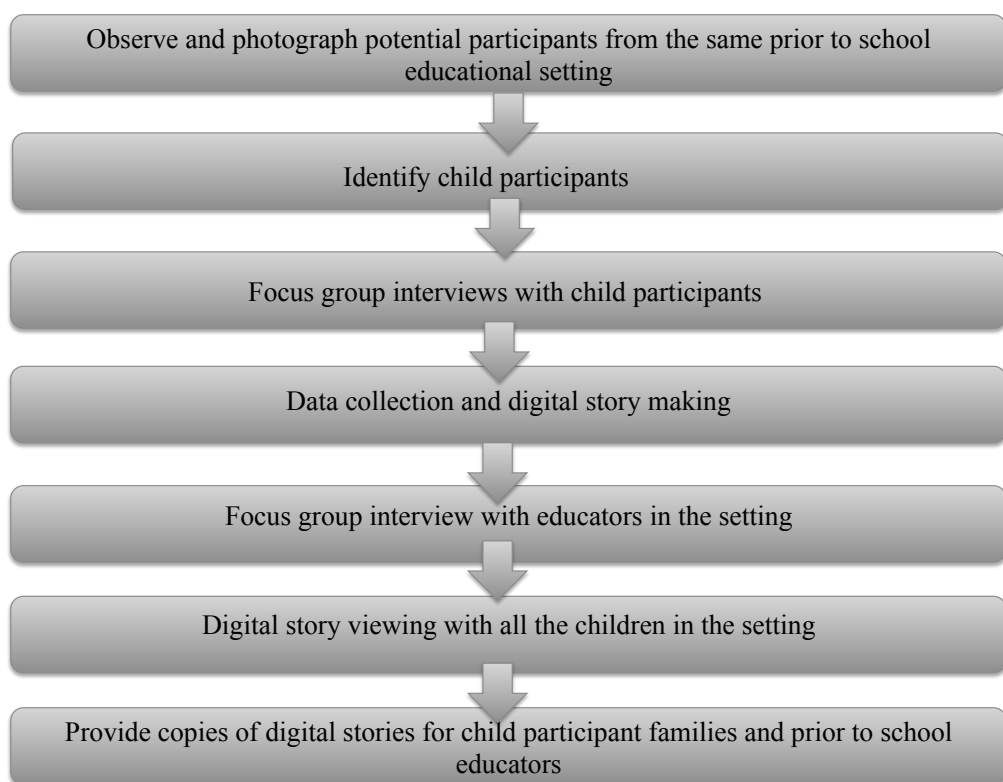


Figure 3.1. Phase one flow chart

Phase two: The first year of the formal school setting

This phase captured the preferred individual literacy practices as identified by the same children, but this time as students in their first year of formal schooling. The inquiry was conducted in the children's classrooms within the primary school setting. The duration of data collection in phase two was over also five weeks. Data were collected as: digital story making, interviews, observations and key document analysis. Figure 3.2 outlines the procedure for phase two.

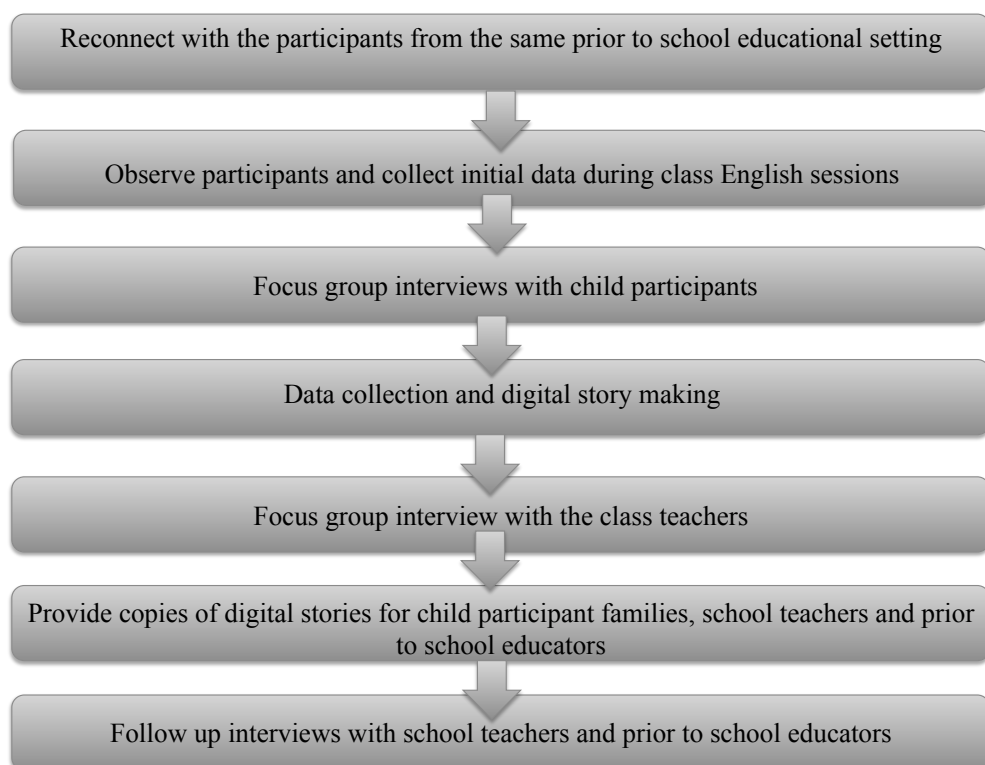


Figure 3.2. Phase two flow chart

Methods of data collection

Data collection methods were selected for the inquiry to enable the researcher to build a detailed description of these children at this time of transition. Table 3.4 provides a summary of data collection across the two distinct phases and shows how the data is connected to the research questions. Each data collection method is explained in this section. Appendix A provides the audit trail indicating the timing of specific data collection methods during the period of the inquiry. Codes corresponding with each type of data are used throughout the thesis to identify a source and to demonstrate the findings.

Table 3.4 Data collection methods

| Research questions | Phase one: The prior-to-school setting | Phase two: The first year of school |
|--|---|---|
| <p>What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and in the first year of formal school classrooms?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of children (captured through field notes, audio recordings and still images) • Unstructured interviews with children and educators • Focus group interviews with the educators • Document analysis of the EYLF and the teaching program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of the same children in the first year of school (captured through field notes, audio recordings and still images) • Unstructured interviews with children and teachers • Focus group interviews with the teachers • Document analysis of the ACE (ACARA, 2014) the NSW BOS English Syllabus (BOSTES, 2015) and the teaching program |
| <p>How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and in the first year of formal school classrooms?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews with the child participants • Digital story making with each child participant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews with the child participants • Digital story making with each child participant |
| <p>What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative case analysis of participant digital stories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative case analysis of participant digital stories • Follow-up semi-structured interviews with prior-to-school educators and school teachers |

The digital stories were the primary data for exploring the research questions, supported by periods of observation, interviews and document analysis in each setting. Figure 3.3 depicts the collection methods and the place of the data in the inquiry.

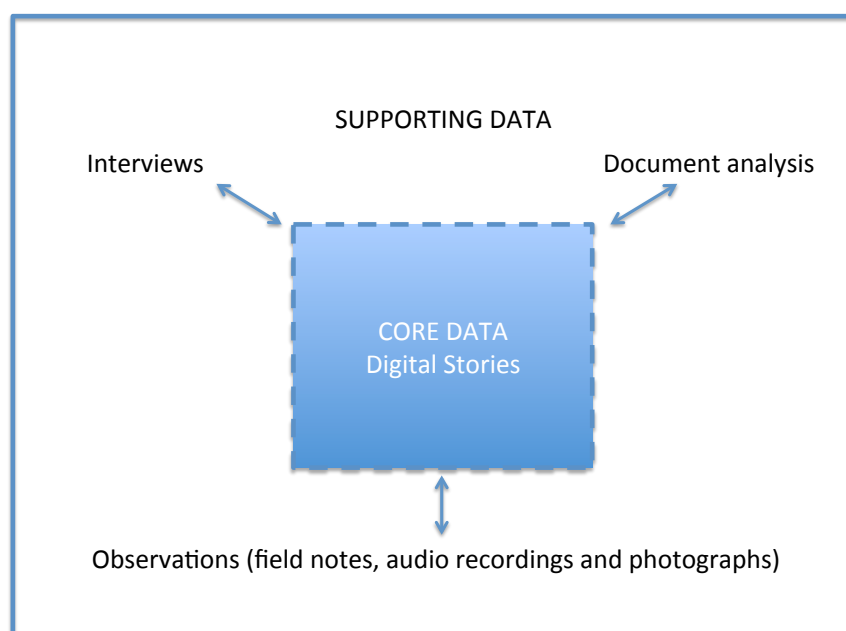


Figure 3.3 Overview of data

The digital stories

‘Digital stories are short, personal multimedia presentations created through the capture of image (still and/or video), which the creator then edits on a computer with video editing software to include a spoken narrative’ (Kervin & Mantei, 2015, p. 1). In this inquiry, digital stories provided opportunities for children to be creators of texts, to be authors, as they shared their unique personal perspectives on their interests and the ways they participated in the literacy events in their educational settings (Kervin & Mantei, 2015).

Multiple modes of meaning (images, sound, language) were used in the digital stories to provide avenues for the children’s ideas, opinions and feelings to be expressed through story and digital media (Centre for Digital Storytelling, n.d; Mantei & Kervin, 2010). The children’s perspectives, seen through the different modes afforded by the use of digital stories, allowed for the capture of a broader view of the children’s meaning-

making processes (Haggerty, 2011). The children whose images were captured in the scenes spoke about the meaning they associated with the images, and in doing so they spoke about the meaning they associated with the literacy event they engaged with. They orally annotated each image to create a scene in the process of the digital story construction. The children made visual images in which they were physically present. The links from these images to the aural texts in which the children's voices were heard provided a deeper level of meaning making. As a consequence, the digital stories provided a deeper understanding for the viewers and a deeper level of analysis for the researcher (Haggerty, 2011). To ascertain the children's perspectives in order to answer the research questions, the images of the children participating in the literacy events they chose, and what they said about the images, were analysed.

As the participants in this inquiry were young children, the researcher interacted individually with each child as they identified which events to include in their digital story. The children chose, directed and posed for the photographs (taken by the researcher), while the child and researcher discussed their significance. The researcher then helped the child to sequence their images, and to record an oral script in connection with earlier conversations, using the images to stimulate their recall and bring the modes together using iMovie. This process is outlined below:

- In phase one a digital story was made individually with each participant in order to capture their perspectives on the literacy activities they participated in their prior-to-school setting. Following Mantei and Kervin's (2010) advice for working with very young children the process for this included:
 - capturing 10 images of 'literacy' events in their setting (photographs directed by the child)
 - downloading these on the computer into iMovie and ordering the images (with the child)
 - recording an oral script for each image (with the child)
 - exporting a final product as a QuickTime movie.
- In phase two a final individual digital story was made (following this same process). This took place after the children had been in their new formal school setting for several weeks, in order to gain their perspectives on the literacy

events they engaged with and participated in, in their first year of formal school setting.

Certain limitations are acknowledged in regard to using the digital story framework with young children as a space to put forward their perspectives. These limitations will be outlined in the final section of this chapter.

Document analysis

The Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a), Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2014) and the NSW Board of Studies English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) and related materials were analysed for connections to prior-to-school literacy, school literacy expectations and promoted practices. The collection and analysis of educator and teacher programs and policies from the prior-to-school and school settings assisted the researcher in understanding how literacy expectations and practices were re-contextualised in the different educational contexts. The documents were analysed according to the theoretical framework of this inquiry by using the lens of literacy as a social practice, embedded in the specific social events which took place in the two educational settings.

Table 3.5 shows the curriculum documents (discussed in detail in Chapter 1) that guided the planning and programming of the educators and teachers in this inquiry. Shown in the table are The Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) informing curriculum planning in the prior-to-school educational context and the learning journal specific to the prior-to-school setting. Also shown in the table are national curriculum documents for the years of formal schooling from the first year (Foundation) to the final year (Year 10). It then shows the syllabus documents used by schoolteachers in NSW and then what is implemented at a system level in some NSW Department of Education and Community schools.

This table demonstrates the range of documentation that early childhood educators and school teachers in NSW educational settings refer to when planning and programming for children’s learning in their respective contexts.

Table 3.5 Curriculum documents in the prior-to-school and the first year of formal school setting.

| Educational settings | Curriculum documents |
|---|---|
| Curriculum documents in the prior-to-school educational setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Years Learning Framework (The Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) <li style="text-align: center;">↓ • The educators respond by programming in the Learning Journal |
| Curriculum documents in the primary school setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2014) <li style="text-align: center;">↓ • The NSW K–10 English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) <li style="text-align: center;">↓ • The K–10 Literacy Continuum (NSW DEC, 2011) <li style="text-align: center;">↓ • Language, learning and literacy in the early years program (L3) (NSW DET, 2009) <li style="text-align: center;">↓ • Teacher English programs |

Observation

The data collection in both the prior-to-school setting (phase one) and the first year of formal school setting (phase two) included observation of the children, representing a firsthand encounter of the everyday literacy events in the prior-to-school and the first year of school classrooms. Observation of the children enabled the researcher to see how children interacted with literacy events within their settings and to check her understanding of these events with the participants (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

In conjunction with the data analysis of key documents, spending extended periods of time in both educational contexts enabled the researcher to make a range of observations informed by the theoretical frame of the inquiry (Merriam, 1998). The

observation process was documented using field notes, audio recordings and photographs. Unstructured interviews and conversations were interwoven during observations (Merriam, 1998) as the researcher asked open ended questions such as, *I noticed that you are ... can you tell me about that?* This gave the children an opportunity to talk freely about the activities they were engaged in and not be led by the researcher (Yin, 2009).

In the prior-to-school setting, the researcher initially spent time as a participant observer of the children to build rapport with them and the educators, being friendly and interested in the routines of the setting. The participants who met the criteria were at the forefront of the inquiry but the researcher interacted with many of the children in the course of her observations. She intentionally engaged with the seven child participants, conversing with them and documenting observations through still images, field notes and audio recordings. Data were only collected on the seven child participants.

In the following year in the first year of formal schooling the seven child participants were already familiar with the researcher, who reminded them of her interest in their news about their new school context. The researcher again spent time as a participant observer of the children as they engaged with experiences on offer in the English session, across three first-year classrooms. The researcher intentionally engaged with the seven child participants, conversing with them and documenting their observations through still images, field notes and audio recordings. Data were only collected on the seven child participants.

Interviews

In phases one and two of the data collection period, interviews were conducted with the children, and with educator and teacher participants in the research. Interview types included focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. The type used was determined according to the participant and the purpose of the interview. How and when interviews took place in phase one and phase two of this inquiry are outlined in the following section.

Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews allow for a collective meeting of participants with something in common, in order for the researcher to uncover information that is the focus of the research inquiry (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Focus group interviews are a dynamic process of interaction in which participants respond not only to questions from the researcher but to each other and to the group as a whole (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Kitzinger (1994) described the unique elements of this type of interview, stating,

Everyday forms of communication such as anecdotes, jokes or loose word associations may tell us *as much* if not *more* about what people ‘know’. In this sense focus groups reach that part that other methods cannot reach – revealing dimensions of understandings that often remain untapped by the more conventional one-to-one interview or questionnaire (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 109).

Focus group interviews are beneficial when the interactions among the interviewees are likely to generate useful discussion and when the participants may be less inclined to offer information individually (Creswell, 2007). This is especially true for young children whose social interactions and language skills may be somewhat limited (Greene & Hogan, 2005). This inquiry made use of stimulus to engage the children in conversation. For example the sample digital story was made specifically for this purpose in the prior-to-school setting, and in the first year of school the children viewed photographs taken of them during the English session in their respective classrooms (outlined in the following section). The researcher was mindful that there is a danger in small focus groups that the views of the children may become parallel (Greene & Hogan, 2005), and made every effort to listen carefully and value each child’s contribution, ensuring there was equity in sharing the conversation. These data were coupled with observation data to substantiate the findings. The following section outlines the focus group interviews in phase one and then in phase two of this inquiry.

Focus group interviews in phase one

In phase one the focus group interviews with the child participants occurred after the initial observations of the children and before subsequent digital story making. The intention was to frame the task for the child participants by giving them an example of

what they were working towards (a digital story) and a literacy lens through which to view the various activities in which they participated.

For this reason the researcher created a digital story of all the children in the prior-to-school setting during literacy activities. The purpose was (i) to provide a model and (ii) to act as a stimulus for discussion in the focus group interviews. This included images of a wide range of literacy events observed in the prior-to-school setting. The oral script devised by the researcher to accompany the images in the sample digital story described the different ways the children use words in their prior-to-school setting (Appendix E phase one sample digital story transcript). This sample digital story contained images of many children in the centre and because of this was not used outside of the prior-to-school context. All photographs of the children who were not included as participants in the inquiry, and the sample digital story itself, were deleted and trashed from the researcher's computer and iPhone after they had served their purpose. Appendix E includes the script but not the images of the sample digital story.

As a discussion starter after the children had viewed the sample digital story, the researcher asked the children to consider the ways they 'use words' as they engage with the activities available in the learning environment. This provided an opportunity for the children to discuss the types of literacy activities they participated in that they may wish to include in their personal digital stories (Appendix F transcript example of the child participant focus group interviews in phase one).

In phase one the focus group interviews took place in the prior-to-school setting on two separate occasions. The reason was related to the availability of the participants at times suitable for the interview. In order to begin observations of the individual children and subsequent data collection, the four children who were in attendance in the setting in the morning designated for the interview were included in the first focus group interview (PFG-1). The second focus group interview of the remaining three child participants occurred following the completion of the digital stories of the first four children (PFG-2). Having smaller focus groups of four and then three children instead of one group of seven enabled the children to have more frequent opportunities to contribute to the conversation, and as they were very active, this allowed the interview to be concluded over a shorter period of time (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

In phase one a focus group interview was also conducted with the prior-to-school educators (Prior-to-school Educator Focus Group (PEFG)). The two educator participants Angie and Kylie were also the centre owners and directors. The purpose was to obtain the educators' personal philosophy of literacy education and to gain insight into the ways they planned for the literacy learning experiences of the children in the setting (Appendix G transcript example of the educator focus group interview in phase one).

Focus group interviews in phase two

In phase two, in the first year of formal schooling, the child participant focus group interviews also took place in two groups. Again this related to the availability of the children who were spread over three first-year classrooms. The focus group interviews occurred after the initial observations of the children in their new school setting and before their individual digital stories were created. The interviews aimed to capture the participants' reactions to their change in setting, and their perspectives on the literacy events they engaged in. Photographic data of the children participating in literacy events in their new school setting were used as a stimulus for the discussion about the types of literacy activities that the children could include in their personal digital stories. The children were asked to consider what they might share with their parents, and Kylie and Angie as the potential audience for the digital stories, about their experiences in their new school context (Appendix H transcript example of the child participant focus group interviews in phase two).

In phase two a focus group interview was also conducted with three of the school teachers, Bernadette, Jemima and Julia (School Teacher Focus Group (STFG)). Karen, who shared the teaching of class K LW with Bernadette, was unavailable at the time of the interview. The focus group interview identified and began to explore the teachers' personal learning philosophies, their literacy teaching practices and how they planned the literacy events in their first year of the formal school context (Appendix I transcript example of the teacher focus group interview in phase two).

Semi-structured interviews

After the conclusion of the observations and the digital story making in the primary school context, the researcher conducted semi-structured final interviews with Angie

and Kylie, the educators in the prior-to-school setting (Prior-to-school Educator Focus Group (PEFG) and Bernadette, Jemima and Julia, the teachers in the school setting (School Teacher Interview (STI). Open-ended questions were devised for the interview and the use of a semi-structured approach provided opportunities to probe further to ascertain additional information from the educators and teachers (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington & Okely, 2006). The purpose of these interviews was to seek the participants' reactions to both sets of the children's digital stories, to gain their perspectives on the literacy events the children engaged with at the time of transition into the first year of formal school, and to obtain their opinions of the 'smoothness' of the children's literacy transition to school.

The prior-to-school educators Angie and Kylie were given copies of the individual participants' digital stories from both phase one and phase two of the inquiry and they participated in a final interview with the researcher. The digital stories were viewed with the researcher and educators together, during which time the educators' responses to the digital stories were captured by audio recorded and then transcribed (Appendix J transcript example of the final prior-to-school educator interview).

The schoolteachers Bernadette, Jemima, Julia and Karen were also given copies of the individual participants' digital stories from both phase one and phase two of the inquiry. Due to the busyness of school life it was not possible for the researcher to view the digital stories together with the teachers and conduct the interview as a focus group. Therefore, the teachers viewed the digital stories in their own time and were interviewed separately in their classroom contexts several months after the completion of data collection with the child participants. Bernadette, Jemima, Julia and Karen were given an interview schedule to guide their thinking in readiness for the planned interview. The teachers were provided adequate time to view both sets of digital stories for each of their children to consider their responses to the interview questions (Appendix K transcript example of the semi-structured final teacher interview).

Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews with the child participants, the educators in the prior-to-school setting and the teachers in the school setting were conducted in the form of ongoing informal conversations (Cresswell, 2007). The conversations that took place during the course of observations within the settings with child participants were documented as

journal entries (JE) in the prior-to-school setting and as classroom observations (CO) in the school setting. The unstructured interviews that took place with the educators during the course of observations within the prior-to-school setting were documented and were assigned the code PEU. In the primary school setting unstructured interviews with school teachers were documented and assigned the code STU. The unstructured interviews allowed the researcher to obtain information during her observations of the participants in their educational settings (Appendix L transcript example of the unstructured child participant interviews in the prior-to-school and first year of school settings).

Methods of data analysis

The multiple forms of data collected were analysed in line with the logic of the inquiry discussed earlier in this chapter. Throughout the course of the inquiry and data collection periods the researcher constantly interacted with the data and data analysis occurred (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As noted by Strauss and Corbin (1990) the nature of qualitative research analysis is non-linear, and movement through the data during the collection and analysing period is recursive.

As such, data was analysed simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998). Data were carefully organised and the following process observed.

1. Read and reread the data making notes in the margins.
2. Personal reflections and comments were noted, capturing tentative hunches and themes.
3. The second set of data were compared with the first to look for recurring regularities and to assign codes to the data to reflect the purpose of the inquiry.
4. A set of tentative themes emerged in relation to the research questions.

Data were triangulated to ensure that the data analysis was comprehensive. These sources included: digital stories, analysis of curriculum documents, the researcher's field notes and all interview transcripts.

Analysis of key documents

Key documents pertaining to each of the settings in phase one and phase two were analysed in conjunction with the theoretical framework of this inquiry. These included:

- the Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a)
- the NSW English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015)
- the Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2014)
- the educators' programs in the prior-to-school setting
- the first year of school teachers' programs in the school setting.

Once the literacy events were identified in each setting, tables were made to connect the observed literacy events to the relevant syllabus documents. These data informed the range of literacy opportunities available for the children across both sites. From these data, the expected literacy practices for each setting were documented. The range of literacy events that the children participated in was identified for each setting. From the analysis of these documents it became apparent that the literacy events would look different in the two education contexts. The holistic approach to literacy learning in the prior-to-school setting meant that the literacy events in this setting were different to those in the school setting, where they were more structured and skills based. This was evident in the key documents pertaining to the school context. Analysis of key documents is presented in Chapter 4's discussion of the learning environment (Appendix M key document analysis examples).

Analysis of the digital stories

The core data collected were the participants' individual digital stories. The process of digital story creation was outlined earlier in this chapter. The digital stories were analysed to obtain the children's perspectives on the literacy events they engaged with, first in the prior-to-school setting and then again at the time of transition to their first year of formal school. The digital stories were analysed by examining the connection between the images taken of the children participating in the literacy events chosen by them, what the children said about the images, and their opinions and feelings of the literacy event represented. The events the children chose to share in their digital stories were consistent with the observations made of the children in the settings and these data

were also used to corroborate the findings.

The following four questions were asked in relation to the digital story analysis:

1. What did the child choose?
2. What was the connection between the child's chosen image and their assigned oral script?
3. How did the child describe the literacy event they participated in?
4. How did the child's description of the literacy event connect with the document analysis to understand the setting?

For example, in her comment on the scene shown below from her prior-to-school digital story, Skyla described her action depicted in the image of her chosen literacy event. She also commented on her enjoyment of the particular story she read. The researcher's observation of her participating in the event added context to Skyla's engagement in the literacy event, which revealed insight into not only her familiarity with this literacy event but her understanding of picture book structure and book language.



6. *I readed Goldilocks and I like that story.*

Observation: Skyla revealed that reading was a favourite activity. Positioned in the book corner in the inside area, Skyla read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and told the story in her own words. Using the images as a guide, she included language structures from the text: 'Mother Bear's porridge is too hot. Father Bear's porridge is too cold. Baby Bear's porridge is just right!' (PDSP-S).

In another example, this time taken from Skyla's school digital story, she again chose to be photographed reading a picture book. In this example Skyla did not directly state the activity represented in the image but gave more information about herself and the context of her new learning environment.



4. *I like to read rhyming books and they make me laugh and it's a must-do job. Sometimes Miss Wilson reads me rhyming books and it's a 'Giraffe in the Bath'. It's my favourite.*

Observation:

This was a 'must-do' activity. Skylia sat with her friend Maddy, engaging with picture books. Skylia described (to the researcher) what was happening in the book, sharing the humour and rhyme addressing each page. Skylia's oral script reveals her enjoyment of reading rhyming books, referring to her favourite book *Giraffe in the Bath* by Mem Fox (CO-S).

Triangulation of data took place in both the prior-to-school and first year of school settings. The reading and viewing of picture books evident in the children's digital stories was an identified literacy practice in the analysed documents which occurred in both contexts, and was one that was considered important by the educators and teachers (Appendix N example of digital story analysis).

Analysis of observation data

Literacy practices were documented using photographs, field notes and audio recordings. These data were analysed in conjunction with the identified literacy events and practices from the key document analysis, the range of literacy events the children participated in and their perspectives on those literacy events in their digital stories for each setting. In the example below the journal entries that documented observations of literacy events in the prior-to-school setting were aligned to outcome number 5 in the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a).

OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

Data collected

This is evident, for example, when children:

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in enjoyable interactions using verbal and non-verbal language• Convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on home/family and community literacies• Respond verbally and non-verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel and taste• Use language and representations from play, music and art to share and project meaning• Contribute their ideas and experiences in play, small and large group discussions | <p>Listening to stories read by educators (PDSP-L) (JE-9.11.11) (JE-30.11.11) (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Listening to the sounds of your name (whole group) ‘Whose name starts with ... get your hat’ (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Ivory spoke to group about her huge home grown zucchini (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Children speaking to the group about what they are doing for Christmas with their families (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Relaxation music all children lie on the floor (JE-9.11.11) (JE-30.11.11)</p> |
|--|---|

The analysis of these data enabled a richer description of the learning environment, a greater understanding of the literacy events in the setting and of the ways the children talked about their participation in the literacy events in their digital stories.

Triangulation across the research data was obtained using: the observation of literacy events in the two settings, the literacy events identified by analysis of syllabus documents, educator and teacher interview data and the children’s chosen literacy events in their digital stories.

Analysis of interview transcripts

The process of data collection from focus group, and semi-structured and unstructured participant interviews was outlined earlier in this chapter. The interview data were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. These data were analysed in conjunction with the documented literacy events and practices, the range of literacy events the children participated in, and their perspectives on the literacy events in their digital stories for each setting.

The seven children who were the primary participants were interviewed in focus groups and unstructured interviews in phases one and two of this inquiry. The interviews were analysed by examining the connections between the children’s thoughts and opinions

about the literacy events and practices they engaged in in both settings, and the events they chose to share in their digital stories.

The following question was asked in relation to the interview data analysis:

1. What was the connection between the children's thoughts and opinions of the literacy events in interviews and their chosen literacy events represented in their digital stories?

For example, in the excerpt below from an unstructured interview transcript, Maddy revealed her engagement with story in the prior-to-school setting. She included this literacy event in her digital story and the interview data are consistent with the enjoyment of the story Maddy demonstrated in scene 2 of her digital story.

(Maddy choose the *Bugalugs Bum Thief* – a mini novel from the shelf and sits on the floor to read it)

Researcher: Who read the book to you at pre-school?

Maddy: Angie.

(Maddy talks aloud describing what is happening in the story as she turns the pages)

Maddy: One boy woke up one day he went to go and get some breakfast and then when he was about to put on his clothes they fell right down again

Researcher: Did they? Because he didn't have a bum? (chuckles) Oh that's funny. (PDSP-M).

Maddy: And then when he were going to see their mum and dad they were eating on the floor (Chuckles). And then he made a map to see who were taking their bums.

The educators in the prior-to-school setting and the teachers in the first year of school setting were interviewed in focus groups, and semi-structured and unstructured interviews in phases one and two of this inquiry. The interviews were analysed by examining the connections between the identified literacy events and practices from the document analysis, and the literacy events planned by educators and teachers in their educational settings.

The following two questions were asked in relation to the interview data analysis:

1. What was the connection between the educators/teachers' personal philosophies and the planned literacy events and practices in their respective settings?
2. What was the connection between those literacy events identified in the key document analysis and those planned and implemented by the educators/teachers in their respective settings?

For example in the excerpt from a semi-structured interview transcript shown below, educators Kylie and Angie explained what they considered to be important for children's literacy development at this age. These data were consistent with the literacy events and practices identified in the document analysis and with the types of literacy events chosen by the children in their prior-to-school digital stories.

Kylie: The single most important thing is to be read to every day – exposure to books ... the single most important thing.

Angie: Creating that passion and enjoyment of literacy in all its forms really.

Kylie: We think about what they are interested in and they can build on it.

Angie: The journey of the *Gruffalo* has been amazing! That is the first time ever they have actually written a play for the end of year concert. *The Rock Whale* was another thing ... taking that extra step in inviting the illustrator and the author. They were calling themselves authors and illustrators and then with the *Gruffalo*, it went to puppet shows and there is even a DVD that some children watched ... all the different forms that it has taken (PEFG).

Limitations and delimitations

The digital story framework

In using the digital story framework to provide children with a space to put forward their perspectives, certain limitations are acknowledged. Firstly, for young children the use of the technology to create the digital story required adult support. This meant that some of the children were initially reserved in their talk with the researcher as a new person in their setting and the oral annotations the children assigned to the images were in some cases brief. For other children, recording their voices using headphones for the first time meant that the conversation leading up to the voice recording was sometimes

richer in content than that which was recorded. For this reason these data were coupled with observation data in the representation of the findings. Additionally, for one child the time taken to construct the digital story meant he became restless and distracted. When this occurred, the process was suspended and resumed at a later time.

Sample size

With only seven child participants and two educational settings, the outcomes of this study are not generalisable to the wider population. However, the small sample size enabled an in-depth, rich description to be built, as stories of these particular ‘cases’ located within their specific educational settings were captured. This rich, thick description allows the reader to transfer information to other similar settings, due to the ‘shared characteristics’ (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 209) of the settings.

Child participant age

This inquiry viewed children as competent to organise and describe their everyday social situations through talk, gestures and movement (Danby, 2002). Children’s agency as experts in their own lives was recognised. Their opinions were elicited as they were actively involved in choosing literacy experiences, being photographed whilst participating and talking about their experiences in the context of this inquiry. From a developmental perspective (Piaget, 1959) some may consider the age and hence the probable vocabulary knowledge of the participants may have hindered their ability to articulate their responses verbally during the unstructured and focus group interviews. However, through triangulation of the data using observations and photographs in addition to interviews, a fuller picture of the child participants’ views was obtained. Photographs were used to prompt or remind the children of the literacy events they had participated in, and the inclusion of the child’s oral script which they created as annotations for the images in their digital stories were also employed to overcome this issue. The researcher was mindful of the temptation to speak for the children or put words into their mouths during the data collection period, and made space for the children’s thoughts and opinions to be captured and documented accurately.

Children transition between the same educational settings

The cases in this inquiry were bounded by the same educational contexts both in the prior-to-school and in the first year of the formal school setting. These contexts in which the cases were studied influenced the literacy opportunities available to the children. By exploring similar cases a deeper understanding of the case findings was possible. However, this may also be considered a limitation of the inquiry. Children from different prior-to-school educational contexts would experience a variety of literacy events associated with their particular contexts and when they transitioned into the same first year of formal school setting a more diverse set of findings may be possible. This is an area identified in Chapter 6 for further research.

Ethical considerations

Prior to commencing the inquiry, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Wollongong Ethics Committee (HE11/488) on 4 November 2011 (Appendix C). Ethical approval was also gained from the NSW Department of Education and Communities (SERAP Number 2011224) on 27 January 2012 prior to the in-school phase of data collection, which began in February 2012 (Appendix D).

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from parents of the children in the prior-to-school setting, who were chosen to be a part of this inquiry using the eligibility criteria previously outlined. Children moved around groups and interacted with many of their peers in the course of the day in the prior-to-school setting. Therefore, the chosen participants were involved with or alongside many different children as they engaged in literacy events. For this reason the parents of all children in the prior-to-school setting were advised of the nature of the inquiry. The general consent form used in the prior-to-school setting allowed children to be photographed for use within the setting only, and applied to all children in this prior-to-school context. These data were trashed from the researcher's computer at the end of their use. No data were collected in the primary school settings from children other than those who consented to be part of the inquiry.

In addition to parental consent, it was important to obtain each child's agreement to participate in the inquiry (Dockett et al., 2009). The children were asked if they were

willing to participate at each step of the inquiry. For example, the researcher would inquire, 'is it alright if I sit down and talk to you about what you are doing now?' If a child was reluctant to engage with the researcher at any point in the data collection the researcher would respectfully move away and attempted to reengage with the child at another time. Informed consent to participate in the inquiry was also obtained from the early childhood educators and school teachers in their respective settings (Appendix B participant information sheets and consent forms).

Interpreting the data

The children in this inquiry were actively involved in the inquiry through participating in chosen literacy events, talking about those events and being photographed in situ. They were also involved in the interpretation of the data through the creation of their digital stories. Their perspective was evident as they annotated the images and recorded their voices in digital storytelling. Obtaining the children's unique perspectives was the main focus of this inquiry, and this ensured that it was not only the voice of the researcher that was heard in the interpretation of the research data (Dockett et al., 2009).

Confidentiality

The data collected were safeguarded in locked filing cabinets in the home office of the researcher. The educational establishments, teachers and educators were all assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. However, as the children referred to themselves in the oral scripts of their digital stories, parental permission was sought and granted for the researcher to use the children's names in this thesis after the data collection period in the formal school setting. The collected data were treated with sensitivity and confidentiality and will be stored for a period of five years after collection.

Reciprocity

The children, their families and educators in the inquiry were provided with copies of their own work. The child participant families received the personalised digital story made about them in both settings of the inquiry. These records were seen as valuable memorabilia for the children and their families as they began their educational journey. The educators in the prior-to-school setting received copies of the digital stories made with each child participant in their setting, and the teachers received copies of the digital

stories of the children in their particular classes. This was seen as a record for these educators and teachers, of the children's opinions and feelings about the literacy experiences in their respective educational settings.

Equity

To ensure that all children present in the educational settings during this inquiry felt valued (despite the fact they were not at the centre of the inquiry) a digital story was made that featured all children (the sample digital story in the prior-to-school setting). This story was shown to all students, along with digital stories of the individual participants in phase one of this inquiry. The same procedure was not possible in the school context due to time constraints associated with the nature of the formal school context and the number of first-year children across three classrooms.

Conclusion

This inquiry adopted a comparative case study approach, which enabled an in-depth investigation of the research questions using multiple sources of data across two settings. This approach was used to build detailed description of the seven cases within the boundaries of their educational contexts. Data collection methods combined with each other to enable the voices of the participants to be heard, as they became creators of personal texts in the form of digital stories. The analysis of these stories provided insights into the ways the children viewed their experiences at the pivotal time of transition from a prior-to-school educational context to the first year of formal schooling. The choice of methodology was justified by highlighting the research design's sensitivity to the questions posed, and the eagerness to capture the perspectives of the children.

Chapter Four

The Learning Environment

Chapter 4 The Learning Environment

Introduction to the chapter

This chapter provides insights into the nature of the learning environments of the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings at the time of transition for the seven child participants. The chapter draws upon data that were collected from analysis of key documents and data from each setting, the educator and teacher interviews and observations, and data captured through field notes and still images to show how the literacy events were represented in these learning environments.

The chapter begins by describing the research site in phase one (the prior-to-school educational setting) and the physical space of the learning environment. Following this is an account of the personal philosophies of the educators Kylie and Angie, who were also the centre owners and directors. This is followed by an explanation of how they interpreted the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) in planning literacy experiences for the children. Examples are then shared of the types of literacy events available in the prior-to-school setting as experienced by the child participants.

The second section uses the same format to report on phase two of this inquiry (the first year of the formal school setting). It focuses on the classroom settings, the physical space, the personal philosophies of the school teachers, and the teachers' interpretations of the syllabus documents and pedagogical routines when planning the children's literacy learning. Examples are then shared of the types of literacy events experienced by the child participants.

At the end of both sections (Setting One – The prior-to-school educational setting and Setting Two – The first year of formal school setting), interpretive comments are made regarding the data analysis in response to the first contributing question:

- What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?

Setting One: The prior-to-school educational setting

The research site for phase one of the inquiry was a small privately owned prior-to-school educational facility in a small town on the South Coast of NSW, Australia. The centre was accredited through the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). It is located on the corner of the main road and a side street, five hundred metres from the town's surf beach and less than one kilometre from the township. There are several large playing fields and parks located nearby, as well as a lagoon that flows into the ocean. Rolling hills and pastureland, mainly farmed for dairy cattle, surround the township.

Directors Kylie and Angie who owned and operated the centre hold degrees in early childhood education. One or other was on the premises each day, with an overlap one day per week where they collaborated to oversee administration and pedagogical planning. In total, seven educators were employed at the centre. Two educators had Diplomas in Children's Services (Early Childhood Education and Care) and three held a Children's Services Certificate 3 from TAFE NSW (Technical and Further Education, NSW).

Appearance and layout of the prior-to-school setting

The centre is physically appealing with a large circular window adjacent to the main doorway as the focal point. The window views directly into the education room and was often decorated with the children's artistic designs. The outdoor learning space offered children places to explore, and to be creative and imaginative with both natural and manufactured resources. Figure 4.1 shows the layout of the outdoor learning space.

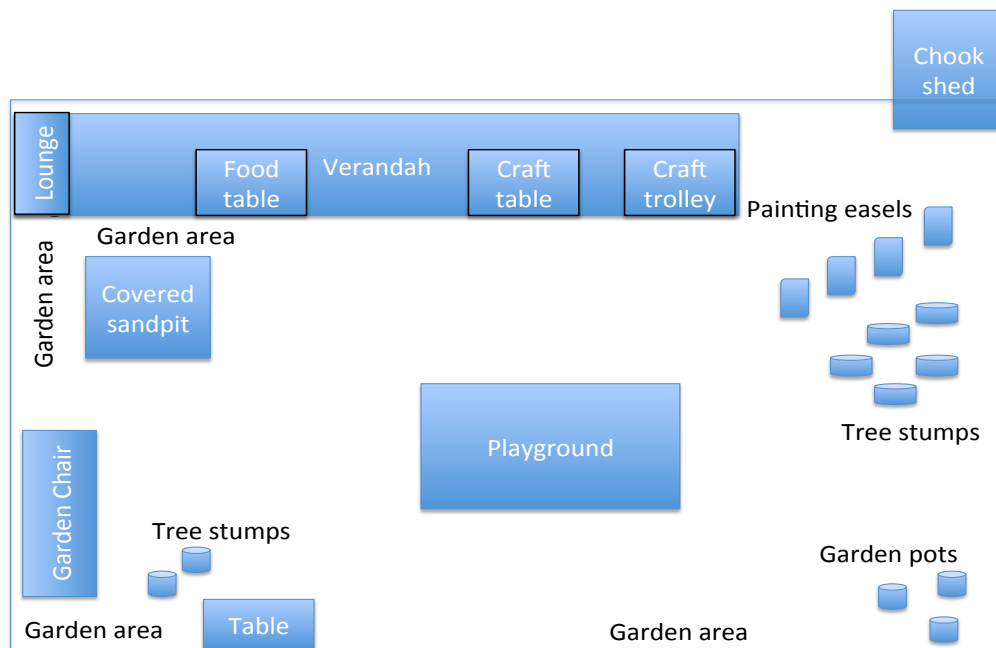


Figure 4.1 Floor plan of the outdoor learning space in the prior-to-school setting

The indoor learning environment is a large one-room space organised to allow the provision of varied learning experiences. It includes areas for children to sit at tables; floor spaces; a desk and bed area where children can engage in socio-dramatic play; shelves for books, puzzles and construction resources; a lounge and computer area; an area for musical resources; various storage rooms; and a bathroom that opens onto both the inside and outside learning spaces. Figure 4.2 represents the layout of the indoor learning space.

