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## How to transition from a traditional classroom to a whole language classroom by implementing a fourth grade social studies-language arts unit that meets the needs of all students

Marcia Ann Musket Fiorindo

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HOW TO TRANSITION FROM A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM TO A WHOLE  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM BY IMPLEMENTING A FOURTH GRADE SOCIAL  
STUDIES-LANGUAGE ARTS UNIT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS  
OF ALL STUDENTS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education: Reading Option

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by  
Marcia Ann Musket Fiorindo

June 1994

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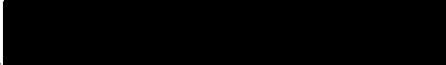
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by  
Marcia Ann Musket Fiorindo

June 1994

Approved by:

  
Mr. Joseph W. Gray, First Reader

  
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*May 3, 1994*  
Date

## ABSTRACT

Statistical findings by Will (1986) indicate that anywhere from ten to twenty percent of the student population today have difficulties learning, but do not qualify for special education. These statistical figures have an impact on the regular education teacher and the regular education classroom that typically presents curriculum in a traditional way.

This project researches the literature on traditional and whole language approaches to learning and their results on the diverse population that exists in many classrooms today.

It proposes that a whole language approach can meet the needs of the "at risk" population because it takes into consideration cultural diversity and the background that each child brings to the classroom. The "at risk" population is capable of learning when immersed in a classroom that is rich in literature and integrates the language arts with social studies.

This project provides a curricular unit based on whole language principles. The unit is a model fourth grade social studies-language arts curricular unit that meets the needs of all students, especially the "at risk" student



population. It is this author's experience and observation that these students are not learning language successfully by traditional teaching methods. It provides assistance to teachers who work with a diverse population of students, especially those teachers who are observing student failure by teaching in traditional ways. It consists of a section on how to prepare an integrated social studies-language arts unit. It provides a model unit. In conclusion, it provides information on the results of the application of the model unit and the indication that the application of whole language principles are effective in meeting the needs of all students, including the "at risk" population.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Mr. Joseph Gray for reading this project several times. I appreciate the many suggestions that have resulted in a much richer project. I would also like to thank him for advising me over the past several years and for assisting me in my journey through the reading program.

I would also like to thank Dr. T. Patrick Mullen for reading this project and making some salient suggestions. I especially appreciate his knowledge and input of children's literature that has further enriched the annotated bibliography. I would also like to thank him for supervising my student teaching.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Today, throughout the country, "at risk" students comprise a significant percentage of regular elementary education classrooms. Specific data provided by Will (1986) indicates that "Of the more than thirty nine million young people enrolled in public schools, over ten percent...are eligible for special education services....Another ten to twenty percent...are not handicapped...but have difficulties which interfere with their educational progress" (p. 412). It is this population that comprises a significant percentage of the regular education classroom. She goes on to state, "The numbers alone argue for new strategies to increase the educational success of these students, (p. 412). This fact is a daily reality for many struggling, regular education elementary teachers. It also poses the serious problem of how to teach in a classroom with a high population of "at risk" students. How does a teacher create a curriculum that meets the needs of a diverse population?

The author of this project is a teacher transitioning from a traditional classroom to a whole language classroom. She initiated the transition by implementing a fourth grade social studies-language arts unit that meets the needs of all students. There is a particular focus on the "at risk"

student population since they appear to have difficulty learning language by traditional teaching methods. The author assists teachers in their attempts to prepare an integrated fourth grade social studies-language arts unit. She presents a model unit and the results of its implementation.

"At risk" students are the children in the school population who score at the thirty fifth percentile or below on the achievement tests, or, in instances where they are new to a school, who score at the thirty fifth percentile on the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test). If they meet these criteria, they qualify for participation in Chapter I, a federally funded remediation program. Some of these students are diagnosed as learning disabled and qualify for other special education programs. Many of them do not qualify, and they comprise a significant population of the regular education classroom.

In the regular education classroom, teachers need to comply with state mandates. One way they can do this is by becoming familiar with the state frameworks. State frameworks provide descriptions of teaching areas and the guidelines for what is to be taught as well as how it is to be taught. State frameworks take into consideration the special needs students that exist in the classroom and how teachers can approach the teaching of these students.

According to the current California History Social Science Framework (1988), the goals of social science are stated as "knowledge and cultural understanding...democratic understanding and values...and skills attainment and social participation" (p. 10). This incorporates the areas of "history, geography, economics, political science, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and the humanities" (p. 3).

Typically, the regular education classroom employs traditional methods of teaching reading/language arts. According to the English-Language Arts Framework for the State of California (1987), language arts includes the "integration of all the elements of language--listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 5). Traditional methods of teaching typically consist of phonics and skills based reading programs. Based on this author's experience, the effects of traditional methods on "at risk" students are questionable, since many of these students are failing.

Another case is that of educator Reggie Routman (1991) who relates that she "was teaching in an elementary school where the majority of students were part of a minority, lower socio-economic population and many students were failing to learn to read successfully with traditional methods" (p. 1). In The Struggle to Continue, Patrick Shannon (1990) is the voice for a multitude of teachers who experience teaching a diverse population with traditional

methods that do not work. He states that, "Many teachers across the United States voice...frustration and dreams....Most have lived with the scientific management system of reading instruction their entire student and teaching careers, and they consider its dominance impenetrable" (p. 183).

Traditional teaching methods today have many of the characteristics of teaching that were employed in the 1920's and practice the principles embedded in the scientific management system which focused on learning from the smallest units of sound and mastering a series of skills all of which were done in a standardized way. Shannon (1990) states that the "...scientific management system was adapted from industry as the model for constructing a scientific curriculum" (p. 11). There were correlations between basals and the scientific management position. There was the belief that the materials were created by experts, were scientifically based, tried and tested, with the message that if all teachers followed the materials as directed, children would learn to read. The traditional grade school curriculum consisted of a hierarchical sequence of basic academic skills that students were expected to acquire.

The basal reading series have been the leading mode of instruction and learning and continue to be the predominant mode today. Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, (1988) in the Report Card on Basal Readers state that, "Our

examination shows that today, as in their inception, basal readers use a view of learning rooted in Thorndyke's Laws of Learning" (p. 98). This is a way of learning from the smallest units to larger units. It also proposes teaching skills out of context, resulting in students filling in blanks on worksheets.

An alternative approach to traditional teaching is based on the whole language philosophy. Whole language proponents advocate the use of the natural context to teach skills, as opposed to the basal approach which is "not natural language, and it is therefore unpredictable for the learner" (Goodman et al., 1988). This philosophy views learners as active participants whose thoughts and feelings are used to create meaning. Reading, like speech, is looked upon as a natural process. Curriculum is negotiated by the teacher and the students. Students learn as they inquire into the nature of things as well as language. Learning and learning language is most effective when integrated across the curriculum. Here the learner uses language in a meaningful, purposeful way.