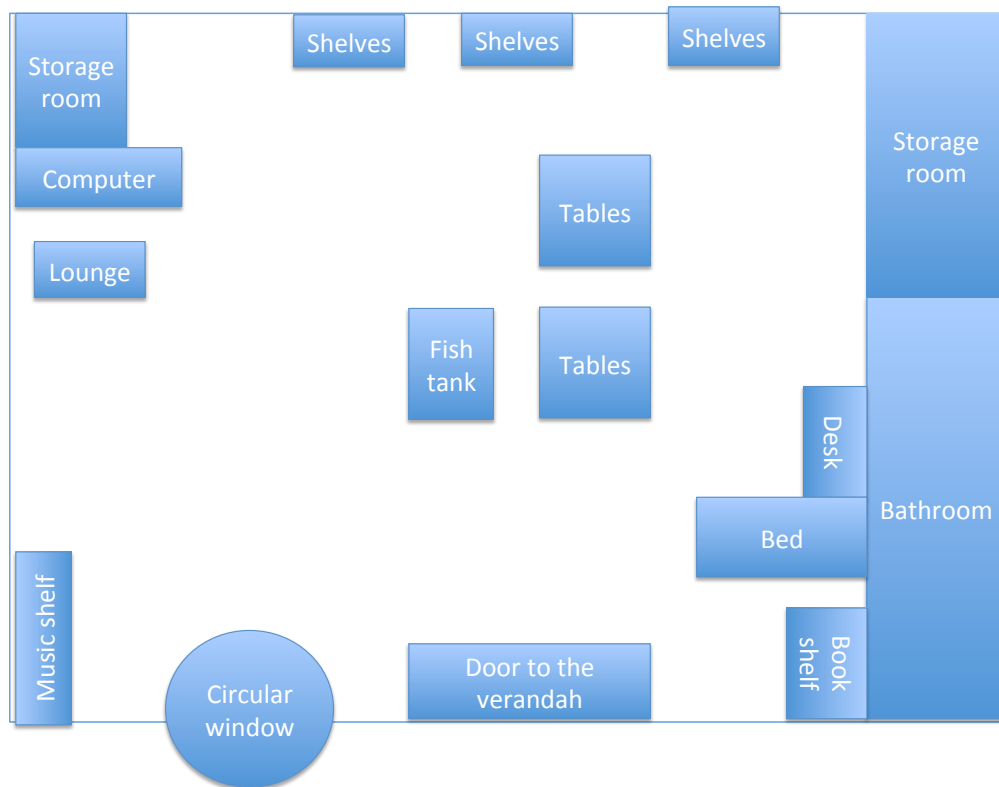


Figure 4.2 Floor plan of the indoor learning space in the prior-to-school setting

At the time of this inquiry the routines of this prior-to-school setting required the children to spend the mornings and afternoons in the outdoor learning space and the middle of the day in the indoor learning space. The timing of this arrangement was flexible. Table 4.1 represents this timetable arrangement

Table 4.1 The prior-to-school learning environment timetable

| Approximate Timing | The Learning Environment |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 7.30 am – 11.00 am | Outdoor space |
| 11.00am – 2.30 pm | Indoor space |
| 2.30pm – 5.00pm | Outdoor space |

The educators' philosophies

Centre directors Kylie and Angie reported that they had worked together in early years education for over twenty years. They shared common beliefs about how young children learn and articulated similar educational philosophies during the initial focus group interview (PEFG). Kylie and Angie expressed an adherence to a socio-cultural perspective of learning and in particular nominated the work of Vygotsky, and by association scaffolding, as major influences on their understanding of effective learning pathways for the children of this age group. Angie explained,

We do take it [philosophy] from a lot of different perspectives; socio-cultural perspective mainly; definitely play-based pedagogies (PEFG).

The seven educators (including Kylie and Angie) in the centre were guided by the requirements of the EYLF (The Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) to ensure all children in their care experienced quality teaching and learning. The framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning, and recognises the importance of communication and language and social and emotional development. The practices identified in the EYLF aligned with those identified by the centre directors during the focus group interview. For example, Angie explained,

What the EYLF did was really reinforce what we are doing is not 'right' but the best way to go about things. It kind of said we are doing OK ... Yeah, there are areas where we keep evolving and improving, but we could say we are on the right track (PEFG).

Kylie elaborated on Angie's statement, confirming their shared beliefs,

It is a lot of what we always did and what we thought worked and it was like an affirmation that we are on the right track – what we believed in works we see through the children (PEFG).

The definition of literacy in the EYLF as 'the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a, p. 41) aligned with Angie's description of their approach to literacy learning. She said,

Wide ranging; it encompasses art and painting and drawing, music, imaginary play, they (the children) bring along all sorts of interesting things,

literacy comes into it; the sand play – it's a holistic all-encompassing approach (PEFG).

Evidence of this 'holistic approach' (PEFG) was in the data in the educators' programming and through the participants' digital storytelling. These data document literacy events where diverse textual modes were present, explored and created. The following section describes the directors' philosophy in action as it translates into planning and programming for the children and the seven educators.

The prior-to-school education program

The education program recorded documentation of the educators' planning as well as their reflection on children's learning in this setting. Angie explained how the program works,

It's called the learning journal – It's a working document. Everyone contributes to it. Every educator has a chance to have input. We have daily reflective time where we get together to talk about what's happened, to talk about what's gone on with the children or the educators through the day. [It] documents what we've seen.

Kylie built on Angie's explanation.

What's been going on through the day whether we should continue on with something – the next day what we could contribute to it. Looking at what the children's interests are too, bringing them in and what the children want to contribute to the planning ... we aim to get that all written down – you know mind maps or learning stories or the things that the children are giving us.

The learning journal was kept in a central area (on a high table in the verandah area) (JE) so that all educators could document specific interactions with children, share planning suggestions in response to those interactions, and note significant aspects of dialogue and involvement with families and community members (PEFG). The learning journal was a planning and reflection tool for the seven educators and as such it was for their particular use only. It was not shared with family or community members.

In alignment with the theory underpinning early childhood pedagogy outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a), Kylie and Angie reported that the centre's program was planned in response to the children's interests, and aimed to extend these interests in authentic contexts of situated practice. They explained how the interests of the children were determined in several ways: firstly through listening to children's talk through dialogic exchanges and documenting their interests, secondly through observation and documentation of the children when they were active in the learning spaces, and thirdly through dialogue with parents and caregivers (PEU; PEFG).

The centre programming informed the organisation of the learning environment. Angie and Kylie explained that the indoor and outdoor learning spaces provided access to a range of open-ended and movable resources to facilitate children's integration of literacy into their play (JE). The resources in both learning spaces changed regularly in response to the children's interests (JE).

Overview of the literacy events in the prior-to-school setting

This section lists the literacy events available for the children as observed in the data collection period. The literacy events listed begin with those that were most strongly child-initiated and directed, and which were therefore to a large extent controlled by the children, to those least child initiated and directed – that is, they were more controlled by educators. Each literacy event is represented in the text below. First there is a title explaining the nature of the literacy event. Then there is an image of one part of the learning environment where the literacy event image took place, and next the image a link is made to the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a), demonstrating how the observation of the experiences in the learning environment connected to EYLF Outcome 5 (pertaining to literacy development) in the curriculum framework.

In the text below, each literacy event example describes the context of the image and summarises the literacy learning that occurred in the experience, supported by the theories of literacy as events and practices. The literacy events were observed in the social activities that occurred in both the indoor and outdoor learning spaces. They were mediated by a variety of texts that the children engaged with for particular purposes. The texts included oral, aural, gestural, and visual representations with words, images

and artefacts working together to create meaning (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Pahl, 2007; Kress, 1997). The events observed within the learning environment were evidence of the literacy practices valued within the setting. The full range of the observed literacy events is outlined in Appendix N Document Analysis Examples.

1. Children participated in imaginary play



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.

The educators provided opportunities for children to engage with books and soft toys in the parachute play area positioned under the trees (JE-9.11.11). In imaginary play, children communicated through gestures, words, scripts, roles, rules and symbolic tools (Hill, 2012). Children's communication and collaboration skills developed in the play context, and they improved their interpersonal relationships as they collaborated, and scaffolded each other's problem solving whilst participating in activities (Verenikina, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

2. Children participated in socio-dramatic play



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

In this image Skyla, Maddy and Hannah played shops in the sandpit, building on familiar home and community literacies (PDSP-I). In socio-dramatic play, children experiment with the purposes and functions of literacy through verbal, tactile and gestural modes as they negotiate roles and exchange ideas with each other and the educators. As the children create and use artefacts in roleplaying, they create opportunities for communication and collaboration. They often use more complex syntax and longer sentences (Hill, 2012) scaffolded by interactions with the educators. Other examples of socio-dramatic play from the research data include children's role

play as mothers and babies (JE-9.11.11) and in the doctor's surgery play area where children role played doctors, nurses and patients (PDSP-S).

3. Children participated in constructive play



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Here, Hannah constructed a castle in the garden area from wooden blocks. She described her creation as Rapunzel's castle, connecting to a familiar popular culture narrative she engaged with in reading, drawing and imaginary play (PDSP-H). In constructive play, children used open-ended materials to build or create things which were often associated with goals for further play activities (Johnson et al., 2005). Children in such play were active in planning, creating and problem solving, often whilst interacting collaboratively with others (Yelland, 2011).

4. Children participated in physical play



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

In this image James's physical play is imaginative as he and his friends manipulated the construction blocks to become racing cars. They raced the cars around the playground area, using verbal and non-verbal language to negotiate the rules and the roles of the activity (PDSP-J). Children demonstrate enthusiasm for participating in physical play, using verbal and non-verbal language to negotiate play spaces, rules and roles with others and explore ideas and theories connected to their social and cultural worlds (Vygotsky, 1978). Other examples from the research data included children playing on the playground equipment and playing with balls (JE-09/11/11; JE-30/11/11; JE-02/12/11; JE-06/12/11).

5. Children engaged with painting and drawing



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

In this image Ivory is painting a picture telling the story of a person running through a sun shower. She depicted the grass, the trees, a bird flying overhead, the sun and rain. The painting reflected her personal interest in the natural environment (PDSP-I).

Children's painting and drawing are modes of expression, communication and narration which reflect their understanding of their social and cultural world (Anning & Ring, 2004; Kervin & Mantei, 2015). The paintings and drawings children create represent narratives that reflect their everyday lived experiences and understandings from their homes and communities. They convey more complex meanings through drawing than they are able to with print (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013).

6. Children created three-dimensional texts using a range of craft material



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Side by side, Hannah and Ivory used a variety of materials, including paper bags, paper patty pans, pipe cleaners, cotton balls, glue and felt pens to create handbags. This activity was observed to include talk, as the girls conversed, not only about their creations, but also about experiences and stories from their everyday lives (JE-7.12.11). At the craft table, children experimented with ways of expressing ideas and meaning making by creating three-dimensional texts, using and manipulating a range of mediums. Children's participation in creative activities give rise to opportunities for communication and development of oral language skills, as they are likely to share

meaningful conversations with those around them when they are involved in creative activities (Pahl, 2010).

7. Children created artifacts with play dough



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Here, Maddy created a ginger bread man from play dough (PDSP-M). During the activity she drew on her memory of the language structures from the familiar text *The Gingerbread Man* and recited the refrain from the story (PDSP-M). The artefact created became an object for storytelling, as Maddy orally shared with the researcher the meaning she assigned to it. Children create artefacts to express ideas and make meaning by sharing the symbols of their social and cultural world (Pahl, 2010).

8. Children engaged in storytelling experiences



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

In this image, Maddy orally retold the story of the Three Little Pigs whilst manipulating the characters on the felt board (PDSP-M). She drew on her memory of the language structures in the story, manipulating the text to construct meaning as well as expressing ideas and feelings about the characters and the plot of the text (PDSP-M).

Children engage with visual, tactile texts, demonstrating an awareness of the relationship between the visual and oral representation of story (Pahl, 2010).

9. Children created personal texts through images and print



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

In this image the children participated in ‘table time’ (JE-2.11.11) where they experimented with ways of expressing ideas by creating personal texts through images and print, and exchanging ideas orally with each other and the educator. Children make connections from their everyday lived experiences as well as the stories they hear or view in their visual representations (Anning & Ring, 2004; Kervin & Mantei, 2015). A further example of this from the research data was observed when children were invited by the educator to draw a Halloween pumpkin brought to the centre by a parent after Halloween celebrations. The children made connections to the social, community experience of Halloween through talk with each other and the educator, and through the creation of texts using images and print (JE-2.11.11).

10. Children engaged in independent reading experiences



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.

In this image the children had accessed narrative picture books about Christmas, made available to them in the outside play area. Here, they positioned themselves on the blocks arranged as a walking track and swapped comments and ideas with each other as they read (JE-30.11.11). Children engage with and share the language and images in texts through reading and viewing picture books. In doing so they make connections to their own experiences, to other texts and to the world, in order to make meaning and enhance enjoyment as they engage with picture books.

11. Children and educators engaged in experiences with music, singing and dancing



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.
- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Here, Ivory talked about a familiar song, *Madame Zelda* that she enjoyed singing and dancing to (PDSP-I). Educators provide a range of resources for children to express ideas and make meaning through singing, dancing and listening to music (Makin & Whiteman, 2007; Tomilison, 2013). These modes involved children and educators in representation, movement and interpersonal communication. Daily experiences were planned by the educators to involve children in singing, and listening to and moving to music. Children and educators also participated in spontaneous singing and dancing activities (JE-7.12.11). Musical aspects of communication integrated with movement, language and enjoyment as children created both sense and meaning during these literacy events (Alcock, Cullen & St George, 2008).

12. Educators and children engaged with whole group reading experiences



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.

The example in this image is *The Gruffalo* (JE-2.11.11). The educator engaged children in discussion about the book and they responded with relevant comments and/or questions, developing children's comprehension and oral language ability. Children and educators engage with and share the language and images in texts through viewing and listening to children's literature. Listening to stories and engaging in discussion assists children in developing their understanding of narrative structure. It also exposes

children to rich vocabulary and syntax patterns that they may not hear in their everyday interactions (Collins & Svensson, 2008).

13. Children and educators participated in meal-time routines within the centre



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

In this image Maddy was participating in the routine of morning tea (PDSP-M). She engaged in enjoyable oral interactions with the educator and other children during this mealtime routine with the pragmatic skills needed to initiate and sustain conversation. Children participate in morning tea routines, acquiring knowledge of the rules that govern the procedures and interactions, such as turn taking, language and gestures. Through talk during this routine event, the educators helped construct children's social identity in relation to each other, to the educators and the world (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

14. Children, educators and families engaged with communication technology



EYLF, Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators:

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.
- Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

This image shows that the children's daily experiences in the centre have been captured through still and moving images, which were then downloaded to a laptop. The

educators and sometimes the children supported by an educator were responsible for collecting images using a digital still and/or video camera. The educator included a written script to accompany the images. The digital text was available for the children to view throughout the day and for family members to view when they collected their children in the afternoons (JE-7.11.11). Children used technology to access images and information by viewing a multimodal digital text with visual, sound and linguistic elements. This required the children to engage with and process the multiple text modes simultaneously in order to make meaning from the digital text.

Interpretive summary of the prior-to-school setting

The images provide illustrative examples of children choosing to engage in the learning experiences that were observed in this prior-to-school educational setting. The children had opportunities for literacy development through a range of imaginative and creative play activities, and through engagement with a variety of textual modes with a particular focus on talking, listening, creating, drawing and the emergent skills required for reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The children spent the majority of their day in the outdoor learning environment and nine out of the fourteen images show literacy events on offer in the outdoor area.

The first four literacy events described above (events 1–4) involved opportunities for play provided by the educators and initiated by the children. Play was identified by directors Angie and Kylie as being at the forefront of their planning for children’s learning experiences. They identified Vygotskian theory as an influence on their pedagogy when planning for children’s learning. That is, through engagement with play, children imagine, assigning meanings to objects and actions as they enact and explore the roles and rules associated with their social world (Vygotsky, 1978). Planning and implementing learning through play is a pedagogical practice that is promoted by the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a). The framework recommends that educators create learning environments that encourage children’s imagination and creativity, and their ability to problem solve.

The use of ‘language in all its forms’ identified by the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) was evident in this prior-to-school learning environment. Literacy events (events 5–9 above) involved the children creating texts using a range of media.

The opportunities for the children to paint, draw and engage with a range of three-dimensional texts enabled them to explore ways to express their ideas and make meaning. This is evidence of what the directors Angie and Kylie identified as their holistic approach to literacy learning (PEFG).

Further evidence of the all-encompassing approach to literacy used by Kylie and Angie was apparent in the children's engagement with picture books both independently (event 10) and with an educator (event 12). This approach was also apparent in the use of music, singing and dancing (event 11), through dialogue in the centre morning tea routine (event 13) and through interaction with digital media (event 14).

The children transitioned from the prior-to-school educational setting into the first year of school classrooms at the end of the year. In the new learning environment, teachers had different expectations of the learners. The teachers were responding to different imperatives including curriculum documents and policies that guided planning, programming and pedagogy. Whilst this inquiry found certain literacy practices were common across the two settings, the purpose of the literacy practices and the expectations of the learners were different in the two settings. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 when the cases of the seven child participants are presented. This presentation includes their unique perspectives on the literacy events they engaged with in both educational contexts.

Setting Two: The first year of formal school

Phase two of the research was located in first year of formal school in the local Department of Education and Community (DEC) primary school. The primary school is located two kilometres from the prior-to-school setting (phase one research site) and at the time of the inquiry had an enrolment of 398 children from the first year of school to Year 6.

At the time of the inquiry the school staff included a principal, three assistant principals, thirteen classroom teachers, a teacher librarian, a reading recovery teacher, a learning assistance support teacher, an itinerant visual disabilities teacher, a counsellor, a teacher release from face-to-face and school administrative and support staff. This amounts to the equivalent of 24.2 full-time staff. All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools with seventy five per cent of staff having a degree or diploma and twenty five per cent having a postgraduate qualification (Annual school report, 2012).

Each of the seven child participants was allocated to one of three classes for their first year of formal schooling. Two classes (called KLW and KD) comprised only children in their first year of formal school. The third class (called K1W) was a composite class, which included children in their first and second years of formal schooling. At enrolment, the child participants in this research were spread across the three classes as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The first year of formal school class organisation

| Child participants | Class | Teaching personnel (pseudonyms) | Total children |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Hannah | First year of school (KD) | Julia | 20 |
| Ivory James Lee Tommy | First year of school (KLW) | Karen (Monday & Tuesday) Bernadette (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday) | 20 |
| Maddy Skyla | First year of school/second year of school (K1W) | Jemima | 8 first year of school children 12 second year of school children |

Appearance and layout of the classrooms

The KD and KLW classrooms were mirror images of each other and were situated side by side, with folding doors allowing the two rooms to be opened into one large space. The K1W classroom was located two classrooms along from the KD and KLW rooms, adjacent to the Year One classroom. The K1W and Year One classrooms were connected by folding doors that could be opened to create one large space. The classrooms were almost identical in layout and contained similar learning resources. Figure 4.5 shows the floor plan for the first year of formal school classroom KLW as an example representing the three first year of school classroom.

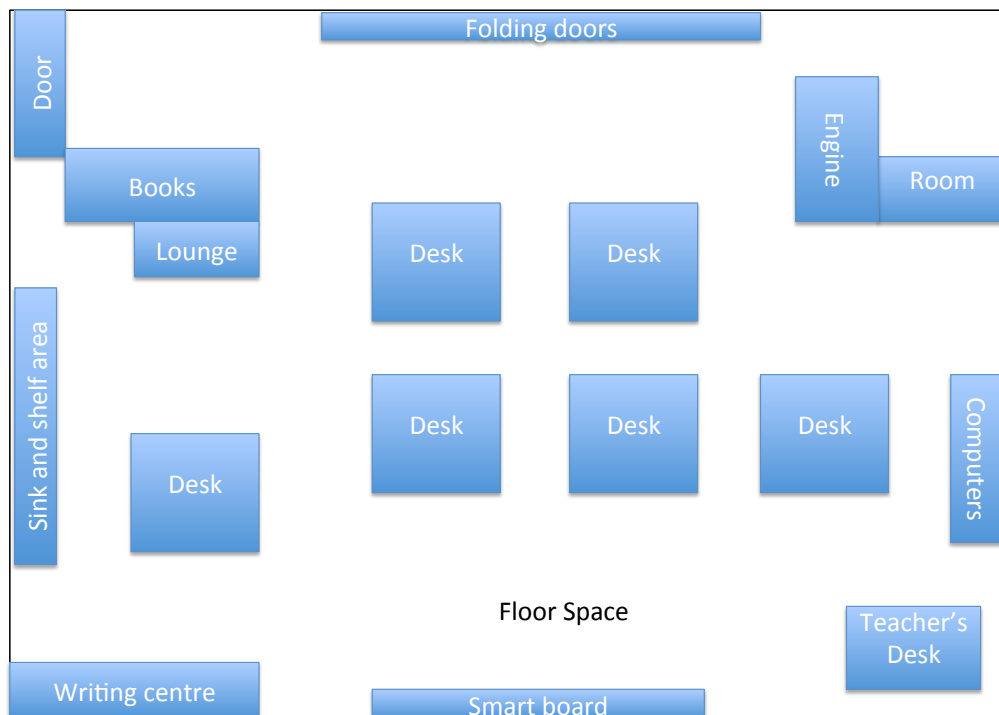


Figure 4.3 Floor plan of the first year of formal school classroom KLW

The 'must do' and 'choice' literacy activities were positioned throughout the classroom space. For example, there were writing materials and implements in the writing centre along with sample texts for the children to use in this 'choice' activity. Puzzles, blocks and letter/sound games were positioned on floor spaces. The lounge area was scattered with reading materials. The desks contained various activities including writing, drawing and colouring worksheets. The floor space at the front of the classroom was used for whole group literacy events and the 'engine room' was positioned in the corner

of the classroom. This allowed the teacher full view of the room during guided group activities.

The teachers' philosophies

The four teachers, Julia, Karen, Bernadette and Jemima, all had Bachelor of Education Primary degrees. The teachers' particular philosophies of learning were discussed during the focus group interview (STFG) at which Julia, Bernadette and Jemima were present. The teachers were asked to share their beliefs about learning and teaching. Jemima and Bernadette made several generalisations about the importance of enjoyment, independence and choice in learning, whilst Julie articulated her belief about children needing structure in the learning environment (STFG).

Jemima highlighted the need for children to enjoy learning in a positive environment and the need for them to develop independent learning practices,

I think one important thing is that they [the children] are enjoying it, that it's not a chore ... like a fun experience where they are constantly being praised ... I think for the children to be independent where they take control of their own learning ... they set little goals for themselves and work hard to achieve it (STFG).

Jemima spoke about children taking control of learning new words,

So they know what word they want to learn next. So they put that ownership on themselves to work hard to get that, so I think that's a big, that's one of my philosophies. So they know why [The children can think,] 'This is what I want to achieve because if I know these words it is going to help with my writing. This is how I am going to learning these words and this is what's going to happen when I know these words' (STFG).

In another example, data analysis of transcripts revealed Jemima's expressions of positive reinforcement. For example,

'Wow I saw some great things happening today' (CO-M; CO-S)

'Good job you're doing' (CO-M; CO-S)

'Here's some great writing' (CO-M; CO-S)

'Wow Madison you are the best' (CO-M; CO-S)

'You should feel happy and proud of the work you have done' (CO-M; CO-S).

Jemima's comments affirmed children's engagement in learning. Her positive comments and feedback to children as they participated in literacy events appeared to motivate them in the English session. Jemima's desire for the children to enjoy learning was also reflected in the language the children used in their digital stories. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Jemima and Bernadette spoke of 'choice' being an important element of early literacy learning at school. Bernadette compared her perception of children's prior-to-school experiences (one that included a range of choices for children) and the many opportunities they now had for making choices within this first year of formal school,

It [choice] helps I think with the transition ... There is so much choice ... it's all about making that decision and here they do have to make that decision, but in saying that they do have to do their 'must-dos' (STFG).

The teachers' philosophies about learning and teaching were apparent in the pedagogical practices they employed as they provided literacy learning experiences for the children. The practices aligned with L3 program implemented in all three first-year classrooms. The teachers' programs were planned using the results of the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment whereby the children's literacy skills and understandings were identified and mapped in Early Learning Plans (used by teachers as the English program) in conjunction with literacy aspects of the K–10 Literacy Continuum.

The teachers in the three first year of school classrooms worked together to plan and organise literacy events for the children. This meant that the children were exposed to a similar range of 'choice' and 'must do' activities in the English session. The teachers however brought their own pedagogical styles to their respective classroom learning environments and this may have impacted the children's interpretations of literacy events put forward in their digital stories.

Overview of the literacy events in the first year of the formal school setting

This section presents examples observed in the data collection period of the range of literacy events available for the children in the first year of the school environment at the time of the inquiry. The literacy events listed begin with those that were most strongly child initiated and directed (choice activities which therefore allowed higher levels of child control), and then lists those least child initiated and directed (must-do

activities that were more highly controlled by the teachers). Each type of literacy event is represented below. First is a title describing the literacy event. Then there is an image of one part of the learning environment where the literacy event image was captured and next to the image a link is made to the Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2014) content, from the NSW English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015). For the purposes of this inquiry, only the Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content was drawn upon to ensure clarity, rather than double reference with the BOSTES syllabus content. The text underneath each image outlines the literacy learning (the literacy events) that occurred in the learning space.

1. Children composed simple texts to convey an idea or message (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651).
- Students compose texts for known audiences identifying some familiar texts and the contexts in which they are used (ACELY1645).
- Students share their own texts with peers and teachers, listening to and responding orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations (ACELY1646).

In this image Skyla was drawing a picture of a girl for her mum. She posted it in the class letterbox (CO-S). At the end of the English session the teacher shared the contents of the post box with the children who responded to the text orally, to each other and to the class group. The children worked together, or independently to create personal texts of their own choosing, thereby drawing on their life experiences that included aspects of home, personal and local community life. They experimented with the symbols of written language and drawing to convey meaning, often whilst interacting socially with each other (CO-M).

2. Children composed simple texts to convey an idea or message (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651).
- Students know that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet and how to write some high-frequency sight words and known words (ACELA1758).
- Students explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786).

This image depicts Hannah ‘making a story’. She wrote the word ‘mum’ twice and a string of letters. She drew pictures making connection to her story and was able to communicate the meaning of the written and visual text orally (CO1-H).

3. Children read, viewed and comprehended texts (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators (ACELT1577).
- Students use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently (ACELY1650).
- Students identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578)
- Students share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783).
- Students replicate the rhythm and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures (ACELY1784).

In this image Tommy was positioned in the ‘starzone’ (under a table covered in a cloth with stars) he used the torch to read and view this picture book. Four children were allowed in the ‘starzone’ at one time (CO1-T). Children selected picture books to read independently. During these literacy events children were observed to share the language and images in the picture books with peers, making comments on the parts of the texts that they enjoyed. Other examples of children engaged in independent reading of picture books from the research data included children reading picture books from the bookshelf and in lounge area (CO1-J; CO1-I; CO1-T; CO1-L) (CO-M; CO-S).

4. Children read, viewed and comprehended texts (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students read leveled texts, practising phrasing and fluency, and monitor meaning using concepts about print and emerging contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge (ACELY1649).
- Students use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently (ACELY1650).

This image shows James reading his home reader (PM Gems reading level 4 ‘Balloons Go Pop’) (CO2-J). This was a familiar text for James as he had read it in the ‘engine room’ and at home.

5. Children applied phonemic knowledge (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students know that letters are used to represent sounds in words and words can begin with the same sounds (ACELA1758).

During this activity the children used the tile shapes to create an artefact that begun with the letter ‘m’. They were observed discuss their creations and share their knowledge and understanding of the task. They also collaborated and interacted socially with each

other. In this image the sign was visible, reminding the children of the task (CO-T; CO-J; CO-L).

6. Children developed sight word knowledge (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students practise reading and writing sight words, knowing that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet and how to write some high-frequency sight words and known words (ACELA1758).

In this image, Maddy practised reading and writing the sight words ‘and’ and ‘this’ by shaking the bottle, to locate the words and then writing them on the mini whiteboard (CO-M).

7. Children applied graphological and phonological knowledge (choice activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students practise recognising the letters of the alphabet and know there are lower and upper case letters (ACELA1440).
- Students know that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet and how to write some high-frequency sight words and known words (ACELA1758).

This image depicts Lee colouring the pictures that began with the letter ‘T’. All the pictures on the worksheet began with this letter. He then made a cut out book about the letter ‘T’ (CO-L). Other examples from the data of children engaged in recognising letters of the alphabet included the choice activity where children highlighted the letter ‘S’ in the poem ‘Easter Surprise’ (CO2-J), children completed a puzzle in the shape of a frog that sequentially connected the letters of the alphabet (CO2-J) and drew pictures that began with the letter ‘p’ (CO2-M).

8. Children applied graphological knowledge (must-do activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students practise recognising the letters of the alphabet knowing there are lower and upper case letters (ACELA1440).

In this image Maddy was matching upper case and lower case letter cards and creating a pile of pairs (CO-M). Other examples from the research data of children engaged in matching lower and upper case letters included ‘the fishing game’ (using a stick with a magnet on the end) to pick up matching pairs of upper and lower case letters (CO1-H).

9. Children developed an understanding of simple sound blends and sight word knowledge (must-do activity)

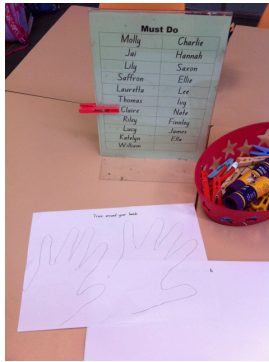


Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students know that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet and how to write some high-frequency sight words and known words (ACELA1758).

In this image Ivory made the word ‘am’ with the magnetic letters, positioning the letters as ‘ma’. She wrote the word ‘ma’ on the whiteboard (CO2-I). The activity required the children to make the word ‘am’ with the magnetic letters supplied and then write the word on the whiteboard. Children practised making and writing the word ‘am’. This word had previously been introduced to the children in the context of guided reading.

10. Children traced around and coloured their hand (must-do activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- No content description was aligned with this activity.

In this image an example of the task was displayed for the children. The children traced around their hands and coloured them in. After completion of the task they were required to place a peg on their name, to enable the teacher, to see which children had completed the task (CO-I).

11. Children coloured in the Rainbow Fish image (must-do activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783) by using art forms and beginning forms of writing to express personal responses to literature and film experiences.

In this image, examples of children's work are evident, showing the children's work. In this activity the children coloured the picture of *The Rainbow Fish*. This activity was in response to the children listening to and viewing *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister on the interactive whiteboard (CO-I).

12. Children participated in a teacher directed art activity (whole class activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content description:

- Students retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580).

This image shows the classroom wall display of the children's art works (CO1-I). In this whole class activity children made connection to the familiar text *Hairy Maclary* by Lynley Dodd, by illustrating the main character. In creating this artwork the children were directed by the teacher. Other examples from the research data of children engaged in teacher-directed art activities include colouring the watermelon (CO-M) and creating texts by combining drawing and media texts (CO-M).

13. Adults read to children (small group/whole class activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students listen to and view stories being read by teachers, or other adults or through communication technologies. Students listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations (ACELY1646).
- Students explore the different contributions of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786).
- Students share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1783).
- Students respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators.

This image shows a comfortable space in the classroom where children listened to stories being read by the teacher or by other adults. Other examples from the research data of children engaged in listening to and viewing texts included the use of the interactive whiteboard. For example, children viewed – *The Rainbow fish* with Ernest

Borgnine on www.storylineonline.net (CO1-J; CO1-I; CO1-T; CO1-L).

14. Children, teachers and families engaged with communication technology



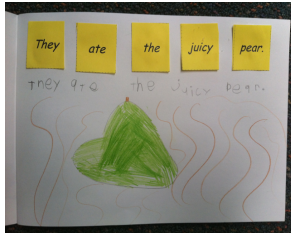
Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students and teachers create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651).
- Students know that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet and how to write some high-frequency sight words and known words (ACELA1758).
- Students understand that punctuation is a feature of written text different from letters; recognise how capital letters are used for names, and that capital letters and full stops signal the beginning and end of sentences (ACELA1432).
- Students read predictable texts, practising phrasing and fluency, and monitor meaning using concepts about print and emerging contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge (ACELY1649).
- Students understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality (ACELA1433).

In this literacy event teachers interacted with children whilst guiding them in developing a range of writing skills and understandings from the English Syllabus. This image depicts the whiteboard display where the sentence ‘They ate the juicy pear’ was jointly constructed using the Interactive Writing process. This activity followed on from the ‘Reading To’ activity by the teacher of *The Pear in the Pear Tree* by Pamela Allen. Also on display were the magnetic letters used by the teacher to demonstrate

phonological knowledge, as well as letter sound charts and the picture book *The Pear in the Pear Tree* by Pamela Allen, that the sentence was in response to (CO-M; CO-S).

15. Independent writing (must-do activity)

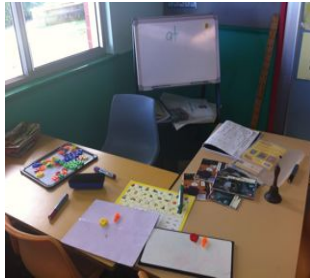


Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning (ACELA1434).
- Students explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786).
- Students retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580).
- Students understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality (ACELA1433).

This image was taken from Maddy's writing book (CO-M) and followed on from the interactive writing activity outlined above. The children cut up and rearranged words to form a familiar sentence. They glued the words into their writing books and copied the sentence underneath. Children then retold a part of the story through illustrations. In a similar literacy event, a sentence jointly constructed by the teacher and children in the engine room 'The big elephant went in the pool' was later cut up, sequenced, copied underneath and retold by the children through illustrations (CO2-J; CO2-I; CO2-T; CO2-L).

16. Guided reading and writing: (small group activity)



Australian Curriculum English (ACE) content descriptions:

- Students read predictable texts, practising phrasing and fluency, and monitor meaning using concepts about print and emerging contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge (ACELY1649).
- Students recognise rhymes, syllables and sounds (phonemes) in spoken words (ACELA1439).
- Students explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786).
- Students recognise that sentences are key units for expressing ideas (ACELA1435).
- Students understand that punctuation is a feature of written text different from letters; recognise how capital letters are used for names, and that capital letters and full stops signal the beginning and end of sentences (ACELA1432).
- Students understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality (ACELA1433)

This image shows the positioning of the ‘engine room’ in the corner of the classroom. The space was set up with the necessary materials (a large whiteboard, levelled readers, small whiteboards, whiteboard markers, magnetic letters and letter/sound charts) for reading and writing instruction (CO1-H).

Interpretive summary of the first year of formal school setting

The first year of formal schooling offered a range of opportunities for children to engage in literacy events involving written, visual and multimodal texts with a focus on developing the more formalised skills of reading and writing. The literacy events included those that the children could choose to engage with (choice activities) and those that they were required to complete (must-do activities), individually or in the company of peers, and those that were small group or whole class literacy events.

During the daily English session the children were expected to complete the 'must-do' activities assigned by the teacher. In KLW and K1W the children chose when (during the English session) they would complete the 'must-do' and 'choice' activities. For example, the 'must-do' activities were set up in different areas of the classroom and the children would choose when to participate in those activities. The children would place a peg on their name when they had completed the 'must-do' literacy event (see literacy event 11 in the overview above). This informed the teacher which children had completed the 'must-do' activity. The children also chose from the range of 'choice' activities set up in different areas of the classroom. The children had the freedom to participate in those activities for as long as they chose to, provided they completed the 'must-do' activities at some time during the English session.

In KD the children were required to complete the 'must-do' activities prior to choosing from the 'choice' activities. The teacher assigned the children in groups to a particular 'must-do' activity and after ten minutes she would ask the children to stop and move to the next 'must-do' activity. When the rotation of 'must-do' activities was complete the children had the freedom to choose from the range of 'choice' activities that were set up in different areas of the classroom. During this time in all three classrooms, the teacher would take small groups of three children to the 'engine room' for guided group work. The children were observed to engage willingly in this routine, appearing to enjoy the range of experiences on offer (CO1-H; CO2-I; CO2-J; CO2-L; CO-M; CO-S; CO2-H).

Jemima and Bernadette commented on the importance of the children having the opportunity to make choices or decisions in their learning (STFG). It seemed apparent that the decisions children were able to make were about *which* activities to participate in, and *when* to participate in those activities that were planned by the teachers. It

appeared, however, that less choice was available about the ways to participate in the literacy events. For example, several of the ‘choice’ activities provided by the teacher were open-ended tasks in which the children had control over the process of their text creation and the resulting product of the literacy event. This was evident in the free writing and drawing activities (events 1 and 2) where the children created texts of their own choosing for their own particular purposes. Also in the reading activities (events 3 and 4) the children were able to engage with picture books of their own choosing. However, examples of ‘choice’ activities that were more teacher-directed were evident in event 5 through to event 16. It was evident that in these literacy events the children were not afforded the opportunity to explore ways of engaging with and creating personal texts. Whilst an element of choice was available in the first-year classrooms, choices for the children were in many instances about which literacy events to choose and in what order. The children did not appear to have the opportunity to make decisions about the process or product of text creation in these observed literacy events. In many of the literacy events observed, it was the teacher who controlled the process and product of text creations.

Jemima spoke specifically about her belief in the importance of children developing independent work habits in order to take control of their own learning. She encouraged the children to understand the purpose behind the literacy events on offer and to focus on the new learning that they would acquire as a result of participation in the learning experiences. For example, Jemima wanted the children to understand the importance of learning new words and how that would benefit them in their reading and writing, and she voiced this to the children during the English session. For example in one instance she commented to Skyla, ‘Good job! They’re good words to know ’cause you need them when you’re writing letters’ (CO-S).

Jemima also expressed the desire for the children to ‘take control’ of their learning in ways that were in alignment with the teachers’ expectations of what the valued literacy skills in this first year of school setting were (STFG). This desire became evident in the classroom observations of reflection time at the end of the English session where Jemima expressed her approval to the children who had organised their time to complete all the allocated ‘must-do’ activities. The transcript demonstrates this:

Jemima: Must-do jobbers jump up in the air and say yeehah

Maddy: I had my best try

Jemima: (to all) And does it make you feel good inside when you have done your must-do jobs?

All: Yeh!

Jemima: You should feel proud of yourself and happy with the work you have done.

Conclusion

In the prior-to-school learning environment the children engaged in literacy events that involved interaction with texts across a range of media, often initiated and directed by the children themselves for their own particular purposes. In the first year of school during the English sessions, the majority of the literacy events represented here from the range observed in the first year of school classrooms at the time of transition were focused on the spoken and written features of letters and sounds, on how words look and sound, on print concepts, on the grammatical features and on the contribution words and images make to texts.

Evidence from the data suggested, as one may expect, that the learning environment in the first year of school participant classrooms was different from that of the learning environment in the prior-to-school setting. Firstly, in this school the literacy learning environment was located within the context of the classroom, which is significantly different for the children who came from a prior-to-school setting where most time was spent in the outdoor learning area. Consequently there was a greater diversity of events available in the prior-to-school educational setting, which included both the indoor and outdoor areas. The opportunities on offer to learn through imaginative and creative play were significantly reduced in the school learning environment, and more formalised opportunities for the children to engage with teacher-designed texts and tasks were on offer in the school setting. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that both learning environments were influenced by the curriculum documents pertaining to the setting, and by how the educators and teachers interpreted these documents in line with their particular learning philosophies.

The cases of the seven participants will be presented in the next chapter. The cases will show: each child's place within the learning environments of each setting; how they

participated in the literacy events in each setting; and how they viewed the literacy events on offer.

Chapter Five

The Case Studies of Seven Children

Chapter 5 The Case Studies of Seven Children

Introduction to the chapter

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore literacy transitions from the perspectives of seven children as they moved from the same prior to school educational setting to the same first year of the formal school setting. This chapter presents the cases of the seven child participants as they transition between the two educational contexts. Each case reports a child's creation and sharing of two digital stories, one in the prior-to-school setting and the second in the following year as the children began their first year of formal schooling. The digital stories were the core data source in this inquiry. They captured the children's unique perspectives of the literacy opportunities available to them in both settings, and the particular ways they participated in the literacy events at the time of transition from one educational context to the other. These data were supported by researcher observations, interviews with the educators and teachers, and analysis of key documents pertaining to each educational setting.

The literacy events captured in the data were analysed through the theoretical lens of this inquiry – that is, literacy as represented in socio-cultural events and practices. Literacy practices are situated within social and cultural contexts that shape the way people engage with texts for particular purposes (Street, 1984). They reflect the broad knowledge, beliefs and values held by people and they underpin how literacy is used in literacy events. Literacy events are 'mediated by texts' (Barton & Hamilton, 2000 p. 9), the range of which has broadened to include not only written texts but spoken texts, visual representations of words and images in paper-based form as well as artefacts and multimedia texts (Kress, 1997). The literacy events in this inquiry were observed within two distinct educational contexts, a prior-to-school and a first year of school setting.

In the prior-to-school setting the children chose to participate in a diverse range of opportunities available to them in both the indoor and outdoor areas. The events chosen by the children for sharing in their digital stories included physical play, socio-dramatic and constructive play, and events involving the modes of speaking, listening, singing, reading, viewing and creating texts, and centre routines.

In the first year of school the events chosen by the children during the class English session to share in their digital stories included those they engaged with independently as ‘choice’ or ‘must-do’ activities, and those in which they were involved as part of the whole class or a small group directed by the teacher. The literacy events represented in the digital stories included the construction of written and visual texts, reading and viewing written texts, the practice of skills associated with reading and writing, constructive play and classroom routines.

The creation of digital stories

In both educational settings the creation of digital stories required the researcher to accompany individual children and spend time in observing them and talking to them as they engaged in literacy events. The children chose the literacy activities in which they wanted to be photographed and then chose the photographs they wanted to include in their digital stories. The process of creation was similar in the two settings. However, in the prior-to-school setting, the participants’ understanding of digital stories was supported by a sample story shared during the focus group interviews. In the school setting, a sample story was not required since the children were, by then, familiar with the process and its purpose, and remembered creating their digital stories in the prior-to-school setting. However, photographs taken of the seven children during initial observations in the school settings were used to stimulate conversation during the child participant focus group interviews. At this time the children were asked to consider what they might tell their parents and their former prior-to-school educators about their experiences in the new school environment.

To create the individual digital stories the participants:

- reviewed a sample digital story (prior-to-school setting only)
- chose literacy events they enjoyed participating in and asked the researcher to photograph those they identified as important
- reviewed (in iPhoto) all the photographs they chose to be taken by the researcher
- chose photographs (a maximum of ten), sequenced and assembled them into iMovie with the researcher
- shared by oral annotation what each image represented and what to tell their

audience (family and school teachers in the prior-to-school digital story and family and prior-to-school educators in the school digital story)

- recorded the oral scripts with the researcher
- viewed the digital stories with the other children, educators and participant parents (in the prior-to-school setting)
- were given the final product to view with their families (in the school setting).

Appendix O presents a hard copy of the digital stories that were stored on a USB flash drive. The cases are presented in alphabetical order using the participants' first names: Hannah, Ivory, James, Lee, Maddy, Skyla and Tommy. As noted in Chapter 3 the children referred to themselves in the oral scripts recorded as part of their digital stories. This meant that the use of pseudonyms in reporting this thesis would be ineffectual. As also noted in Chapter 3 parental permission was sought and granted for the researcher to use the children's names in this thesis.

Each case is organised so that it reports on the phases of the inquiry. Phase one of each case reports on the process of creating a digital story in the context of the prior-to-school setting. Phase two of each case reports on a similar process, but this time as the child is making the transition into their first year of formal schooling.

Within each case, the digital stories are represented in the same format. For each scene there is an image and accompanying oral script from the participants' digital story. Included below each image and oral script are observations made as field notes during the literacy event and creation of the digital story, adding context and description to the event.

Interpretive comments are made of the data at the end of each case. This discussion was in response to the first two research questions:

- What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal schooling?
- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal schooling?

The research data have been coded to allow citation in the cases and these codes are recorded in the audit trail (Appendix A). Data were collected as described in Chapter 3. The core data were the children's digital stories and supporting data comprised

researcher observations (captured through field notes and still images), interviews with child participants, educators in the prior-to-school setting and teachers in the school context, and data analysis of key documents pertaining to both educational contexts.

In line with the qualitative approach used in this inquiry, this chapter will build a thick description of the cases, taking the reader into the different learning environments of the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings at the time of transition to school (described in Chapter 4) and detailing the lived literacy experiences of the seven child participants through their unique perspectives.

The cases are now presented.

Hannah

The prior-to-school setting

At the time of the inquiry, Hannah was five years of age. She is the eldest of two siblings and attended the prior-to-school educational setting three days per week on the same days as her younger brother aged three.

Throughout the data collection period Hannah was observed to be an enthusiastic participant in a range of activities. She interacted socially with peers, often in the company of three other participants: Ivory, Maddy and Skyla (JE). Hannah was inquisitive about the inquiry and keen to participate, questioning the researcher and inquiring whose turn it would be next (JE). Angie (centre director) reported Hannah was a quiet child who liked routine (PEU). Journal entries described Hannah as reserved in whole group activities (such as practice for the Christmas concert), however she was seen to be talkative and outgoing at play with friends (JE).

Hannah was the focus of researcher observations four times in the prior-to-school setting. Her digital story was created during the first day. Hannah chose eleven separate literacy events, was photographed twelve times and selected ten photographs to create her digital story.

The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Hannah's prior-to-school digital story. Six from nine scenes portray images captured in the outdoor area of the prior-to-school setting and three scenes portray images from the inside area.

Scenes

Oral script



1. Introduction: *My name is Hannah and I like to play with dolls and I like playing with friends and my best friend is Ivory and Skyla and, and Maddy.*

Observation: Hannah chose this image to introduce her digital story. Her oral script revealed her enthusiasm for play and interacting socially with peers in this prior-to-school context.



2. *My name is Hannah and I like to do drawing.*

Observation: Positioned at a table in the inside area, using a large piece of paper Hannah wrote a string of letters, some recognisable words, ‘lov’ and ‘Tom’ (her brother’s name) and some love hearts. She said, ‘I can write love and I can write Tom’ (PDSP-H). After finishing she pointed to the string of letters and asked, ‘What does that say?’ (PDSP-H). Hannah’s oral script revealed her enjoyment of drawing. Her comments were directly related to the image. She used the terms drawing and writing interchangeably (PDSP-H).



3. *My name is Hannah and I like to glue and make pretty flowers and love hearts and a ballerina and beautiful dolls.*

Observation:

Hannah positioned herself at the craft table, in the verandah area for this activity. She manipulated a variety of materials, cutting, pasting, drawing and colouring. The assigned script reflects some of her interests – she named several subjects that she liked to make, not specifically related to her text in the image: *pretty flowers and love hearts and a ballerina and beautiful dolls*. Hannah was often observed at the craft table, creating and conversing with friends during the data collection period (JE).



4. I um, there's a little book about three little piggies and piggies live on a farm and they like to play with dirt and mud.

Observation:

Positioned in the inside reading corner Hannah read *The Three Pigs* picture book, using the pictures to describe what was happening in the story. The oral script revealed the meaning Hannah assigned to the images in the text. Hannah expressed her confidence in her ability to read and her enjoyment of reading several times during the digital story creation, 'I like reading and I can read and I like to read pretty books and I like to read so much and I can read books' (PDSC-H).



5. My name is Hannah and I like to do um, books and do writing and do um, do drawings and I like to write letters and ...

Observation:

Hannah chose to be photographed in the inside area while using a notepad and pencil to create letters, symbols and squiggles. She was observed to be confident in her ability to create messages in print, and expressing this confidence during the digital story creation. Hannah stated, 'I can easy do writing and I like writing and I can easy write

spider and I can easy write cat and dog and I can easy write everything and I can easy write my name (PDSC-H). Similar to scene 2 where Hannah spoke of her enjoyment and ability to read, her script accompanying this image reflected confidence and engagement in writing words.



6. I um, My name is Hannah and I like to write um, love hearts and flowers and beads and castles and leaves and a beautiful, beautiful castle.

Observation:

Positioned in the outside garden area Hannah painted this picture of Rapunzel's castle with love hearts at the top of the castle and her name written to the side. Hannah's oral script (similar to scene 3) referred to her interest in ballerinas, castles, beautiful dolls, love hearts and beautiful flowers. Hannah used the word 'write' in the oral script when describing the drawing that appeared in the image. The literacy event captured in the image revealed her connection to popular culture (as shown by her interest in Rapunzel) (PDSP-H).



7. I like to make castles with blocks and building.

Observation:

In this scene Hannah was constructing a castle from wooden blocks in the garden area. She described her creation as Rapunzel's castle (scene 6), making a connection to the familiar narrative she engaged with in reading, drawing and imaginary play (JE). Hannah's oral script described her engagement with creating three-dimensional texts and like scene 6, revealed an interest in popular culture.



8. I like doing swinging at the park.

Observation:

Hannah was often observed to show enthusiasm for physical play with friends in the outdoor area (JE). In this image she used the playground to engage in an activity of swinging upside down from the bar. Hannah successfully demonstrated this skill for the researcher and then moved on to the activity depicted in scene 9 (PDSP-H).



9. Um, I like to skip with a blankie on.

Observation:

Hannah chose to be photographed again during physical play. She initiated this activity, using props (the blanket) before moving on to the playground itself to be photographed for the next image (PDSC-H).



10. Um, I like to swing in a seesaw and, and a slide.

Observation: Hannah chose to be photographed outdoors on the play equipment (following on from scenes 8 and 9). In her script she attempted to describe the swing, but was unsure of its name and so used the familiar words *seesaw and slide*. This popular activity was one Hannah was observed to engage in with friends (JE).

The first year of formal school

Hannah transitioned from her prior-to-school setting into the first year of formal school to the classroom 'KD' and was the only one of the seven participants allocated to that class. In phase two she was observed in the classroom during two periods of data collection. Like her prior-to-school educator Kylie, Hannah's teacher Julia described her as quiet at first, and said that she chose to sit at the back of the group but that she was slowly developing the confidence to interact, especially in the 'engine room' (STFG).

As she was in the prior-to-school setting, Hannah was inquisitive about this inquiry (asking questions about the process) and she was keen to participate in the creation of her digital story (CO1-H). Hannah chose eleven separate literacy events, was photographed nineteen times and selected seven photographs for her digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Hannah's school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations.

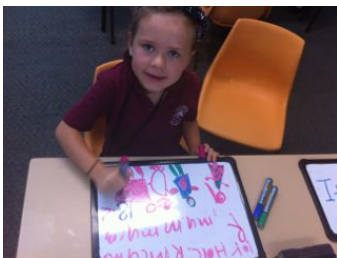
Scenes

Oral script



1. Introduction: *My name is Hannah and I am at big school now and I like it.*

Observation: Hannah chose this image to introduce her digital story. Her oral script acknowledges her change in setting and her approval of the change.



2. *My ... I like making a story of the farmer and um, the cow and I love writing so much and I drew people in it. I drew two people and I drew the farmer and the cow.*

Observation:

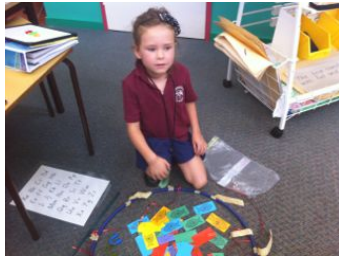
This was a 'choice' activity. In this image Hannah was *making a story* (CO2-H). She wrote the word *mum* twice and a string of letters. She drew pictures which were connected to her story and communicated orally the meaning of the written and visual text to the researcher (CO2-H). Hannah's confidence in participating in this activity was reflected in her oral script



3. *I ... I was doing um, um, 'H' all the 'H' words and I like um, um, I had to colour it in and it was a 'must-do' activity.*

Observation:

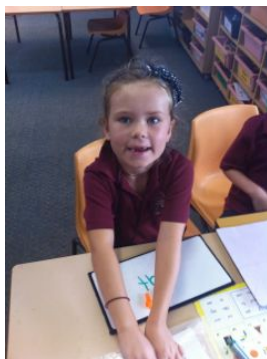
In this 'must-do' activity Hannah was colouring the pictures that began with the letter 'C' (all pictures began with the letter C). She asked the researcher, 'What letter starts with 'C'?' (CO2-H). Revealing a misunderstanding of the concepts of letters and words. Her oral script mistakenly identified the letter 'H' as the letter represented in the worksheet.



4. Um, I like to um, do fishing. I had to match the um, small letter case words and the big um, um, capital and this was a choice.

Observation:

This was a ‘choice’ activity. Hannah used a stick with a magnet on the end to pick up matching pairs of upper and lower case letters. She began by commenting to the researcher ‘I held a real fish at the fishing weigh in’, making a connection to experiences from home and community. Hannah picked up the letter ‘r’ and asked the researcher ‘What number is this?’ The researcher located both the lower case and upper case ‘r’ and Hannah asked. ‘Is one a capital?’ (CO2-H). The oral script revealed Hannah’s engagement with the literacy event, as well as some confusion with the concepts of letters and words (similar to scene 4).



5. I, I was in the engine room doing um, reading a book and when I um, I, after that I do writing and I put it in my reading folder and then I put it in my bag and when it’s home time I see my mummy and daddy and read it.

Observation:

Hannah was observed to participate confidently in the ‘engine room’, reading a simple caption text guided by the teacher (CO2-H). Hannah’s oral script described the schedule of events following on from the ‘engine room’, revealing her understanding of the routines of the school classroom.



6. My name ... um, um, I did a painting of um, myself and I'm, this was a picture of me and I drew and then I painted on top. Um, I like to go painting at little school and big school.

Observation:

The painting captured in the image, was displayed on the classroom wall, in readiness for Grandparent's Day. Hannah created the visual text as part of a whole class art activity directed by the teacher (CO2-H). The activity was not observed during the data collection period in the English session. Hannah's oral script described the process of construction, and made a connection to her engagement with painting both prior to school and at school.



7. I like reading. I like to read and it's very fun. I can read 'Hedgehog' and it's a very good book and it's a very fun book because it's got, it's so hungry and you can possible meet everything when you've got that book and you can see there's worms and slugs and beetles.

Observation:

In this image Hannah was reading her home reader, *Hedgehog is Hungry* (PM reading level 3). This was a familiar text for Hannah as she had read it in the 'engine room' and at home. Hannah provided an expressive retelling of the story using the vocabulary and the images in the text (SDSC-H). This was reflected in her oral script where she used the vocabulary from the text, demonstrating her familiarity with reading, as well as her confidence and enjoyment of it.

Interpretive summary

Throughout the data collection period Hannah readily engaged with a range of literacy events available in the prior-to-school educational setting and in the first year of formal school. She made connections across settings in her digital stories by identifying the literacy events she engaged with in the prior-to-school setting and the similar literacy events she engaged with in school. Hannah described the events she chose prior to school and the events that were either ‘choice’ or ‘must-do’ activities in school. Her ‘voice’ (revealed through digital story telling) described a positive and enthusiastic approach to the literacy events she participated in across both settings. Hannah used the words ‘I like’ when describing literacy events, in eight of the nine scenes in the prior-to-school digital story, and in five of the six scenes in her school digital story.

In the prior-to-school setting, opportunities for socialising with peers were commonplace. Hannah was observed to confidently interact with peers during literacy events in this setting (JE). In her introductory scene Hannah shared the activities she engaged in with friends, and named Ivory, Skyla and Maddy as her best friends. Journal entries noted the confidence and interdependence she experienced socially in the prior-to-school environment (JE).

Similarly, her first year at school offered opportunities to interact socially with peers during literacy events. However, Hannah, did not appear to have many opportunities for extended interactions with peers during the data collection period. (CO1-H), (CO1-H). Placement in KD meant that she was not with her ‘best friends’ and in the new, less familiar setting of school, Hannah engaged quietly and independently during observed literacy events (CO1-H), (CO1-H).

Journal entries by the researcher in the prior-to-school setting noted Hannah’s comments on the ease with which she could write. Her ability to write her name and some familiar words was evident in her chosen images, and observations recorded in her prior-to-school digital story (scenes 2, 5 and 6). She experimented with ways of expressing her ideas by creating personal texts through images and print, and was observed to exchange ideas orally with peers and with educators. She appeared to hold the expectation that her text conveyed a message, commenting after finishing the string of letters ‘What does that say?’ (JE). The digital stories not only suggested Hannah’s

confidence in creating texts but also her understanding that writing is purposeful and that messages are conveyed through written and visual texts for a reader.

Hannah's confidence in participating in literacy events was also apparent in her first year at school. For example, she confidently explained her engagement in reading and writing in the 'engine room' and recounted the routine associated with this literacy event (scene 5) (SDSC-H). In describing this daily class routine she demonstrated her understanding and emerging autonomy in her new environment.

In both her prior-to-school and school digital stories Hannah described how she engaged with and created texts. In the prior-to-school setting she confidently created a range of personal texts through drawing, writing, painting and manipulating a range of materials. These text creations gave insight into her interests and made connections to her social and cultural world. For example the image in scene 6 captured Hannah's visual text of 'love hearts and flowers and beads and castles and leaves and a beautiful, beautiful castle' (SDSC-H). Similarly the images and oral scripts portrayed in scenes 2, 3, 5 and 7 revealed Hannah's creation of personal texts through experimentation with written and visual symbols, and tactile materials. These texts conveyed messages about her lived experiences and about stories she had heard or viewed.

In school Hannah also participated confidently in the creation of a variety of texts. Hannah initiated and self-directed the creation of the written and visual text in the literacy event captured in the image in scene 2. She wrote on a mini-whiteboard the familiar word 'mum', a string of letters and familiar images of people and a cow. Her assigned oral script expressed her engagement with this activity. She stated, 'I like making a story ... I love writing so much'. In this literacy event Hannah chose the subjects of the written and visual text but the medium (the whiteboard), was set by the teacher (SDPC-H).

During the data collection period in school Hannah's text creations were in the main structured and directed by the teacher (CO2-H). These texts allowed for less personal expression than was evident in Hannah's prior-to-school texts. For example, colouring the pictures that begin with the letter 'C' (scene 3) and matching lower and upper case letters (scene 4), could be considered closed tasks, affording Hannah limited opportunity to make choices and decisions in her learning. In the oral scripts assigned to

these images Hannah indicated, ‘I had to...’ when describing the literacy events, perceiving a more instructional approach.

Texts reflecting popular culture themes were also evident in Hannah’s prior-to-school digital story. The images and oral scripts in scenes 6 and 7 captured her castle text creations revealing an interest in the story of Rapunzel (PDSC-H). The opportunities to engage with popular culture texts were not observed during the time of data collection in the school setting, as texts for children to engage with were in the main selected by the teacher.

Hannah expressed her enthusiasm for reading in both the prior-to-school and school digital stories. Opportunities to engage with a variety of picture books were evident in both settings (JE; CO1-H; CO2-H). She revealed her connection to story when describing the picture book of the *three little piggies* (scene 4 prior to school) and the characters she meets in the ‘*Hedgehog*’ (scene 7 school). Similar to the prior-to-school setting, Hannah’s comments in school revealed her interest in reading and her connection to story (PDSC-H; SDPC). The digital stories again reflected her engagement with story as well as her understanding that the purpose of written texts was to convey a message to the reader or viewer.

The process of creating two digital stories provided Hannah with space for sharing her perspective of the literacy events in which she participated during the time of transition from prior to school to her first year of formal school. She revealed a positive attitude towards her experiences with literacy in both settings, displaying a sense of confidence in creating texts. The activities she enjoyed prior to school were the activities she enjoyed in school: reading, writing, drawing and painting. Hannah continued to create texts in her new school setting, however there were constraints associated with the choices concerning topic, process and product. The texts were more structured and there appeared to be less opportunity for Hannah’s personal exploration and experimentation with the range of texts, than there was in the prior-to-school setting, as well as less opportunity for personal expression and sharing of personal preferences and interests.

Hannah interacted socially with peers as she engaged in literacy events prior to school, however despite the opportunities for socialising during literacy time in school, Hannah was observed to be developing independence during the English session at the time of

transition into her new school setting. Hannah appears to have understood and embraced the new demands for literacy in the school environment.

Ivory

The prior-to-school setting

Ivory (Ivory) was five years of age and attended the prior-to-school educational setting two days per week at the time of the inquiry. She lives on a small acreage of land with her parents, two older siblings and one younger sibling. Data collection revealed Ivory had a keen interest in the natural environment and creative pursuits that resonated with family experiences of ‘making things’ and life on the family property (PEU).

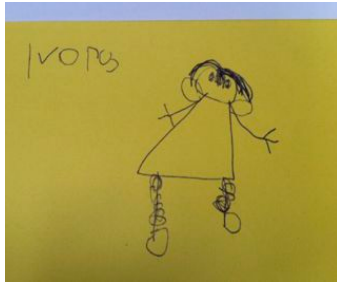
Centre Director Angie described Ivory as quiet and shy, however Angie explained, ‘once she got to know you she would be comfortable to engage in conversation’, adding that Ivory ‘is quiet but she is quietly confident’ (PEU). Reflective journal entries supported Angie’s observations (JE). Ivory gave brief responses to the researcher when questioned or when she was asked to make comment, but once a rapport was built she revealed herself to be a confident participant in her surroundings, with an independent demeanour and keen sense of humour, although her dialogue remained concise (JE).

Ivory was observed as a participant in the research during four periods of data collection in the prior-to-school setting. To create her digital story Ivory chose nine separate literacy events to engage with. She was photographed by the researcher twelve times and selected nine photographs to create her digital story.

The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Ivory’s prior-to-school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations. Six of the nine scenes portrayed images were captured in the outdoor area of the prior-to-school setting and three scenes were from the inside area.

Scenes

Oral script



1. Introduction: *My name is Ivory and I like to draw.*

Observation: Ivory chose this image to introduce her digital story. Her oral script made a connection to the chosen image and revealed her a favourite literacy event.



2. *My name is Ivory and I like to do um, cakes in the sandpit.*

Observation: Ivory chose to be photographed making ‘cakes’ in the sandpit. During the activity she engaged in conversation with friends, negotiating the construction and sale of the cakes. Ivory was observed to be comfortable in the sandpit with her shoes off, participating in social interactions with peers as she made cakes out of sand (PDSP-I)



3. *My name is Ivory and I like to do persons.*

Observation:

Ivory demonstrated her enthusiasm for drawing, positioning herself at a table in the inside area and drawing a picture of a girl. Ivory stated that she liked to draw people, no particular people, ‘any people’ (PDSP-I). Ivory sat in silence, drawing, giving one-word

answers or nodding her head the researcher asked her questions. When the researcher asked her if she could write her name she nodded and wrote her 'big name' *Ivory* on the top of the page (this was evident in the introduction scene) (PDSP-I).



4. I like to read Christmas books.

Observation:

Ivory chose this book from the book shelf in the inside area and stated, 'It's a Christmas book!' When asked (by the researcher) how she knew it was a Christmas book, Ivory replied 'I look through it'. She turned the pages of the book, *I Think I Just Saw Santa* by Alan Cornwell, scanning the pictures but making no comment on, or reference to, the story represented in the written or visual text. When asked by the researcher whether she liked listening to stories she answered 'Yes' (PDSP-I).



5. I like to paint pictures and do a sun and a person and making the person run and trees and a sun shower.

Observation: Ivory chose to be photographed painting in the outside garden area. She painted in silence and when asked about the content of her painting, she was confident in describing what she had painted. She named the natural elements of the *sun, trees, and a man running through a sun shower*. She chose her colours carefully, filling the space on the paper with her chosen subjects (PDSP-I). The oral script revealed her enjoyment of creating visually and a connection to the natural environment.



6. I like to draw pictures and put the glitter on.

Observation: Positioning herself at the craft table in the verandah area, Ivory drew a bird and applied glue and glitter. She was often observed at the craft table, creating and conversing with friends during the data collection period. Ivory chose this photograph, stating in the oral script that she liked to draw pictures. Her choice of subject matter connected to the painting of the natural environment in scene 6 (PDSP-I).



7. I like to paint monsters.

Observation: Ivory again chose to be photographed painting in the garden area. Ivory's monster painting demonstrated her artistic ability. Her monster was symmetrical in appearance and centred on the page showing well-developed spatial awareness. Ivory painted her monster in silence. When asked (by the researcher) what she could tell about her monster she replied, 'I don't know' and when asked where she sees monsters she replied 'in books' (PDSP-I).



8. I, I like to paint. I like to do butterflies with play dough.

Observation: In keeping with the nature theme (scenes 5 and 6) Ivory created butterflies from play dough. Positioned in the outside area, she molded the play dough to create the butterfly. She did so quietly, focused on her creation, demonstrating an aptitude for visual perception with the detailed, symmetrical formation of the butterfly (PDSP-I).



9. I like to paint butterflies.

Observation: Ivory chose to be photographed painting in the outside garden area (similar to scenes 5 and 8). During the activity, she silently focused on her creation, demonstrating the same visual perception skills observed during the literacy event reported in scene 8. She again revealed her interest in nature and her ability and enthusiasm for creating artistically (scenes 5, 6, 7 and 8), (PDSP-I).



10. My favourite song is Madame Zelda and I like to sing um Madame Zelda and I like to dance to it.

Observation: Ivory chose the ‘music corner’ in the inside area to be photographed, stating that she enjoyed singing and dancing to her favourite song, ‘Madame Zelda’. When asked (by the researcher) if she would like to demonstrate singing and dancing to ‘Madame Zelda’ she declined (PDSP-I). In her oral script Ivory made a connection from the music space (captured in the image) to her favourite song and her enjoyment of dancing.

The first year of formal school

Ivory transitioned into the first year of formal school into the class ‘KLW’. She was one of four child participants (Ivory, James, Lee and Tommy) placed in KLW. Similar to observations made by both the researcher and the prior-to-school centre director Angie, Ivory was observed to be quiet in the school setting (JE), (PEU). However, unlike the data for the prior-to-school context, observation and interview data in the formal school setting suggested that she was not particularly confident in her new surroundings. Her teacher, Bernadette viewed Ivory as ‘slower to cotton on ... into the routine’ adding that

‘Ivory’s in Ivory world’ (STFG), perhaps implying Ivory was not fully engaged and confident in the classroom routine. Journal entries noted she did not appear to be confident in engaging in many of the ‘choice’ and ‘must-do’ activities in this new, less familiar setting (JE).

Ivory was at ease with the process of photograph collection and the creation of her school digital story. She appeared happy to converse and share her perspective on her new setting (JE). To create her digital story Ivory chose eight separate literacy events, was photographed seventeen times and selected eight photographs to create her digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Ivory’s school digital story.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *My name is Ivory and I like, I like to go to big school and I like to go to crunch and sip.*

Observation: Ivory chose this image to introduce herself in the school setting. Her oral script made a connection to the image, where she participated in a daily routine of her new classroom (CO1-I).



2. *I like to write the word, the words on the whiteboard – I was writing the word am. It has a ‘a’ and ‘m’.*

Observation:

In this ‘must-do’ activity Ivory practised making and writing the word ‘am’ (a word previously introduced in the context of guided reading). The activity required Ivory to make the word ‘am’ with the magnetic letters supplied and then write the word on the whiteboard. In this image Ivory attempted to make the word ‘am’ positioning the letters as ‘ma’. She wrote the word ‘ma’ on the whiteboard (CO1-I). Ivory’s oral script revealed her confidence in undertaking the task, but she was unaware of the reversal of letter order.



3. I like to trace my hand then colour it in.

Observation:

This ‘must-do’ activity required Ivory to trace around her hand and then colour it. Ivory was observed to be confident in undertaking this task and her oral script revealed her enjoyment of it (CO1-I).



4. I dunked Mrs Lead at the fete and I drew a picture.

Observation:

This was a ‘must-do’ whole class activity that followed on from interactive writing. The children were asked to compose and write a story about what they would do at the school fete the following day. They were to begin the story with ‘I am going ...’ (written on the whiteboard) and add their own ending to the sentence, then draw a picture to match their story. Ivory wrote ‘I am going to the ft [fete]’ and drew a picture of herself at the fete with some fairy floss and the sun in the top corner of the page. She was assisted (by the researcher) to locate ‘the’ on the sound chart and to hear the sounds in ‘fete’ (CO3-I). Ivory’s oral script was composed after the fete had taken place and recounted an activity from the fete, ‘I dunked Mrs Lead’.



5. I - Mrs Lead helps me read a reader. Then I take it home. Then I read it to mummy and this book is called The Photo Book.

Observation:

In this image Ivory was reading her home reader (PM reading level 3 *The Photo Book*). This was a ‘choice’ activity and a familiar text for Ivory, as she had read it in the ‘engine room’ guided by her teacher and at home. Ivory read the text tentatively to the researcher during the classroom observation (CO2-I).



6. I like to read in the engine room and Mrs Lead helps me. We write the words together.

Observation:

Ivory chose this image of the ‘engine room’. It represented her daily engagement in guided reading and writing. During guided reading Ivory was assisted by the teacher to use ‘crisp, sharp finger pointing’ under each word on the text. The teacher, Mrs Lead, assisted Ivory on each page of the text. The children read the text together, repeating each page several times (CO2-I). Ivory’s oral script revealed her engagement with the activity, and similar to scene 5 she was being assisted by the teacher.



7. Mrs Lead readed us a story about the Rainbow Fish. Then we coloured it in and cut it out.

Observation: In this ‘must-do’ activity Ivory coloured in the picture of The Rainbow Fish and cut it out, as she explained in the oral script. This activity was in response to the children listening to and viewing *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister, on the interactive whiteboard (CO1-I). The children’s work was displayed on the classroom walls.



8. *I painted a picture of me for Grans' Day. I love to paint pictures.*

Observation:

The painting captured in the image was displayed on the classroom wall, in readiness for Grandparents' Day. Ivory created the visual text as part of a whole class art activity directed by the teacher (SDSC-I). The activity was not observed during the data collection period in the English session. Ivory used the word 'love' in the oral script to describe her enthusiasm for painting.



9. *I did a circle and a tail and did some legs and did a circle and it was Hairy Maclary. Hairy Maclary did his tricks with a hat.*

Observation: Similar to scene 7, Ivory created the visual text as part of a whole class art activity directed by the teacher (SDSC-I). The activity was not observed during the data collection period in the English session. In the oral script Ivory described how she created an image of the main character (from *Hairy Maclary* by Lynley Dodd), also recounting an event from the story. This image depicts the classroom wall display of the children's art works.

Interpretive summary

Ivory engaged with a range of literacy events in both the prior-to-school and first year of formal school setting. She commented positively on those events, with the words *I like* featuring prominently in the oral scripts for her digital stories (ten times in the prior-to-school story and seven times in school story, with one 'I love'). This suggested an engagement and enthusiasm for the literacy events in both settings.

Ivory's chosen literacy events in the prior-to-school setting revealed her preference for artistic and creative pursuits (JE). In the prior-to-school digital story eight of nine

scenes captured images in which Ivory created personal texts, expressing ideas and meaning through visual and tactile modes, using a range of media: paint, pencils, sand, play dough, craft materials and movement (PDSC-I). Opportunities for Ivory to engage in the same variety of visual and tactile texts during the data collection period in the school context were limited (English session) (CO-I).

The prior-to-school digital story captured images of Ivory creating personal texts independently, revealing her interests and her connections to her social and cultural world. She drew people (scene 3), painted a natural scene (scene 5), created a bird text with glue and glitter (scene 6), created a monster painting (scene 7) and created a play dough butterfly and a painted butterfly (scenes 8 and 9). Ivory's subject choice in her texts suggested an interest in the natural environment. Journal entries corroborated her interest in nature and made connections to her family life. For example, Ivory brought in a zucchini grown in the family vegetable garden. She spoke knowledgeably about the zucchini to a group of peers and an educator, explaining about her home vegetable garden and answering questions from the other children (JE).

The school digital story also provided insights into Ivory's participation in the creation of visual texts. These visual texts included: tracing her hand (scene 3), colouring the rainbow fish, (scene 7), the personal portrait for Grandparents' Day (scene 8) and the portrait of Hairy Maclary (scene 9). However, unlike the texts she created prior to school, where Ivory was observed to make choices regarding the medium, the process and the product she created, these were all 'must-do' activities; that is, they were chosen and directed by the teacher (CO-I). As a result, restricted choice and limited opportunities for Ivory to be creative or express herself personally although visual texts were noted in classroom observations (CO-I).

In Ivory's prior-to-school digital story, four of the nine scenes portrayed images of Ivory painting as text creation medium of choice (PDSC-I). In her school digital story (scenes 8 and 9) Ivory made connections from the enthusiasm she demonstrated for painting in prior to school, to her new setting. She chose images portraying her artworks and the modality in her language became stronger. She stated, 'I love to paint' in her oral script (scene 8) (SDSC-I).

Ivory's school digital story revealed the texts created in her new setting required her to make meaning through experimentation and engagement with written symbols, rather than by using the predominantly visual texts she chose to engage with in the prior-to-school setting (SDSC-I). In the school digital story, seven of the eight scenes conveyed images of texts where Ivory expressed meaning through using written and visual modes. These texts included: 'am' (scene 2), the school fete (scene 4), the home reader (scene 5) and the 'engine room' (scene 6). Ivory appeared to have limited experience with such texts, as she was not observed to experiment with written symbols during the data collection period in the prior-to-school setting (PDSC-I).

Ivory's oral script in her school digital story made connections to the 'newness' of the literacy events she participated in, when referring to reading and writing texts chosen by the teacher. Her oral script in scenes 5 and 6 pointed to the help she required to engage in the activities. Ivory stated, 'Mrs Lead helps me read a reader' (scene 5), and 'Mrs Lead helps me. We write the words together' (scene 6) (SDSC-I). Ivory's comments implied some reliance on teacher support during these literacy events and implied some lack of confidence when engaging with these unfamiliar written texts. Educator Angie confirmed Ivory's inexperience with written texts in the prior-to-school setting, commenting 'she never had been one to say – what does that say?' Prior to commencing the first year of formal school Ivory demonstrated a strong preference for the visual mode and showed little interest in the linguistic mode.

Ivory shared her perspective on the literacy events she engaged with during the time she transitioned from the prior-to-school setting to her first year of formal school. The images and oral scripts in both her prior-to-school and school digital stories communicated a positive attitude towards the literacy events she engaged with. In her prior-to-school story she created a range of personal visual and tactile texts that gave insight into her interests and relatedness to her social and cultural world. With less opportunity to access the variety of textual modes and more teacher-chosen and directed activities in school, Ivory experienced fewer avenues for personal expression in the creation of texts than in the prior-to-school setting. Evidence from classroom observations, teacher interviews and digital story analysis suggested that Ivory was less confident in participating in the unfamiliar literacy events in this new learning

environment, than she was in chosen literacy events of her familiar prior-to-school setting.

James

The prior-to-school setting

James attended the prior-to-school educational setting three days per week. He is the younger of two siblings and was five years of age at the time of this inquiry. James was observed to be confident in his surroundings and to enjoy interacting with friends in play at the prior-to-school centre (JE).

Sharon (educator) described James as someone who liked to engage in physical activity, and as not being content to sit for long and participate in activities such as craft (PEU). Prior-to-school directors Kylie and Angie both confirmed that he did like to play, however they added there were also times when James would choose to write, and he ‘really liked books’ (PEF). Researcher observations in the prior-to-school setting noted that James took part in physical and imaginative play in the outdoor area and during inside time, he read picture books, created written and visual texts, and participated in imaginative play activities (JE).

In the prior-to-school setting James participated in the focus group interview and watched the sample digital story with two other child participants. In response to the prompts from the interview protocol, ‘How do you like to use words at Beanies? Can you think of some ways?’ James replied, ‘Talking with friends when you play’ (PFG-2). This comment set the scene for the majority of images presented in James’s prior-to-school digital story.

James preferred to remain with his friends at outside play during the collection of photographs for his digital story (PDSP-J). Consequently, James’s photographs were captured during two time intervals: the outdoor photographs were taken in the morning and the inside photographs were taken on the same day in the afternoon when all the children were inside. The afternoon (just after lunch) was routinely spent in the indoor area and journal entries noted James’s willingness to re-engage in the creation of his digital story at this time (PDSP-J).

James was observed during three periods of data collection in the prior-to-school setting. James chose nine separate literacy events, was photographed seventeen times

and selected nine photographs to create his digital story. The following section presents the images and oral script from James's prior-to-school digital story. The first five scenes portrayed images captured in the outdoor area of the prior-to-school setting and the remaining four scenes portrayed images from the inside area.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *I like to play... My name is James and I like to play cars with my friends.*

Observation: James chose this image to introduce his digital story. His oral script revealed a favourite activity in this prior-to-school context.



2. *Um, I like to play cool tricks with my friends, with the cars.*

Observation: Positioned on the verandah in the outside play area, James and two friends moved the toy cars in and around the toy garage. James was observed to be playful. He responded positively to peers, and showed enthusiasm for participating in imaginative play (PDSP-J).



3. *I like to play with the cars on the ramp with my friends and play fighting with them.*

Observation: In the outdoor play area, James and two friends turned plastic construction blocks on their sides to make a series of ramps on which they positioned cars to race down and collide with each other. James initiated and contributed to this play experience. Similar to scene 2, James engaged in enjoyable interactions with peers using verbal and non-verbal language (PDSP-J).



4. I like to play racing cars with my friends and there's a short cut where we can go, if the road's broken.

Observation: In the outdoor play area James and two friends used the plastic construction blocks as racing cars, pushing them around the playground, racing each other. Similar to scenes 2 and 3, James engaged in and contributed to shared play experiences. The children observed particular rules for this activity, mindful of the others playing in the same location (PDSP-J). For example 'if the road's broken', meaning if there were other children in the way, the car race would go in between the slide and the climbing platform (PDSP-J).



5. This is when my, my friend Tommy says go.

Observation: The image in this scene captured the same activity as in scene 4. James's oral script explained one of the roles negotiated for the event; 'Tommy says go'. James was observed cooperating and playing collaboratively with others in physical play (PDSP-J).



6. This is when I was drawing a picture of Santa and these are two reindeers flying up to them, and I look watching Santa fly down.