"Recent advances in cognitive psychology, the science of how we learn, also have profound implications for the elementary school curriculum" (It's Elementary!, 1992, p. xiii). Cognitive research has been instrumental in presenting some reasonable arguments for change. "Modern cognitive research has found that children are actually more



like natural scientists bent on making sense of the world," (It's Elementary!, 1992, p. xiv).

Whole language philosophy and recent cognitive research are congruent and offer an alternative to the regular education teacher who has a significant population of "at risk" students. An integrated social studies-language arts unit incorporates all the characteristics of a whole language approach that meets the needs of a diversified group. "Children learn through use--they learn language by using language the way their culture uses it, and they learn science by doing science as scientists do" (Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores, 1991, p. 66). This project looks at a traditional fourth grade classroom that is transitioning from a skills based model to a holistic model. The teacher has been teaching a traditional curriculum, but observes that the "at risk" students are failing. The population of "at risk" students is forty percent of the total classroom population. These facts are significant reasons for considering a change from a traditional teaching approach to a whole language approach.

Strickland and Morrow, (1988) acknowledge that change is difficult, but that it is necessary for people to learn or be willing to learn about the nature of children and how children learn and develop. They state that curriculum "should flow naturally and sensibly" (p. 722).

Patrick Shannon (1990) provides inspiration by writing about the many teachers who experienced similar problems. Despite the obstacles, they were resistant to change. He states, "I hope that it {his book} will help these and other progressive teachers to take over the leadership and to write a better, more compassionate, and just future for literacy programs and American society" (p. 183).

This author of this project reports the observations of a specific classroom. The students and teacher work together to negotiate curriculum "that...flow{s} naturally and sensibly" (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p. 722) from an integrated social studies--language arts unit. It reports the effects and the success of the students with particular attention to "at risk" students. This project assists teachers on how to develop a similar unit based on the model used for the study. Because of the nature of the unit and the process and outcomes, no two units will or ought to function in the same way. It is a design based on theoretical beliefs.

"Let curriculum 'emerge' from student interests while we, as teachers, sat {sit} back and served {serve} as a resource for their needs" (Burke & Short, 1991, p.4). These words serve as a common denomination for curriculum based on a whole language philosophy.

Goodman, (1986) states that "language should be whole, meaningful, and relevant to the learner" (p. 9). Cummins

(1989) elaborates on this when he states that "academic growth will be fostered by context embedded instruction that validates students' background experiences by encouraging them to express, share and amplify these experiences" (p.29). This philosophy sees the interrelatedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They are not isolated entities, but interrelated as one acquires language, especially when used purposefully and meaningfully. This is particularly relevant when learning in a content field.

Whole language looks at learning as learner centered. Dewey, (1929) advised this when he said, "the child is the starting point, the center, and the end" (p. 14). Freeman, and Freeman, (1992) proclaim "Cognitive psychologists saw learners as creative, and they saw learning as being influenced by meaning and motivation. In a cognitive view, the learner is not passive but active" (43). Students in a whole language classroom are active participants as they interact with the processes of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

There are other forms of communication by which children learn, process, and generate meaning. Harste (1988) states, "To mediate the world is to create sign systems-- mathematics, art, music, dance, language--that stand between the world as we perceive it," (p. 3). He goes on to emphasize the importance of sign systems in a whole

language curriculum when he indicates that "society...ought to be concerned with expanding communication potential rather than systematically shutting off certain forms of expression through overemphasizing some, and neglecting others of the humanities" (Harste, 1991, p. 49). This recognizes students' strengths and focuses on what they can do rather than what they cannot do.

The learner is involved in decision making, risk taking, and processing instead of being involved in product oriented activities which are characteristic of the decoding and skills models. An example of this is "Authorship: A Key Facet of Whole Language," (Lamme, 1989). Authoring is a process that involves reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking and collaborating. It also recognizes the need for evaluation and reflection.

Learning is social as students and teacher collaborate with each other. This model looks at social learning as a crucial aspect of individual learning. Dewey (1938) stated that "all human experience is ultimately social: it involves contact and communication" (p.38). Vygotsky (1978) takes it one step further when he states that "The ways in which we talk and interact with other people become internalized and change the ways we think," (p. 86).

The author of this project employs the practices that are embedded in the whole language philosophy. The integrated social studies-language arts unit takes into

consideration how children learn and how children learn language. It is particularly sensitive to the needs of "at risk" students and recognizes that the whole language approach makes sense when working with a diverse group.

The author of this project takes into consideration that the step from a traditional classroom to a whole language classroom is risky for teachers. She attempts to assist teachers in planning for this change by presenting a section on how to go about setting up a whole language classroom. It presents a model with an emergent design as a springboard or starting place. It also describes the effects of the use of the social studies-language arts curricular unit on all of the students in a specific classroom. It describes how they negotiated curriculum, processed through it, and experienced curriculum in a positive way, thereby providing a successful curricular experience for all the students.

The author of this project recognizes that "Becoming a whole language teacher is a bold decision for many....{and} being a professional means accepting responsibility for using the best available knowledge to educate every learner to the fullest extent possible (Goodman, 1986, p. 69).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on this author's observations, experiences, and research, the "at risk" students are not succeeding in the traditional classroom. "At risk" students comprise "ten to twenty percent" (Will, 1986, p. 412) of the regular education classroom. In view of these facts, how do teachers in the regular education classroom teach a diverse group of students that range in varied abilities? An integrated fourth grade social studies-language arts unit based on whole language principles includes all students, and believes that all students are capable of learning. It is holistic in its perspective. Classrooms that embrace a whole language philosophy provide the necessary ingredients that invite all children to learn. Goodman (1992) states that "whole language reemphasizes the need for curriculum integrated around problem solving in science and social studies with pupils generating their own questions and answering their own questions and answering them collaboratively" (p. 188). An integrated unit based on whole language principles takes into consideration how children learn, the nature of curriculum and the role of the teacher.

These important characteristics of whole language that meet the needs of all students with particular consideration

of the "at risk" students are crucial for regular education teachers who are trying to meet the needs of all students and are trying to provide a curriculum in which they can succeed.

#### HOW CHILDREN LEARN

"...modern cognitive research has found that children are actually more like natural scientists bent on making sense of the world" (It's Elementary!, 1992, p. xiv). This research indicates that learning is a natural act for children. They strive to make sense of their environment. Smith (1985) states, "Children learn in the same way as scientists, testing tentative modifications of their theories of the world through experiments" (p. 83).

The characteristics of modern cognitive concepts are inherent in holistic curricular models which are meaning centered and address that learning proceeds from whole to part.

Freeman and Freeman (1992) state that children "need first a sense of the whole to understand the parts. The whole provides an important context in which the parts are naturally embedded" (p. 12). The opposite of this is part to whole learning found in the scientific management system. Goodman (1986) states, "Moving from small to large units has an element of adult logic....But the psychology of learning teaches us that we learn from the whole to parts" (p. 9).

The California History-Social Science Framework (1987)

mirrors whole language principles when it states, "This curriculum attempts to bridge the barriers between the related disciplines and to enable students to see the relationships and connections that exist in real life" (p. 26). This is looking at major ideas and key concepts which are holistic in nature.

Freeman and Freeman (1991) state, "Learning is the active construction of knowledge" (p. 29). This takes into consideration what children know, what they don't know, and what they want to learn. The child relates the new material to prior knowledge. Goodman (1987) refers to this as he describes learning as "coming to know through the symbolic transformation and representation of experience" (p.98). Smith, Goodman, and Meredith (1970) state that there are three stages to learning. They are "perceiving, in which the child attends to particular aspects of experience; ideating, in which the child reflects on the experience, and presenting, in which the knowledge is expressed in some way." These perspectives address learning as active, not passive.

Clark (1988) refers to this as a "paradigm shift in education" and describes it as a "transmission of knowledge to education as the active construction of knowledge" (p.18).



One of the characteristics of The California History Social Science Framework (1987) is that teachers employ "a variety of content-appropriate teaching methods that engage students actively in the learning process" (p. 7). Again, the emphasis is on the active participation of students as opposed to the traditional approach to social studies which was the memorization of facts. "Social Studies for Early Childhood and Elementary School Children Preparing for the 21st Century: A Report from NCSS Task Force on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies," {NCSS}, (1989), report that "the dominant classroom pattern is characterized by lecture and recitation, reading textbooks, and completing worksheets" (p. 20). The report emphasizes the need for students to be actively involved in learning social studies in order to be "effective citizens of the 21st century" (p. 14). This is one of the major goals of the social studies curriculum.

Freeman and Freeman (1991) state that learning takes place when lessons "have meaning and purpose for students now" (p. 29). Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores (1991) agree with this when they state, "it is purpose that makes the learning occur" (p. 25). When a child's interests are taken into consideration, the affective as well as the cognitive domain is considered and children are motivated to learn.

### The California History and Social Science

Framework(1987) addresses this aspect with "the inclusion of different cultural traditions in each year's course" (p. ix). This aspect of the framework recognizes and respects the diversity that exists in the classroom and opens up areas of interest for the diverse groups, thereby making learning more possible through meaning and purpose for all students. "This framework incorporates a multicultural perspective....that reflects the experiences of different ...groups (p. 5).

Freeman and Freeman (1991) state, "Lessons should engage groups of students in social interaction" (p. 29). Johnson and Johnson (1989) are in agreement as they investigate and propose that children learn in cooperative groups. Since man is a social being they propose and promote cooperative learning as "positive interdependence, face to face promotive interaction...individual accountability...social skills...group processing....{which includes} how they are working and how their effectiveness may be improved" (p. 80). Freeman and Freeman (1992) make a connection between social interaction and cognitive psychology when they state that "meaning is constructed in transactions between individuals and their learning environments" (P. 104). Vygotsky (1978) contends that "the distance between the actual developmental level is determined by independent problem solving and the level of

potential development is determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). The research done in this field has signified the need for social interaction and its relationship to learning. Goodman et al. (1987) sum up the importance of social learning by stating that "Language becomes the social medium for the sharing of thoughts; it creates a social mind from individual minds and thus greatly magnifies the learning ability of any one person" (p. 31).

The California History Social Science Framework (1987) states as one of its goals that "...the ability to work with others is an asset in any society, it is a requirement for citizenship in a democracy" (p. 24). The NCSS Report (1989) states, "The school itself serves as a laboratory for students to learn social participation directly and not symbolically. Democratic and participatory school and classroom environments are essential to this type of real-world learning" (p. 15). Cooperative learning fills this need because it provides the interaction necessary to meet the goal stated above.

Children learn in various ways. Gardner (1984) indicates that not only do they use listening, speaking, reading, and writing to learn, which he refers to as the traditional linguistic way of learning, but they also learn kinesthetically, musically, spatially, mathematically, interpersonally, and intrapersonally. He refers to these as

the seven intelligences. Harste (1988) discusses this with his research that relates multiple intelligences to literacy by the process of transmediation when "humans mediate the world...to create sign systems" (p. 3). These modes are not only used for learning, but for expressing knowledge when a student is incapable of writing in a coherent way. These studies have significant implications, particularly when working with "at risk" students.

Another key factor of learning, especially for many "at risk" students who are limited English speaking students, is to honor their primary language and culture. Freeman and Freeman (1992) state that "When we support students' first language, we are building on their strengths and validating them as individuals" (p. 175). This is difficult in a regular education classroom, but is needed to build concepts. By acknowledging that each person contributes to the classroom community, we validate their importance as individuals. We no longer live in a unicultural society. Multiculturalism needs to be acknowledged.

Particularly in California does this ring true as "influxes of refugees have filled classrooms with a rich mix of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds" (Freeman and Freeman, 1991, p. 29). Once again the all important factor of multiculturalism is addressed and looked on as a crucial factor in social studies. For learning to take place, this needs to be taken into consideration.

Freeman and Freeman (1991) state, "Lessons that show faith in the learner expand students' potential" (p. 29). A teacher needs to encourage children to learn and initially guide them. As they are surrounded by resources, they need to learn how to organize information for learning. Goodman, (1986) states that teachers need "To support pupils in revaluing themselves as language learners, and to get them to believe they are capable of becoming fully literate" (p. 56). Freeman and Freeman (1992) state that "Rather than labeling such students as Limited English Proficient or learning disabled, {many of whom are referred to as "at risk"}}, teachers need to help students develop their potential by showing unwavering faith in their ability to succeed" (p. 208). These thoughts mirror cognitive psychologists research on motivation and self esteem.

Children learn when they make connections to prior knowledge. Smith (1985) states that "All the order and complexity I see in the world must reflect an order and complexity that exists in my head. I can only make sense of the world in terms of what I know already" (p.74).

Inquiry and problem solving are key ingredients in how children learn. "The 'scientific method' is the natural way to learn, displayed by all of us in our early years" (Smith, 1985, p. 84) Children think and question naturally and try to get meaning out of their world. Smith (1985) continues with "Predicting, hypothesizing, striving to comprehend, and

striving to learn are going on all the time. They are as natural and continuous for a child as breathing" (p. 88).

The current traditional curriculum that is used by many teachers focuses on "skill and drill." This approach to learning dates back to the 1920's where the theories of learning matched society's needs at that time and does not match how children learn or how children will survive in the 21st century. Goodman (1986) tells teachers to "Put aside the carefully sequenced basal readers, spelling programs, and handwriting kits. Let the...ditto masters gather dust on the shelves...." (p. 7).