Observation: James chose a text from the wall display that he had created the previous day. During the text creation James drew the picture and then relayed the meaning of the text to the educator who scribed the story: 'Santa and his reindeer flying upside down and James is watching'. James's oral script communicated the meaning he assigned to the drawings. It described the actions of Santa, the reindeers and himself

(PDSC-J).



7. This is a ... I like reading Christmas books and this is my favourite bit on the Christmas book.

Observation: Positioned in the inside area James chose a familiar picture book, *I Think I Just Saw Santa* by Alan Cornwell. He was aware of how the text worked, and lifted the flaps to reveal hidden images of Santa on each page. James was observed to enjoy viewing the text, locating his favourite page (PDSP-J).



8. This is when I'm doing a puzzle with my friends.

Observation: Positioned in the inside area James chose to be photographed doing a puzzle about work tools. He was observed to solve the puzzle with ease. This was a social event for James as he talked with friends alongside him who were also engaged with puzzles (PDSP-J).



9. This is when I was doing Leggo and the Christmas tree already stayed up.

Observation: Positioned in the verandah area James chose to be photographed with his Leggo construction (PDSP-J). James was observed constructing with Leggo several times during the data collection period. He manipulated materials to express ideas and make meaning (JE). His oral script is directly related to the image and referred to the Christmas tree that did not have to be made but 'already stayed up' (PDSP-J).

The first year of formal school

James transitioned into the first year of formal school as one of four child participants (Ivory, James, Lee and Tommy) placed in the K LW class. Educator Sharon indicated that they felt him to be well positioned for a smooth transition to the first year of formal school. Sharon stated plainly, ‘he is ready for school, I think he is realising that he is growing out of the routine here [in the prior-to-school setting] ... I could also see is ready for a change’ (PEU).

James was observed in his school classroom during three periods of data collection. A journal entry noted that he navigated the literacy opportunities available to him with self-reliance (CO1-J). James’s teacher Bernadette commented on James in his new setting: ‘he is very confident; a very clever boy’ (STI). Similar to his demeanour in the prior-to-school setting, James initially appeared to be indifferent to participating in the inquiry, however during the second and third periods of classroom observation, he was willing to share his perspective on the literacy events he engaged with (CO2-J). James chose twelve separate literacy events, was photographed twenty times and selected nine photographs to create his digital story. The following section presents the images and oral script from James’s school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *Um, my name is James and I'm at big school now and this is when ... This is a choice and this is when I'm playing a game, um, shapes and you have to make things with it.*

Observation: James chose this image to introduce his digital story. His oral script made connection to the image describing how to participate in this 'choice' literacy event (CO1-J).



2. *I like writing stories and this one was about the fete. I like ... I can write zoo double o, z.*

Observation:

This was a 'must-do' activity that followed on from interactive writing. The teacher had asked the children to compose and write a story about what they would do at the school fete the following day. They were to begin the story with 'I am going ...' (written on the whiteboard) and add their own ending to the sentence, then draw a picture to match their story. James wrote 'I am going to the fete' and accompanied the text with drawings of one of the teachers and the games he was going to play at the fete (CO3-J). James's oral script made reference to the story depicted in the image with additional information about another word he could write.



3. *In the writing centre you have to send letters to people and this is when I'm writing the 's' es.*

Observation:

This was a ‘choice’ activity. James chose the activity in the writing centre where he highlighted the letter ‘S’ in the poem *Easter Surprise* (CO1-J). James’s oral script described what took place in the writing centre (writing letters). He further explained the particular activity he engaged in. James was observed to complete this task competently (CO1-J).



4. I like um, in the engine room you have to write letters and um, I like it when you have to read the next two and I like reading because I’m with my friends.

Observation:

James chose this image of the ‘engine room’, referring in his oral script to his engagement with reading and writing. The usual practice for children in reading in the ‘engine room’ was to read in unison with peers, one page at time. James’s words, ‘I like it when you have to read the next two’, highlighted his developing independence in reading, as his preference appeared to be for a faster pace of reading instruction. James also commented on the reason why he liked the ‘engine room’, stating, ‘because I’m with my friends’.



5. I have lots of words on my lanyard and um, It’s ‘mum’ and ‘am’ and ‘to’ and um, ‘the’.

Observation:

This image portrays James holding his lanyard. The lanyard held the words the teacher had observed James could read and write independently. His oral script revealed the words on his lanyard. James read (to the researcher) all the words on his lanyard: ‘James, in am, I, come, to, the, we, on (no)’. James self-corrected the word ‘on’ to say ‘no’ and added, ‘that’s tricky isn’t it? It would be ‘on’ if ‘o’ was at the start’. He then

proceeded to write the words onto an individual whiteboard (CO1-J).



6. Um, this is about when I'm doing numbers and you get an award and I got award for 'fast thinking numbers'.

Observation:

This was a 'must-do' activity. James traced numerals to 10. He stated 'I know how to write them without those' (pointing towards the numbers on the page). He proceeded to competently demonstrate writing the numbers from 1 to 10 on an individual whiteboard for the researcher (CO2-J). James's oral script directly related to the activity portrayed in the image and also added information about the award he received for his ability with numbers.



7. Um, this is about numbers and letters and it's a puzzle and you have to ... and its made f ... and it makes a animal and it makes a frog.

Observation:

This was a 'choice' activity. James completed a puzzle in the shape of a frog that sequentially connected the letters of the alphabet. James worked alongside friends to complete this activity. They communicated and assisted each other (CO2-J). In the oral script James appeared unsure how to describe the task, but he recognised that it is not just about making a puzzle, but involved thinking about numbers and letters.



8. *This is my cut up story and it, 'The big elephant went in the pool' and the picture is a elephant in the water.*

Observation:

Prior to James undertaking this activity, the sentence 'The big elephant went in the pool' was jointly constructed by the teacher and children in the engine room. In this 'must-do' activity James cut up and rearranged the words to form this familiar sentence. He glued the words into his writing book and then retold a part of the story through illustrations. James then read the story with ease (to the researcher) (CO2-J).



9. *James ... this is my home reader and it says 'James said, my balloon is not going to pop'. I read it to my mum and dad.*

Observation:

This was a 'choice' activity. In this image James was reading his home reader (*Balloons Go Pop* PM Gems reading level 4). It was a familiar text for James, as he had read it in the 'engine room' and at home. James read the text (for the researcher) accurately (CO2-J). His oral script demonstrated him reading a page from the text and information about whom he reads to at home.

Interpretive summary

James appeared to engage confidently in the literacy opportunities presented in both the prior-to-school setting and the first year of school setting. He participated in a range of literacy experiences, transitioning from less formal, play-based activities in the prior-to-school setting to more formalised teacher directed activities in school, with apparent competency (CO1-J; CO2-J; CO3-J).

The prior-to-school digital story revealed James's enthusiasm for engaging in many, shared play experiences with peers, in which he developed communication and collaboration skills (PDSC-J). Five of the eight scenes described activities James

engaged with in the company of friends, using the words ‘I like to play ... with my friends’ (PDSC-J). The introductory scene and scenes 2 and 3 portrayed James with friends using toy cars in play. Scenes 5 and 6 captured James using large blocks to represent racing cars, with the oral script revealing he negotiated play spaces, roles and rules with friends. James’s enthusiasm for shared physical play with friends suggested a sense of interdependence with others in the prior-to-school setting.

In his first year at school James’s preference for play was less evident, as opportunities for outside play were unavailable during the English session (CO-J). However, there were opportunities for James to engage with literacy events alongside peers during the English session. One such literacy event included creating objects with the shape blocks and James commented during this activity saying, ‘It’s my favourite thing’ (CO- J). However, opportunities to play in James’s new school setting were more structured and allowed for less imaginative pathways than those he engaged with prior to school (CO1-J). In ‘making things’ from the shapes (introductory scene), James was required to make things that began with the ‘m’ sound, and in the puzzle activity (scene 7), it ‘is about numbers and letters’ (SDSC-J). In the prior-to-school setting, the opportunity for James to be imaginative with open-ended materials was evident, for example, using plastic blocks as cars (scenes 2 – 5) and playing with Leggo (scene 9) (PDSP-J). The digital stories revealed less opportunity for James to be creative and imaginative with texts in the school setting.

As noted by the prior-to-school directors Angie and Kylie (PEFG), James chose to engage with writing and reading in the prior-to-school setting and this was evident in the images he chose for his digital story. James engaged with written and visual texts in his drawing of Santa (scene 6) and in reading a Christmas book (scene7) (PDSC-J). However, as one might expect in school, James was required to engage with literacy events that involved transacting with texts more formally for the purposes of reading and writing instruction. Seven from eight literacy events portrayed in the school digital story captured James engaging with texts and focusing their on different aspects such as letters, words, continuous text and visuals.

In the school digital story James revealed that he liked to write. He is portrayed creating written text in the image in the fete story (scene 2), in the ‘engine room’ (scene 4), and in the cut up story (scene 8). He has a bank of words he knows how to read and write

(scene 5) (SDSP-J). These data suggested James was confident in his ability to write and to read words and short familiar texts in his new school setting (CO1-J).

In both digital stories James chose to include images of his engagement in reading. He declared his enjoyment of reading Christmas books in his prior-to-school digital story (scene 7), where he was observed turning the pages, interacting with the visual text and commenting on his favourite part of the story (PDSP-J). In the oral script accompanying the image in school scene 4, James also stated his enthusiasm for reading, commenting, 'I like reading because I'm with my friends' (SDSP-J).

James's school digital story revealed the different ways he participated in reading in the new school context. Unlike the prior-to-school setting, reading in school was observed to involve paying attention to a range of compartmentalised knowledge, skills and strategies (CO1-J). Literacy events characterised by a range of skills were portrayed in four of the eight scenes in James's school digital story. These four events were: the letter 's' (scene 3), words on the lanyard (scene 5), letters on the puzzle (scene 7) and rearranging words to make a sentence (scene 8). Further opportunities for engagement were evident in reading short pieces of continuous text, for example, James reading a home reader (scenes 4 and 9) and the creation of the fete story (scene 2) and the elephant in the pool story (scene 8) (SDSC-J).

The opportunity for extrinsic rewards was an aspect of the school routine that was noted by James during the data collection period. In the oral script in scene 5 James explained how he received an award for 'fast thinking numbers' (SDSP-J). Journal entries revealed his interest in receiving awards. James questioned Tommy on the first day of data collection in school:

James: Do you like big school?

Tommy: Yep! Do you?

James: No because I don't get one of those.

Researcher: What don't you get?

James: um well you go and so whoever does the best thing you get an award for doing it.

Researcher: So you'd like to get an award. So you're going to try really hard to get one?

Tommy: He wanted to get one and I did.

This dialogue revealed a competitive side to James that was corroborated by teachers Karen and Bernadette.

Karen: (after viewing both the prior-to-school and school digital stories) He seems like the boy we know – competitive but friendship is important (STI-J).

Bernadette: competitive in a good way though – I find he is encouraging other kids around him in his group (STFG).

Their comments may be interpreted to mean that James liked to be recognised for his achievements, but this appeared to be more for the purposes of self-fulfilment rather than in competition with peers.

James's perspective on the literacy events he engaged with in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings was captured in the scenes and accompanying oral scripts in his digital stories. Data analysis revealed James was capable and confident, and engaged in literacy events in both settings. He participated readily in a variety of activities on offer in the prior-to-school setting and in the more formalised literacy events of his new school setting. Whilst displaying a preference for physical play with friends in the outdoor area in his prior-to-school digital story, evidence in the data confirmed his interest in a variety of literacy experiences including reading, and viewing and creating visual and tactile texts. With the absence of physical play in the outdoors during the time of data collection in school, James chose from a range of literacy events on offer, making connections between the literacy events he enjoyed in prior to school (reading and creating visual and tactile texts) and those he engaged with in school. James demonstrated enthusiasm for creating written texts in his new school setting, something that was not observed during the data collection period in the prior-to-school context. The images and accompanying oral scripts in James's school digital story reflected his confidence and competence in writing.

Lee

The prior-to-school setting

Lee is the younger of two siblings and was five years of age at the time of this inquiry. He attended the prior-to-school setting three days per week, the same days as his friend James. It was difficult to obtain Lee's perspective on the literacy events he enjoyed in the prior-to-school setting as he did not engage in conversation readily, and when he did so, he spoke in a very soft voice. His speech was often inaudible and often consisted of single words (PDSP-L). Lee was observed to be reliant on James's company in the prior-to-school setting (JE). This was confirmed by educator Sharon who commented on Lee's reserved nature and his enjoyment of play with James (JE). When James was absent for a day, Lee was very upset, and as a result was taken home for the remainder of the day (JE).

Lee was observed as a participant in this inquiry during two periods of data collection in the prior-to-school setting and his digital story was made on the last day. On this day James was absent and Lee appeared to be upset, which initially made interactions with the researcher difficult. However, the educator Sharon offered advice as to what activities Lee often engaged with, and this was a starting point for his collection of photographs. Sharon spoke of how Lee enjoyed ball sports and craft, but especially playing with James (PEU). Lee was happy to select literacy events and pose for photographs. However, due to his reserved nature he was unable to compose the oral script or record the voice over for his digital story. The researcher composed the script for each image and after obtaining Lee's oral consent recorded her voice into iMovie.

Lee chose nine separate literacy events (prompted by the researcher), was photographed seventeen times and selected seven photographs to create his digital story.

The following section presents the images and adult recorded oral script from Lee's prior-to-school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations. Five of the six scenes portray images captured in the outdoor area of the prior-to-school setting and one scene portrayed an image from the inside area.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *Lee loves to come to pre-school to play with his friend James.*

Observation: Lee chose this image to introduce his digital story. His oral script describes a social event that was important for Lee (JE).



1. *This is Lee and Lee likes to listen to stories.*

Observation: Positioned in the outside area Lee listened to a Christmas story read by educator Sharon. Lee listened in silence, viewing the pages of the book. He was observed to be very comfortable participating in this activity and it was apparent Lee enjoyed an amicable relationship with this educator (PDSP-L).



2. *Lee likes to draw pictures. This picture is about Santa and his reindeer and the snowmen are watching.*

Observation: Lee retrieved this picture from the wall in the inside area to show the visual text he had created the day before. Lee's oral script revealed his enjoyment of creating visual texts. He described the story he had created in the text to the researcher (PDSP-L).



3. Lee likes to do craft at the prior-to-school setting. He's making a picture here with some glue and glitter.

Observation: Positioned at the craft table in the verandah area, Lee created a tactile text using a variety of mediums. He glued onto a paper bag, sprinkling it with glitter. Lee did not converse with the researcher during this activity. However, it was apparent that for Lee the craft table was a familiar place (PDSP-L).



4. Lee likes to play cars especially with his friend James.

Observation: Positioned in the outside play area. Lee chose to be photographed with the cars and garage as this was an activity he often participated in with his friend James (PDSP-L). During the data collection period Lee was observed on several occasions engaging in play with the cars (JE)



5. Lee is really good at throwing the ball up high into the basketball hoop.

Observation: The educator commented that Lee was very good with ball skills and enjoyed playing with the balls and shooting them into the hoop (PDSP-L). In this image Lee demonstrated throwing the ball into the hoop in the outside play area.



6. *Lee likes to play throwing and catching the ball and he is really good at it.*

Observation: Similar to scene 6 Lee is photographed positioned to throw the ball into the hoop. The oral script reflected a comment made by the educator, that Lee had good hand-eye coordination and enjoyed ball sports (PDSP-L).

The first year of formal school

Lee transitioned into the first year of formal school as one of four child participants (Ivory, James, Lee and Tommy) in KLW. Similar to observations made in the prior-to-school setting, Lee was a quiet participant at school (CO1-L). Bernadette commented on his quiet talk during the teacher focus group interview:

I can't hear him when he talks in reading groups ... I say *talk up Lee, talk up*. Sometimes he refuses to talk (STFG).

However, Bernadette observed that Lee's confidence about speaking had improved since his first days in the classroom and she noted that he created his own voice-over for his school digital story. (whereas the researcher provided the voice-over for his prior-to-school digital story) (STFG). During the final interview with the prior-to-school educators, prior-to-school director Angie noted, Lee's improving confidence with speech, stating:

Lee spoke to me the other day too and he initiated that speaking. I wouldn't have expected him to do that (PEF).

Lee was observed on the first day of data collection participating in a 'choice' activity alongside James and Tommy (two other participants) and similar to the prior-to-school setting, Lee's response to questioning by the researcher was limited and James spoke for him. The boys were using shape tiles to create an image and the researcher commented,

Researcher: That looks good Lee. What are you making? (James answered for Lee)

James: He is making any random (James nominated the activity as his favourite thing)

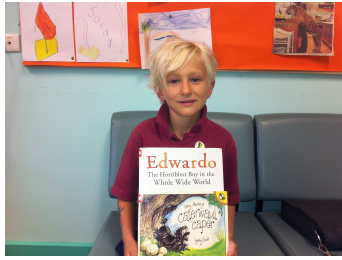
Researcher: What about you Lee, what's your favourite thing?

Lee: These (CO1-L).

Lee was observed in the classroom during three periods of data collection, and journal entries noted that he was following the routines established (STFG). He spoke very softly (to the researcher), answering questions during the collection of photographs for his digital story. Lee chose twelve separate literacy events, was photographed twenty-three times and selected eight photographs to create his digital story. The following section presents the images and oral script from Lee's school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations.

Scenes

Oral script



1. Introduction: *My name is Lee and I'm at big school now*

Observation: Lee chose this image to introduce himself in his new learning context (CO3-L).



2. *I am writing a story about going to the fete.*

Observation:

This was a 'must-do' activity that followed on from interactive writing. The children were asked to compose and write a story about what they would do at the school fete the following day. They were to begin the story with 'I am going ...' (written on the whiteboard) and add their own ending to the sentence and draw a picture to match their story. Lee wrote, 'I am going to the fete' (CO1-L).



3. *I like going in the engine room, 'cause I learn to write.*

Observation:

Lee was observed participating in guided writing in the 'engine room'. He wrote the text supported by the teacher. Lee was able to copy the letters in order, from the teacher's example. He appeared to be engaged in this activity and he understood the

purpose, which was reflected in his oral script (CO2-L).



4. I am writing 'the big elephant is going in the pool'.

Observation:

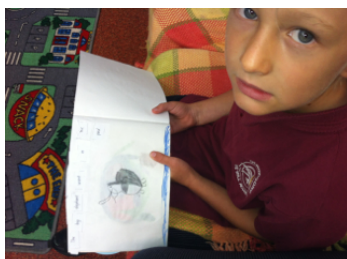
This was a 'must-do' activity, following on from guided writing in the 'engine room'. In this image Lee was copying the sentence that was written during guided writing. Lee copied the words in silence without leaving spaces. When asked by the researcher what he was writing, he was able to recall the sentence, as it had been said aloud many times in the context of guided writing (CO2-L).



5. I like to colour in at big school and I write.

Observation:

In this image Lee was colouring the pictures that began with the letter 'T'. This was a 'choice' activity. Lee was questioned (by the researcher) as to why he was colouring the pictures and he answered *to staple it into a book* (CO2-T). He was unaware that the all the pictures began with the letter 'T'.

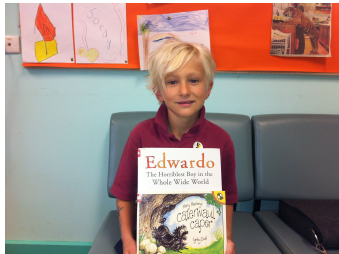


6. I like to cut up the story and glue the words on and draw a picture.

Observation:

In this image Lee was reading a sentence from his writing book 'The big elephant went in the pool'. Prior to this the teacher and the children jointly constructed the sentence in

the engine room. Following this Lee cut up and rearranged the words to form this familiar sentence. He then retold a part of the story through illustrations. Lee remembered the story and read it to the researcher (CO2-L).



7. I take books at the library and I like looking at them at home

Observation:

During the data collection period the children went to the school library for their weekly visit. At this time Lee chose to be photographed with the two books he borrowed for the week. *Edwardo The Horriblest Boy in the Whole Wide World* by John Burningham and *Hairy Maclary's Caterwaul Caper* by Lynley Dodd. Lee also chose this image as the introductory scene for his digital story. Interestingly Lee described his engagement with the books as 'looking' at them. When asked if anyone at home would read them to him he answered that his dad might (CO3-L).



8. I like going to the office to do jobs for Mrs Lead.

Observation:

When asked by the researcher what activities he liked to do in his new school setting, Lee said that he liked to do jobs for the teacher. He had never actually been given the job of going to the office, however he took the researcher to show her what it would be like, and Lee chose to be photographed there for his digital story (CO3-L).

Interpretive summary

Lee was observed throughout the data collection period as being comfortable within the prior-to-school setting as long as his friend James was present (JE). His very reserved nature made it difficult to engage in conversation with Lee in order to gain his

perspective of the literacy events in the prior-to-school setting. Reliance on information from educators (who knew Lee well) meant that photographs could be collected of Lee engaging in activities he regularly enjoyed in prior to school. The composition and recording of Lee's oral script by the researcher meant there could be a discrepancy between Lee's perspective on the literacy events and the recorded data. However, Lee's digital story was authenticated by checking with Lee (and receiving confirming nods) and the educators in the prior-to-school setting.

Interestingly, during the data collection period in the first year of school Lee appeared more confident about giving his perspective (albeit very quietly). He appeared happy to be photographed engaging in literacy events in his new school environment, and in creating his digital story. He composed the oral script and his voice was recorded.

In both settings Lee engaged in a variety of activities. In the prior-to-school setting three scenes captured Lee in outdoor play. These scenes were: with the cars (scene 5), and positioned under the basketball hoop (scene 6 and 7). Lee engaged with written, visual and tactile texts in three scenes. These data suggest that Lee participated in a variety of literacy events in this setting. In the school setting the opportunity for outside play was not available during the data collection period and six of the seven scenes captured Lee engaged with written and visual texts within the formal school classroom (SDSC-L).

In the prior-to-school setting the images in Lee's digital story captured him creating personal texts by drawing and manipulating tactile materials. Two of these images portrayed Lee with his drawing of Santa (scene 3) and creating with glue and glitter (scene 4). Lee enjoyed similar activities in school. In scene 6 (school) Lee stated, 'I like to cut up the story and glue the words on and draw a picture' and in scene 7 the oral script revealed, 'I like to colour in at big school'. However, unlike the texts Lee created in the prior-to-school setting, these similar activities in the first year of school were chosen and directed by the teacher and were closed tasks, affording him limited opportunities for personal expression or to demonstrate his particular knowledge and understandings in literacy.

In the school digital story, four of the six images portrayed Lee creating written texts. Lee stated, 'I am writing a story about going to the fete' (scene 2), 'I am writing, the big elephant is going in the pool' (scene 4) and 'I like to colour in at big school and I write'

(scene 5). The oral scripts implied that Lee enjoyed writing and in scene 3 Lee exclaimed, 'I like going in the engine room, 'cause I learn to write'. These data suggest Lee is developing a positive attitude towards the creation of written texts, an activity that did not feature in his chosen literacy events in the prior-to-school setting.

The engagement Lee demonstrated with picture books prior to school was also evident in the school context. In scene 2 (prior to school) the image captured Lee listening to a story being read by one of the educators, and in school Lee stated 'I take books at the library and I like looking at them at home' (scene 6). Interestingly, Lee did not use the word 'reading' to describe his engagement with picture books, but described his interaction with the text as 'looking' (SDSC). This may suggest self-doubt as far as his reading skills are concerned.

In his prior-to-school digital story Lee chose the image of James and him at play for his introductory scene. This pointed to an important aspect of Lee's prior-to-school day – play with James. As noted earlier, Lee appeared to rely on James's company in the prior-to-school setting and was inconsolable on the day of data collection when James did not arrive. This dependence continued as Lee transitioned into the first year of school. However, as noted by Bernadette (school teacher) (STFG) Lee became less dependent on James after the first few weeks.

The newness of several literacy events in the school context was highlighted in Lee's digital stories. He did not engage in experimentation with written symbols during the data collection in the prior-to-school setting, preferring outdoor play and the creation of visual and tactile texts. However, in the first year of school, the images in Lee's digital story captured him creating written texts in three of the six scenes. This indicated a shift in the literacy events he engaged in after moving to school.

Evidence from the research data suggested Lee 'very quietly' navigated the literacy events in both settings (JE). However, Angie (prior-to-school director) suggested that Lee may be in danger of what teachers often refer to as 'going under the radar', that is because he was compliant and did not draw attention to himself in the classroom, it was possible that teachers would not fully realise his ability or lack thereof (PEF). Perhaps Angie's perception of Lee as rarely initiating interactions with the teachers led her to this observation:

He will go under the radar for everything for sure – we knew that always!
(PEF).

Comments made by Bernadette (school teacher) appeared to corroborate this perception,

I think he is reading the book but I'm not sure ... he just sat there in a real fog and didn't have the confidence to do it [a vocabulary assessment] ... when I ask him to say the sounds I can't hear him ...

And then Bernadette added unexpectedly,

Of course I know he is a clever boy! (STFG).

These comments confirmed that both Angie and Bernadette were aware of Lee's reserved nature. This also suggested that Lee did appear more confident in the new formal school setting than he appeared in the prior-to-school setting. Lee's school digital story revealed his participation in a range of new literacy events associated with written texts and his willingness to engage in the routines of the formal school context.

Maddy

The prior-to-school setting

At the time of the inquiry, Maddy was five years of age. She attended the prior-to-school centre one day per week and was observed as a participant in this inquiry five times during data collection in this setting. As a researcher it was easy to build a rapport with Maddy as she was amiable and would converse easily. She was described by the Angie the centre director as a ‘really, really happy ... free and easy and just into everything’ (PEU).

Throughout the data collection period, journal entries indicated Maddy to be just that, ‘into everything’ (JE). She was attuned to the literacy events occurring around her that involved peers and educators. She asked questions and expressed opinions and showed that she was secure and confident within the learning environment. She displayed a sense of familiarity with the place and the people, as she described her enjoyment of the variety of literacy events on offer within the prior-to-school setting (JE).

Maddy was observed to participate freely in a range of the literacy events offered within the centre. She interacted with a variety of visual, written, live, aural and multimodal texts available in both the indoor and outdoor areas. Maddy demonstrated her understanding of the texts through drawing, writing, speaking, creating and play (JE; PDSP-M). This understanding was documented in Maddy’s digital story.

Maddy chose nine separate literacy events, was photographed eleven times and selected ten photographs to create her digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Maddy’s prior-to-school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations. The first three scenes portrayed images captured in the inside area of the prior-to-school setting and the remaining six scenes portrayed images taken in the outside area.

Scenes



Observation: Maddy chose this image to introduce herself in her prior-to-school context (PDSP-M).



Oral script

1. Introduction: *I like going to little school and my name is Maddy.*

2. *I like it when they got their bums back and I like it when the um, man went in gaoled.*

Observation: Maddy chose as her favourite book, Tim Winton's *The Bugalugs Bum Thief*. Positioned in the inside area, on the mat, she addressed every page from beginning to end, recounting the story using 'book talk'. Maddy recounted with appropriate intonation, 'One boy woke up one day. He went to go and get some breakfast and then when he was about to put on his clothes, um, they fell right down again' (PDSP-M). She giggled with enjoyment throughout her recount. Maddy's oral script expresses her opinion about the resolution of the story. She was observed to be satisfied with this very 'just' ending to an amusing story, whilst expressing her opinions and questioning the motives of the characters (PDSP-M).



3. *I like it when he got his friends and I like it when they got um, a house so the big bad wolf couldn't get him. I like it when um, um, they, he ran away.*

Observation: Maddy chose the felt story board (inside area) and described it as ‘So you put stuff on here to make a rhyme’ (PDSP-M). The artefact of the felt board afforded Maddy the possibility to recount her version of a story she had heard. She moved the felt figures around the board and recounted the story of the ‘Three Little Pigs’. The oral script directly related to the story Maddy told during the activity. It referred to the resolution of the story whilst offering her opinion (PDSP-M).



4. I like when Rapunzel had short hair and long hair and I like the prince when they, when he saved her.

Observation: Positioned at a table in the inside area Maddy drew a picture of Rapunzel with both long and short hair and the prince who saved her. As she drew, she related information about the characters in the story, expressing her opinions about them. When referring to the witch, Maddy commented, ‘she is actually a mean witch’ (PDSP-M). Maddy also participated in ‘self-talk’ to describe the drawing process. She said, ‘and then we give her a crown, up, down, up, down, up, down (as she drew the crown)’ (PDSP-M). Finally she drew the prince, and said, ‘and then I draw a prince inside it because who’s going to save her?’ (PDSP-M). Maddy’s oral script referred directly to the drawings captured in the image (Rapunzel with short and long hair and the prince who saves her).



5. I like making ginger bread. Run, run as fast as you can you can't catch me I'm the ginger bread man (giggles).

Observation: Positioned at a table in the outside area, Maddy used the cookie cutter to cut a gingerbread man out of play dough. When asked if she knew any stories about gingerbread men she began to recite the rhyme from the story. The gingerbread man artefact afforded her the opportunity to connect with a familiar story (PDSP-M). In her

oral script Maddy made a connection between gingerbread and the narrative by reciting the rhyme from the story.



6. I like doing the painting. I like doing glue and putting on tissue paper and putting more glue on and then I will put the glitter on the top. And I like climbing.

Observation: Maddy chose to be photographed creating a tactile text positioned in the outside area. As she created her work she talked aloud to describe what it was she was doing with the paint, glue and glitter. Her talk focused on the process of creation. She was very definite about how she wanted to create the piece (PDSP-M). Her oral script recounted the process she described whilst completing the activity. She then added ‘And I like climbing’. This statement was not congruent with the image but reflected another activity Maddy liked to participate in.



7. I like helping Bec wash the trucks and I helped her a lot of them.

Observation: Helping Bec (an educator) wash the trucks in the outside area was a social event for Maddy. She conversed with Bec as she helped to wash the trucks, asking many questions and obtaining answers from the educator, who extended the dialogue between them (PDSP-M). Maddy’s oral script revealed her enthusiasm for helping wash the trucks and related directly to the image.



8. You can ... I gonna ask my friends if they can come over for a play or um, ask them for to come over for a sleep over.

Observation: Maddy chose the outdoor play area to be photographed in because she liked to be physically active and social in her play (JE). The positioning of the image within the play area prompted Maddy to talk of inviting friends over ‘for a play’ and a ‘sleep over’ (stated in the oral script) (PDSP-M). This activity was one that prompted Maddy to recall social events with friends and exemplified her enjoyment of engaging socially with them.



9. I like to swing on the holder thing.

Observation: Maddy chose to be photographed swinging on the ‘holder thing’ in the outside area. This was observed to be a very popular activity for the children, as they manoeuvred around the play equipment in the outside play area (PDSP-M). Maddy’s oral script revealed her enjoyment of the activity, and related directly to the image.



10. I like eating healthy food and I like drinking milk to make my arms strong and I like saying ‘may can I leave the table’.

Observation: Maddy was photographed sitting at the table, with an educator and a small group of children eating morning tea. Maddy conversed with the educator and the other children present. It was observed to be a social practice Maddy was familiar and

comfortable with (PDSP-M). Her oral script referred to what took place during this event (eating and drinking), and showed her awareness of good nutrition and the social rules for the event.

The first year of formal school

Maddy transitioned into her first year of formal school class (K1W) along with one other of the participants, Skyla. This composite class comprised eight children in their first year of school and twelve Year One children. The teachers chose Maddy for the composite class based on information from her Best Start school assessment.

Information obtained reported Maddy was a confident student and would be compatible socially and academically with the Year One children (STFG).

Data collection focusing on Maddy began on day two of the data collection period in school. Journal entries indicated Maddy to be confident within her new classroom environment (JE). She appeared at ease while she explained and demonstrated all that she was doing in her first year at school and spoke about the rules and routines particular to different activities (JE; CO-M). Similar to the prior-to-school setting, Maddy happily shared her views in her school digital story.

Maddy chose twelve separate literacy events, was photographed sixteen times and selected nine photographs to create her digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Maddy's school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *Hello my name is Maddy and I'm at big school now and big school is where you learn lots of stuff and it's really good to be at big school because you can find your brother or sister or cousin.*

Observation: Maddy chose this photograph to accompany her introduction. The oral script reflected a recurring theme present throughout Maddy's digital story in school: 'big school is where you learn'. The oral script also referred to Maddy's enjoyment of socialising – 'big school is a place to locate family and friends' (CO-M).



2. *Books help you learn 'cause they have new words and you don't have them on your key ring, they can help you learn new, words on, 'cause the possum is really funny is 'cause, 'cause he gets paint on him [giggles]. Miss Wilson reads us good books because my favourite book is 'Dancing with Grandma'.*

Observation: This was a 'choice' activity within the English session and was a social literacy event for Maddy as she sat with her friend Skyla, enjoying the picture books. During the activity Maddy described (to the researcher) what was happening in the book and the funny antics the possum was getting up to (CO-M). This was not congruent with the oral script, which began by telling the audience that books are for learning new words. The second half of the oral script reflected Maddy's enjoyment of story.



3. *This is a must-do job and you have to find the letter and match it with the picture. And you've got to learn.*

Observation: This was a 'must-do' literacy activity. The confident, precise language of this oral script reflected Maddy's competent engagement in the activity and her understanding of its purpose (CO-M).



4. This is the 'engine room' and this, and the books help us to learn to read a lot. And there's magnets what Miss Wilson puts on and we change the words and then um, we have all the, and I like the 'engine room' [giggle].

Observation: Maddy chose this image of the 'engine room', representing her daily engagement in teacher-guided instruction. Maddy's oral script revealed she was unsure how to describe what happens here but she knew the purpose of the 'engine room'. She saw it as the place to learn with books.



5. The watermelon has to be coloured in. But if it's still pink it will not look good when the meeting is on and you have to colour it in because you're going to sing a watermelon song for Grandparent's Day.

Observation: This was a 'must-do' activity. Maddy chose this image to represent her interest in creating visual texts. However, rather than commenting on her enjoyment of the activity, she stated, 'but if it's still pink it will not look good when the meeting is on', revealing the importance that was placed on the 'rules' for the completion of the activity (SDSC-M).



6. I like to paint because um, you had to decorate the first bit before you put on the magazine, 'cause then um, it won't look that pretty with just paint. And if it doesn't have your name on it you don't know if it's yours or somebody else's, and the girl who I made is really um, laying down. I didn't want to take off the head. I just put on a new head.

Observation: This was a whole class art activity, not observed during the English session. This image reflected Maddy's meaning making through creative arts. She

began by sharing her affection for painting, but went on to articulate the rules around the process for creating the text and the rules associated with this particular type of literacy event – decorating in a teacher-directed sequence and having your name written so your work can be identified. Maddy also stated that she added her own touch ‘I just put on a new head’. This revealed that even though she was aware of how the text was to be created, she decided to be just a little innovative (SDSC-M).



7. P starts with pear and I was drawing the um, pictures what start with the letter P. And it's good to draw the letters, with the um, letter P. Pirate and peaches and grandparents.

Observation: This literacy event took place during writing time and was a ‘must-do’ activity. Maddy talked with peers at her table during this event. She was observed to enjoy the social nature of this activity and the language in her annotation reflected her confidence in participating in this literacy event (CO-M).



8. Um we had to just shake the bottle to um find a word what we know but if we don't know the word just shake it again and if there's an 'a' in there just write it on the board. It's good to shake the bottle 'cause if you just want to learn that word just write it on your board or if you want to get it on your key ring just get and write it.

Observation: Maddy's focus was on learning words in this literacy ‘choice’ activity. She referred to the classroom practice of getting known words put on your key ring, also referred to in the oral script for scene 1. Maddy completed this activity with ease (CO-M). Her oral script revealed her knowledge of the process for completing the activity as well as its purpose, reflecting her confidence and independence during this literacy event.



9. *The 'quipment is fun 'cause it's really like a playground but it's not a playground. It's um, a thing where you go but if nobody's down there don't really go down there, 'cause if you know that's the line-up bell just get up there 'cause it will be the line-up time. If you're not up there you'll be in big trouble.*

Observation: Maddy's enjoyment of physical activity was reflected in her final image. She used the language of school and called the 'playground' the 'quipment' (SDSC-M). Maddy's oral script focused on rules rather than the social purpose of the activity 'as a time to play with friends'.

Interpretive summary

In her prior-to-school digital story Maddy used a very simple and familiar language structure starting with 'I like...' to begin her oral script for eight of the nine scenes. These statements expressed Maddy's personal views of the literacy events which were on offer, and which were taken up by her in her prior-to-school setting. They suggest that her choice of, and participation in, literacy events in in this setting were motivated by familiarity and enjoyment. The images and assigned scripts in both the prior-to-school and school digital stories demonstrated the independence and control with which Maddy operated within the settings.

The oral script Maddy assigned to the images in her school digital story gave the audience more information about the literacy events in which she participated than was evident in her prior-to-school digital story. The data indicates that Maddy had a stronger sense of audience for this second digital story and she explained to the viewers what literacy events she was participating in and the purpose of each event, via the oral scripts she attached to the images.

In the prior-to-school environment it was evident that Maddy had easy access to books, and that reading, viewing and the telling of stories were literacy practices that were familiar to her (JE). Images captured in scenes 2 to 5 in her first digital story revealed Maddy's strong connection with 'story'. The images depicted Maddy positioning herself with story artefacts and recounting the stories or parts of stories she had heard or viewed. During Maddy's recounting of *The Bugalugs Bum Thief* (scene 2) she perused

the pages, demonstrating interest and enthusiasm for the story. Her enjoyment was evident in the intonation and expression in her voice as well as the intermittent chuckles she made during her recounting of the story (JE). Maddy demonstrated her understanding of, and familiarity with, the text through the use of book language in her recounting of *The Bugalugs Bum Thief*. For example:

‘One boy woke up one day’ and ‘everywhere there was nothing but people
(PDSP-M).

During the account Maddy expressed her opinions of the events, and evaluated the behaviour of the book characters. She commented with an empathetic tone in her voice,
It’s not fair is it? That everyone couldn't sit down on the floor? (Because they had no bums) (PDSP-M).

Maddy was observed to be very familiar with the way stories ‘work’. She provided a retelling of the orientation, complication and resolution of *The Bugalugs Bum Thief*, displaying her understanding of the structure of narrative texts and an understanding that the purpose of narrative texts was to entertain. For example she began her of the *Bugalugs Bum Thief*,

One boy woke up one day he went to go and get some breakfast and then when he was about to put on his clothes um they fell right down again ...
(PDSP-M).

Next Maddy explained the story’s complication with,

Maddy: He looked everywhere to find it, but everywhere there was nothing but people and houses ... Who is stealing so he can’t sit down? He’s the one ’cause he has one and all the other people don’t ... it’s not fair. Is it? ...
(PDSP-M).

Followed by the resolution to the story,

Maddy: And then they could all sit down again and all the people got them back (PDSP-M).

The evidence in the data (i.e. The Three Little Pigs, Scene 3; Rapunzel, Scene 5 and The Gingerbread Man, Scene 6) repeatedly demonstrated Maddy’s understanding of and engagement with story, as well as her familiarity with stories and the way they ‘work’.

The engagement Maddy demonstrated with story in her prior-to-school digital story continued into the first year at school, albeit with a new focus. That is, the focus moved from being on ‘story’ as an enjoyable experience, to the focus being on the ‘learning’ that could be gained from engaging with books, particularly the learning of ‘new words’.

This new focus was initially revealed in Maddy’s oral script for image 2, where she began her oral script with ‘Books help you learn’ (PDSC-M). The enjoyment of the story, whilst still apparent, appeared now to be a secondary feature of the book. However, Maddy appeared to obtain satisfaction from this new purpose for engaging with books in the formal school setting (PDSP-M).

Maddy’s digital story (book reading Scene 2, letter/picture matching Scene 3, the ‘engine room’ Scene 4 and shake the bottle to find a word Scene 8) revealed her understanding of, and engagement in, literacy activities for the purpose of ‘learning’. This learning was through books with a particular focus on learning new words. For example in Scene 3 Maddy described the activity of matching letters to pictures,

Maddy: And you’ve got to learn (PDSP-M).

In scene 4 Maddy described what is happening in the engine room,

Maddy: The books help us to learn to read a lot (PDSP-M).

And in Scene 8 Maddy told the audience,

Maddy: If you just want to learn that word just write it on your board
(PDSP-M).

Maddy now appeared to view books as having a ‘school’ purpose (learning to read and learning new words).

Maddy’s enjoyment of talk and engaging socially with peers was evident in both her prior-to-school and her school digital stories. Maddy had a core group of friends in the prior-to-school centre (the other participants: Ivory, Hannah and Skyla) with whom she was observed talking, singing, creating, dancing and playing during the data collection period (JE). The image in scene 8 captured Maddy balancing on beams in the outdoor play area. Her oral script did not comment on the image but instead the artefact prompted her to talk of friends as she spoke of inviting friends over to her house to play

(PDSP-M). No opportunities for outside play were available in school during the data collection period (the English session). Interestingly, however, in her school digital story (scene 9), Maddy chose to be photographed outside of the classroom on the play equipment. Rather than comment on this activity as a time for play with friends, as Maddy did in her prior-to-school digital story, the assigned script focused on the rules around engaging with the (SDSC-M).

Observations in the prior-to-school setting also revealed Maddy engaging socially with educators. With the ratio of educators to children being in 1:5 Maddy was never far from an adult. For example, she helped Bec (educator) wash the trucks (scene 7) and during morning tea, sat at the table with four other children and an educator (scene 10). Maddy was observed to be comfortable participating in these social literacy practices, and she conversed easily with peers and educators (PDSP-M). In school, although responding to the teacher's directions and the boundaries set, the children operated independently from the teacher as they participated in 'choice' and 'must-do' activities within the English sessions. Children interacted socially with peers during these literacy events but not with their teachers. Maddy was observed to confidently navigate the literacy events on offer at this time, and to engage socially with peers as she participated in the 'choice' and 'must-do' activities within this formalised setting (JE).

However, the restricted opportunities for 'talk' with the teacher were noted in journal entries during the data collection in the first year at school. Observations revealed Maddy's talkative nature was curbed during the learning that took place within the 'engine room' (CO-M). The literacy practice of the 'engine room' was very structured by the teacher. It was observed that these sessions were systematically planned to meet the needs of the learners and lasted no longer than ten minutes. There was no time for friendly banter, questioning or discussion. During the period of data collection Maddy was observed in the 'engine room' where her talk was largely dismissed. She asked a question during the writing activity:

Maddy: Can I go down and get ...

Teacher: Not right now.

Maddy: Why are the books over here? Are we going to get ... (CO-M).

Maddy's teacher Jemima ignored her question and continued directing the lesson (CO-M). Maddy was asking questions but there was no place provided for questions and no time for answers.

During the data collection period in the prior-to-school setting, Maddy was observed to be confident and independent in choosing and creating a variety of texts. She independently directed herself, and shared orally her thought processes and feelings during the literacy events (JE). In creating craftwork (Scene 6) Maddy appeared to know how she wanted her creation to look and completed it to her satisfaction, whilst directing herself by talking aloud as she added the paint, glue and glitter. In her drawing of Rapunzel (scene 4) she spoke aloud saying, 'I need a green pencil for outside her eyes and that one for inside her eyes, I do that and then do a mouth' (PDSP-M). This talk was observed to be important for Maddy in self-directing literacy events in the prior-to-school setting (JE).

In school, opportunities to self-direct text creations were limited. The rules around the creation of craft works in school were observed to overtake the process of self-direction and self-expression for Maddy (CO-M). In the oral script which accompanies the image in scene 5, Maddy explained the rules around the text production of the watermelon. In scene 6, Maddy commented about adding her own touch (clearly against the directions for the activity). She stated, 'I didn't want to take off the head. I just put on a new head' (SDSC-M). This digital story revealed Maddy focused on the rules pertaining to the activity, in contrast to her prior-to-school digital story where she self-directed her text creation in a decisive manner (JE).

Further data revealed Maddy's attention to the rules governing activities in school. Maddy chose to be photographed at play as she did in the prior-to-school setting. Rather than focusing on play and on socialising with friends (as it was in her prior-to-school digital story), Maddy focused on the rules for using the equipment and the consequences if the rules were not adhered to, which she explained in scene 9 (SDSC-M).

Repeated evidence in the data demonstrated that Maddy was as confident in the new school environment as she was in prior-to-school context. In the prior-to-school centre she chose and self-directed a variety of literacy events and confidently participated in

talk with peers and educators, and in the first year of school she knew the routine of the classroom and school, and could clearly explain the routines and rules around the literacy events and the purposes of the activities (CO-M; JE).

By adopting the language of school and knowing the rules and routines associated with the literacy events she participated in, Maddy demonstrated an understanding of the expectations of her new environment. She explained these rules or expectations in the oral script. She described the scenes, reiterating the need ‘to learn’ six times throughout the school digital story. ‘Teacher talk’ was reflected in Maddy’s language, and the literacy events she participated in now had a purpose beyond that of enjoyment which was evident in preschool. The new purpose was to learn (CO-M; JE).

The modality in Maddy’s language became stronger as she annotated the images in the school digital story. The oral script changed from the first person ‘I like ...’ to using the second person ‘you can ..., you have to ..., you’ve got to ...’ (PDSC-M; SDSC-M). Maddy explained how to ‘be’ in this classroom with a focus on the teacher’s purpose for literacy events she participated in. Maddy’s language choices and high modality indicated the sense of importance she placed on ‘doing it right – the school way’ and, through doing so, having a sense of control in her new environment.

This is a must-do job and you have to ...

The watermelon it has to be ... you have to colour it in because ...

You have to decorate the first bit ...

But if nobody’s down there don’t really go down there, ’cause if you know that’s the line-up bell just get up there ’cause it will be the line-up time. If you’re not up there you’ll be in big trouble (SDSC-M).

Maddy’s prior-to-school and school digital stories revealed her unique perspective on the literacy opportunities available to her in both settings. The literacy events she participated in prior to school were similar to those she participated in in her first year at school. However, it was evident from the oral scripts she assigned to her school digital stories that she now had a broadened focus in the events she chose and enjoyed in the school setting.

Maddy's teacher Jemima commented on what she viewed as a difference in Maddy's two digital stories: 'if you could keep some of that "I love doing this!" Not "I have to do this"'. If you could keep that little spark when they got to school ... that is something I noticed!' (STFG). These comments confirmed the shift in the way Maddy reported on the literacy events as she transitioned to the new school setting and how her perception of the literacy events changed in her transition from the prior-to-school setting to the first year of school context.

Skyla

The prior-to-school setting

Skyla was five years of age at the time of the inquiry. She attended the prior-to-school centre two days per week and is the youngest of three siblings. Journal entries reported Skyla to be articulate and keen to interact with the researcher when she shared her understandings of the literacy events she engaged with in the prior-to-school setting (JE).

Skyla demonstrated her emerging literacy knowledge through involvement in a wide range of literacy events throughout the data collection period (JE). She participated in socio-dramatic play and the exploration of written, visual, oral and tactile texts in the prior-to-school setting (JE).

After participating in the focus group interview, Skyla was chosen as the first child to participate in the data collection because of her willingness to engage in conversation (with the researcher) by sharing her response to the sample digital story during the focus group interview (JE). Skyla chose ten separate literacy events, was photographed eleven times and selected nine photographs to create her digital story.

The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Skyla's prior-to-school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations. Four of the nine scenes portray images captured in the outdoor area of the prior to school and five scenes portray images from the inside area. Each of Skyla's oral scripts makes a literal connection to one of the nine images in her digital story, succinctly describing the literacy event she engaged with.

Scenes



Observation: Skylia chose this image to introduce her digital story. Her oral script acknowledges her change in setting and her approval.

Oral script

1. Introduction: *My ... I like little school and my name is Skylia.*



2. *My name is Skylia and I drew Rapunzel.*

Observation:

Using painting easels positioned in the garden area, Skylia drew Rapunzel with coloured pencils and then painted, washing the background with colour and painting a sun in the corner. She represented Rapunzel with very long hair, demonstrating her understanding of this familiar text. Rapunzel was a favoured popular culture text with several of the participants (Hannah, Ivory and Skylia) (JE).



3. *I dressed up the baby.*

Observation: Skyla and her friend Hannah were observed ‘playing babies’ in the outside area on the grass. The girls removed the dolls’ clothes to give them a bath. The girls decided which dolls were girls and discussed which dolls were boys by comparing the length of their eyelashes. The educator present at the time assisted them in collecting play materials and scaffolded language interactions, ideas and concepts around this familiar literacy event (JE).



4. I drew STOP in the sandpit.

Observation: A sign placed near the sandpit read ‘STOP’. Upon seeing this Skyla commented, ‘I can read that’, and she said, ‘stop’. She then proceeded to write ‘STOP’ in the sandpit using a rake. She did not refer to the sign whilst writing the text but constructed the letters in the sand remembering the letter sequence (PDSP-S).



5. I drew STOP on a piece of paper and I drew um, dolphin.

Observation: Positioned at an inside table with a large piece of paper and a tin of pencils, Skyla wrote ‘STOP’, and her name. She then drew a dolphin and was asked by the researcher if she could write ‘dolphin’. She replied, ‘o’ and wrote it on the paper. At Skyla’s request, the remaining letters for ‘dolphin’ were dictated by the researcher.

Skyla was able to connect from the letter names to the visual representations, writing them from right to left across the top of the page (PDSP-S).



6. I readed Goldilocks and I like that story.

Observation: Skyla revealed that reading was a favourite activity. Positioned in the book corner in the inside area, Skyla read the story of the *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and told the story in her own words. Using the images as a guide she included language structures from the text: ‘Mother Bear’s porridge is too hot. Father Bear’s porridge is too cold. Baby Bear’s porridge is just right!’ (PDSP-S).



7. I was a nurse and I looked on a piece of paper.

Observation: Positioned in the inside area set up as a doctor’s surgery, Skyla interacted with medical and literacy props, negotiating roles with others during this dramatic play activity (PDSP-S). Included in the area were a stethoscope, doctor’s kit, medical bag, writing forms, a bed, desk, magnifying glass, telephone, computer keyboard, writing journals and writing implements.



8. *I was being a doctor.*

Observation: Positioned in the same socio-dramatic play area as in scene 7, Skyla interacted with the props and literacy artefacts, taking on the role as literacy user, filling out a form (a census form) in her role as a doctor (PDSP-S).



9. *I was writing 'there's a fire at the fire station'.*

Observation: In this image Skyla was positioned at an inside table with paper and pencils. She wanted to know how to write 'there is a fire at the fire station' (a fire engine had been to the centre the previous day for children to view and for them to have a discussion with the firemen). She was told the words 'fire station' (by the researcher) letter by letter and she wrote the letters, beginning the text at the top of the page in the middle and wrote left to right and then down the page (example below) (PDSP-S)

fire
stat
ion



10. *I was making a cup cake in the sandpit.*

Observation: In this image Skyla, Maddy, and Hannah were making ‘cupcakes’ in the sandpit. Skyla was adding ‘sugar’ to the mixture. During this socio-dramatic play activity Skyla engaged in conversation with the other girls, negotiating roles and the construction of the ‘cakes’ as well as enjoying the social interactions (PDSP-S).

The first year of formal school

Skyla transitioned into the first year of formal school (K1W) along with Maddy, one of the other participants. The class was composed of eight children in their first year of school and twelve Year One children. The teachers chose Skyla for K1W based on results from the Best Start formal school assessment. The information obtained reported Skyla as a student who was confident and would be compatible socially and academically with the Year One children (STFG).

Skyla was observed to be an enthusiastic participant in the literacy events available to her in the first year of school (CO-S). Jemima (Skyla’s teacher) described her as shy to begin with, and reluctant to try new things. Jemima explained ‘but now she has realised it doesn’t matter if you make a mistake ... she is fine into it now’ (STFG).

Skyla was keen to share her perspective in her school digital story, just as she was in her prior-to-school story (CO-S). Skyla chose ten separate literacy events, was photographed eighteen times and selected seven photographs to create her digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Skyla’s school digital story and accompanying researcher observations.

Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *My name is Skylia and I'm at big school now and big school is fun.*

Observation: Skylia chose this image to introduce her digital story. Her oral script acknowledges her change in setting and her enthusiasm for the new school context (CO-S).



2. *Sometimes I go to the beach with my puppy and sometimes I cut up stories ... and I ... I love writing.*

Observation:

In this 'must-do' activity Skylia cut up and rearranged words to form a familiar sentence. She glued the words into her writing book and copied the sentence underneath. Skylia then retold a part of the story through illustrations (CO-S). This image is a page from Skylia's writing book. Skylia's oral script recounts an event from her life experience that she has written about: 'I go to the beach with my puppy' as well as the familiar classroom practice of cutting up stories. She ends using the word 'love' to describe her enjoyment of writing (CO-S).



3. *I figured out the names on the wall for the animals. It was a must-do job.*

Observation:

This is a 'must-do' activity. Skylia located and read the animal names of the felt figures, positioned on the back wall of the classroom. She used her knowledge of beginning sounds in words to identify the initial letter of the words, and this helped her to match the animal with its name (CO-S). Skylia's oral script reveals her confidence in participating in this activity.



4. *I like to read rhyming books and they make me laugh and it's a must-do job. Sometimes Miss Wilson reads me rhyming books and it's a 'Giraffe in the Bath'. It's my favourite.*

Observation:

This was a 'must-do' activity. Skyla sat with her friend Maddy, engaging with picture books. Skyla described (to the researcher) what was happening in the book, sharing the humour and rhyme in the text addressing each page. Skyla's oral script reveals her enjoyment of reading rhyming books. She referred to her favourite book *Giraffe in the Bath* by Mem Fox (CO-S).



5. *Miss Wilson printed it off the computer and I coloured it in and it was a must-do job and I like drawing.*

Observation:

After engaging with a whole class story (*The Enormous Watermelon* retold by Brenda Parkes and Judith Smith) Skyla represented an aspect of the experience by colouring in a picture of the watermelon. This was a 'must-do' activity directed by the teacher. Skyla chose this image to represent her engagement with creative arts, reflected in her oral script. The children's work was displayed on the classroom walls for Grandparents' Day (CO-S).



6. *I did a picture for craft and it was a marbling one and it was fun and I love that kind of one.*

Observation:

This was a whole class art activity, not observed during the English session. The teacher directed the text creation. Skyla chose this image which reflects her engagement with creative arts. Her oral script reveals the technical term for this type of art activity *marbling*, and her use of the words ‘fun’ and ‘love’ reveals her enjoyment of it (CO-S).



7. I drew a picture of a girl and I put it in a letterbox for my mum and it was a choice.

Observation:

This is a choice activity. In this image Skyla is drawing a picture of a girl for her mum. She posts it in the class letterbox. At the end of the English session the teacher shares the contents of the post box with the children, who may respond orally to each other and to the group (CO-S).

Interpretive summary

Skyla demonstrated a positive and enthusiastic approach to literacy events in both the prior-to-school and the first year of school settings (JE; CO-S). In her prior-to-school digital story, the literacy events she chose revealed Skyla interacting with familiar texts in socio-dramatic play, and in reading, writing, drawing and creating. Similarly, school her digital story is representative of a range of experiences with literacy, including exploration of written and visual texts, reading, writing, drawing and creating.

Skyla displayed a sense of familiarity and belonging as she engaged with and described the breadth of literacy opportunities available to her in the familiar prior-to-school setting. She was comfortable in participating in the prior-to-school focus group interview, and journal entries noted that she navigated the literacy opportunities with independence and control (JE).

The confidence and control Skyla enjoyed in the prior-to-school setting developed during the transition period into her new less familiar setting (CO-S). As noted earlier, Jemima described Skyla’s growing confidence in participating in literacy events in

school (STFG). This was particularly evident in the oral script in her school digital story. For example Skyla's introductory statement said 'I'm at big school now and big school is fun' (SDSC-S). She used the words: 'I love' and 'I like' in four of six scenes, and the words 'It's my favourite' (scene 4), and 'It was fun', (scene 6) (SDSC-S). After viewing Skyla's prior-to-school and school digital stories, Jemima noted that 'they (Skyla and Maddy) just looked really happy and proud about what they had done in both places' (STFG).

In her prior-to-school digital story, three of eight scenes showed Skyla participating in socio-dramatic play (PDSC-S). Through engagement with socio-dramatic play Skyla experimented with the purposes and functions of literacy, creating oral and written texts linked to family and community literacy events (drawing Rapunzel, scene 2; dressing the baby, scene 3; being a nurse, scene 7; being a doctor, scene 8). In the first year at school there were no opportunities observed for Skyla to participate in socio-dramatic play during the data collection period. However, she experimented with the purposes and functions of literacy in creating written and visual texts (CO-S). These included: Skyla's written account of a personal experience of going to the beach (scene 2) and drawing a picture for her mum and posting it in the classroom letterbox (scene 7) (SDSC-S). It seemed apparent from the digital story that Skyla viewed the creation of written and visual texts as having the specific purpose of conveying meaning to the reader or viewer and at times a specific audience.

In understanding that written letter symbols create meaning for the reader, Skyla was keen to spell words correctly as evidenced in both the prior-to-school and school contexts (JE; CO-S). In the prior-to-school setting she asked 'how do you write *there's a fire at the fire station?*' (scene 9) and in school she was observed to carefully construct written texts following directions from the teacher (CO-S). As noted earlier by Jemima, once Skyla realised it was fine to make mistakes she became more confident about experimenting with creating texts (STFG). These data suggest that Skyla understood that written texts must adhere to specific written language conventions in order for the reader to understand the precise message. Skyla's developing skill with written language, observed during classroom observations, has extended the confidence and control she enjoyed in the prior-to-school context to her participation in literacy events in her new less familiar setting (CO-S).

Skyla was observed to have a keen interest in creating purposeful texts using visual and written modes in both the prior-to-school and the first year of school contexts (JE; CO-S). The texts Skyla created in the prior-to-school setting were chosen by her and related to experiences from within the prior-to-school centre, her home and community. The texts she created in school during the data collection period were also chosen by her (writing a letter for her mum, scene 7), and other texts were directed by the teacher (personal recount, scene 2; the watermelon, scene 5 and the craft activity, scene 6) (SDSC-S). It would appear that Skyla was equally positive about following teacher directions for the creation of texts as she was about directing the creation of her own texts. This is exemplified in the image and oral script in scene 6 (teacher directed art activity). She stated, 'I did a picture for craft and it was a marbling one and it was fun and I love that kind of one' (SDSC-S). Skyla used the technical term 'marbling' for the particular art technique used in the text creation, demonstrating her understanding of and engagement in the activity (SDSC-S).

In both settings Skyla demonstrated a familiarity and engagement with story (JE; CO-S). She engaged in reading for what appeared to be personal enjoyment, and evidence from the data suggested a familiarity with story from both home and prior-to-school contexts. In the prior-to-school story the image and oral script in scene 6 portrayed her reading the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. She used language structures from the text to tell the story whilst viewing the pictures in the book (prior-to-school scene 6) (PDSC-S). Making connections between her experiences with story in the prior-to-school setting and in her new setting Skyla nominated rhyming books as a kind of text she enjoyed (school scene 4). She also revealed she liked listening to stories read by the teacher and named a favourite text *Giraffe in the Bath* (school scene 4) (SDSC-S).

Skyla communicated her perspective on the literacy events she engaged with in the prior-to-school centre and the first year of formal school through her digital stories. She confidently took up a range of the opportunities available to her in both settings, engaging in the creation of a range of written and visual texts. Building on skills with written language she gained in the prior-to-school setting and from familiar and new experiences with texts in school, Skyla appeared to have further developed her confidence in engaging with a range of literacy events. Her familiarity with story is evident in both prior to school and in school, as she engaged with picture books and

talked around narrative texts with enthusiasm and confidence. From analysis of the data it is reasonable to suggest that Skyla had a positive and enthusiastic approach to the literacy events she participated in at the time of transition from the prior-to-school setting to the first year of school.

Tommy

The prior-to-school setting

Tommy was five years of age at the time of the inquiry and is the eldest of three siblings. He attended the prior-to-school setting two days per week. Tommy was observed to be an amiable and communicative child who enjoyed a variety of activities in the prior-to-school setting (JE). An easy rapport with the researcher was established and Tommy was happy to be photographed engaging in his chosen literacy events (JE). He displayed a sense of familiarity with the setting and the people, as he described his engagement in the various literacy events on offer within the prior-to-school setting (JE).

Tommy was observed as a participant four times in the prior-to-school setting. To create his digital story Tommy chose eleven separate literacy events and was photographed twenty-one times. He chose eleven photographs, sequenced them and assembled them into iMovie with the researcher. Tommy tired of the process of digital story creation after completing six scenes. As a result, the process was suspended and was resumed later that afternoon, when Tommy agreed to complete his digital story by recording the oral script for the last two images represented.

The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Tommy's prior-to-school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations. The first six scenes were captured in the outside area of the prior-to-school setting and the remaining four were captured in the inside area. For each of the nine scenes Tommy made a literal connection in the oral script, as well as revealing additional information about the activity.

Scenes



Observation: Tommy chose this image to introduce himself in his digital story.

Oral script

1. Introduction: *My name is Tommy.*



2. *Um, this is when um, um, um, I was doing craft and it was for daddy.*

Observation: Positioned in the verandah area Tommy chose to be photographed creating this visual text. He was observed to be enthusiastically experimenting with ways of expressing ideas and meaning by painting a plate as a mask and decorating a large sheet of paper with Christmas stamps (PDSP-T).



3. *Um, I was, I like to go on the play set with my friends.*

Observation: Tommy chose to be photographed during physical play with friends in the outside area. He climbed on the playground and engaged in interactions with peers using verbal and non-verbal language and showed enthusiasm for physical play (PDSP-T).



4. *I like to swing with my friends and I like to um, um, they, we jump in and, and they smash us.*

Observation: Similar to scene 3 Tommy chose to be photographed again on the play equipment, this time in the swing section in the middle of the playground. He initiated and contributed to this play experience which emerged for his own idea (PDSP-T).



5. *Um, um, we um, we both um, seesaws because um, um because, because I did it with my friend Dan and it was so fun.*

Observation: Tommy and his friend Dan played on the seesaw together in the outside area. The two children were observed to engage in enjoyable interactions using verbal and non-verbal communication during this activity (PDSP-T).



6. *Um, I like to read books about Santa with the elves be ... um, because I like the Christmas books because I like them.*

Observation: Positioned in the outside play area Tommy reads *Merry Christmas Maisy* by Lucy Cousins, a picture book about Christmas. This was a familiar book for Tommy. He described the events portrayed on each page as he lifted the flaps and interacted with the visual text (PDSP-T). Tommy was observed to enthusiastically engage in this event, demonstrating his enjoyment of story (PDSP-T).



7. *Um, um these were um, these were um, um circ...
um, round lollies.*

Observation: Positioned in the outside play area, Tommy was observed to create a visual text (similar to scene 2). He painted lollies, describing them in the oral script (PDSP-T).



8. *Um, this um, we um, if someone was sick um, we
um, we need to ring them up and give them some
medicine.*

Observation: Tommy role-plays a familiar, family/community literacy event in the inside play area set up as a doctor's surgery. The image shows Tommy using a display folder containing written and visual texts as part of his role as a doctor (PDSP-T). Included in the area were a stethoscope, doctor's kit, medical bag, writing forms, a bed, desk, magnifying glass, telephone, computer keyboard, writing journals and writing implements. Tommy's oral script relates to the social purpose of the play experience (PDSP-T).



9. *Um, I like to draw octopuses.*

Observation: Positioned in the inside area Tommy drew an octopus on a large sheet of paper. When questioned by the researcher about whether he would like to write a story to accompany his picture, he wrote 'oimo' at the top of the page, representing the word 'octopus'. Tommy used images and approximations of letters and words to convey meaning, demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between written, visual and oral representations (PDSP-T).



10. *Um, I like my family and um, because because they make um, because they give me mince and ... I only can say that.*

Observation: Positioned in the inside area Tommy drew all the members of his family on the chalkboard. He colour coded the males blue and the females yellow. Tommy stated there were five people in his family and he wrote the numeral 5. Tommy's drawings are symmetrical in appearance with each family member having very similar characteristics but individual hairstyles (PDSP-T).



11. *I like playing with puzzles.*

Observation: Positioned in the inside area Tommy chose to be photographed completing a puzzle about work tools. He was observed engaging in conversation with peers whilst problem solving the puzzle with ease (PDSP-T).

The first year of formal school

Tommy transitioned into the first year of formal school as one of four child participants (Ivory, James, Lee and Tommy) in the KLW class. He displayed a positive attitude towards the new learning environment in school. In the introductory scene for his digital story Tommy stated, 'I like everything in my classroom' (SDSP-T).

His teacher Bernadette commented, 'I initially thought because he was a little bit upset when he first came and that he was a little timid and mum was a bit worried ... [however] Tommy is a very clever little boy' (STFG-T). During the data collection period Tommy was observed to fit into the routine of the classroom with ease. Prior-to-school directors Angie and Kylie were not surprised and Kylie gave some insights into her own perspective into the nature and purpose of school. Kylie commented, 'Tommy was always set up for school anyway because his mum was always getting him there ... they did lots of homework, sounds and letters' (PEFG).

Initially Tommy was reluctant to leave the activities he was engaged with in the classroom to take part in the creation of his digital story. However, after his teacher's encouragement he agreed (CO3-T). Tommy chose eleven separate literacy events, was photographed twenty-three times and selected nine photographs to create his digital story. The following section presents the scenes and oral script from Tommy's school digital story, accompanied by researcher observations.

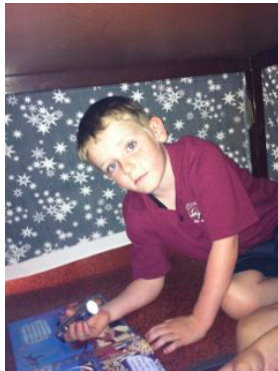
Scenes



Oral script

1. Introduction: *My name is Tommy and I like everything in my classroom.*

Observation: Tommy chose this image to introduce his digital story. His oral script acknowledges his change in setting and his enthusiasm for the new school context (CO1-T).



2. *I like to play in Starzone and you have to get a torch ... and you have to read.*

Observation:

This was a ‘choice’ activity. In this image Tommy is positioned in the ‘starzone’ (under a table covered with a star cloth) using the torch to read and view his picture book independently. The beginning of Tommy’s oral script shows that he views the ‘starzone’ as a place to play and an activity that he enjoys. He knows the purpose of this activity and added to the end of his script: ‘and you have to read’ (SDSC-T).



3. *Crunch and sip. You have to eat and you have to ... if you hear the bell you have to go inside and have a read.*

Observation:

Crunch and sip is a ‘must-do’ activity. Tommy chose to sit outside the classroom at the table to eat his fruit and drink his water (CO1-T). His oral story describes the rules for this activity ‘You have to eat’ and when the bell rings it is time to go into the ‘engine

room’ to read with the teacher.



4. In the engine room I like to write and I like to read new books.

Observation:

Tommy chose this image of the ‘engine room’. It represented his daily engagement in this event. Tommy was observed to participate confidently in this literacy event, reading a simple caption text guided by the teacher (CO2-T). His oral script shows that he enjoyed participating in the ‘engine room’ and that he understood its purpose – to read new books.



5. This is um, the story of the fete and you have to, and, and, and you have to write and, and you have to do the house.

Observation:

This is a ‘must-do’ activity that followed on from interactive writing. The children were asked to compose and write a story about what they would do at the school fete the following day. They were to begin the story with ‘I am going ...’ (written on the whiteboard), add their own ending to the sentence and draw a picture to match their story. Tommy wrote ‘I am going to the ft (fete)’ (CO3-T). He accompanied the text with a drawing of the house (the haunted house at the fete) referred to in the oral script.



6 I like colouring all the words what starts with 'T' and my favourite animal is the turtle.

Observation:

In this image Tommy is colouring the pictures that begin with the letter 'T'. All the pictures begin with this letter (CO1-T). This is a 'choice' activity. His oral script revealed this new understanding and also made a personal connection to the text by commenting on one of the pictures, by saying 'my favourite animal is the turtle'. Tommy was observed to colour the picture with precision (SDSC-T).



7. I like colouring all the colours in the Rainbow Fish.

Observation: In this 'must-do' activity Tommy coloured in the picture of the Rainbow Fish. He used a variety of bright colours and followed the instructions of the teacher. He was observed to be very proud of his efforts (CO1-T). This activity was in response to the children listening to and viewing *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister on the interactive whiteboard (CO1-T). The children's work was displayed on the classroom walls.



8. Dear Grandma can you please have something to eat with me on, um, on Grandparents Day?

Observation:

This was a whole class art activity directed by the teacher. It was not observed during

the data collection period. The image shows the classroom wall display of Tommy's artwork and written text (SDSC-T). The written text was composed by Tommy and scribed by the teacher using a Word document. Tommy's oral script does not refer to the text itself but makes a personal connection between the image and the activity of sharing food with grandparents that will occur on Grandparents' Day.



9. *Clifford likes to play with this ... my ... the friends and this is my favourite book.*

Observation:

This was a 'choice' activity. Tommy chose his favourite book *Clifford the Big Red Dog* by Norman Bridwell, to read independently. He was observed to engage enthusiastically with the text (CO3-T). Tommy's oral script describes the role of the main character Clifford. Similar to scenes 2 and 4, this scene demonstrates Tommy's enthusiasm for engaging with books and understanding of story.

Interpretive summary

Tommy was observed to engage enthusiastically in a range of activities in both the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal school setting. His positive attitude and open, friendly demeanour, suggested that he was present to the joys, complexities and challenges of both the familiar prior-to-school setting and the new, less familiar school setting (JE; CO1-T; CO2-T; CO3-T).

The literacy events portrayed in the prior-to-school digital stories revealed Tommy's interaction with familiar texts in physical play, socio-dramatic play, reading, writing, drawing and creating (PDSC-T). Similarly, the school digital story is representative of a range of experiences with literacy, including exploration of written and visual texts, as well as the classroom routines of the 'engine room' and 'crunch and sip' (SDSC-T).

In his prior-to-school digital story Tommy used the words 'I like' in six of the ten scenes as he described the activities he engaged in. He also used the word 'because' when offering a rationale for his choices. For example, 'because I did it with my friend'

(scene 5), ‘because I like the Christmas books’ (scene 6) and ‘because they give me mince’ (scene 10) (PDSC-T). These digital story scenes suggest Tommy’s choice of literacy events in the prior-to-school setting were familiar and enjoyable, and also give the viewer insight into his social and cultural world.

Tommy reported in scene 1 in his introduction to his school digital story that he liked everything in his new school classroom. He described the literacy events, again using the phrase ‘I like to ...’ but also adding the phrase ‘you have to ...’ throughout the oral script in his digital story (SDSC-T). The words ‘I like’ were used four times, indicating Tommy’s engagement and familiarity with the literacy events. The words ‘you have to’ were used seven times, indicating the constraints associated with the literacy events available in his new setting. For example:

You have to read (scene 2).

You have to eat and you have to ... if you hear the bell you have to go inside and have a read (scene 3).

And you have to write and, and you have to do the house (scene 5) (SDSC-T).

The digital story revealed Tommy’s understanding of the rules and routines associated with the literacy events in the first year at school, and that his motivation for engaging with the events went beyond personal choice and involved conforming with the teacher’s particular expectations.

Journal entries described how Tommy adapted to the rules and routines of his new school setting. For example, Tommy sat attentively with his hand up ready to answer questions during whole class interactive writing (CO3-T), and as noted earlier (in James’s digital story interpretive summary), Tommy received an award from the teacher in the first few weeks of school, suggesting the teacher’s apparent approval of Tommy in his new environment (CO1-T). Bernadette (KLW teacher) reported ‘he is one of those kids who you just have to say something little and encouraging and his little chest puffs up and he runs with it’ (STFG). This indicated Tommy readily developed a sense of familiarity and control in his new school setting.

In the prior-to-school setting Tommy was observed to engage readily in the creation of texts through drawing, painting, making and experimenting with written symbols,

demonstrating his enthusiasm for artistic pursuits (JE-T). He made personal choices regarding the medium, the process and the production of texts, and engaged his creativity and imagination. These texts included: making craft for daddy (scene 2), painting lollies (scene 7), going to the doctors (scene 8), drawing octopuses (scene 9) and drawing his family (scene 10) (PDSC-T). Tommy chose and directed these literacy events in the prior-to-school digital story. They reflected his everyday lived experiences from home and community, and offered insight into his particular knowledge and understanding of his world.

In the first year of school Tommy also engaged in the creation of texts through drawing, painting and using three-dimensional materials. He revealed during classroom observations that drawing and using the computer (not observed during the data collection period) to create visual texts were his favourite activities in his new setting (CO3-T). The texts however, were noted to be more teacher-directed and less personal than those in the prior-to-school setting. For example, the fete text (scene 5) and the grandparent painting (scene 8) were texts created by Tommy but chosen and directed by the teacher (SDSC-T). These texts allowed less creative and personal input and less insight into Tommy's social and cultural world than was evident in his prior-to-school texts.

Opportunities for colouring were on offer as 'choice' and 'must-do' activities in school – for example the letter 'T' (scene 6) and *The Rainbow Fish* (scene 7). In describing these activities in the oral script accompanying the images, Tommy used the words, 'I like colouring', again demonstrating his enthusiasm for artistic pursuits (SDSC-T). Unlike the texts created prior to school, these texts afforded Tommy limited opportunities to demonstrate creativity or personal expression.

In prior-to-school literacy events, Tommy also experimented with written symbols and their connection to visual texts. He demonstrated his understanding of the connection between written symbols and visual texts in the octopus painting (scene 9) and the family drawing (scene 10) (PDSC-T). In school, literacy events planned by the teacher supported Tommy in further developing this understanding of the connection between letter symbols, sounds and visual texts, as evidenced in the 'engine room' (scene 4), the fete text (scene 5) and in the letter 'T' worksheet (scene 6) (SDSC-T). Tommy's developing skills with written language were observed during classroom observations.

They extended the confidence and control he enjoyed in his new setting (CO1-T; CO2-T; CO3-T). Confirming this, and giving some insight into her perceptions about the purposes and processes of school, teacher Bernadette reported ‘Tommy is doing very, very well. Beautiful writing!’ (STFG).

Tommy revealed his enthusiasm for reading in both his prior-to-school and school digital stories. At the time of data collection in the prior-to-school centre there were many opportunities to engage with Christmas texts. In the image in the introductory scene of the prior-to-school story, Tommy was reading Christmas books in the outdoor area (introductory scene 1 and scene 6) (PDSC-T). In school, Tommy chose two images of himself engaged in reading picture books, in the Starzone (scene 2) and reading *Clifford the Big Red Dog* (scene 9). Tommy described *Clifford the Big Red Dog* as his favourite book (SDSP). Both these literacy events were choice activities for Tommy and reflected his enjoyment of, and connection to story.

In the prior-to-school setting, Tommy demonstrated enthusiasm for physical play with friends (JE). The images captured Tommy on the play equipment (scenes 3 and 4) and on the seesaw (scene 5). No opportunities for physical play were available in school during the data collection period (the English session). However, connection to play was evident in the school digital story. Tommy’s oral script stated, ‘I like to play in Starzone’ (scene 2). Interestingly Tommy added, ‘and you have to get a torch and you have to read’ (SDSP-T), suggesting that the activity, whilst engaging for Tommy, was specifically teacher-directed. This is unlike the self-initiated play, directed by Tommy and his peers, evident in the prior-to-school digital story (PDSC-T).

Tommy’s digital stories provided space for the sharing of his perspective of the literacy events he participated in during the time of transition from prior to school to the first year of formal school. Tommy was observed to be enthusiastic in engaging in literacy events in both settings. Research data revealed him to confidently and competently navigate a variety of texts in the prior-to-school centre and at school. The research data suggested that Tommy came to understand the rules and routines of school. They also showed he had a sense of belonging and control in his new setting.

Conclusion

The core data represented in this chapter were the digital stories created and shared by the seven child participants. The children's voices were 'heard' through the images and their oral annotations of the images relating to the literacy events they participated in the two settings at the time of their transition into formal schooling. These data were triangulated with the supporting data, the researcher observations and interviews with educators and teachers, enabling the researcher to make interpretive comments for each of the seven cases. The stories did not mirror the sample digital story shown to the children in phase one, and nor did they mirror each other's stories. Each of the children's digital stories is different, and they are all told from their individual perspectives, based on their thoughts and opinions about the ways they engaged with the literacy events on offer. The findings from this chapter 'The cases' and from Chapter 5 'The learning environment' will inform the discussion in Chapter 6 to answer the research questions of this inquiry.

Chapter Six

Discussion

Chapter 6 Discussion

Introduction to the chapter

This inquiry aimed to explore literacy transitions from the perspective of seven children as they moved from the same prior-to-school educational setting to the same first year of formal school setting. In doing so it addressed the following research questions:

The overarching question:

- How do children negotiate the literacy practices of a prior-to-school educational setting and a first year of formal school setting?

And contributing questions:

- What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?
- What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?

The previous two chapters reported the findings of this inquiry. Chapter Four provided insights into the nature of the learning environments in the prior-to-school and first year of school settings, the teachers' and educators' personal philosophies and how they interpreted relevant curriculum frameworks and syllabus documents when planning literacy opportunities for children. Chapter Five presented the cases of the seven children. Each case reported a child's creation and sharing of two digital stories as the core data source in this inquiry. The digital stories captured the children's unique perspectives of the literacy opportunities available to them in both settings, and the particular ways they participated in the literacy events at the time of transition from one educational context to the other.

Each research question will be discussed in the chapter. This discussion outlines the literacy opportunities available to the children in the two different educational contexts and the factors that influenced these opportunities. Factors considered include: the location of the setting, the organisation of the learning environments, the requirements of curriculum frameworks and syllabus documents, and how the educators and teachers

interpreted these documents in line with their personal beliefs about how children develop literacy skills and understandings.

The second research question is then addressed. The child participants made decisions about the literacy events they engaged in and which ones they would have photographed. They also decided which of the images they would include and annotate for their digital stories in both educational settings. From these data, how the children viewed the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school classrooms is explored, to gain their unique perspectives of the literacy events on offer in the two different educational contexts.

The next section reflects on the implications for transition practices as children negotiated the changes in literacy experiences when they moved from the prior-to-school setting to the school setting. The final section draws together the concluding remarks and recommendations of this inquiry.

What literacy opportunities are available for children in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?

In this inquiry the educators and teachers planned and implemented literacy events within the frameworks of mandated curriculums. In the prior-to-school setting, Kylie and Angie, the centre directors and owners, interpreted the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) and enacted their own beliefs and philosophies as they constructed literacy opportunities for the children within this prior-to-school learning environment. In the early childhood context the breadth of what is considered as literacy is wide. Educators are guided by the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) to provide opportunities for children to communicate meaning through music, dance, movement, art, craft, storytelling, talking, reading and writing.

The literacy practices noted from the observed literacy events made connection to the children's interests, their home and community experiences, and a variety of textual modes. Kylie and Angie described their approach to planning literacy events as wide ranging, and inclusive of activities such as painting, drawing, music and imaginary play. The learning journal that operated as the program in this prior-to-school setting provided evidence of this broad approach, as educators planned opportunities for the

children to engage in literacy events and then reflected on the children's responses to the events to inform planning for future literacy experiences. This aligned with Honig's (2007) finding that educators engage children with a range of texts including stories, poetry, drama, works of art, songs and dance, and often plan further literacy activities around areas of interest. The findings are also consistent with Burchinal and colleagues' (2010) argument that the educators themselves drive the quality of the program, and while there is guidance through the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) that states, 'educators work together to construct curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local contexts' (p. 11), there is also room for professional interpretation.