The current traditional curriculum that is used by many teachers in social studies where "forced marches through textbooks are frequent; and where the assumption prevails that memorization...will somehow translate itself during adulthood into civic involvement" (NCSS Report, 1989, p. 20).

There is an alternative and teachers do have a choice and a voice in creating an environment that reflects how all children learn. "At risk" students are capable of learning in an environment that incorporates these characteristics.

After looking at research in education and how children learn, it is important to look at the state frameworks and documents that are attempting to implement change in curriculum. These frameworks suggest and reflect on how children learn and think. Resnich and Klopfer (1989) wrote

that "the entire educational program must be reconceived and revitalized so that thinking pervades...." (p. 2).

### THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM

The "at risk" students are not making the necessary connections that allow them to learn. Traditional curriculum that focuses on part to whole learning, and skills in isolation, do not make sense to these students. A curriculum is needed that takes into consideration how all children learn.

"Since the 1960's, there has been a renaissance in what we know about how children learn language; yet, ... the field of curriculum development...has changed little" (Burton, 1991, p. 365). Burton (1991) realizes the "mismatch between how children learn language and the historical grounding of how we continue to frame and display the curriculum..." (p. 365).

Forty five years have passed since research has indicated the breakthrough as to how children learn, but current practices in curriculum development continue to be grounded in outdated theories. Skill and drill exercises, the use of readers with workbooks that accompany them date back to the pre-1900's and the "mental discipline" theory. These practices were indicative of the curriculum that existed at that time, but they ring true in many schools throughout the country today. Short and Burke (1991), whose beliefs, efforts, and progress in curriculum

development are expressed in Creating Curriculum: Teachers and Students as a Community of Learners, encourage teachers to attempt curricular changes that reflect recent research on how children learn. They encourage teachers to take the responsibility for change, but they are afraid that teachers will state, "...in my district we have to teach the basal," (p. xi) or "...we are held accountable to know children's progress on the state achievement test" (p. xi). Comments like these date back to the 1920's when the basals were first introduced or the "use of standardized tests {were used} to determine students' competence" Shannon (1990, p. 12).

In addition to this, curriculum was affected by Ralph Tyler's (1949) Basic Principles of Curriculum Instruction which proposed the preparation of precisely formed objectives before an activity would be used with children. Today, many teachers are required to state objectives for activities that they use in their classrooms.

Strickland and Morrow (1989) reiterated the words of Short and Burke when they wrote, "How do we introduce this new approach into a world where the teaching and testing of skills increasingly dominates everything we do?" (p. 722). One way is to "read, think, talk., and reflect on policy and practice" (p. 722).

The State of California History--Social Science Framework (1987) indicates that policy and practices are



changing and efforts are being made to make curriculum more congruent with the way children think and learn. In its foreward it states, "...it integrates history and geography with the humanities and the social sciences; it enriches the content of the early grades;...it recognizes the multicultural character of American society;...it incorporates the teaching of critical thinking into the content of each course" (p. viii).

The current English-Language Arts Framework, adopted by the California State Board of Education and Published by the California Department of Education in Sacramento, (1987) recognizes and states that "We are in a midst of a revolution...into how the brain works, how we acquire language, and how we construct meaning in our lives" (p. 1). What they are proposing meshes with with "Psycholinguistics, language acquisition theory, and research in composition and literacy...." (p. 1).

This framework calls for "A literature-based program...that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing and teaching of language skills in meaningful contexts" (p. 3). They are calling for "Instructional programs that guide all students through a range of thinking processes" (p. 3).

Huck and Kuhn (1968) indicate that children can develop an appreciation for literature and the historical perspective as they read and discuss varieties of literature

that present historical views. This can be done through biographies of famous people, historical fiction, or the actual presentation of historical facts.

This framework also addresses the needs of special students. It states that the curriculum for students with special needs includes "...good literature; integrating instruction in all of the language arts; ...and connecting English-language arts activities and materials with the students' own lives" (p.20).

These frameworks provide the basis for an integrated social-studies, language-arts curriculum, one that meets the needs of all students.

Studies on the integrated curriculum indicate the need to "make language a major focus of concern and put it at the center of the curriculum" (Goodman, 1986, p. 60).

Freeman and Mason (1991) "have suggested organizing themes around big ideas and powerful contrasts." Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores (1991) propose using "theme cycles {which} are a means for pursuing a line of inquiry" (p. 64).

They are in agreement with Clark (1988) who states, "curriculum should involve students in some of the significant issues in life and that teachers should encourage students to ask questions worth arguing about" (p. 29).

Sizer (1990) builds on this idea by organizing around "Essential Questions" which lead to "engaging and effective curricula"(p. 49). This involves the learner in relevant activities. The California History Social Studies Framework, (1987) refers to this as key issues or ideas that can be pursued, especially when they relate to an individual's life. NCSS Report (1989) states that a social studies program must be "organized...around concepts from history and the social sciences" (p. 18). Once students inquire into these key concepts or ideas it allows them to "generalize and integrate new information" (p. 18).

Harste, Short, and Burke (1988) talk about the authoring cycle as a curricular cycle. The authoring cycle is a model for curriculum and allows learners to bring to the cycle their life experiences. This employs and includes the alternate systems of communication such as art, music, drama and movement. This approach to curriculum takes into consideration all students and builds on their strengths. It also looks at language and its activities as functional and meaningful. It also recognizes the need for social interaction. They state, "In starting the authoring cycle it is important...to select open activities that permit all students...to connect" (p. 54).

"If the young people of this nation are to become effective participants in a democratic society, the social studies must be an essential part of the curriculum in the

early childhood/elementary years" (NCSS Report, 1989, p. 14). An integrated social studies-language arts unit is one way to achieve these goals.

#### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In whole language programs the role of the teacher, according to Routman (1991), is one of "facilitator and co-learner. I do more listening and less talking. I am an observer, encourager, participator, and respondent. I am a coach" (p. 18). The whole language teacher operates as a facilitator and a resource. Short and Burke (1990) describe it from a similar perspective. "As teachers, we contribute our experiences and understandings about learning and about our particular students" (p. 5). Whole language teachers recognize the importance of the individual. They recognize students strengths and build on their strengths.

In much of the literature reviewed, similar characteristics kept appearing. The teacher's role is one of observer, listener, organizer, inviter, negotiator, demonstrator, risk taker, encourager, and one who assumes that children will learn to read and write,

As an observer and listener, the teacher is a child watcher who capitalizes on children's strengths. the teacher then works with those strengths to provide appropriate materials and resources for the child. This is evident in the Reading Miscue Inventory: Alternative Procedures (Goodman, Watson and Burke, 1987) whose work is

based on Kenneth Goodman's Taxonomy of Reading. These researchers have indicated that by doing a miscue analysis, one can decide on a students' strengths and needs in reading. Reading strategies are then employed to build on the reader's strengths. Weaver (1988) considers "the most important use of miscue analysis to be helping teachers gain insight into the reading process" (p. 329).