In the school setting teachers' planned literacy events were guided by the NSW English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) in conjunction with the K-10 Literacy Continuum (NSW DEC, 2011). The children's literacy knowledge was assessed using Best Start assessments (NSW DEC, 2009) in the first week of the new school year, and through this process the teachers mapped the results onto early learning plans that were used as their English program. This process enabled the teachers to identify the literacy skills and understandings that individual children brought with them to school, as a starting point for literacy teaching. The skills identified were those related to paper-based written and visual texts, and included reading, writing, comprehension, speaking and phonological skills. These skills are ones that have been identified by BOSTES (2015) as central to being literate. The teachers used the early learning plans to design modelled, guided and independent literacy experiences for the children centred on the development of these skills.

The literature review noted that literacy practices similar to those advocated today, had been employed much earlier, such as in the *Early Years Literacy Research Project* (Hill & Crèvola, 1998), and in established literacy practices from New Zealand (Clay, 1991) and elsewhere (Luke & Freebody, 1999). These earlier findings supported the structured and systematic teaching of reading and writing, closely linked to assessment data.

These literacy practices were also favoured by the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005), and by Loudon et al. (2005), who advocated a balanced and integrated approach, using explicit and systematic instruction. This approach appears to align with the expectations of the NSW Department of Education and Communities (2009), who

recommended a process of explicit and systematic teaching, linking assessment, planning and instruction using modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies. The author of this approach claimed it would ensure that children were equipped with a full range of literacy capabilities across the modes of reading, viewing, writing, representing, speaking and listening, embedded in authentic contexts (NSW DEC, 2009).

Teachers Jemima and Bernadette described their belief in offering children choice within the learning environment and in the need to foster children's independent learning skills. However, there didn't appear to be the same level of professional freedom for interpretation of the English curriculum as there was for the educators in the prior-to-school setting when planning using the EYLF. Teachers organised the classroom literacy routines in conjunction with the school mandated L3 program, which directed them to guide children's literacy skill development in small groups, and to diversify their instruction to meet the identified needs of the children. This approach also allowed the children to make choices about the literacy events in which to engage within the social context of the classroom.

Given the different curriculum frameworks of the two educational contexts, and the difference in professional freedom to interpret documents across learning contexts, there existed an expected variation in established literacy practices across the two settings. In the prior-to-school setting the educators planned with a focus on the child and providing suitable interest-based literacy events guided by a holistic framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a), and in the first year of formal school the teachers planned learning experiences which were still focused on the needs of the child, but which were connected to a range of literacy assessment data, linked to syllabus documents and a continuum of literacy skills and understandings (BOSTES, 2015). The change in policy documents from the prior-to-school to the first year in formal school, meant that for children at the time of transition between settings there were new literacy practices in which to engage. This meant that the children required new understandings and more skills in addition to those they had acquired in their prior-to-school educational setting. It is therefore important to understand how the children engaged in the different literacy practices and how continuity of learning was affected for the children at the time of transition into their first year of formal schooling.

The learning environment and literacy opportunities

The literacy opportunities available for the children were also influenced by the way the spaces were organised within the different educational learning environments. In this inquiry the educators in the prior-to-school setting planned the organisation of the indoor and outdoor learning spaces to capture the children's interest in the context of play. Observations and interactions with the children in the daily program, and reflections on these observations, informed the educators' planning of literacy events which would engage children in activities that interested them. These findings are supported by studies that link literacy opportunities to spaces or domains of practice. For example Neuman and Celano (2001) reported that learning practices are designed for the context in which the learning is situated, and are dependent on local practices and values, and this influences the opportunities available for children.

In the first year of formal school the range of literacy opportunities was also influenced by the organisation of the particular classroom environments during the English session. Similar to the prior-to-school setting, the spaces were organised by the teachers to allow for the planned literacy practices. The practices were designed by teachers with professional expertise and were in line with curriculum and system expectations. For example, the physical arrangement of the classroom allowed the children to engage in whole class learning, as well as 'choice' and 'must-do' activities in table areas and in allocated floor spaces. However, unlike the prior-to-school context where literacy events could occur in both indoor and outdoor spaces, the planned literacy interactions in the school context were physically limited to the classroom for the duration of the English session. In support of these findings Jewitt (2008) explained that literacy opportunities in schools are influenced by the physical and social boundaries of school and the curriculum. This may also be true for the prior-to-school setting as the literacy opportunities observed were also influenced by the physical space and the curriculum framework.

The location of the setting and literacy opportunities

This inquiry found that in the prior-to-school setting literacy opportunities were influenced by the local community connections of the directors and educators, who built relationships with families and children. The directors had lived and worked in the local

community for more than twenty-five years, and had forged connections with many families in the community. In this setting the reciprocal sharing of the children's interests and experiences across the home and prior-to-school contexts was commonplace and led to varied literacy events for the children within the established literacy practices of the setting. This is similar to the situation reported by Jones Diaz et al. (2000) who found that relationships that support daily conversations with families and children, assist educators to plan experiences according to the interests and experiences of children in their homes and communities. A range of research literature aligned with these findings, has argued that educators knowingly construct learning experiences relevant to the children and their local contexts through the establishment of caring relationships with children and their families (Cairney, 2002; McNaughton, 2002; Makin & Groom, 2002; Martello, 2007).

Conversely, community connections appeared to be less obvious and had limited influence on the literacy opportunities available in the first year of school classrooms. Like Angie and Kylie in the prior-to-school setting, teachers Bernadette and Julia had been associated with the participants' primary school for a long time (fifteen and twenty five-years respectively), and as such, they potentially held considerable knowledge about the community and the families who attended the school. However, the findings showed that the literacy opportunities available in the school classrooms at the time of the transition did not appear to reflect overt connections with the community. Perhaps this was because in the formal school setting the focus was on more academic literacies that drew on the internal practices of the school. As Mackenzie's (2014) findings reported, the structured approach to planning by teachers in the first year of school afforded less flexibility in learning opportunities. Furthermore, Petriwskyi et al. (2005) observed that schools, as part of a state-based system, have less flexibility in structures than do prior-to-school settings, and this potentially limited opportunities for drawing on home literacy practices.

Further to this, the opportunity for the teachers to make connections to the personal lives of the children and their families appeared restricted due to the observed interaction patterns of teachers and children. For example, the structure of the localised, system-developed L3 program meant the time for the teachers to interact personally with individual children was limited. During the observed English sessions, time in the

‘engine room’ for each group of children was no more than ten minutes, leaving little time for sharing of children’s personal stories or interests in this first year of formal school. This finding is supported by Ford and Opitz (2002) who claim that a teacher’s time with individual children is dramatically reduced through the pedagogical approach of small group teaching. It is apparent that the interaction patterns in the school context were very different from those in the prior-to-school centre, where the children would converse readily with the educators throughout the day. In the school setting, restrictions on when and with whom children could talk were evident. Questions therefore arise as to how the children viewed and adapted to what appeared to be a change in their relationships with their teachers at the time of transition.

Teachers’ beliefs and subsequent planned literacy opportunities

In this inquiry the literacy opportunities made available were influenced by the particular beliefs of the educators and teachers in the different contexts. For example, the experienced early-years educators drew on personal beliefs about literacy and children’s literacy learning to inform decisions about planning literacy events to make available for the children. The educators described their beliefs that children learn through play and through dialogue with peers and educators in the social context of the learning environment. These beliefs were evident in the information shared by the children in their digital stories, as they described their engagement in play experiences alongside friends. The beliefs expressed by the centre directors cited the importance of gauging the children’s interests throughout the day in order to make planning decisions for the following day. This was evident in the centre’s learning journal. This finding aligned with that of Stipek and Byler (1997), who claimed that how teachers plan and implement literacy opportunities for young children is definitely associated with their beliefs about literacy and the literacy practices associated with the settings. Further supporting this view Foote et al. (2010) found that what teachers do is likely to stem from their particular beliefs about what is best for young children’s literacy learning. However, they also observed that on occasions what teachers believed about what was appropriate for children’s literacy development, and the opportunities they actually provided, were at times mismatched. This mismatch was not evident in this prior-to-school setting.

Similarly, in the first year of formal school the teachers' personal beliefs about how children best learn literacy knowledge and skills informed decisions about the planning of literacy events for the children. The teachers noted that for children, choice was an important element of learning, and one that connected well with their perception of prior-to-school practices. This was evident in the organisation of their classroom learning environments in which the element of choice established as part of the L3 program. However, the concept of choice appeared to have different meanings across and within the two settings. For example, in the prior-to-school context it was expected that the children should choose what to do and when. As such Kylie and Angie did not refer to choice as a significant option in regards to literacy events. In the school context choice meant that the children could choose from a selection of teacher-planned literacy events inside the classroom with a close focus on developing a specific language/literacy skill. Luke (2010) pointed out that educators and teachers planning and implementing learning experiences for children using curricula with different ideologies enact the curricula differently, and that this was apparent in their pedagogical practices. Johnson (1992) argued much earlier that the ways in which teachers translate their beliefs into practice might be affected by implicit and explicit curriculum mandates which could limit options.

The literacy events

The kinds of literacy events that were in place within the educational settings of this inquiry provided insights into the way literacy was defined within the learning spaces of prior-to-school and school contexts. This led to the identification of similarities and differences. The educators in the prior-to-school setting stated their belief that literacy was a social construct embedded in a diverse range of everyday experiences with a range of texts, usually in the context of play. Table 6.1 shows the frequency with which literacy events represented in the children's prior-to-school digital stories occurred.

Table 6.1 Frequency of literacy events in the prior-to-school digital stories

| Literacy event | Frequency of event |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Physical play | 16 |
| Written and visual text creation | 10 |
| Reading - free choice | 9 |
| Socio-dramatic play | 8 |
| Three-dimensional text creation | 7 |
| Painting/ Drawing | 7 |
| Puzzles | 2 |
| Constructive play | 2 |
| Storytelling | 1 |
| Singing | 1 |
| Routine (morning tea) | 1 |
| Total scenes analysed | 64 |

Physical play was the most frequently represented literacy event in the children’s digital stories in the prior-to-school context (evident in 16 scenes). Second was the creation of written and visual texts in which children drew images and experimented with print to accompany the images (evident in 10 scenes). Similar to this event the creation of personal texts through the use of three-dimensional materials (evident in 7 scenes) and through painting and drawing (also evident in 7 scenes) were favoured by the children. Free choice reading of picture books was the third-most popular literacy event (evident in 9 scenes), followed closely by children’s participation in socio-dramatic play (evident in 8 scenes).

The table demonstrates the variety of literacy events planned that the children engaged with in this prior-to-school setting across the modes of reading, viewing, writing, creating, speaking and listening in a range of social contexts. In alignment with these findings the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) stated that children in prior-to-school settings engage with a range of texts, express ideas and make meaning using a range of media. Additionally Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) asserted the value of emergent literacy knowledge acquired through reading, viewing, speaking, listening and creating texts in informal ways in social contexts. Furthermore Foote and Smith (2002) argued that children develop literacy through a wide range of opportunities in prior-to-school educational settings.

A valued literacy practice in this prior-to-school setting was the sharing of picture books. Table 6.1 shows that the children chose book reading as a preferred literacy

event in nine scenes in their prior-to-school digital stories. The educators' belief that children need to develop a love of literature by exposure to books and by being read to every day, as well as developing a passion and enjoyment of literacy in all its forms, was evident in the established literacy practices of the setting. Findings showed that there were multiple opportunities for the children to engage with familiar picture books and storytelling for what appeared to be personal enjoyment. Analysis of the data revealed that all seven children engaged with picture books individually and in small or large groups, within the indoor and outdoor learning spaces. This finding aligns with Goodman (1986) who argued that children arrive at formal school with experiences of making meaning using print and visual images in books. Additionally Raban and Coates (2004) found that the prior-to-school settings in their study were print-rich environments that immersed children into a literacy culture.

Similarly, this inquiry found that in the first year of school the sharing of picture books was a valued literacy practice. There were opportunities for the children to engage with picture books for what appeared to be the purpose of enjoyment. Table 6.2 shows the frequency with which literacy events represented in the children's first year of school digital stories occurred. Free choice reading was the most frequent literacy event represented (evident in 9 scenes), suggesting that like the prior-to-school setting, this was a literacy event the children were familiar with and enjoyed engaging in. It was evident that the children's positive attitude towards reading picture books had transferred into the first year of formal schooling. In alignment with these findings, Raban and Coates (2004) observed the importance of children being situated in a print rich environment with multiple opportunities to engage with books and storytelling. Further to this, Collins and Svensson (2008) observed that engagement with reading and enjoyment of narrative is vital for children's reading development, and for developing positive attitudes towards reading.

Table 6.2 Frequency of literacy events in the first year of formal school digital stories

| Literacy event | Frequency of event |
|--|--------------------|
| Reading – free choice | 9 |
| Written and visual text creation- guided | 9 |
| Tracing/colouring | 7 |
| Engine room – guided reading and writing | 6 |
| Item knowledge – letter/sound | 6 |
| Item knowledge – word | 5 |
| Painting | 5 |
| Constructive block play | 2 |
| Written and visual text creation | 2 |
| Jobs for the teacher | 1 |
| Physical play | 1 |
| Puzzles | 1 |
| Routine (crunch and sip) | 1 |
| Total scenes analysed | 55 |

Evident in both settings was the common literacy practice of adults sharing books with children. In the prior-to-school setting this practice was observed throughout the observation period, where educators would share narrative texts with groups of children. However, classroom observations documented that ‘reading to’ literacy events, in which the teacher shared a picture book with the class as part of L3 requirements, were not observed during the data collection period, with teachers admitting to experiencing difficulty in including all the expectations of the L3 program, particularly the specified six daily ‘reading to’ events (STFG). However, in one first year of school classroom the children commented on their enjoyment of the teacher reading their ‘favourite’ books (CO-S; CO-M). This meant that there was time made for listening to and viewing literature with their teacher, although perhaps this literacy event was mainly limited to times outside the structure of the English session.

The literacy practice of children experimenting with written symbols for the creation of personal texts was evident in both the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal school, albeit to a lesser degree at school. Table 6.1 shows that in the prior-to-school setting the creation of personal texts through written and visual modes including painting, drawing and three dimensional texts was represented in twenty four scenes. In contrast, Table 6.2 shows that the creation of personal written and visual texts was represented in the school digital stories in only two scenes, and those two scenes were

‘choice’ activities. These data may suggest that this type of literacy event was of less value to the teachers in the first year of formal school setting than it was to the educators in the prior-to-school context. Perhaps the focus on teaching the skills related to reading and writing left minimal time for children to experiment with those skills in personally meaningful ways. The literature reports that children are motivated to create personal texts, and this develops their understandings of the purposes and functions of literacy because it involves experimenting with oral and written language (Raban, et, al., 2009). This finding aligned with Graves (1983), who affirmed the importance of young children's desire to communicate through drawing before they could write. One might question whether the creation of texts that were less personal and more teacher directed, had the same motivational impetus for young children as texts that the children chose and directed themselves. For example, in the school context the children were directed to colour in the watermelon text in a particular way, and talked about the purpose of doing so, which was to make them look good as a display for Grandparents Day (SDSC-M) suggesting that perhaps the text held and communicated less personal meaning for the students.

In these first year of school classrooms it appeared that the literacy practice of children personally creating visual texts was considered to be of minimal value in comparison to creating written texts during the English session. In a similar argument related to the personal creation of artistic texts, Eisner and Descollonges (2003) reported that teachers often require children to create formulaic artworks for the purposes of display in the classroom, rather than allowing them the freedom to create in personally meaningful ways. This belief is supported by Kellogg's (1969) much earlier assertion that children should be allowed freedom of expression when creating art works. Similar findings were evident in this inquiry as the children reported instances in their digital stories where visual texts were created in uniform ways for the purposes of classroom display. Questions arise as to the value teachers place on the importance of the creation of visual texts in the school setting as valid means of communicating meaning. Mackenzie and Veresov (2013) argued that teachers often do not view the creation of visual texts as a valid way to communicate meaning. They made further assertions, supported also by Anning and Ring (2004), that children's drawings are a valuable literacy practice and should continue to be valued in classrooms even after children have acquired the skills needed for creating written texts. Further to this van Oers (2007) contended that when

the texts children create have personal meaning to them, their literacy learning is enhanced.

However, multiple opportunities were available for the children to participate in the creation of written and visual texts directed by the teacher. These created texts were observed to recount a part of a familiar narrative or connect to the children's personal experiences. For example, Table 6.2 shows that these literacy events were represented in the children's digital stories in nine scenes. These included the regular literacy practice of whole class interactive writing, leading the children in creating their own written texts with accompanying visual texts. As a part of this practice the teachers modelled strategies for developing children's print concepts, graphological and phonological understandings, and sight word knowledge. These findings were similar to findings in the literature. Luke and Freebody (1999) recommended teachers embed literacy skills in meaningful contexts for children whilst ensuring a balanced and integrated approach to literacy learning. Further, Morris et al. (2003) attested to the importance of teachers engaging children in frequent and meaningful written activities around texts and Hill (2012), reported that in schools teachers planned around a range of types of texts including narrative. One could ask: for whom the text is meaningful? Would the text be more meaningful to the children if they were to have a choice over what type of text they might create?

Literacy events that supported children in the prior-to-school setting in understanding graphological and phonological knowledge were less formal than in the school context. For example, in the 'table time' routine, in which the children chose to engage in the creation of personal texts, educators were present to support the children's text construction, assisting them to connect sounds to letters or form written letter symbols through modelling. Educators also used the established literacy practices of engaging children in chants and rhymes, in which they played with words and sounds. This flexible approach to developing children's phonological awareness in prior-to-school settings is similar to that advocated by Mackenzie (2014), who reported that the prior-to-school context is 'a place for children to explore writing, if they wish, when they wish and how they wish' (Mackenzie, 2014, p. 97). Sanacore's (2010) findings supported these established literacy practices. He argued that when young children have opportunities to use a range of phonological skills in meaningful and engaging contexts,

it assists their literacy development.

However, within the context of the first year of school, as one might expect, teachers focused on developing specific skills related to reading and writing acquisition in more formally structured literacy events. In this inquiry the children in the first year of school practised the skills of phonics, phonemic awareness and word recognition on multiple occasions and identified these in their digital stories as being important. Table 6.2 shows that literacy events involving the practice of letter and sound item knowledge in decontextualised ways were represented in the school digital stories in eleven scenes. In alignment with this finding teachers are directed by system policy. The NSW K -12 Literacy Policy (2013, p. 1) states: ‘In the early years [of primary school], literacy teaching will include the explicit teaching of: phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary knowledge; comprehension; concepts about print; grammar, punctuation; spelling and handwriting’. Further to this the explicit teaching of phonological skills has been identified in studies as important to early reading acquisition (Ehri, 1991; Goswami, & Bryant 1990). However, the policy document (DEC, 2013) and other researchers, for example Luke and Freebody (1999), have stated that literacy educators must ensure an approach to literacy education that is balanced and integrated, and recommend that literacy experiences be embedded in real and meaningful contexts. At the time of this inquiry there appeared to be an imbalance, or what may be perceived as an over-emphasis on the constrained skills related to reading and writing acquisition in comparison with time spent in engaging with literacy experiences embedded in personally meaningful contexts.

Findings in this inquiry showed that literacy events involving children developing oral language skills were markedly different in the prior-to-school and formal school contexts. For example in the prior-to-school setting informal opportunities to participate in language interactions with educators and peers were commonplace. Perhaps the child-to-educator ratio of five children for every one educator meant that the children were afforded opportunities to hear and use language alongside peers and educators as they engaged in shared play experiences, in shared book experiences and in the daily routines of the setting. Barratt-Pugh (2007) reported similar findings, explaining that children’s frequent conversations with educators afford them opportunities to hear and use rich language.

Further to this, frequent opportunities to engage in talk with educators and peers and experiment with oral and written language, which are activities which developed children's literacy skills, occurred in the context of play. Table 6.1 shows that play was represented in the prior-to-school digital stories in twenty-six scenes, demonstrating this to be a dominant literacy practice in the prior-to-school context. Aligning with this inquiry's findings are Roskos and Christie (2001, p. 59) who argued that 'play contributes to children's literacy development through serving as a language experience that has the affordance to build connections between oral and written modes of expression'. Roskos et al. (2010) reported that having a variety of contexts for learning through play is important for children in developing literacy skills. It would appear, then, that multiple daily opportunities for children to talk with educators and peers emerged from the early childhood theories of play-based learning promoted in the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a).

Conversely, in the school classroom there was less opportunity for children to develop language skills in dialogue with teachers. This was perhaps due to the more structured learning environment and the teacher to child ratio being significantly greater than in the prior-to-school context. The focus of literacy events appeared to be less on oral language and more on the constrained skills considered important for reading and writing acquisition. In alignment with these findings Hill (2010) reported that oral language is not prioritised in school, as writing is considered a more valuable life skill in written cultures, and Danby and Davidson (2007) agreed, arguing that as teachers focus on the formal outcomes of literacy, less attention is given to children's oral language communication.

Further to this, the first year of the formal school setting that established literacy practices at the time of transition did not include an emphasis on play for developing the children's literacy skills. However, evident in the data were opportunities for the children to engage with play in the 'choice' activities in their English sessions. Play opportunities were viewed by the teachers as a way to make connections to children's experiences from home and prior-to-school settings. They were to be gradually phased out and replaced with more 'academic' activities as the children became more familiar with the more formalised literacy events of school. The findings showed, however, that the observed play literacy events in the school settings afforded the children less

opportunity to be creative and imaginative because they were constrained by the teachers' directions and routines. Gullo and Hughes (2011) similarly found that in the context of school, learning is about using structured materials in specific ways with little reference to creativity and play. In further support of these findings Margetts (2002) found that schools emphasise a work/ play distinction, in which 'play' is confined to break times in the playground rather than being positioned as a valid form of learning.

It was evident in this inquiry that in both educational settings, the children's engagement with digital and media texts in literacy events appeared to be only peripheral. In one instance in the prior-to-school setting the children were observed to use technology to access images and information about their daily activities that had been captured through still and moving images downloaded from the internet. Similarly, in the school setting, the children had access to digital technologies but this was observed in two instances only. The children used the classroom computers during the 'choice' activities to engage with an onscreen reading program in one classroom, and at another time the children were observed as a class group, viewing an online story reading website. The children did not choose to include literacy events involving digital texts in their digital stories in either setting. Perhaps this was because for them it was not a common or regular practice. In alignment with this finding Jewitt (2008) reported that in contemporary digitalised society, what is valued in school as literacy is increasingly challenged, and concerns have been expressed about the modal dominance of print-based literacies. Jewitt's finding is supported by Hill's (2012) assertion that children engage more readily with a range of multimodal and digital texts in home and community settings than in educational settings. It was apparent that both educational contexts, whilst providing opportunities for children to engage with multimodal digitalised texts, did not afford them the status they may have in home and community literacies.

In the prior-to-school educational setting a common literacy practice was engagement with popular culture texts of interest across a range of textual modes. For example at this time, the character of Rapunzel, recently made popular through the Disney movie *Tangle*, featured significantly in the texts created by the children in the prior-to-school setting. This was evident within the chosen literacy events represented in the children's

digital stories. In alignment with these findings Marsh (2010) observed that young children integrated media-related popular culture characters, texts and artefacts into traditional play such as socio-dramatic, imaginative and constructive play, and play using new technologies.

Conversely, opportunities to engage in literacy events with popular culture texts were not observed during the data collection in the school setting (CO). Perhaps the very structured approach of the classroom program meant there was limited time for teachers to explore the children's interests in popular culture texts. Hedges (2011) argued that using children's existing practices with media-based popular culture texts is a way for educators to engage children in meaningful literacy activities. Furthermore, Cloonan (2008) contended that by ignoring students' interests when choosing texts, with little attention to the expanding modes across contemporary texts, may lead to a narrowing of literacy instruction. The concept of narrowing the literacy opportunities available to children when they transition from their prior-to-school setting to the first year of formal school is one that will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

In summary, the literacy practices evident in the prior-to-school setting and in the first year of formal school in this inquiry shared both commonality and difference. Many of the familiar literacy events that were self-directed in the prior-to-school setting became more teacher-directed in the formal school context, resulting in new ways for children to engage in the literacy events. The number of events that made connections to the everyday lives of the children through play decreased as the teachers planned opportunities based on assessment of children's literacy knowledge and skills. A range of new literacy events were available which focused on children developing and practising skills in ways that were in the main de-contextualised from everyday social purposes.

In the prior-to-school setting the children engaged with literacy practices linked to real life experiences from home and community. The children's developing literacy skills were scaffolded by educators in socially purposeful ways. The dominant literacy practice in the prior-to-school setting was through children's engagement in play. Planned literacy practices aligned with the children's interests from home and community, and educators scaffolded children's literacy development through talk and by extending play experiences.

In the first year of school the children moved towards literacy practices that included a skills-based approach to literacy learning. The dominant literacy practice in the first year of formal school setting was the development of the very specific skills young children require to read and write print text, with less focus on the application of those skills for real life social purposes. The literacy practices associated with play and with personal interest texts appeared to be relegated to the peripheral. Perhaps they were considered unimportant in connection to the literacy practices required in school. This discussion foregrounds the need for children to be supported in negotiating the new and very different literacy events on offer as they move from the prior-to-school context and into the first year of school. A further point of interest is whether the children's motivation to engage as literacy learners will be sustained when practising the discrete skills of reading and writing without extended opportunities to create texts that are of personal interest to them.

The following section discusses the findings of this inquiry in relation to the second contributing research question:

- How do children view the literacy opportunities available to them in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings?

What are the children's perspectives on the literacy opportunities in each setting?

There is a gap in the research literature related to children's perspectives on the literacy events they engage with at the time of transition into formal schooling. Gaining the perspectives of children through talk alone can be difficult and may not represent their thoughts and opinions accurately. However, through digital storytelling the children's voices can be heard uninterrupted as they describe their participation in literacy events in both their familiar and new educational settings.

The children's perspectives on the literacy opportunities made available to them in both the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal schooling at the time of transition were revealed in the core data of this inquiry – the digital stories created by the seven child participants. In their digital stories the children described the literacy events they chose and participated in, offering their unique interpretations of the events in both

settings. This inquiry sought to understand the children as literate individuals as they went about participating in literacy practices in the two educational contexts. When the children were asked for their opinions and allowed the space to talk, and to show through photographs what it was like for them at the time of transition between the two very different settings, a different perspective was gained from that of the educators and teachers. In addition to this, multiple sources of evidence collected as secondary data, for example data from the educator and teacher interviews, along with observations and field notes, enabled the researcher to build a richer description of the cases and develop further understanding of the children's perspectives at the time of transition to formal school.

The seven child participants demonstrated a willingness to participate in the data collection process for the composition of their digital stories. In the prior-to-school setting the children were able to identify and describe the events they enjoyed engaging with, that were on offer within the learning environment of this context. It may be argued that those literacy events identified by the children were seen by them as the most valuable within the context as they were chosen and directed by the children themselves, suggesting their personal connection with the literacy experiences on offer.

Similarly, in the school setting, the children were able to identify and describe the literacy events they enjoyed engaging with that were on offer within the learning environment of this new context. In addition to identifying their chosen literacy events, the children described the routines and rules associated with the literacy events in their new classroom environments. This demonstrated their developing understanding of the ways in which they were expected to participate in the familiar and new literacy events on offer. Similar to the prior-to-school setting, it may also be argued that those literacy events identified by the children were seen by them as the most valuable within their new school context.

A positive approach

The seven child participants had a positive approach to the literacy events they participated in, across both educational settings. There were many examples in the data of the children using the phrases 'I like' and 'I love' when describing literacy events they engaged in in both settings. Jemima (school teacher) noted after viewing both

prior-to-school and school digital stories how proud and happy the children looked in both educational settings. With similar findings Harrison and Murray (2015) concluded that the majority of children reflect positively on their experiences in the first few months of transition to formal school.

The children appeared to comply with the very different rules, routines and expectations of the first year of school classroom. It seemed evident that they readily accepted, and even expected, that what was offered in their new setting was in many ways different from the range of events they engaged with in the prior-to-school context. The children directed the researcher in the prior-to-school setting, describing and participating in the literacy events on offer, and demonstrating their sense of belonging in this familiar context. Similarly, in the first year of formal school the children appeared to easily understand what was expected of them as they moved between the ‘choice’ and ‘must-do’ activities and into the ‘engine room’. The literature aligned with these findings reported that it is common for children to rely on their knowledge of school structures in order to feel confidence in the first few months of school (Harrison & Murray, 2015).

Rules and routines

As the children at the centre of this inquiry moved to the more formal setting of school they appeared to very quickly adopt the language of school and to understand that there were now ‘rules’ governing the literacy events in which they participated. This was evident in the children’s digital stories, as some annotated their images by describing the routines and teacher expectations associated with their chosen literacy events. Similar findings were reported by Einarsdóttir (2002) and Margetts (2009), who reported that children’s responses to questions about starting school contained references to the rules and routines of their new setting; that is, there was a focus on how to belong in this learning context.

Additionally, it became evident that even when the literacy events were similar, there was a shift in focus in the way the children reported on the literacy events in the two educational contexts. For example in the prior-to-school setting oral interactions between the researcher and the children were centred on the events and how they participated in those events. In the very different school context, the children’s perspectives began to focus on the purpose of the literacy events and the need to learn

appeared to take priority for these children. In one most notable example, Maddy explained her perception of the rules or expectations of her chosen literacy events in the oral script for each of the images in her school digital story. She appeared to realise that the literacy events she engaged with in school had a purpose beyond personal enjoyment, and that this purpose was learning as defined by the teachers, the school and the syllabus. Aligning with this finding, Pahl and Rowsell (2010) contended that 'literacy is always shaped by the context in which it occurs' (p. 3). This is a view shared by Neuman and Celano (2001) who saw literacy opportunities as dependent on the setting, local practices and values circulating within a space.

To further exemplify this finding, all seven children in this inquiry made connections between their engagement with books and story in the prior-to-school and their engagement in the first year of formal school setting. However, the ways of engaging with books appeared to be different in the formal setting of school. One noteworthy example of this was Maddy's demonstration of her understanding of narrative and her enthusiasm for books and for the telling of stories in the prior-to-school context. In the first year of school, the findings showed Maddy again engaging with books for the purpose of enjoyment, but she also revealed a new perspective on why she might engage with books, which was to learn new words. One is left wondering if the children in this inquiry who had learned a great deal about books and about narrative felt that this knowledge was valuable in their new school learning environment. Did the teachers recognise the knowledge about story that the children brought with them to school? Thomson (2002) argued that children are more likely to experience a positive start to school if what they know when they arrive is recognised and built upon by teachers.

New ways of participation

The ways of participating in literacy events from the prior-to-school educational setting to the first year of formal school appeared very different as children had less control over the choices they made about what and how to engage in the literacy events on offer in their new learning environment. Interestingly, the language the children used when they annotated the images in their school digital stories changed. This indicated that responsibility for decision-making regarding literacy events may have moved from the children to the teachers. This was evident in the children's language choices in their digital stories. One example is the change from first person to second person, 'I like

to...' to 'you have to...' when referring to literacy event participation. Fisher described the change in agency (2010) in the ways children respond to the possibilities afforded them in the classroom context. Rogoff's (2003) and Peter's (2014) findings supported the finding of this inquiry, that the children were required to change in the ways they participated in the sociocultural activities of the new educational community.

Further to this, in the prior-to-school setting the children appeared to confidently make personal choices about the literacy events in which they participated, and then self-directed the literacy event either independently or in collaboration with peers and educators. Conversely, it was apparent that in the formal school context when personal choices about how to interact with certain texts were only available sometimes, and ways of engaging in literacy events were teacher-directed, children's confidence may diminish. One example of this was the change which Ivory appeared to undergo. In the prior-to-school setting, Ivory engaged with confidence in her chosen literacy events but in school it appeared that she was not particularly confident, with her digital story revealing a tentativeness in relation to the literacy events she engaged with in this new less familiar setting. Was this perhaps because in the school context Ivory was expected to engage with texts in ways that were unfamiliar to her? Broström (2005), whose findings were similar, reported that in order for children to be confident in their new educational settings they required continuity of curriculum and pedagogical practices. Further to this Margetts (2014) explained that for children to confidently negotiate transition into formal school, continuity of experience is important. She further explained that the greater the changes for children the more difficult transition experience. One wonders how the expertise children acquire with literacy in their prior-to-school settings can be used as a bridge to support them in successfully navigating new learning in their school context at this important time.

However, for some, the opportunity to experience new ways of engaging in literacy events was a positive experience. For example, in the school context the rules around the creation of some texts appeared to overtake the process of self-direction and self-expression, restricting the children's choices. Rather than viewing this restricted choice as a negative aspect of the school literacy event, Skyla appeared to be as positive about following the teacher's directions when creating visual texts as she was about self-directing text creations. In this instance the school experience provided Skyla with an

opportunity to extend her knowledge and the data revealed that she took pleasure in learning new ways of creating texts. In another example James demonstrated his keenness to progress in learning by his comments in his digital story, where he was proud to show the new words he had learned and the way he could read his home reader. This finding is supported by Pramling and Williams-Granelds (1993) who reported that the most valued aspect of beginning formal school for many children was the opportunity to learn new things.

In summary, the young children in this inquiry shared their preferences for the literacy events they engaged with in the prior-to-school and in the first year of formal school through digital storytelling. Insight was given into the different ways they engaged in, and reported on, the literacy events on offer in these two very different educational contexts. It is evident that there were both similar and different literacy events available for the children to engage with at the time of transition, and insight was obtained into how the children adapted to the new ways of participation in the more formal learning environment of school. For some of the children the skills and preferences they brought with them from their prior-to-school setting were valuable as they engaged with new learning. Others did not find it as easy to make connections between the expertise in literacy they brought with them and their new learning contexts.

The following section discusses the findings of this inquiry in relation to the third contributing research question:

- What are the implications for transition as children move from one setting to another?

What are the implications for transition practices in the prior-to-school and first year of school settings?

This section outlines the implications identified from the analysis of the children's perspectives about the literacy events on offer in the two settings and the expected ways for children to engage in these events at the time of transition from the prior-to-school to the first year of formal school setting. The significance of gaining children's perspectives on the literacy events on offer as they move across two very different educational contexts is highlighted in this section. What the children have said invites

educators and teachers across contexts to reflect on the literacy opportunities they provide, their beliefs about how children learn literacy skills and knowledge, and their pedagogical practices at the time of transition to formal school.

Implications for educators and teachers

Educators and teachers have a responsibility to listen to what the children have to say (United Nations, 1989) as they consider what it is like for them at the time of transition between settings, what their opinions are on the literacy events on offer, and how they manage the different expectations associated with the literacy events and practices in the two different educational contexts. By creating space for the voices of the children to be heard at the time of transition from the same prior-to-school educational setting to the same first year of formal school setting, this inquiry has provided a deeper understanding of children as literacy learners and as participants in the social context of each educational setting. The children reported first hand on the literacy events they engaged with, the different ways they participated in these events, both socially and within the different spaces, and what their particular thoughts and feelings were. This finding aligns with Mantei and Kervin (2010) who examined the differences in children's learning styles and ways of interacting with the learning environment both physically and interpersonally, by listening to the opinions of children at the time of transition to school, and reporting about children's personal interests and learning preferences to first year of school teachers via digital stories.

Only when educators and teachers are in a position to know and understand the literacy events children engage with in each other's contexts can they be in a position to make connections to the literacy events in their own contexts. That is, educators need to understand primary classrooms, and primary teachers need to understand early childhood environments. The creation of the digital story artefacts meant that the children's perspectives documented as digital stories could be physically transferred across contexts, providing a potential bridge across settings which allowed for communication between stakeholders (Hartley, et al., 2009). When the educators and teachers in this inquiry viewed both sets of digital stories, they reported gaining a deeper understanding of the literacy events and practices that were on offer in each other's settings. These findings augment previous research documenting the importance

of educators in the prior-to-school and teachers in the school settings being knowledgeable about what happens in each other's contexts in order to support the smooth transition for children and a positive start to literacy learning in school (Dockett & Perry, 2014; Mackenzie, 2014; Peters et al., 2009).

This inquiry contributes to the understanding that children whose skills are similar to those valued at school make connections to the learning, and that their learning can potentially be extended in new ways. The space made by the digital stories for children to voice their opinions afforded the educators and teachers the potential to reflect upon the connections and discontinuities of the events provided for the children in this inquiry. With this understanding teachers are perhaps better able to make connections to the literacy knowledge, skills and understandings children bring with them from their prior-to-school educational settings. Kennedy et al. (2006) argued that when the curriculum is accessible to all students they make use of knowledge already acquired. Conversely, children's self-efficacy may decrease if connections are not made with children's areas of interest and expertise. Mackenzie, et al. (2011) found that under these circumstances children may become frustrated and develop negative attitudes towards learning.

Further, educators and teachers need to be aware of the finding that the literacy events children experienced in transition from their prior-to-school setting to their first year of formal school were in many ways incongruent. In this inquiry there were literacy events that played a dominant role in children's experiences in the first setting that appeared to hold limited value in the new school setting, for example the creation of personally meaningful visual texts and the oral texts associated with play and popular culture. For some children their ways of sharing their literacy knowledge and understandings with the teachers in their new context were limited. In alignment with this conclusion Peters (2000) reported that for those children who find it challenging to make connections to new ways of participating in literacy events, it is the nature of support they receive for adapting to the changes that will help them to have positive experiences with literacy. Peter's (2000) beliefs are supported by Dockett and Perry's (2004) assertion that if the demands of the new learning environment are too great, and if there are too many new skills to learn and the former ways of engaging in events are not valued, then a positive transition may be compromised.

This has implications for both the planning of literacy events and the pedagogical practices of educators and teachers. Teachers may best support young children to engage successfully in new literacy events by providing opportunities for children to participate in events similar to those offered in their prior-to-school settings. In addition, by implementing practices that connect the ways of engaging in prior-to-school and first year of school settings, teachers and educators may help children to successfully negotiate new literacy practices. Aligning with this finding Sanders et al. (2005) argued that at the time of transition teachers must adopt routines that are similar to those used in prior-to-school educational settings. Further to this Mackenzie (2014) argued that educators and teachers need to create a shared understanding of each other's practices and philosophies in order to create some congruency across learning environments.

Further to this, in the prior-to-school setting children followed their own interests in making decisions about what literacy events they engaged with, and educators extended the learning experiences building on those interests. This is a finding supported by Yelland et al. (2008) who described how learning opportunities scaffolded by educators in prior-to-school contexts that extended upon children's interests, led to rich learning scenarios. Glasswell et al. (2003) also contended that in structuring classroom learning experiences the ideas of both children and teachers must be considered if effective literacy learning is to occur.

In this inquiry as children moved from the prior-to-school educational setting into the more formal school context, a narrowing of the literacy curriculum was observed, that was similar to that which had been identified in the research literature. There appeared to be a wide range of texts on offer for children to engage with in the school context, but there was a smaller range of texts that the children identified as being important in the prior-to-school setting. For example, there was an observed focus on print-based written and visual texts and texts that were designed for children to practise constrained skills for the purpose of learning to read and write. There was a notable absence of texts available in the school context that made connections to children's interests in popular culture, or to texts that were associated with play-based pedagogies. McNaughton (2002) observed that activities selected and deployed by teachers might restrict or narrow children's emerging literacy. Therefore, when teachers understand the value of

children having the opportunity to create a range of texts to communicate meaning, they may as a result provide experiences that will broaden children's literacy learning.