As an inviter to learning, the teacher recognizes when a child is ready to engage in a meaningful experience and invites the child to the experience. The child has a choice and can opt to decline an invitation. Routman (1991) discusses Holdaway's Developmental Model and quotes him as stating that "The child is invited to participate and collaborate because he has a need for and genuine interest in learning to talk or mastering a particular skill" (p. 9).

When a skill is taught, it is taught in context. Goodman (1986) tells teachers to "Diminish the use of workbooks and exercise sheets....save only the few exercises that might qualify as strategy lessons, those with whole, meaningful texts that might be relevant and interesting to your pupils" (p. 7).

As an organizer and one who encourages, the teacher arranges an environment that is conducive to learning. The teacher organizes the room environment, organizes for cooperative learning, arranges for personal space,

establishes a gathering area, displays student work, arranges the room and workspace, and provides resources and keeps records. Smith, P. G. (1991) states that "What whole language teaching consists of is providing the proper environment which allows and encourages the child to develop his/her language skills as rapidly as he/she is developmentally able to do" (p. 88).

As a negotiator, the teacher negotiates classroom rules, duties, and curriculum with the students. The classroom is considered a classroom community. Routman (1991) indicates that "negotiating the curriculum also means finding our own answers for what should be taught as well as working through problems in our own way....{and} also means sharing the responsibility of learning with the learners" (p. 18).

Since "citizenship education is a major goal of social studies instruction in the elementary school" (Holmes, 1991, p. 176), one way to achieve this is "In democratic classes, {where} teachers share decision making with students. Children participate in setting learning goals and establishing rules for school behavior" (p. 177).

Short and Burke (1991) indicated that they "began to explore with others how curriculum could be a shared process of teachers and students working together through negotiation" (p. 4). "At risk" students involved in

collaboration and negotiation would feel a sense of value and empowerment.

As a demonstrator, the teacher models reading, writing, and learning. Students learn good habits by observing teachers and other adults in learning activities. Trelease (1990) indicates that children are encouraged to read by teachers using the best literature and reading aloud to them. Graves (1989, 1990) states that whole language teachers teach reading and writing by using whole pieces of language and whole pieces of literature.

In summary, recent research articles as well as state frameworks support the trends in education that are reflected in whole language. Individualism and the focus of the individual's interests and choices as well as rights of the individual learner are some of the most discussed topics and themes used in the recent documents and articles coming through ERIC/CS. These topics indicate that the "philosophical ground may be shifting" (Smith, 1989, p. 720). He states that "Literature has become the center of attention in curriculum discussions" (p. 720). Rightly so since both the California History-Social Science Framework (1987) and the California English-Language Arts Framework (1987) refer to a "literature driven curriculum" instead of a "textbook driven curriculum" (720).

The implications here are that changes are in the making and these do affect the teaching profession and the

student population. The most important implication is that the individual and the recognition of individuals as diverse students who bring a variety of cultures, backgrounds, experiences and interests are finally being validated as learners instead of being viewed as students who have limited abilities or disabilities.

Educators need to be aware of change and what those changes imply. Some people don't accept change too easily and some people outrightly resist it. Nonetheless, change is in the making and this project is a reflection of that change.



CHAPTER THREE  
GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

GOALS

In looking at "How to Transition from a Traditional Classroom to a Whole Language Classroom by Implementing a Fourth Grade Social Studies-Language Arts Unit That Meets the Needs of All Students," this author presents a project that is based on whole language principles. It represents a change from traditional teaching methods that are based on skills, workbooks, dittoes, and basal reading materials. It demonstrates how an integrated unit was used in the classroom with all students, including the "at risk" population. It provides information that demonstrates successful processes of all the students in the classroom. It attempts to assist teachers in their move toward whole language by including a section on how to plan an integrated unit. It includes the integrated unit that was used with a fourth grade self contained regular education classroom. Lastly, it presents the results of its implementation.

The goals of this project are:

1. To encourage teachers, especially those who work with a diverse population to consider the use of an integrated social studies-language arts unit that employs whole language principles.

2. To encourage teachers to create their own curricular units with the guidelines provided herein.

3. To sensitize teachers to the multiculturalism that exists throughout classrooms today and provide an accepting, inviting, validating environment for all students.

4. To encourage teachers to employ whole language principles as a result of utilizing this project.

#### LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this project are:

1. Materials could be a constraint because of the amount and type of materials used for the project.

2. Finances could be a constraint since materials are extensive as well as expensive.

3. Space could be a constraint if the classroom does not have adequate space for the variety of areas that are found in whole language classrooms. For example, is there adequate space for art tables? Is there adequate space to display books, magazines, newspapers and other varieties of print?

4. Time could be a constraint if teachers are mandated to follow a schedule, thereby not allowing enough time to implement an integrated unit.

5. A teacher's grade level is a constraint since this is a fourth grade unit. Teachers of other grades would

have to plan and make changes based on their grade level requirements.

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## APPENDIX A

### HOW TO TRANSITION FROM A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM TO A WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM BY IMPLEMENTING A FOURTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES--LANGUAGE ARTS UNIT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

In 1989, I started teaching fourth grade in the public school system. My first year was fraught with many tears and many sleepless nights. I now had my first experience with children who could not read or write at the fourth grade level. Approximately forty percent of these students were considered "at risk" students and were in the Chapter I program where they received assistance for reading and mathematics. Some of these students were in a pull out program for special education services.

Chapter I students are those students who meet a certain achievement criteria. At my school site, they are the students who score at thirty five percent or below on the achievement tests. When a school has a significant percentage of these students, they qualify for Chapter I funds, which are federal funds that provide these students with additional assistance in reading and mathematics.

Since my class consisted of a high percentage of "at risk" students, I really did not know how to begin teaching reading to them since a good percentage of them read at

approximately the first or second grade level. I was accustomed to working with students who were capable of reading the fourth grade texts and who scored high on achievement tests. The "at risk" students had already been inundated with phonics from kindergarten through fourth grade. Those who were enrolled in the Special Education program were receiving more assistance in phonics.

My first impulse was to work with the students in small groups and give them more phonics. This did not work. I had them reading out of old basals. This did not work. I had them doing many skill sheets. This did not work either. I felt like a failure in spite of the fact that my principal was really pleased with my efforts. He could tell that I was doing my best to help the students. I was not pleased with the results or with myself.