The children in this inquiry arrived at school with a wide range of understandings about how to share and create meaning through a diversity of textual modes. This finding is supported by Kress (1997) who described the ways children create meaning in multiple ways across two, three and four dimensions. One questions how may school teachers come to value the diverse ways children competently communicate meaning through texts in their prior-to-school settings. By valuing these diverse forms of communication teachers can diversify literacy practices and provide opportunities for all children to have experiences that connect to the particular interests, strengths and literacy understandings that they bring with them to formal school. When teachers do not take into account the expertise with literacy that children bring to school, children may come to feel that their experiences with and preferences for ways of engaging in literacy events are not valuable in the new learning environment. One wonders how teachers in the first year of school classrooms can be supported to avoid this apparent failure to recognise and value prior-to-school literacy experiences.

Implications for policy

This inquiry contributes to our understanding of the benefits which flow when educators in prior-to-school and formal school educational settings are aware of what happens in each other's learning contexts. When they have this awareness, there is the potential for them to make connections between the learning experiences available to children in prior-to-school settings and in their first year of formal schooling. The need to become aware of the learning opportunities that are available across settings is stated in the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) and again in the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015). Communication across settings has been highlighted in many inquiries into effective transition to school (Broström, 2005; Peters et al., 2009). However, one may question how educators and teachers go about becoming aware of the literacy events and practices in each other's settings, and how children experience those events and practices.

This inquiry points towards a need to formalise transition to school policies, in order give practitioners guidance and practical advice on how to connect to the learning that

occurs across the very different educational contexts of prior-to-school settings and the first year of formal school. The significant changes in curriculum documents at the time of this inquiry meant that it was acknowledged in the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum, (BOSTES, 2015) that teachers in the first year of formal school needed to make connections to the learning that occurred in prior to school settings. However, one wonders whether there should be a specific transition section embedded in both curriculum frameworks rather than what appears to be little more than lip service to the need to provide guidance on transitions to school. In alignment with these findings Dockett and Perry (2003a) reported that there is a lack of professional development for educators in assisting children's transitions.

It is becoming less common for early childhood educators and primary school teachers to have qualifications across settings. Therefore, this inquiry suggests that undergraduate courses in university settings develop educator and teacher knowledge about the two very different frameworks and syllabus documents that guide planning and programming in the two contexts. This will provide an understanding of children's experiences in each context. Educators need to understand what will be expected of children when they arrive at the more formal school context, and teachers need to understand the experiences with literacy that the children had in their prior-to-school educational settings. This refers not just to the activities involved, but also the roles of the educators and teachers, and the philosophies that underpin the literacy practices and pedagogical routines of each learning environment. How can the two pedagogical cultures coexist in harmony at the time of transition so that children can make connections between what they know and what they need to know as literacy events in the first year of school become more formalised? Briggs and Potter (2003) suggested that teachers require more guidance to make connections in literacy and numeracy learning from prior-to-school educational settings and the first year of formal schooling. If a deeper understanding is provided to educators and teachers about the literacy practices in each other's learning contexts, there is potential for greater valuing of the literacy events and practices that that are enacted in the two very different settings.

Another implication for policy makers is to recognise the way the children's agency changed as they moved from the prior-to-school educational context into the first year of formal school setting. In this inquiry it was apparent that the children's control over

their learning and decision-making changed from one of apparent autonomy to one that was highly regulated by the teachers. The ways in which children participated in the literacy events changed when they transitioned from one context to the other. That is, they went from making decisions about how to represent meaning across a diverse range of multimodal texts to an environment in which there were constraints on text and topics that were in main teacher directed. This finding aligned with that of Eccelstone (2009) who described the time of transition to school as a time when children's agency changed in line with a shift in their identities. In a similar finding, Fisher (2010) pointed out that how well children understood their new role as learners in school classrooms affected their agency and their identities as learners. According to Danby et al. (2004) there is a high level of adult regulation and control impacting on the lives of children in schools. When children are recognised as having agency, their perspective is more likely to be sought, and reciprocally, by listening to children through the use of digital storytelling, children's agentic selves may develop (Hull & Katz, 2006). The following section discusses the implications that this inquiry has for research methodology.

Methodological implications for future research

This inquiry found that by listening to the children's voices and hearing their perspectives on the literacy events they engaged with as they transitioned between settings, educators and teachers can become better positioned to build bridges (Hartley, et al., 2009) for children in transitioning from the literacy events and practices they engaged with in their prior-to-school setting to the ones they encounter in their first year of formal schooling.

When the children were afforded the opportunity to express their understandings and opinions by using digital storytelling, it was their perspectives that were put forward, not those of the parents or of adults who planned their learning experiences. Whilst it is acknowledged that the researcher assisted the children in the construction of the story on iMovie, it was the children who chose the literacy events, directed the photographs and composed the oral scripts assigned to the images. Through the images and oral scripts the children clearly voiced their thoughts and opinions and expressed their understandings of the literacy events they engaged with across the two settings. Einarsdóttir (2007) and Dockett and colleagues' (2009) findings also emphasised the

importance of seeking children's views, because they may be different to the views of adults.

The digital story medium allowed the children to be heard uninterrupted for a sustained period of time, as they expressed their view on the literacy events and practices they engaged with across educational settings. This meant that the children's parents, as well as the educators and teachers in the two educational settings, heard the children's views on the literacy events in which they participated. Children's rights to express their views and be listened to is supported by the United Nations (1989) who argued for children to be allowed a say, particularly on matters that affect them. Further to this Danby et al. (2011) reported that children's agency is recognised when they are invited to express their view and those views are listened to by adults. Fisher (2010) also supported this argument. She reported that when children have a say, and actively make choices based on their experiences of the context, the development of children's agency as learners is fostered.

The use of digital stories as the key data collection method provided a powerful means of self-expression and a clear vehicle to hear the voices of the children whose voices may be interpreted differently in other forms of data collection. Seeing the children in the context of the image and hearing their voices annotating the visual texts allowed for the capture of a broader scope of meaning (Haggerty, 2011). Whilst the oral script may in some cases have been limited, the conversations that were included during the literacy events, and the creation of the digital stories, added to the rich layer of data for each child in the process of digital story creation. Digital stories are a starting point for children to tell their transition to school literacy story.

It is the recommendation of this inquiry that future research obtain children's perspectives by using the data collection method of digital storytelling. Communication across settings at the time of transition to school is powerful when the children are seen in images participating in their chosen literacy events, and their voices are heard expressing thoughts and opinions on those literacy events. Having a digital story artefact that can be passed across settings to a range of stakeholders is a compelling way to communicate the children's perspective at this important time.

Theoretical implications for future research

The literacy events and practices framework provided a way to identify, describe and explain the experiences the children had with literacy in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school educational contexts. The literacy events were observed in the social activities mediated by texts, in particular educational contexts. Patterns of events were analysed leading to a broader understanding of the literacy practices across the two educational settings.

Using this approach, the patterns of repeated, observable events allowed the researcher to infer the beliefs, values and attitudes the children held about what was important for their literacy learning across the two different settings. This provided evidence of the literacy practices that appeared dominant in the prior-to-school and first year of formal school settings in this inquiry.

This inquiry contributes to the understanding that what constitutes the concept of literacy events and practices continues to broaden. By examining what occurred in both educational contexts through the lens of literacy as a social event, mediated by texts, a wide range of literacy events were identified. The young children in this inquiry demonstrated the ability to ‘identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written [and visual] materials associated with varying contexts’ (Adapted from the UNESCO Education Position Paper, 2004, p. 13). The contexts included many different social activities mediated by many different types of texts. Events observed ranged from those that are considered traditional, using pencil and paper, to the children creating three-dimensional texts with sand whilst engaging in role plays of a home cooking experience, or through negotiating the rules of a play experience with symbols representing cars, including those that are related to the ever-increasing range of digital media. This pointed towards a great diversity of literacy events across the two very different learning spaces of this inquiry. The value of this approach was that, after identifying this wide range of literacy events, it was possible to identify those particular patterns of activities that comprised the practices associated with the separate educational settings.

The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) and the NSW English Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum (BOSTES, 2015) provide definitions of literacy that were re-

contextualised through the opportunities educators and teachers provided in their specific settings. Asking the children themselves to choose the literacy events that they identified with added to the strength of this approach as the children could describe the literacy activities from the perspective of those who actually experienced them. This perspective allowed for a deepening understanding of each literacy event and a new perspective that was different to those of the adults involved. This in turn afforded further insight into the literacy practices available for young children at the time of transition between the educational contexts of the prior-to-school setting and the first year of formal schooling.

A final recommendation for future research

This inquiry has drawn upon a purposive sample of seven children who were on the same transition pathway from the same prior-to-school centre to their first year at the same school. There is a need to examine such transitions further, across a broader range of contexts with more children. An expanded sense of context would allow for insight into how educators and teachers in other locations outside of New South Wales, re-contextualise different curriculum frameworks in response different communities and insight into the different perspectives of children in prior-to-school educational settings and first year of school settings. To further inform the body of research on transition to school, there is a need to examine more individual perspectives of children's thoughts and opinion on the literacy events and practices made available to them at the important time of transition to formal school.

The following and final section of this thesis before the conclusion presents a model to show how this inquiry has enabled the researcher to move towards a theory about the role of children's perspectives in informing literacy events and practices in both educational settings.

Towards a theory for understanding children's perspectives in informing literacy events and practices

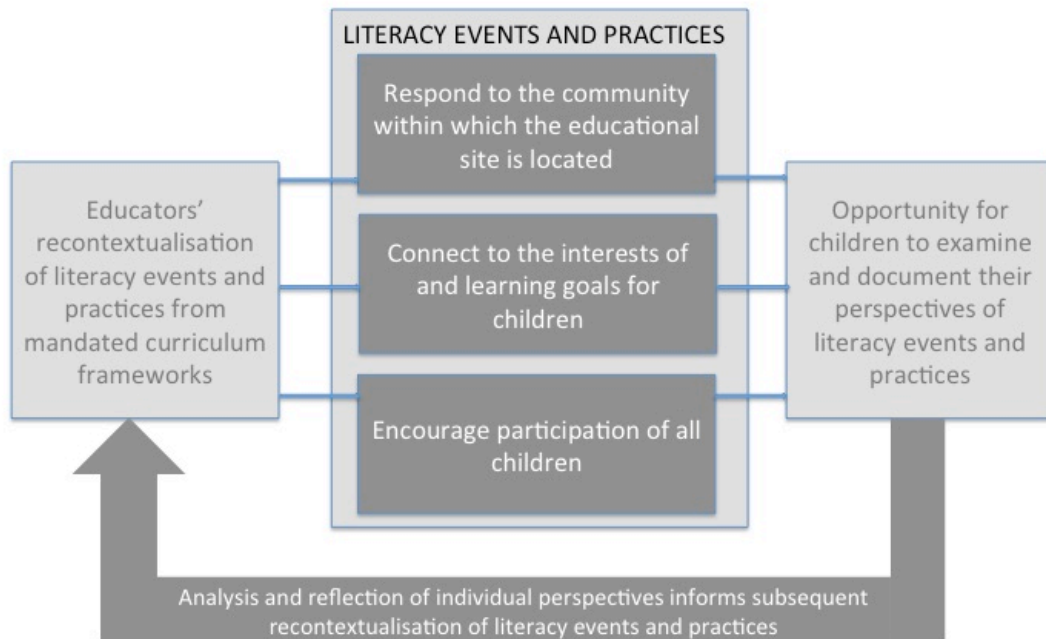


Figure 6.1 Understanding children's perspectives in informing literacy events and practices

There is a significant gap in the research literature on the transition from prior-to-school educational settings to the first year in formal schooling: children's perspectives on the literacy events and practices they engage in at this time is not widely acknowledged or documented. This inquiry created an opportunity for children transitioning between two different yet sequential educational contexts to identify literacy events and practices within the two settings and communicate their perspectives through digital storytelling. Figure 6.1 illustrates an emerging theory about the role of children's perspectives in informing literacy events planned by educators in educational contexts. The word educator in this model refers to early childhood educators and school teachers across the settings of prior-to-school and school.

The model depicted in Figure 6.1 shows how educators re-contextualise mandated curriculum frameworks to plan and implement literacy events and practices within

educational contexts. That is, educators work with mandated curricula, translating their understanding of the documents to create literacy events and practices. In doing so, they consider and incorporate three important factors. Firstly, educators respond to the community in which the educational site is located. Secondly, they ensure that the planned literacy events and practices connect to the learning goals set for the children. Thirdly, they encourage the participation of all children in the literacy events and practices. These three factors considered by educators mean that literacy events and practices are contextualised to learning environments and to the particular learning needs and interests of the children.

In this inquiry the educators and teachers in both settings cited similar considerations as important in planning literacy events and practices. This is shown in the model in Figure 6.1. Educators plan literacy events and practices that make connections to community, and to the children's interests, and they encourage the participation of all children in the literacy events and practices. The educators and teachers in both settings responded to the community contexts in which the settings were located when planning for literacy events and practices. There appeared to be close connections between the prior-to-school centre and the community as educators planned their programs based on a holistic early years learning framework. However, in the primary school setting the more constraining nature of the curriculum and the associated policy documents in comparison with the Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009a) meant that teachers in the primary school context had less flexibility in their ability to respond to community connections when planning literacy events than was evident in the prior-to-school setting.

Similarly, all the educators and teachers in this inquiry connected to the interests of the children when planning the literacy events and practices. In the prior-to-school setting this was found to be more overt as the educators planned future literacy events in response to those that were chosen by the children each day. However, in the first year of school expectations set by curriculum and local school policy, for example the L3 program, meant that teachers were required to plan for children's literacy skill development in the context of small group instruction, which meant that there was less opportunity in the English sessions for events that made connection to children's interests.

From there the model shows the connection from re-contextualised literacy events and practices to the opportunities for children to examine and communicate their unique perspectives. The documentation of the children's perspectives has the potential, as shown by the model, to feed back and inform subsequent re-contextualisations of literacy events and practices by educators and teachers as they work within mandated curriculum frameworks.

In this inquiry the children described those literacy events and practices they engaged with in both the prior-to-school and first year of school settings. Engaging with the creation of stories provided an avenue for them to identify and document the literacy events and practices they felt were important in their learning contexts. The children's voices as heard through digital storytelling expressed their engagement with a range of literacy practices. For some children the practices they identified made connections between the prior-to-school and school settings, and for others the practices were new and the children needed new skills in order to participate effectively. The digital stories demonstrated the different literacy knowledge, understandings and skills that individual children acquired in their prior-to-school setting and brought with them into their first year of formal schooling. Therefore, analysing and reflecting on individual children's perspectives can inform educators and teachers as they plan for literacy events and practices in the different educational contexts.

The contribution of this inquiry is that it has shown how important it is, not only to encourage children to identify their perspectives, but also to analyse and reflect upon those individual perspectives, and then to consider what this means for subsequent re-contextualisations of curriculum framework documents in the prior-to-school and the first year of school settings. The model shown in Figure 6.1 shows this as the arrow linking the children's perspectives to the following analysis and reflection which informs the subsequent planning of literacy events and practices by educators. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the children's perspectives have created the space and opportunity to inform what it is that educators and teachers can do when planning literacy events and practices for children in the educational contexts at the time of transition to school.

Conclusion

In this inquiry the children were not merely asked for their opinions on the literacy events they engaged with at the time of transition. They were given a space where they could identify what was important to them as they shared their opinions, feelings and unique perspectives across visual and oral modes. They were also afforded choice in what literacy events they wanted to share, and their talk was positioned from the perspective of those who were ‘insiders,’ since they were participants in the events.

In obtaining the perspectives of children, this inquiry enabled stakeholders in the transition process to hear firsthand from the children involved. These children initially attended a prior-to-school centre where they experienced a significant degree of autonomy in the choice of the literacy events they engaged. They were able to follow their own personal interests, often in play. The children arrived at school already competent in making choices about their learning as they moved to a new space where learning was compartmentalised and often de-contextualised from the everyday uses of literacy. The literacy events in the new space were planned and directed by the teachers and the children often had a limited ability to explore the range of text modes available in their prior-to-school context. For some children, those who were able to make connections to the new learning environment appeared to confidently navigate the literacy practices provided. For others, closer attention to the expertise they had with literacy practices from their prior-to-school setting would have assisted them in making a confident transition to the literacies of a formal school setting.

In this inquiry it was apparent that different forms of literacy practice were valued in the two educational contexts. What were considered valuable ways to express meaning in the prior-to-school setting were only peripheral in the first year of school environment. Children were expected to engage in learning in very different ways. Broström (2005) described this as a culture shock for some children. For these children the culture shock came, not from the expectations placed on them, but from the effort required to engage in the new activities.

The children in this inquiry all reported a ‘happy’ start to formal schooling. They knew school was about learning. The teachers’ words were echoed in the oral scripts in their digital stories. However, with the deeper level of analysis that was afforded by the

digital story artefacts, and triangulation of data, it was apparent that some children adapted more readily than others to the new ways of being a learner in the school context.

The aim of this inquiry was to listen to what the children had to say, and to challenge educators' and teachers' beliefs and practices about what is valued as literacy learning for young children at the time of transition from a prior-to-school setting to the first year of formal schooling. Educators and teachers must recognise the value of listening to children and what they have to say about their literacy experiences in both educational contexts if children are to be offered continuity in learning in the transition into formal schooling, and if this transition is to be smooth and successful for all children.

As noted by Danby and Farrell (2004, p. 35) 'Children are competent interpreters of their everyday worlds' and when what they have to say about matters that affect them is listened to there is potential to inform research and change policy. In sharing the digital stories of its seven child participants, this inquiry has contributed to a deeper understanding of children's experiences with literacy events at the all-important time of transition to the first year of formal schooling. This inquiry emphasises the importance of viewing transition from the perspectives of the children immersed in the process.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Audit trail of the data

| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Hannah | ASSIGNED CODE |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG-1 |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-H |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-H |
| 23/02/12 | Classroom observation 1- field notes | CO1-H |
| 19/03/12 | Classroom observation 2 - field notes | CO2-H |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-1 |
| 20/03/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-H |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Ivory | ASSIGNED CODE |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG-1 |
| 02/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-I |
| 02/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-I |
| 15/02/12 | Classroom observation 1- field notes | CO1-I |
| 09/03/12 | Classroom observation 2- field notes | CO2-I |
| 19/03/12 | Classroom observation 3- field notes | CO3-I |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-2 |
| 21/03/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-I |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: James | ASSIGNED CODE |
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG -2 |
| 06/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-J |
| 06/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-J |
| 15/02/12 | Field notes - classroom observation 1 | CO1-J |
| 09/03/12 | Field notes - classroom observation 2 | CO2-J |
| 19/03/12 | Field notes - classroom observation 3 | CO3-J |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-2 |
| 21/3/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-J |

| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Lee | ASSIGNED CODE |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG -2 |
| 07/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-L |
| 07/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-L |
| 13/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story viewing | PDSV-L |
| 15/02/12 | Classroom observation 1- field notes | CO1-L |
| 09/03/12 | Classroom observation 2 - field notes | CO2-L |
| 19/3/12 | Classroom observation 3 - field notes | CO3-L |
| 19/3/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-2 |
| 21/3/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-L |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Maddy | ASSIGNED CODE |
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG-2 |
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-M |

| | | |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-M |
| 23/02/12 | School classroom observation - field notes | CO-M |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-1 |
| 20/03/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-M |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Skyla | ASSIGNED CODE |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG-1 |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-S |
| 09/11/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-S |
| 23/02/12 | Classroom observation - field notes | CO-S |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-1 |
| 20/03/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-S |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Tommy | ASSIGNED CODE |
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school focus group interview | PFG -2 |
| 07/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story photograph collection | PDSP-T |
| 07/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story creation | PDSC-T |
| 13/12/11 | Prior-to-school digital story viewing | PDSV-T |
| 15/02/12 | Classroom observation 1 - field notes | CO1-T |
| 09/03/12 | Classroom observation 2 - field notes | CO2-T |
| 19/03/12 | Classroom observation 3 - field notes - | CO3-T |
| 19/03/12 | School focus group interview | SFG-2 |
| 21/03/12 | School digital story creation | SDSC-T |

| | | |
|-------------|--|----------------------|
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Educators | ASSIGNED CODE |
| Ongoing | Prior-to-school educator unstructured interview | PEU |
| 30/11/11 | Prior-to-school educator focus group interview | PEFG |
| 26/09/12 | Prior-to-school educator semi-structured interview final | PEF |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Teachers | ASSIGNED CODE |
| Ongoing | School teacher unstructured interview | STU |
| 23/03/12 | School teacher focus group interview | STFG |
| 17/09/12 | School teacher semi-structured interview final | STI |
| DATE | DATA COLLECTED: Journal entries | ASSIGNED CODE |
| Ongoing | Journal entries | JE |

Appendix B

Participant information sheets and consent forms

Phase one: Prior-to-school student information sheet for parents and guardians

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET (FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS)

Research Project: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in pre-school using digital stories as a tool to document children's voices.

Researcher: Lynette Cronin
(Supervised by Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong).

I am a research student at the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. I am undertaking a Masters in Education research project examining the literacy opportunities available to students in their final year at pre-school from the perspective of the children.

Why am I doing this research?

There has been little research about children's literacy opportunities in pre-school from the perspective of the child. The study will focus specifically on the child who is in their last term in pre-school. It will capture children's perspectives on the literacy events in which they participate, at pre-school. The context of pre-school and literacy learning is often interpreted differently by adults and children therefore gaining the perspective of children who are *living* the experience is quite different to that derived from those who are planning and implementing it. In providing space for the voices of children to be heard, via digital stories we acknowledge that children's opinions are valuable and what they have to say about things that affect them should be heard and can influence decisions made concerning them.

Digital Stories are short, personal, multimedia presentations. A digital story is created through image (from still and/or video cameras), which is then edited on a computer with video editing software to include a spoken narrative. In this research, I wish to work with children as they create digital stories to capture the literacy opportunities they participate in their final year at pre-school documenting their unique perspectives of these literacy events. I anticipate that your child will be able to share the digital story they make with the other children and the educators in the pre-school as well as yourselves.

What will it involve?

The centre director of your child's pre-school has agreed to assist me in the study. One researcher (Lynette Cronin) will visit the centre and work with those children in their final year at pre-school.

Each child will create an individual story as they:

- Photograph up to 10 events and/or activities they like to do in the early childhood centre.
- Talk with the teachers and researchers about each photograph – why they took it, what happens in that location, any special memories. This conversation is recorded.
- Work with the researchers to edit the images and audio into a multimedia presentation.

The presentation will be then burned onto CD for your child to share with their families, the pre-school educators and the other children in the centre.

When will the digital stories be created?

The digital stories will be created between the 2nd of November –23rd of December 2011.

The time commitment required by your child will be up to two hours to create the individual digital story (the process outlined above). Your child will also be required for a fifteen-minute focus group interview with the other child participants prior to making their individual digital story. These activities will be within their normal pre-school hours and if at any time during these activities your child becomes tired he/she will be allowed to return to the activities of their pre-school group.

How will students' rights be respected?

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong and will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example when reporting on the digital stories created, and the process the children engaged with, children, teachers and centres will not be identified, participants' interests are respected and raw data kept strictly confidential. The research will not proceed without approval from the University and the pre-school.

What you should know:

- This research is part of a longer study and you will be asked at a later point if your child would like to participate as a Kindergarten student again in 2012.
- Your child's identification in the study will remain confidential. In both the analysis and reporting of data your child will not be individually identified.
- As noted on the Consent Form you are free to withhold consent or withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty. In order to withdraw consent for your child to participate in this study please contact Lyn Cronin (0408312017) or Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au. The data collected at that point will be destroyed and no longer included in the data collection for the study.
- If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

I really hope that you see this as a worthwhile and valuable experience for your child. I anticipate the children will have a lot of fun capturing photographs of their favourite literacy activities and making digital stories with the photographs.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dr Lisa Kervin Senior Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Wollongong Wollongong NSW 2522 Phone: +61 2 4221 3968 Email: lkervin@uow.edu.au | Dr Jessica Mantei Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Wollongong Wollongong NSW 2522 Phone: +61 2 4221 3465 Email: jessicam@uow.edu.au | Lynette Cronin Research student Faculty of Education University of Wollongong Wollongong NSW 2522 Phone: 0408312017 Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au |
|---|---|---|

Phase one: Prior-to-school student consent form

Hannah

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

STUDENT CONSENT FORM (TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS)

Research Project: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in pre-school using digital stories as a tool to document children's voices.

Researcher: Lynette Cronin
(Supervised by Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong).

Parent/Guardian Consent:

I have been provided with information about this project and have had opportunity to discuss the project with the director of my child's centre and the researcher (Lynette Cronin). I understand the centre director has agreed to take part in the research.

I have been advised of my child's involvement with the research and have had opportunity to ask the centre director and Lynette Cronin any questions I may have about the research and my child's participation.

Please tick the following boxes:

I understand that my child will be observed, audio-taped and photographed participating in literacy activities in their pre-school. They will also participate in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with the researcher.

I understand that my child will capture digital images as they photograph up to 10 literacy activities they like to participate in their pre-school centre.

I understand that my child's voice will be recorded as they talk about the pictures they have taken. The purpose of the collection of images and audio is to create an individual digital story.

I understand these images may be used when reporting on the collected data and research findings.

I understand that the digital stories may be used for future presentations, for example, for training purposes.

I understand that names of individual children and centre will not accompany any image used.

I understand that my child's participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse for my child to be observed and photographed participating in literacy activities in their pre-school. I am free to refuse for my child to participate in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews in their pre-school. I am free to refuse for my child to create a digital story with the researchers and I am free to withdraw their inclusion from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the centre nor the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that if I have any enquiries about the research I can contact Lyn Cronin (0408312017) or Dr Lisa Kervin (02 42213968) or Dr Jessica Mantei (02 42213465) or if I have any complaints regarding the manner in which the research is or has been conducted I can contact UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.


I understand that as part of a longer study I will be contacted in 2012 for the follow-up research and my email address is _____

By signing below I am indicating my consent for my child to participate in the research project conducted by Lynette Cronin as it has been described to me. I understand that the digital story created by my child will be used to describe, categorise and disseminate findings regarding the variety of literacy events that children participate in, in their final year at pre-school.

Name: *Paul* [redacted]

Signature: *Paul*

Phase one: Prior-to-school director consent form



27/9/11

To whom it may concern,

As co-directors of the [REDACTED] we would like it made known that we are aware of the research proposed by Lyn Cronin as a research student at the University of Wollongong.

We have had opportunity to meet and discuss this research entitled, 'Using digital stories to help pre-school children capture their perspectives of literacy opportunities in their pre-school' and are in full support of the proposed research at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Co-director



Faculty of Education

PARENT/CAREGIVER INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in their first year of formal schooling

Your child is invited to take part in a study being conducted by Lynette Cronin. It is part of a Masters in Education Degree, being supervised by Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei. We are asking you if it is ok for your child to take part in this project.

Why am I doing this research?

There has been little research about children's literacy opportunities in Kindergarten from the perspective of the child. The study will focus specifically on the child who is in their first term in Kindergarten. It will capture children's perspectives on the literacy activities in which they participate. Research has shown that a good beginning to school has ongoing benefits for the child's progress at school. However, there has been little research looking at what beginning Kindergarten and literacy learning is like for children, in their own words.

In this research, I wish to work with children as they create digital stories to capture the literacy opportunities they participate in their first term in Kindergarten documenting their unique perspectives of these literacy activities. In listening to children's voices via digital stories we acknowledge that children's opinions are valuable and what they have to say about things that affect them should be heard and can influence decisions made concerning them.

Digital Stories are short, personal, multimedia presentations. A digital story is created through image (from still and/or video cameras), which is then edited on a computer with video editing software to include a spoken narrative.

What will it involve?

Being part of this project would involve one researcher (Lynette Cronin) visiting the Kindergarten classroom and observing your child participating in the everyday literacy activities within the classroom during one literacy session. I would like to spend time with your child asking them about the literacy activities they are participating in and make a digital story with them about these literacy activities. The process of making the digital story with your child is outlined below.

Your child will create an individual story as they:

- Photograph up to 10 events and/or literacy activities they do in Kindergarten.
- Talk with the researcher about each photograph – why they took it, what happens in that location. This conversation is recorded.
- Work with the researcher to edit the images and audio into a multimedia presentation.

The presentation will be then burned onto CD for your child to share with their family and I will keep a copy for analysis.

When will the digital stories be created?

The digital stories will be created between the 5th of March 2012 –23rd of March 2012.

The time commitment required by your child will be up to two hours to create the individual digital story (the process outlined above). Your child will also be required for a twenty-minute focus group interview with the other child participants prior to making their individual digital story. These activities will be within their normal classroom hours and if at any time during these activities your child becomes tired he/she will be allowed to return to the activities of their Kindergarten group.

How will students' rights be respected?

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong and will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example when reporting on the digital stories created, and the process the children engaged with, children, teachers and centres will not be identified, participants'

interests are respected and raw data kept strictly confidential. The research will not proceed without approval from the University and the pre-school.

Participation in the study.

Being part of this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your child from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not jeopardise your current or future relationship with the University of Wollongong or your child's school. Any information already given at the time of withdrawal may be used or not, at your discretion. To withdraw simply contact Lynette Cronin Phone: 0408312017

What will happen to the information you provide?

The data will then be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Access will be available only to me (and my two supervisors) for a period of five years, after that time the information will be destroyed. The information I collected will form part of my Masters in Education Degree and the information may be used in publications, presentations and theses. All information I collect will be treated confidentially both in analysis and reporting of the findings.

What you should know:

- Your child's identification in the study will remain confidential. In both the analysis and reporting of data your child will not be individually identified.
- As noted on the Consent Form you are free to withhold consent or withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty. In order to withdraw consent for your child to participate in this study please contact Lyn Cronin (0408312017) or Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au. The data collected at that point will be destroyed and no longer included in the data collection for the study.
- If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

I sincerely hope that you see this as a worthwhile and valuable experience for your child. I anticipate the children will enjoy capturing photographs of themselves participating in literacy activities and making digital stories with the photographs.

Lynette Cronin
Research student
Faculty of Education
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Phase two: Student consent form

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

STUDENT CONSENT FORM (TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS)

Research Project: ‘Investigating children’s perspectives of literacy opportunities in their first year of formal schooling’

Researcher: Lynette Cronin

(supervised by Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong).

I (print name).....

Give consent to the participation of my child (print name).....

In the research project described below.

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Investigating children’s perspectives of literacy opportunities in Kindergarten using digital stories as a tool to document children’s voices.

CHIEF RESEARCHER: Lynette Cronin Phone: 0408312017 Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

- I have been provided with information about this project and have had opportunity to discuss the project with the teacher of my child’s Kindergarten class and the researcher (Lynette Cronin).
- I understand the School Principal has agreed to take part in the research.
- I understand that my child will be observed by the research, audio-taped and photographed participating in literacy activities, be a part of semi structured interviews and a focus group in Kindergarten.
- I understand that my child will capture digital images as they photograph up to 10 literacy activities in which they participate in Kindergarten and that they will record their voice as they talk about the pictures they have taken. The purpose of the collection of images and audio is to create an individual digital story.
- I understand these images may be used when reporting on the collected data and research findings.
- I understand that the digital stories may be used for future presentations, for example, for training purposes.
- I understand that names of individual children and the school will not accompany any image used.
- I understand that my child’s participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse for my child be observed and photographed participating in literacy activities in Kindergarten. I am free to refuse for my child to participate in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews in Kindergarten. I am free to refuse for my child to create a digital story with the researchers and I am free to withdraw their inclusion from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the centre nor the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.
- I understand that if I have any enquiries about the research I can contact Lyn Cronin (0408312017) or Dr Lisa Kervin (02 42213968) or Dr Jessica Mantei (02 42213465) or if I have any complaints regarding the manner in which the research is or has been conducted I can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 42214457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent for my child to participate in the research project conducted by Lynette Cronin as it has been described to me. I understand that the digital story created by my child will be used to describe, categorise and disseminate findings regarding the variety of literacy events that children participate in, in the first term in Kindergarten.

Name:

Signature:



Faculty of Education

PRINCIPAL INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in their first year of formal schooling.

Dear

I am a research student at the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. I am undertaking a Masters in Education research project examining the literacy opportunities available to students in their first term in Kindergarten from the perspective of the children. I am working with my supervisors Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong.

Why I am doing this research?

There has been little research about children's literacy opportunities in Kindergarten from the perspective of the child. The study will focus specifically on the child who is in their first term in Kindergarten. In this research, I wish to work with children as they create digital stories to capture the literacy opportunities they participate in their first term in Kindergarten documenting their unique perspectives of these literacy events. An example of this would be observing and photographing the children participating in a reading or writing activity and asking them their thoughts and opinions regarding the activity.

How you can be involved?

I wish to invite 7 students in one Kindergarten class and the Kindergarten teacher to be a part of this project. I write to seek your approval and assistance in conducting this research.

What teacher involvement would mean?

In the project I wish to observe 7 students participating in the everyday literacy activities in the Kindergarten classroom. I then wish to interview those children as a focus group and following that make individual digital stories with them. Approval is sought to visit your school on eight occasions in Term One 2012 during the literacy sessions in Kindergarten. I would like to observe the 7 students during their literacy sessions on three days and return on five separate days to make individual digital stories with the 7 students. During this time I would also like to interview the Kindergarten teacher for no more than thirty minutes to ask the teacher about their approach to literacy teaching in the Kindergarten classroom.

If you are happy for the Kindergarten teacher concerned to take part in this research please direct the participant information sheet and consent form (attached) to the teacher.

How will the teacher's and the school's rights be observed?

Ethical aspects of this project have been approved by the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department of Education and Community (DEC), and as such will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example, schools, teachers, students and their families will not be identified in any reports or publications, participants' interests are respected and raw data will be kept strictly confidential. In both the analysis and reporting of data, you and your school will not be identified, you are free to withdraw consent or withdraw your school's data at any time. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing consent will not affect your relationship with either University of Wollongong or your school. If you have any concerns regarding the conducting of this research please contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

What will happen to the findings of this project?

The data collected in this project will be used in my Masters of Education thesis and other related publications. Findings, particularly those related to your school, may be of interest to you and your staff.

If you would like to hear the outcomes of my research I would be very happy to share them with you and your staff, either in written form or during a staff presentation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you wish to obtain further information about the project.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated,

Lynette Cronin
Research student
Faculty of Education
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TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: ‘Investigating children’s perspectives of literacy opportunities in their first year of formal schooling’

Researcher: Lynette Cronin

I am a student studying in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. My Research Supervisors are Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Jessica Mantei.

Why am I doing this research?

There has been little research about children’s literacy opportunities in Kindergarten from the perspective of the child. The study will focus specifically on the child who is in their first term in Kindergarten. In this research, I wish to work with children as they create digital stories to capture the literacy opportunities they participate in their first term in Kindergarten documenting their unique perspectives of these literacy events.

What will it involve?

In the project I wish to observe 7 students participating in the everyday literacy activities in the Kindergarten classroom. This would take place during the last 2 weeks of February 2012. This would mean observing the 7 students during 3 literacy sessions in total. During this time field notes will be taken. I then wish to interview those children as a focus group to gain an insight into their thoughts and feelings regarding the activities they are participating in. This interview (no more than 20 minutes) would be audio recorded and be held at a time convenient to you.

Following that I would like you to participate in a short interview (no more than 30 minutes). I am hoping to gain an understanding of your aims during the Literacy session and how your planning is influenced by the relevant syllabus documents and your teaching experience. This interview will be audio recorded and will be held at your convenience.

I would like to return on 7 separate occasions to make individual digital stories with the 7 students during the literacy session. This would take place during the third week of March 2012. The time required by each student to make the digital story will be 1 – 2 hours. Digital Stories are short, personal, multimedia presentations. A digital story is created through image (from still and/or video cameras), which is then edited on a computer with video editing software to include a spoken narrative. The process of making the digital story with your child is outlined below.

Each child will create an individual story as they:

- Photograph up to 10 events and/or literacy activities they do in Kindergarten.
- Talk with the researcher about each photograph – why they took it, what happens in that location, any special memories. This conversation is recorded.
- Work with the researcher to edit the images and audio into a multimedia presentation.

The presentation will be then burned onto CD for each child to share with their family and with you the teacher.

How will your rights be observed?

Ethical aspects of this project have been approved by the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department of Education and Community (DEC), and as such will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example, schools, teachers, students and their families will not be identified in any reports or publications, participants’ interests are respected and raw data will be kept strictly confidential. In both the analysis and reporting of data, you and your school will not be identified, you are free to withdraw consent or withdraw your school’s data at any time. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing consent will not affect your relationship with either University of Wollongong or your school. If you have any

concerns regarding the conducting of this research please contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

What you should know:

- Your identification in the study will remain confidential. In both the analysis and reporting of data you will not be individually identified.
- As noted on the Consent Form you are free to withhold consent or withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty. In order to withdraw consent for your child to participate in this study please contact Lyn Cronin (0408312017) or Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au. The data collected at that point will be destroyed and no longer included in the data collection for the study.
- If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

Thank you for your support in assisting me with this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if, at any time, you have questions about the research.

Lynette Cronin

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Phase two: Teacher consent form

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Research Project: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in Kindergarten using digital stories as a tool to document children's voices.

Researcher: Lynette Cronin

Teacher Consent:

I have been provided with information about this project and my involvement, and have had opportunity to discuss the project with the researcher, Lynette Cronin. I understand the researcher is conducting this study as part of her Masters of Education project undertaken at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong or my standing with my school.

I understand that if I have any enquiries about the research I can contact Lynette Cronin (0408312017) or if I have any complaints regarding the manner in which the research has been conducted I can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on Email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au or by phone 0242213386.

I understand that by signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research project conducted by Lynette Cronin as it has been described to me. In participating I understand that:

- Lynette Cronin will come into my Kindergarten classroom for 3 visits to observe 1-7 students during the literacy session and conduct a focus group interview (no more than 20 minutes) at a time that is convenient to me and to the smooth running of my class.
- I will be interviewed (no more than 30 minutes) and the questions that will be asked will be regarding my approach to literacy teaching, and my planning decisions using the relevant syllabus documents and my teaching experience.
- Lynette Cronin will come into my Kindergarten classroom to make individual digital stories with 1-7 students. This will take place during the literacy session (1 -2 hours per student) at a time that is convenient to me and to the smooth running of my class.
- audio recordings will be made as a part of the study. These recordings will take place during interviews only. Recordings will be transcribed for analysis.
- the data collected from observations in my classroom will be used to assist the researcher in the research project regarding children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in Kindergarten

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Phase two: Additional parent consent form

Faculty of Education

University of Wollongong



November 2015

ADDITIONAL PARENT CONSENT FORM

Dear _____,

You will remember _____ was a participant in a research project at _____ Centre in 2011 and then again in Kindergarten in 2012. As a result of this project you received two digital stories composed by _____ that documented her transition from pre-school to Kindergarten.

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in Kindergarten using digital stories as a tool to document children's voices.

I am pleased to say that the writing of the research thesis for the award of Doctor of Philosophy is nearing completion.

Before submitting the thesis I would like your permission to use _____ first name in the document for the purpose of examination. The reason for this is that the children referred to themselves by name in their digital stories and to edit this from the stories I believe would take away from the effectiveness of the product. If you agree to this please sign below.

By signing below I am indicating my consent for my child's first name to be used in the written thesis for examination purposes.

Name:

Signature:

Please return this form to the school or by using the stamp-addressed envelope included. I hope you enjoy _____ digital stories as a keepsake of her early years.

Kind regards

Lynette Cronin

Research student
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522
Phone: 0408312017
Email: lpc475@uowmail.edu.au

Appendix C

University ethics approval

University of Wollongong



COPY

APPROVAL LETTER

In reply please quote: HE11/407
Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 3386

7 November 2011

Ms Lynette Cronin
150 Toolijooa Road
Toolijooa NSW 2534

Dear Ms Cronin

I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved.

Ethics Number: HE11/407
Project Title: Using digital stories to help pre-school children capture their perspectives of literacy opportunities in their pre-school
Name of Researchers: Ms Lynette Cronin, Dr Lisa Kervin, Ms Jessica Mantei
Approval Date: 4 November 2011
Expiry Date: 3 November 2011

The University of Wollongong/Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the National Statement and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document.