I had a wonderful room environment and a very accepting approach with the children. I followed the state frameworks and the district and school site mandates. I did everything that I was expected to do. I checked and double checked the curriculum guides that were distributed at the beginning of the school year. I followed these flawlessly. I was often chided by my colleagues as being the only one at my site to read the curriculum guides from cover to cover. I was going to do things the right way. Curriculum was the application of all the dictates to me. I did all this, but something was definitely wrong. I was not happy with myself or with

the results. When I saw my student's test scores in June, I cried. I had to make a move or leave teaching, which I loved.

It was at this point that I was accepted into the Master of Education program which focused on the reading option. It was the beginning of a new way of thinking and teaching.

I was fascinated with the whole language philosophy and began to apply some of the concepts in my classroom. These were baby steps. I was afraid to give up my security blanket--my belief in the skills based program. I progressed little by little to the point that I am now transitioning successfully into a whole language classroom.

LET'S TAKE A WALK THROUGH THE UNIT  
AS IT WAS DONE IN MY CLASSROOM

I had a three-four combination classroom of thirty children--ten third graders and twenty fourth graders. My third grade students were higher academically and the majority of my fourth graders were low to average students with only two students academically high. Eleven of the thirty students were designated Chapter 1 students based on their placement on the CAT (California Achievement Test). This was thirty three percent of the total class.

I explained to my students that there were certain topics that I was required to teach. These were mandated by the state and by my district. I then distributed curriculum strips that listed topics that I was supposed to teach them. Also, I verbally stated the topics that I had to cover that year.

After looking over the curriculum strips and discussing the topics, I asked the students what they were most interested in learning. They came up with the following topics:

1. Gold Rush.
2. Transportation systems in California.
3. Water projects in California.
4. Westward Movement.
5. Regions of California.

6. Immigrants who came to California.

7. Changes in California life from 1900 to the present

Then, we voted on the topics. The most popular topic was the Gold Rush with eleven votes. A close second was water projects in California.

After this selection, we proceeded to list the things we know about the Gold Rush. Students generated the following:

1. They used special equipment to mine gold.

2. Lots of people moved to California to mine gold.

3. People thought that they would get rich if they moved here.

4. Some people got "gold fever."

5. People were greedy. They tried to take each other's gold.

6. Some people dug with their hands.

7. Some people used dynamite.

8. They used picks and shovels.

9. There was a man who first discovered gold.

10. They worked for a long time to find one nugget.

11. Some people used pans to get gold.

12. They used cradles to mine gold.

13. Some people died while mining for gold.

14. They used carts to go into caves to mine for gold.

15. It is worth lots of money.

When we completed the list of the things we knew about the Gold Rush, we began to list what we would like to learn about this period in history. We all had input in this, including me. We came up with the following list:

1. Who was the first man to discover gold?
2. How come they wanted gold?
3. How did they find out about it?
4. Who priced the gold?
5. Who knew it was gold?
6. Why were they so greedy?
7. When was it first found?
8. How is it made?
9. How did it get its color?
10. How many people died looking for it?
11. Why were they crazy about it?
12. How did the Gold Rush start?
13. Why did they want to be rich so quick?
14. How did they know there was gold?
15. How did gold get its name?
16. How did people travel here to mine for gold?
17. How did they find out about it if they lived so far?
18. Where did all these people come from?
19. What were the communities like back then?

I invited the students to sign up for those topics that they wanted to research. Some students had difficulty with

this process and I told them that they could decide whenever they felt comfortable with a topic of interest to them. Eventually all students signed up to research a topic.

We took trips to the library and checked out as many books as were available. I went to a children's book store and bought over three hundred dollars in books to support the theme. I brought in my own personal encyclopedia set since we have access to the school library only one half hour a week and cannot check out encyclopedias. I called the district media center to have them send me whatever videos and films they had on the Gold Rush. I got the word out to colleagues at school and teacher friends. Finally, I sent a letter to the parents explaining what we were doing. I told them that we were doing the research at school. I invited them to encourage their children in their pursuits by getting them their own library card. I invited the children and parents to send in whatever they found that was related to the topic. Finally, I invited the parents to stop by to visit the classroom to see research in action.

The students and I discussed some ways that we could find the answers to the questions. We came up with a list of resources that were available.

I started the cycle by reading several chapters from Patty Reed's Doll by Laurregard. I showed several videos and filmstrips to make the students feel comfortable with the topic. They all took notes on everything. I then



shared the books that I brought in as well as the topics in the books. I told students that they could find information in their social studies textbooks.

With this as a starting point, I invited the students to select whatever they were interested in and told them that they could share topics as well. They started reading everything that was available and taking notes on it.

The reading specialist at our school got so excited about what we were doing that she went home and asked her husband to build a covered wagon. She no longer had a classroom of her own and missed the excitement of these activities. She also brought in a big doll, Sweet Betsy from Pike. She brought in records and tapes of music from this period. She made copies of songs and provided the words on large charts.

Another friend told me about the video, "Clementine," so I rented that. The students were learning the songs from the period and really enjoy<sup>ed</sup>~~ing~~ it.

I allowed for a long time block every day and told the children that this was uninterrupted reading and writing time. At this point students started sharing and reading books and taking notes. Some of the students had gone to the city library, got library cards for the first time, and checked out books. They brought them in to share with the class.

I worked my way around the room guiding students, listening to their questions, supporting them in what they were doing, and invited them to share their writing with each other. Small groups were working together and helping each other in their research. Whenever new materials were brought in, they were shared with the class.

When students got to a certain point in their investigations, they shared with the class and we all applauded the findings.

Students were told that they could share their findings through art, music, writing, dance, or movement if they so chose to do it and they could do this whenever they wanted to share their learning. Demonstrations were given so that they would have a model for the sign systems.

We discussed some processes that students might enjoy. Again this was emphasized as process and not product and students spent quite a bit of time trying to figure out what they wanted to do.

Some of the processes they decided on:

1. Constructing paper mache projects--miners and gold nuggets.
2. Creating murals (very popular).
3. Building sluice boxes out of wood and construction paper.
4. Building cradles out of wood.
5. Creating panning displays out of pie pans.

6. Constructing wagon trains out of construction paper.

7. Creating dioramas of mining sites and communities.

Students took ownership of their learning. Those students who are normally distracted had difficulty deciding what they wanted to do. They eventually became part of cooperative groups and contributed to their best ability in their groups.

The students liked the variety of communications available through the sign systems. This meant that the students communicated through music, movement, drama, or art. Many of the students used art as a means of communication and some wrote songs and performed them.

Students pursued their topics and were excited about their success. They presented whenever they completed their works.

They kept track of what they were doing in their journals and expressed the difficulties and successes of their daily work.

Either individually or in groups they worked on sluice boxes, murals, books, reports, communities, etc. This led to research into rocks and minerals in science since some students preferred to do this. This actually opened up the theme to bigger ideas which captured the essence of "wholeness."

Reflection and evaluation were important facets of the cycle and these students were learning the meaning of these words for the first time and sincerely made efforts to reflect and evaluate.

As they progressed through their work, they stopped and thought about what they were doing. They were told that if they were unhappy with something that they did, they could go back and redo it. Or, if they were content with what they did, they could continue with it. This reflection and evaluation process was a continuous cycle.

As students performed or presented their creations, our classroom implemented "the veil of silence." Once the veil was lowered, we held our applause. Instead of applauding each student or group that presented their creation, there was a silent reflection on what was presented. When all presentations were complete, we applauded all of the efforts as a celebration of our community's growth. This acknowledged and validated what students were doing, rather than giving one individual or group more recognition than another. This type of reflection and evaluation honors the fact that everyone has value and that their contributions are valuable.

What is particularly interesting is that children are capable of evaluating themselves honestly and this contributes to the cooperative environment of the classroom and makes everyone feel valued.

The Chapter 1 students in particular felt successful because they all were able to get involved in processes based on their interests. They too, felt a sense of acceptance and accomplishment and improved greatly how they felt about themselves.

## THE UNIT

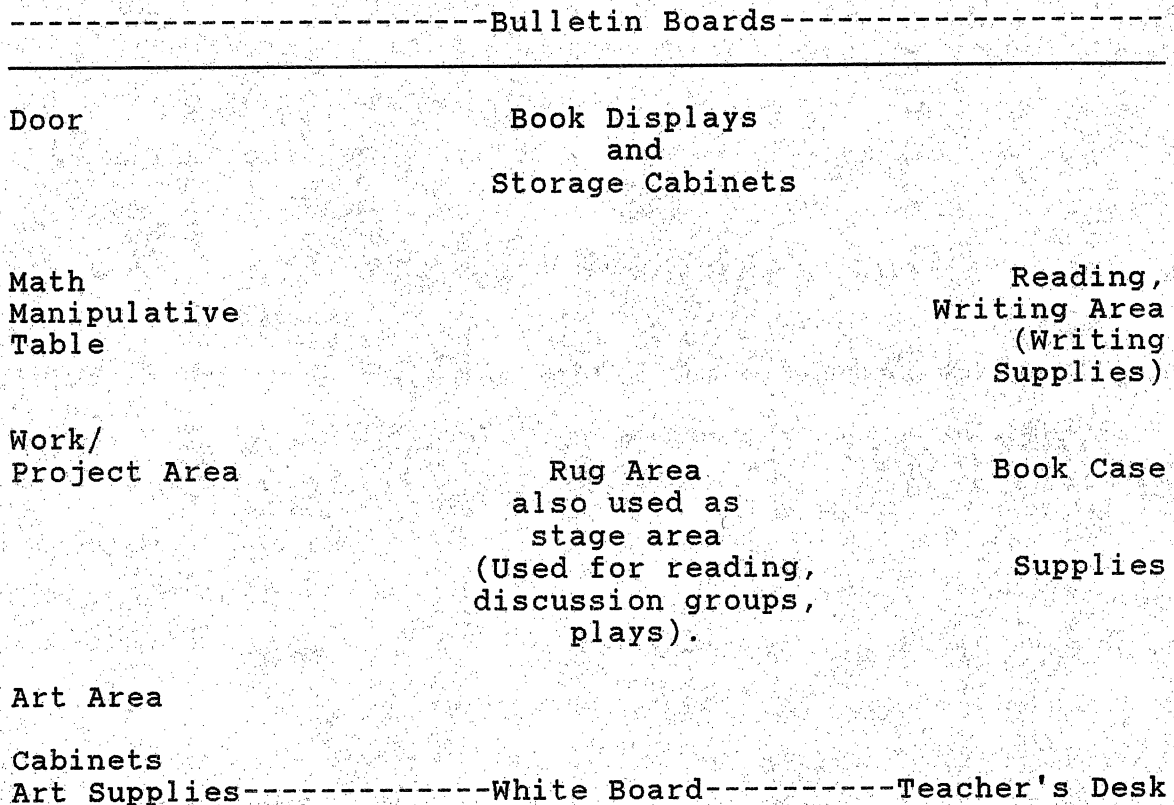
The structure of the unit came from the state frameworks and the district guidelines. It also came from the format that was used. Read alouds, mini lessons with large and small groups, individual conferences with students, large and small group discussions, processes and invitations provided the basic structures upon which the unit was built.

The physical structure was one that invited students to discuss and interact with each other. This is why individual desks were arranged in clusters or groups. For example, in my classroom, I organized the students' desks in groups of five so that there would be lots of interaction. They could have been arranged differently. Large tables were used for reading, writing, and listening centers. Large tables were equipped with materials for publishing, including a large variety of art supplies and paper. Students had access to a computer and word processing programs.

The classroom library was equipped with a variety of print which included books, newspapers, magazines, and resource books.

## ROOM ARRANGEMENT

An example of the physical process is this room arrangement.



Observe the location of the teacher's desk. This was done deliberately to deemphasize the role of the teacher. The teacher's role was one of facilitator, to assist the children in their learning.

## MATERIALS

I used books, films, etc. so that students could take notes and gain information. This gave them sufficient background information when they researched information.

Some of the potential materials and processes were books, films, filmstrips, videos, magazines, newspapers, inviting visitors, and taking field trips.

The art supplies included paints, chalk, crayons, markers, and paper of different textures and sizes. Paint brushes came in a variety of sizes also.

Writing supplies consisted of a variety of paper including paper with computer generated designs so that students could become acquainted with writing stories on paper of different forms.

Books were displayed all around the room to invite children to browse and read. Books were ordered from the district library to supplement the classroom books. Books were checked out from the public library as well.



## PROCESS STRUCTURES

Other structures that were process structures included the authoring cycle. The authoring cycle usually began with finding out what students already knew about the topic or theme. This then led into what the students wanted to know about the topic or theme. The teacher worked as a facilitator and assisted students in how they could go about finding out about their topics of interest.

After students made their decisions about what they chose to investigate, they proceeded and worked on their topics of interest. At various times, as students finished their research or activities, they shared their results with the rest of the class.

Sometimes they read reports. Other times they presented their findings by writing songs, creating artistic products, or doing a dramatic presentation.

After they presented their findings, they discovered other areas that they wished to pursue. For example, as students pursued the study of pioneers, they proceeded to study gold mining communities. From here, they became interested in the study of rocks and minerals and researched these areas.

The authoring cycle was often initiated by reading aloud from books that often motivated the students to research topics of interest to them. For example, I read

Patty Reed's Doll, and this created interest in pioneers and how the pioneers came to California.

Another process structure was that of pulling students together to work in mini groups. Based on my observation of the students, I observed that students at various points of their research were ready to work on story characters, plot, setting, etc. These students worked with me to obtain more information in these areas. I invited the students to join mini groups. The students had a choice in this. They could accept or decline the invitation based on their interests.