A condition of approval by the HREC is the submission of a progress report annually and a final report on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rso/ethics/UOW009385.html>. This report must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee also requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Please note that approvals are granted for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

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Telephone +61 2 4221 3386 Facsimile +61 2 4221 4338
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Appendix D

Department of Education and Communities SERAP approval



Education &
Communities

Mrs L Cronin
150 Toolijooa Road
TOOLIJOOA NSW 2534

DOC11/310691
SERAP number: 2011224

Dear Mrs Cronin

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Investigating children's perspectives of literacy opportunities in their first year of formal schooling*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may now contact the Principals of the schools in your application to seek their participation. Your approval will remain valid until 14 December 2012.

You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send participating schools. I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time.
- The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering data must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed, please email a scanned copy of your report to the Manager, Schooling Research at robert.stevens@det.nsw.edu.au and myself at angela.byron@det.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A Byron'.

Angela Byron
Manager, Strategic Planning and Analysis
27 January 2012

Appendix E

Phase one sample digital story script

At little Beanies we know a lot about words
And we use words all the time
We use words in our play when we pretend
We use words when we play shops in the sandpit
We use words when we play, 'I wonder what this pretend food is?'
We use words when we draw and write stories with our friends
We use words when we talk about the pictures we are creating
Our pictures can tell a story without words
We use words when we sing for our Christmas concert
And sometimes we use words all by ourselves in our heads
We use words to think 'I wonder what I will do next!'"
'How will I make these cars go down into the garage?'
We use words to have fun with the cars
We use words when we talk making lunch for all the Beanies
We have to be very careful cutting up the capsicum
Stories use words and we listen very carefully
We use words to write our own story
We even can think up our own words to write a story all together
There are lots of words at Little Beanies and we use them all the time.

Appendix F

Transcript example of the child participant focus group interviews in phase one

Focus Group Interview: James, Maddy, Tommy and Lee (PFG-2)

Introduction by interviewer:

Hi everyone, remember on the first day that I was here and I took lots of photos, well I made a little movie. It's about how we use words. All the different ways we use words at pre-school - when we play, when we listen to stories and read stories, when we write and draw. It's called a digital story.

So I want you to have a look at the digital story and then I am going to ask you some questions about how you like to you use words, and then I am going to help you make your own digital story. Is that OK?

(Children view the digital story)

Tommy: Yummy!

James: Tommy *(When Tommy was cutting up the capsicum.)*

Interviewer: Can you find your name there? *(The final slide contained all the names of the children in the prior-to-school setting. All the children located their names on the final slide of the sample digital story).*

Tommy: I see my name.

Maddy: I see mine.

James: I saw Lee's in the middle.

Interviewer: Can you see yours Lee? *(Nods for yes)* Ah, everybody's name is there. Very good! You guys are going to be great at big school because you know what your name looks like.

Interviewer: Ok great! So how do you like to use words at Little Beanies can you think of some ways? James what do you think?

James: I don't know *(chuckles)*.

Interviewer: You don't know? Do you use some of the ways I showed you on the digital story?

James: I know someone's name on there.

Interviewer: Whose name can you read?

James: Skyla and Jack.

Interviewer: So do you like reading? Is that a way that you use words? What stories do you like reading?

Maddy: The three little piggies.

Interviewer: Oh you like that one? What about you Lee? How do you like to use words any of the ways that were in the digital story? (Lee doesn't answer).

James: I can see Jacob.

Interviewer: You can see Jacob. You are good at reading names. How did you know that was Jacob?

James: It has a 'j' and a 'a' and a 'c' and a 'o' and a 'p'.

Interviewer: Who showed you how to read letters?

James: I've been to Jacob's birthday and my mum writed them and I still remember.

Appendix G

Transcript example of the educator focus group interview in phase one

Phase one prior-to-school educator focus group interview: Angie and Kylie: Prior-to-school setting directors and educators (PEFG)

Introduction by interviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of the interview is for me to learn about your beliefs about young children's early literacy development and the ways these beliefs influence your planning of literacy learning experiences for the children in the centre, particularly at the time of transition. So that I can gain a good understanding, I will ask you some questions about your personal philosophies related to literacy learning. I will also ask you to describe specific examples of your planning for literacy experiences in this setting. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated confidentially and that your name will not be associated with the data when it is reported. Do you have any questions about your participation?

Would you mind if I record your interview to allow me to concentrate on our conversation rather than taking notes? [If yes, start recording. If no, then take handwritten notes.]

Interview schedule

1. As very experienced early childhood educators what do you consider to be important for children's literacy development at this age?
2. Are there any particular philosophies of learning, that guide your decision making that you would like to discuss?
3. To what extent does the EYLF and other documents influence your planning?
4. How do they assist you in planning literacy activities?
5. The EYLF defines literacy as 'the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms' Can you tell me about the range of modes of language you encourage or plan for in the centre? And are there opportunities for children to explore using technologies?
6. Can you tell me about your daily programming and reflection book?
7. Why is this your chosen way to program?

8. Is there any 'big picture' planning around literacy, e.g. a term planner?
9. Tell me about the children's treasure books, do the children/parents access them? I notice you make links to the EYLF Outcomes, is this explained to the parents at any stage?
10. What is your view on what these children need (is important) in the transition to school process? And what do you do to cater for these needs at this time of the year?

1. As very experienced early childhood educators what do you consider to be important for children's literacy development at this age?

Kylie: The single most important thing is to be read to every day – exposure to books... the single most important thing.

Angie: Creating that passion and enjoyment of literacy in all its forms really.

1. Are there any particular philosophies of learning, that guide your decision making that you would like to discuss?

Kylie: Vygotsky's scaffolding. That is a lot of what we do.

Angie: We do take it from a lot of different perspectives ... socio-cultural perspective mainly ... definitely play-based pedagogies.

Kylie: EYLF is a huge focus on what works through the socio-cultural perspective.

2. To what extent does the EYLF and other documents influence you planning?

Angie: What the EYLF did was really reinforce what we are doing is not 'right' but the best way to go about things. It kind of said we are doing OK ... Yeah there are areas where we keep evolving and improving, but we could say we are on the right track.

Kylie: It is a lot of what we always did and what we thought worked and it was like an affirmation that we are on the right track. What we believed in works - we see through the children.

Angie: Like this year we have had the most literate group of children using many different means ... they are using literacy in all forms.

Kylie: We think about what they are interested in and they can build on it.

Angie: The journey of the *Gruffalo* has been amazing! That is the first time ever they have actually written a play for the end of year concert. *The Rock Whale* was another thing ... taking that extra step in inviting the illustrator and the author. They were calling themselves authors and illustrators and then with the *Gruffalo*, it went to puppet shows and there is even a DVD that some children watched ... all the different forms that it has taken.

4. How do they assist you in planning literacy activities?

Angie: As far as planning we are trying to document more of the children's influence in planning. Previously it has happened but we haven't documented as much, so we've talked about that at a recent staff meeting and next year we aim to get that all written down - you know, mind maps or learning stories or the things that the children are giving us. We've always done it but we just haven't documented it.

5. The EYLF defines literacy as 'the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms' Can you tell me about the range of modes of language you encourage or plan for in the centre? And are there opportunities for children to explore using technologies?

Angie: Wide ranging. It encompasses art and painting and drawing, music, imaginary play... they bring along all sorts of interesting things, the sand play – literacy comes into it... it's a holistic all encompassing approach.

Appendix H

Transcript example of the child participant focus group interviews in phase two

Maddy, Skyla and Hannah (SFG)

Introduction by interviewer:

I want to show you some of the photos I have taken of you all these last few weeks. We are going to make another digital story like we did in pre-school, and I want you to tell me all about the activities you do in your new classes.

You remember Angie and Kylie at pre-school. Well they don't know what you are doing at big school. They don't know how you are reading and writing and drawing, all those fabulous things you are doing now. So when we make our digital story this time we want to be telling them all the things we are doing and explaining what happens at big school. So we're going to have a look at the photos and have a chat about some of things you do at big school. Is that OK?

(The researcher shows the children the photos she has taken during the data collection period and asks them to comment on the activities they are engaged in).

Skyla: I like reading funny stories because they make me laugh.

Interviewer: Do they?

Maddy: I like reading funny stories because they make me laugh too and they rhyme.

Interviewer: What about you Hannah do you read stories in your classroom?

Hannah: Yes.

Maddy: They help you learn to read.

Skyla: That's a white board what you write on.

Maddy: And it helps us and you're allowed to write on it.

Skyla: It helps you to remember words on your ring.

Maddy: And if you don't remember them when you write the words.

Interviewer: And that's the engine room. Tell me about the engine room.

Skyla: Miss Wilson only asks people if they need to go to the toilet or if it's an emergency.

Maddy: Or if they are hurt or bleeding.

Interviewer: So you can't go near her in the engine room if she is busy with other children. What happens in the engine room?

Skyla: You read.

Maddy: But if it's not an emergency you can't go there and if someone is being mean it wasn't emergency.

Skyla: You can't go there because people who are trying to read they get confused.

Interviewer: So when you are there in the engine room?

Maddy: Because they think five people are allowed then and they get confused. Four people are there but one more came.

Interviewer: If I said to you could choose to do something in school what would you do?

Skyla: I would choose to paint and craft.

Hannah: I would choose to do painting, drawing and writing notes.

Skyla: I like writing too.

Maddy: Writing letters to some people.

Interviewer: Some things you can choose and some things you must-do. What do you like out of the must-dos? What would be your favourite must-do?

Maddy: The fishing one and colour the fish.

Hannah: My favourite must-do is writing words.

Appendix I

Transcript example of the teacher focus group interview in phase two

Phase Two Focus group teacher interview: Jemima, Julia and Bernadette

Introduction by interviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of the interview is for me to learn about what you believe is important for young children's literacy development as they enter formal school for the first time. I would like to know what influences your planning of literacy learning experiences in the English session, particularly at the time of transition. So that I can gain a good understanding I will ask you some questions about your personal philosophies related to literacy learning and I will also ask you to describe specific examples of your planning for literacy experiences in this setting. I would then like to get your perspective on the individual children in your classes, who are a part of this inquiry. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated confidentially and that your name will not be associated with the data when it is reported. Do you have any questions about your participation?

Would you mind if I record your interview to allow me to concentrate on our conversation rather than taking notes? [If yes, start recording. If no, then take handwritten notes.]

Interview questions

1. As experienced teachers what do you consider to be of primary importance for children's literacy development as they enter into formal schooling?
2. What specific documents inform your literacy planning?
3. Are there any particular learning philosophies that you adhere to that you would like to talk about?
4. What ways have you discovered the literacy knowledge and understandings that children bring with them from home and their prior to school settings.
5. I have seen in my short time here the explicit teaching of reading and writing in your teaching routines. The other modes of speaking and listening are obviously integrated within those routines. Are there other times when you explicitly focus on speaking and listening throughout the day?

Interviewer: As experienced teachers what do you consider to be of primary importance for children’s literacy development as they enter into formal schooling?

Jemima: I think one important thing is that they are enjoying it, that’s it not a chore. You know when you get those kids who don’t like writing or don’t like reading – basically you are fighting an uphill battle straight away. It’s all like a fun experience where they are constantly being praised I think that is important.

Bernadette: I think if they already have a little bit of knowledge from home of the letters and the sounds it makes it a bit more ... it makes them aware in the room and a little bit more confident when we also start talking about it. If they just know the letters to their name or recognise a word they’ve got confidence. If they sit here and don’t know anything initially...

Julia: If they have that ‘reading to’, experience from their parents as well, that’s also a very big help as far as their language development - if they have a lot of experience from home already.

Jemima: I agree if they know how to pick up a book, where to turn the pages, they know which way the font reads.

Interviewer: What specific documents inform your literacy planning?

Bernadette: Obviously the English Syllabus, but because we have our Best Start K – 2 that then has our Early Learning Plans which are related to the syllabus. This is our program and the Literacy Continuum based on the Best Start Assessment results. We update those so we know...

Interviewer: How often?

Bernadette: Every term, five to ten weeks - formally on the computer once a term but in the room constantly every week. I scribbled in every area of literacy and numeracy.

Bernadette: We enter the kids’ results and here it tells us where to next.

Jemima: So it details the skill that they need to learn next and then the activity to teach that skill.

Bernadette: and we basically follow the L3 Program

Interviewer: How does that link in with that?

Bernadette: Best Start is the umbrella and L3 comes under that just like TEN in maths and all those other programs.

Interviewer: Are there any particular learning philosophies that you adhere to that you would like to talk about?

Jemima: I think for the children to be independent so they take control of their own learning. Like the key rings that you would have seen. So they know what word they want to learn next. So they put that ownership on themselves to work hard to get that so I think that's a big, that's one of my philosophies. So they know why. 'This is what I want to achieve because if I know these words it is going to help with my writing.' 'This is how I am going to learning these words and this is what's going to happen when I know these words.'

Interviewer: And you articulate these goals for them?

Jemima: Yes and they set the little goals and work to achieve them, and all being hands on with the 'choice'. I really like that and that's when the L3 program offers and I personally like that.

Bernadette: It helps I think with the transition from pre-school to Kindergarten there is so much choice in pre-school and it's all about being able to choose an activity that you're going to love and enjoy- pack it all up and move to another one. It's all about choice, and here they do have to make that decision. But in saying that they still have to do their 'must dos'.

Appendix J

Transcript example of the final prior to school educator interview

Introduction by interviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of the interview is for me to get your reaction and response to the two sets of digital stories made by the children first here and then after their first few weeks in formal school. Like when they were here, the children were photographed engaging with the literacy events on offer in their Kindergarten classrooms. They chose the photographs for their digital stories and composed and recorded the oral annotations for each of the images. I would like your perspective on the children's literacy transition as they enter their first year of formal school. Please be assured that anything you say will be treated confidentially and that your name will not be associated with the data when it is reported. Do you have any questions about your participation?

Would you mind if I record your interview to allow me to concentrate on our conversation rather than taking notes? [If yes, start recording. If no, then take handwritten notes.]

Both Kylie and Angie made comments whilst viewing the digital stories and at the conclusion of each child's digital stories.

Hannah's digital story

Kylie: I just love her enthusiasm about it all. She seems so enthusiastic so eager.

Angie: So much more confident ... I think.

Kylie: It sounds like it's a real joy to her she's taking it all in but she's just thriving on it. And she's remembered the lower case and the upper case. It just shows how ready she was.

Kylie: And the fact that she's related to the book so much she got so excited about it.

Ivory's digital story

Kylie: With her it's like she is talking. Like she is trying to read (Ivory's voice recording on her digital story).

Angie: But then she slipped into it a few times just talking normally but it seemed I don't know ... You would have thought she was reading what was in front of her?

Interviewer: A few times I said listen to this does this sound right? (During the recording of the oral script) Should we do this again so it sounds better? No she said she was happy with it. It was like she was trying to get it right and think about what she was saying.

Kylie: She focused in on that and forgot all the other aspects of it.

Angie: Ivory comes and picks up one of the children here quite regularly once a week (Sonny younger than Ivory and 2 older) and another one soon. But any way she never says anything but she's always cheery and happy. She doesn't really engage in the conversation I thought she might have come out more.

Interviewer: I think of her that day she got up and told every one about the zucchini that she had home grown and she was very confident in talking about that. She loved really nature. I was really interested in when she painted the beautiful butterfly and she could talk about it.

Angie: I'm thinking does the school system really suit her? Does she think she has to be regimented and speak slowly? I mean see her picture it's very artistic but whether school is stiling her a bit.

Kylie: Her mum is really creative and they do a lot of things centred around making things and they're a little alternate. They wouldn't be used to strong routines and if they could go to the Steiner school they would.

Angie: She was quiet but she was quietly confident.

Skyla's digital story

Angie: Colouring in off the computer and she said, 'and I like drawing'

Kylie: Drawing! That's not drawing. Oh sorry ...

Kylie: that shows that the life's gone out of her drawings cause Skyla was very creative that is very stilted.

Kylie: I would put that in as a regression in her drawing and she would be top of the class for that colouring in!!! (Alluding to the red watermelon).

Appendix K

Transcript example of the semi-structured final teacher interview

Jemima's comments about Maddy (STI)

| Interview questions | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>Would you like to make any comments from your observation of the school digital story? E.g. On the literacy activity or the student's comments on the activity.</p> | <p>Maddy seems to have a good understanding of what she is doing and most importantly, WHY. 'We do it to learn new words.'</p> |
| <p>Did anything surprise you?</p> | <p>Good vocabulary/explanation/understanding. She was able to articulate what she was doing and why very well.</p> |
| <p>Would you like to make any comments from your observation of the pre-school digital story? E.g. On the activities or the student's comments on the activity.</p> | <p>Lots of 'I like to', 'It is fun'. Lots of hands on activities.</p> |
| <p>Did anything surprise you?</p> | <p>She didn't articulate 'why' she was doing things. Less literacy focus than in Skyla's Pre-school story.</p> |
| <p>What connections can you make from the pre-school story to the school story?</p> | <p>Love of books/stories. Pride in achievements and activities in both settings – ENGAGED!!</p> |

Additional comments by Jemima about Skyla and Maddy after viewing both sets of digital stories (STI)

- Their language how much it had changed and just how they could explain what they were doing and why they were doing it, especially Maddy – ‘we have to do this because this helps us to learn new words’ – good girl!
- And it was amazing for me to see how much they’ve changed since then to now, even because when I watched it was similar to what they were like then but now it is like watching it another year later almost.
- One thing I did notice when I watched the pre-school ones is ‘ I like doing this and I like doing that’ and then the school one is ‘ I have to do this and I have to do that’. I thought that was just interesting of the way they perceive what they do – ‘at school you have to do this...’ So that was interesting, how much it shifts for them in their minds – ‘Miss Wilson said I have to do this’. ‘This is a must-do job’ they kept saying that both of them. Mainly their language is different.
- With both settings I noticed the love of reading and books – So in pre-school ‘this is my favourite book and I love looking at this book and it was the same when it was talked about here – but Miss Wilson reads us this book – and I love this book – My favourite book is...’
- And I love in Skyla’s one she was doing pretending to be a doctor, pretending to be a nurse, she had the little notepad, she had medical referral forms and I thought that was good – the literacy exposure in pre-school – that role play in pre-school that was interesting.
- And in both settings they seemed really engaged and really happy about what they were doing. They were really proud about what they had done. There was photo of Skyla with her book open and a big wide face really happy about what she had done. It was the same at pre-school – she made a cup cake in the sand and she had the same look on her face so that was good to see. They just looked really happy and proud about what they had done in both places.
- That was the main stand out for me. This is what I do and I like to do this for fun. ‘Now I’m at school I **have** to do this and you must-do this... and if you do this you will be in big trouble.’ I wonder could you shift that? Even though I know they like what they are doing and they are really happy doing what they are doing and they are proud and they know why they are doing what they are doing – it is just funny... if you could keep some of that- ‘I love doing this!’ Not ‘I have to do this’ If you could keep that little spark when they got to school... that is something I noticed!
- And I like in the pre-school how they had lots of different hands on, different activities. So that was good to see. I think when they come to school that would be easier for them than it would have perhaps in the past where everybody sits here and listens – there is still a lot of that but then there is that time of choice.

Appendix L

Transcript example of the unstructured child participant interviews in the prior-to-school and first year of school settings

Maddy's digital story photograph collection (PDSP-M)

(Maddy choose the 'Bugalugs Bum Thief' – a mini novel from the shelf and sits on the floor to read it.)

Maddy: One boy woke up one day he went to go and get some breakfast and then when he was about to put on his clothes they fell right down again.

Researcher: Did they? Because he didn't have a bum? (Chuckles) Oh that's funny. What happens in the end did they get back their bums?

Maddy: And then when he were going to see their mum and dad they were eating on the floor (Chuckles). And then he made a map to see who were taking they bums.

Researcher: Oh that's funny.

Maddy: Then there was big lots of ... He looked everywhere to find it but everywhere there was nothing but just people and houses. So there's nowhere else to find it. Who is stealing so he can't sit down?

Maddy: Then they found the Bugalugs Bum Thief' And then they were trying but they didn't even and then they were trying a lot to find 'The Bugalugs Bum Thief' and then they almost found 'The Bugalugs Bum Thief' in the world and then the surf people were going to surf but they swimmers keep getting down. See? (Maddy shows the researcher the picture) And the surf people couldn't leave it on so and only one person (had a bum) was the Bugalugs Bum Thief. Look he has one! (Maddy shows the researcher the picture) He's the one!

Researcher: He's the one?

Maddy: Cause he has one and all the other people don't and then all the other people rushed with him to get them back.

Maddy: It's not fair is it?

Researcher: No, it's not, it's very naughty.

Maddy: And then everyone can't even sit down.

Researcher: That wouldn't be good would it?

Maddy: And then they all put them back where they belong

Classroom observations: Lee, Tommy, Ivory, and James (CO3)

Researcher: What are you doing here Lee?

Lee: Colouring in.

Researcher: Do you know why you are colouring in?

Lee: You have to staple them.

Researcher: Oh you have to staple them. What's it going to be?

Tommy: A book.

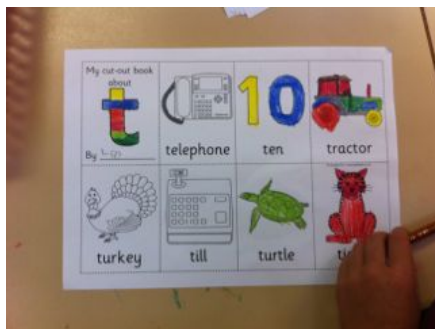
Researcher: What's the book going to be about?

Tommy: I've got one at home about Easter.

Researcher: What's this one going to be about?

Tommy: Um I forgot.

Researcher: And they all start with 't' don't they? Tiger, turtle, turkey (photograph below).



Researcher: (points to the words on James's lanyard) Can you read these ones to me?

James: 'James, in, am, I, come, to, the, we, on (no) that's tricky isn't it? It would be 'on' if 'o' was at the start, the'.

Researcher: Very good! What do you do when you're done?

James: I don't know. What do we do when we're done?

Teacher. You get your lanyard and write the words.

Researcher: You have to copy the words off your lanyard is that what you have to do?

James: Yes.

Appendix M

Document analysis examples

The Early Years Learning Framework analysis example

| OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS | |
|---|--|
| Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes | Data collected |
| <p>This is evident, for example, when children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in enjoyable interactions using verbal and non-verbal language • Convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on home/family and community literacies • Respond verbally and non-verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel and taste • Use language and representations from play, music and art to share and project meaning • Contribute their ideas and experiences in play, small and large group discussions • Attend and give cultural cues that they are listening to and understanding what is said to them • Are independent communicators who initiate Standard Australian English and home language conversations and demonstrate the ability to meet the listeners' needs • Interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, clarify and challenge thinking, Negotiate and share new understandings • Convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on literacies of home/family and the broader community • Exchange ideas, feelings and understandings using language and representations in play • Demonstrate an increasing understanding of measurement and number using vocabulary to describe size, length, volume, capacity and names of numbers • Express ideas and feelings and understand and respect the perspectives of others • Use language to communicate thinking about quantities to describe attributes of objects and collections, and to explain mathematical ideas • Show increasing knowledge, understanding and skill in conveying meaning in at least one language | <p>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</p> <p>Listening to stories read by educators (PDSP-L) (JE-9.11.11) (JE-30.11.11) (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Listening to the sounds of your name (whole group)'Whose name starts with... get your hat' (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Ivory spoke to the group about her huge home grown zucchini (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Children speaking to the group about what they are doing for Christmas with their families (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Relaxation music all children lie on the floor (JE-9.11.11) (JE-30.11.11)</p> <p>The children stand in a circle and 'hug' someone you haven't played with today and give them a special message. Then all join hands and say 'I am special; I am clever; I am... (JE-9.11.11)</p> <p>Afternoon tea conversation 'What rhymes with tea? Lee. Moose? Goose (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Relaxation all children in a circle and repeat the mantra, 'I love myself; I love my friends; I love my family; I am clever ... (JE-30.11.11)</p> <p>Children retell what happened in their favourite movie (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Discussion about homes and lifestyle for children in Bali (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Morning tea/afternoon tea – children talked with educator and each other around the table (JE-9.11.11) (PDSP-M)</p> <p>Making pinwheels for lunch (JE-9.11.11)</p> <p>PLAY -</p> <p>Playing with cars in the garage (JE-2.11.11) (PDSP-J)</p> <p>Cool tricks with the cars with friends (PDSP-J)</p> <p>Racing cars with friends (PDSP-J) (PDSP-L)</p> <p>Fighting cars with friends (PDSP-J)</p> <p>Puzzles with friends (PDSP-J) (PDSP-T)</p> <p>Lego (PDSP-J)</p> <p>Making Sponge Bob city with sand and food samples in the sand pit (JE-2.11.11)</p> <p>On the walking logs (JE-2.11.11)</p> <p>Play in the sandpit (JE-2.11.11) (JE-9.11.11) (JE-30.11.11) (JE-6.12.11) (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>Building a tower (JE-9.11.11)</p> <p>Books/soft toys in the parachute play area (JE-9.11.11)</p> <p>Making castles with blocks (PDSP-H)</p> <p>Swinging on the playground equipment (PDSP-H) (PDSP-T) (JE-2.11.11)</p> <p>Skipping with a blankie (PDSP-H)</p> |

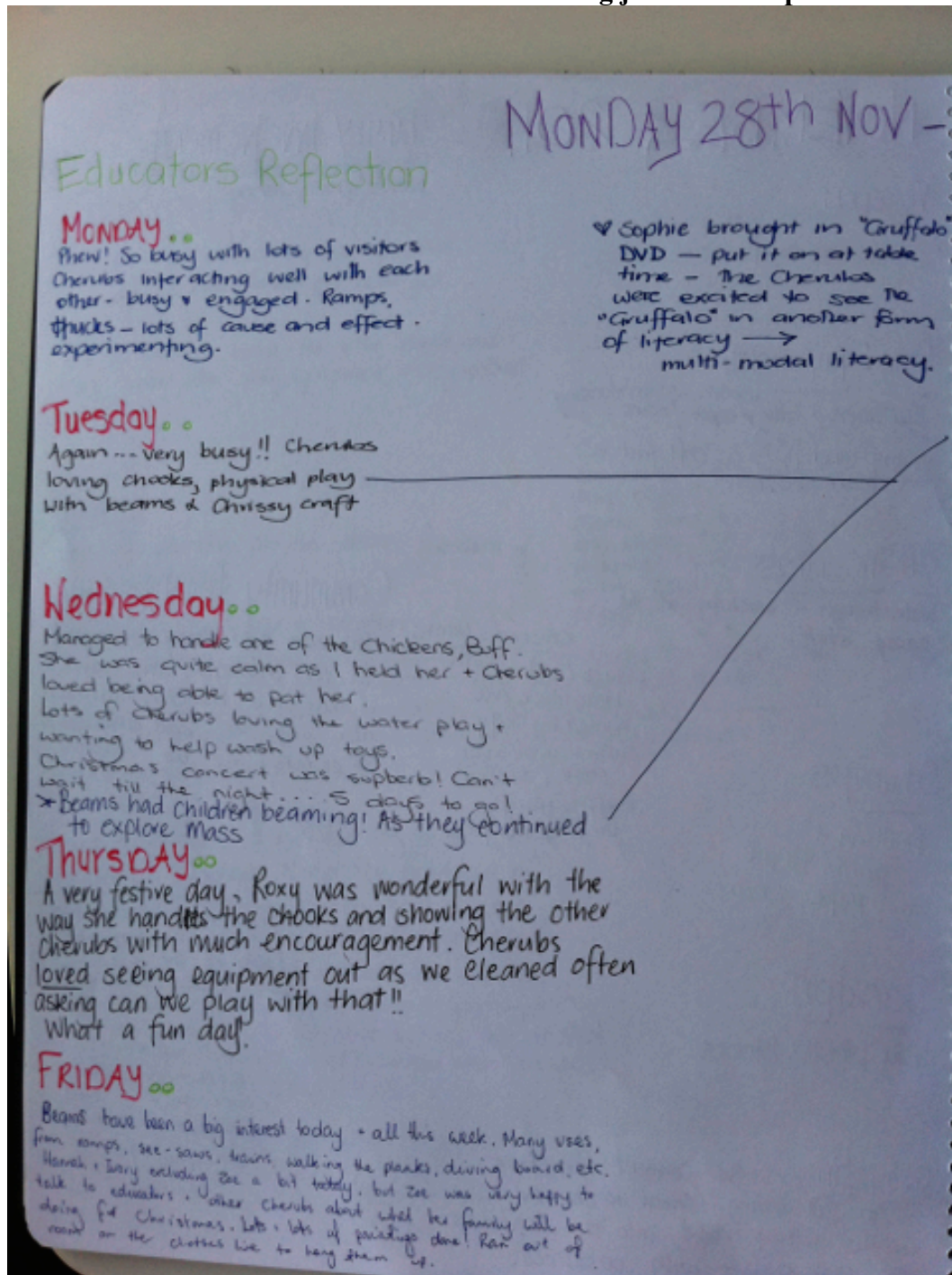
| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Swing on a seesaw and slide (PDSP-H)(PDSP-M) Basketball in the hoop (PDSP-L) Throwing and catching the ball (PDSP-L) Using a long plank in a variety of ways- jumping off the plank into the sandpit, walking the plank, making a see saw or a train (JE-7.12.11) See saw balance experimenting with mass (JE-7.12.11) The 'off to school kids' organised a game of 'Duck, duck goose' (JE-7.12.11)</p> <p>SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY Feeding the dolls and taking their clothes off deciding which ones were girls or boys (JE-9.11.11) In the sandpit selling food (JE-9.11.11) Making cupcakes in the sandpit (JE-9.11.11) (PDSP-S) (PDSP-I) Playing nurses (JE-9.11.11)(PDSP-S) Playing doctors (PDSP-S)(PDSP-T)</p> |
|--|---|

Australian Curriculum English analysis examples

| Strand content descriptions | Literacy Practices | Literacy opportunities/events: What the educators enact; planned experiences |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Language variation and change</p> <p>Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community (ACELA1426) SL</p> | <p>Learning that different languages exist; discussing the various languages encountered in the community and at school; acknowledging the home languages of students who speak another language, and valuing the ability to speak more than one language.</p> <p>Recognising that some texts can include both Standard Australian English and elements of other languages including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages</p> | |
| <p>Explore how language is used differently at home and school depending on the relationships between people (ACELA1428)SL</p> | <p>Learning that language varies according to the relationships between people, for example between parent and child, teacher and student, siblings, friends, shopkeepers and customers.</p> <p>Learning to ask relevant questions and to express</p> | <p>Class routines</p> <p>Teacher reminds the students about not calling out and hands up for questions (CO-M; CO-S; CO1-H; CO1-I; CO3-T; CO3-L).</p> <p>Teacher uses behaviour management strategy – counting to three (CO1-J; CO1-I; CO3-T; CO3-L).</p> <p>Teacher praises the group of students working quietly (CO1-H).</p> <p>Teacher organises where students are sitting on the floor for best listening, 'turn around and face this way hands on your lap' (CO1-J; CO1-I; CO1-T; CO1-L).</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429)RWSL</p> | <p>requests and opinions in ways that suit different contexts. Learning that we use a different tone and style of language with different people.</p> | <p>Read to Teacher asked students for their ideas/ thoughts on the book 'The Pear in the Pear Tree' by Pamela Allen. Students discuss with a partner (CO-S; CO-M).</p> |
| <p>Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429)RWSL</p> | <p>Recognising some of the ways we can use speech, gesture, writing and media to communicate feelings. Recognising some of the ways emotions and feelings can be conveyed and influenced by visual representations, for example in advertising and animations.</p> | <p>Choice and Must do activities In choice and must do activities students (and sometimes parent helpers) exchange ideas in social talk around texts and tasks and play (JE). Independent writing Students paint pictures and write to Grandparents for Grandparents day (KDSC-H; KDSC-T). Writing about the school fete (the next day) and drawing a picture that matches (CO2-J; CO2-I; CO2-T; CO2-L) Writing about the beach with her puppy (KDSC-S) 'I like writing' (CO-S).</p> |
| <p>Text structure and organisation Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories</p> | <p>Sharing experiences of different texts and discussing some differences. Discussing the purpose of texts, for example 'This text will tell a story', 'This text will give information'.</p> | <p>Engine room Guided reading – 'The way we go to school' PM (CO1-T) (CO1-I) 'We go out' PM (CO1-H) Guided writing - 'I go in the red bus' (CO-M; COS) Read to The Pear in the Pear Tree' Pamela Allen (CO-M; CO-S) 'Giraffe in the Bath' rhyming book (JE-S)</p> |

Prior-to-school educator learning journal examples



November, 2011

Veranda
Craft w/ Recyclable

In Yard

Playdough
Cutters/Rollers
on table in shade.

Play Equipment

Under in cubby - curtains
Little People play set.

On the grass

Paint, different sized paintbrushes,
Cotton buds + drums to paint
for Christmas concert.

Stumps

Green water tank
to water things
to start washing for
end of year? If its too
early maybe the
water cans with the
shells.

DONE!!

Wednesday:
Group

Canvas Paintings
to be done
in the morning,
for next week

Boxes out for
FRIDAY.

Sandpit

Ramps with Cars
continued.

Modification
to chook house
A perch across diagonally
some dowel - need to
get from hardware
maybe Froy could
do.

Family Involvement

Monday - Talk to Vanessa + Rusty about
purchase of chooks @ chook
Auction on Sunday. ^{all done} ^{very eager}

Tuesday - Skyla to paint roof on her
(family's donation) chook house.
Just beautiful.... Skyla was
so excited to do this

did we write a thankyou card to
Skyla's Dad for building chook
house? **yes!**

Community Involvement

*Thursday write and send card to
Chrissie Poole to thank her
Marianne came with pamphlets
for her dancing.

From: SeaView Preschool (admin@seaviewpreschool.com.au)
Sent: Tuesday, 15 November 2011 1:19:55 AM
To: little-cherubs@hotmail.com

Hi Guys,

It's Sheree here, I was on a PPP course last week and heard some wonderful comments about
centre from a girl named Michelle. She raved about a centre she did work exp at & went on
work there. She talked about it so much I asked her in the break where it was & she said it was
guys when you were mobile, just thought I'd let you know about the glowing comments that
flying around out there.

First year of formal school phonics program example

| | 0 - Level 0 | 1 - Level 1 | 2 - Level 2 | 3 - Level 3 |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| | <p>Riley [redacted] Jai [redacted] Katelyn [redacted] Ivory [redacted] Lucy [redacted]</p> | <p>Nate [redacted] Charlie [redacted] Lee [redacted] Claire [redacted] Thomas [redacted] Ella [redacted] Molly [redacted] Saxon [redacted] Lily [redacted] Elie [redacted]</p> | <p>Finnley [redacted] Saffron [redacted] Hannah [redacted] Lauretta [redacted]</p> | <p>James [redacted] William [redacted]</p> |
| | <p>2nd cluster (BS 1) Identifies two or more letters that are the same in words. Identifies some letters that are the same in more than one context. Names some letters in a given word. Says one of the sounds for letters in a given word. Writes approximate letters for some sounds.</p> | <p>3rd cluster (BS 2) Identifies all letters that are the same in more than one context. Names most letters in a given word. Says some of the sounds for letters in a given word. Blends up to three sounds in words when reading. Writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds.</p> | <p>4th cluster (BS 3) Names all letters in a word. Says most sounds in a given word. Spells unknown words phonetically with most letters in the correct sequence. Recognises, says and writes names and common sounds of alphabet.</p> | <p>5th cluster Blends initial or with common word patterns or words. Attempts to read complex words letter/sound knowledge. Uses knowledge of clusters and word digraphs to spell unfamiliar words.</p> |

First year of formal school reading program example

Public School Reading Program

| Group: | Word Work | Group: | Word Work | Group: | Word Work | Group: | Word Work |
|--|--|--|---|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| ① Finnley Note Molly | MON New Book Going on holiday - About game on a holiday | ① Lauretta James Tommy | MON New Book Playing - About playing | ① Saxon Will Hannah | MON New Book At the Zoo - Going to the Zoo | MON New Book At the Zoo - Going to the Zoo | MON New Book At the Zoo - Going to the Zoo |
| TUES New Book Playing - About playing | TUES New Book We | TUES New Book At the Zoo - Going to the Zoo | TUES New Book the | TUES New Book Me | TUES New Book Me | TUES New Book Me | TUES New Book Me |
| WED New Book At the Zoo | WED New Book the | WED New Book Me | WED New Book am | WED New Book Dressing up | WED New Book Dressing up | WED New Book Dressing up | WED New Book Dressing up |

First year of formal school writing program example

Record of Writing Lesson

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Students in group:</u> | <u>Day:</u> Mon | <u>Week:</u> 4 | <u>Term:</u> 1 |
| | Jai Claire Lucy Riley Lily Sofron / Charlie Kaklyn Ivy Ella Ellie | | |
| | Lauretta James Tommy | <u>SHARED EXPERIENCE</u> | |
| 1. | I am patting the fat cat. | | |
| 2. | " " Kissing " " " | | |
| 3. | I " Cuddling " " " | | |
| | (I) am patting the fat cat. <u>SENTENCE</u> | | |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Students in group:</u> | <u>Day:</u> Tues | <u>Week:</u> 4 | <u>Term:</u> 1 |
| | As above | | |
| | | <u>SHARED EXPERIENCE</u> | |
| 1. | I am digging in the yellow sand | | |
| 2. | " " running " " " | | |
| 3. | " " playing " " " | | |
| | I am digging in the yellow sand <u>SENTENCE</u> | | |

Appendix N

Example of digital stories analysis

Maddy's Kindergarten Digital Story (461 words)

1. Hello my name is Maddy and I'm at big school and big school is where you learn lots of stuff and it's really good to be at big school 'cause you can find your brother or sister or cousin. *Social*
 2. Books help you learn 'cause they have new words and you don't have them on your key ring, they can help you learn new, words on, 'cause the possum is really funny is 'cause, cause he gets paint on him (giggle). Miss Wilson reads us good books because my favourite book is 'Dancing with Grandma'. *- Enjoyment of story / learning*
 3. This is a must do job and you have to find the letter and match it with the picture. And you've got to learn. *Learning*
 4. The watermelon has to be coloured in. But if it's still pink it will not look good when the meeting is on and you have to colour it in because your gonna sing a watermelon song for grandparent's day. *Rules / Teacher directed*
 5. This is the 'engine room' and this, and the books help us to learn to read a lot. And there's magnets what Miss Wilson puts on and we change the words and then um, we have all the, and I like the 'engine room' (giggle). *Learning*
 6. P starts with pear and I was drawing the um, pictures what start with the letter P. And it's good to draw the letters, with the um, letter P. Pirate and peaches and PA skills grandparents. *PA skills*
 7. I like to paint because um, you had to decorate the first bit before you put on the magazine, 'cause then um, it won't look that pretty with just paint. And if it doesn't have your name on it you don't know if it's yours or somebody else's, and the girl who I made is really um, laying down. I didn't want to take off the head, so I just put on a new head. *Rules / Conflict / self direction of craft*
 8. Um we had to just shake the bottle to um find a word what we know but if we don't know the word just shake it again and if there's a 'a' in there just write it on the board. It's good to shake the bottle 'cause if you just want to learn that word just write it on your board or if you want to get it on your key ring just get and write it. *Learning - skills*
 9. The 'quipment is fun cause it's really like a playground but it's not a playground. It's um, a thing where you go but if nobody's down there don't really go down there, 'cause if you know that's the line up bell just get up there 'cause it, um will be the line up time. If you're not up there you'll be in big trouble. *Rules*
- Need to Learn - skills important .
 - Requirement to conform .
 - Events take on a new purpose .

Appendix O

Digital stories stored on USB flash drive