Other process structures that were in place were the learning community and environment. This endorsed the importance of the learning theory.

As students worked together and created and worked on activities, they contributed to the learning community.

Evaluation was another process structure that was build into the unit. Students conferenced individually with me. They also conferenced in groups with me. The students and I kept portfolios. My portfolio included notations of completed work, the way the children interacted with each other, and how the children worked through the processes. My notations included students' interests, strengths, weaknesses and growth.

The students evaluated themselves and were asked to keep journals that included thoughts and feelings about what they were doing. They were expected to write about what

they had learned. They were expected to evaluate their processes.

Some potential activities/processes were:

1. Writing in diaries.
2. Writing postcards.
3. Writing letters.
4. Writing in journals.
5. Writing poetry.
6. Creating murals.
7. Creating dioramas.
8. Writing plays.

Some processes for finding out what students knew about a topic or theme:

1. Brainstorming as a class and noting it on butcher paper.
2. Writing quick writes which meant writing down quickly whatever came to mind and doing it in two or three minutes.
3. Clustering which consisted of writing the focused word or term and writing brief notations of thoughts related to the term.

We found out what the students wanted to learn about the theme. We continued to make lists.

Based on this, we determined the resources that were available and those that we needed. Students were invited to bring in resources also.

## POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

I initiated activities by reading aloud to the students. The students recorded their reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the story by writing in journals and diaries.

The read aloud also initiated other lessons and activities. Some mini lessons were:

1. Learning about fiction.
2. Learning about characters.
3. Learning about story.
4. Learning about plot.
5. Learning about problems.
6. Learning about solutions.

Some activities were:

1. Selecting stories for literature groups.
2. Writing stories.
3. Sharing stories.
4. Reading (Sustained Silent Reading/S. S. R.).
5. Discussing in small groups.
6. Reading to each other.
7. Writing (Sustained Silent Writing/S. S. W.).
8. Writing responses to students.
9. Writing responses to the teacher.

READ ALOUD  
(BIOGRAPHY OR AUTOBIOGRAPHY)

At one point a biography or autobiography was read to introduce this concept to the students. This led into mini lessons of these topics. From the mini lessons students broke into small groups to do the following:

1. They selected further readings.
2. They read silently.
3. They wrote silently.
4. They read and responded in small groups.

After they did this, they responded in the following ways:

1. They wrote biographies.
2. They wrote autobiographies.
3. They shared biographies.
4. They shared autobiographies.

There were many other options that could have occurred.

## LETTER WRITING

At one point, letter writing was introduced. This was done by reading The Jolly Postman. There are other good books that could have been introduced. There are lots of choices.

Other books that demonstrated letter writing were on display. Children were introduced to letter writing in this way. The children did the following:

1. They wrote letters.
2. They read the letters to each other.
3. They read the letter writing books.
4. They discussed the letter writing books.

It is important to note that these activities are open ended and could include more options.

(FUN WITH SOUNDS AND WORDS)  
INVESTIGATION OF SOUNDS AND WORDS

As students demonstrated an interest in the sounds of words, this was introduced. Some of the books used for this were Guppies in Tuxedos, Superdupers, and The Dove Dove.

There are many other books to work with when you do this.

After reading the books, the students did the following:

1. They selected and "played" with words.
2. They wrote "fun" words.

Other possible activities are:

1. Writing activities.
2. Tape recording activities.
3. Video recording activities.

Children invent many possibilities. The teacher and children can create a variety of choices.

## FUN WITH LANGUAGE

Throughout the readings, mini groups were formed and lessons focused on the nature of language. This was done as students expressed an interest or appeared ready to accept information on nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.

Some of the students reflected on their own writing to see if they had these elements. They shared this information in small groups. They exchanged writing and assisted each other in exploring language.

Ruth Heller has written a series of books that delve into the parts of speech. The pictures are vibrant and the writing is interesting and inviting.

Again, the processes are endless and are the students' choices.



## INVITATIONS TO POETRY READING AND WRITING

As students expressed an interest in poetry or as the teacher observed that children could be interested in poetry, this was introduced to the students.

A variety of books were displayed and read to the students. Mini lessons were done on the following:

1. Reading poetry.
2. Investigating different forms of poetry such as the haiku, the diamonte, etc.
3. Exploring books that demonstrate good poetry.
4. Writing poetry.

It is important to keep in mind that children are invited as they demonstrate, or express an interest in poetry, or the teacher as observer invites them into the process.

## EXPLORING THE MULTI-CULTURAL ASPECT

We read the book, People, to investigate the multi-cultural aspect. There are innumerable books to read aloud and explore this theme.

In this particular unit, the multi-cultural theme is strong and will be woven throughout the unit because of the diversity that exists in California.

Demonstrate and share books with this theme. Read and discuss with the entire group and with small groups. Students themselves can select books to read in literature circles.

Students can explore similarities and differences between and among cultures. A multitude of topics can be created with the students.

## FINDING OUT ABOUT THE GOLD RUSH

Invitations were extended to read from primary source documents such as journals and letters used during this period. This was done to motivate interest.

As students read about the gold rush and the communities that existed at that time, they did the following:

1. They wrote journals.
2. They wrote letters.
3. They did creative writing.
4. They wrote miner's journals.

Students created and expressed themselves in various ways. Some were:

1. They drew gold mining equipment.
2. They wrote and performed plays.
3. They made murals.
4. They made California flags.
5. They created gold mining communities.
6. They created dioramas.
7. They wrote and kept journals.

The possibilities that students and teachers could come up with would be:

1. Performing skits.
2. Performing dances.

## OTHER GENRE

I read aloud a variety of genre. We read and explored folk tales, short stories, poetry, fiction, historical fiction, and nonfiction.

I displayed a variety of all genre and extended invitations to do the following:

1. Read books.
2. Write books.
3. Discuss books.
4. Compare and contrast the various genre.

The possibilities are endless and invite students to continue the cycle of exploration and process.

## HOW TO PREPARE AN INTEGRATED FOURTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES-LANGUAGE ARTS UNIT

You can prepare for the integrated unit by reading and becoming familiar with the California Social Studies Framework and the California Language Arts Framework. In social studies, look at the broad themes and the major concepts. This helps in organizing a unit by opening up many possibilities of exploration and experience by the students.

Select relevant literature and other resources and materials that support the concepts. This could include films, filmstrips, videos, computer related materials, as well as art and music resources.

Arrange the environment for cooperative learning. Group desks in such a way as to invite and encourage social learning. Arrange for personal space. Establish a gathering area. This can be used for a variety of purposes such as focusing attention, sharing literature or writing, and demonstrating mini-lessons or experiments.. Let the classroom reflect student work.

Begin to work with students in groups. Establish ground rules and allow time to evaluate activities. Reflection and evaluation are important aspects of a wholistic environment. Students are given time to

reflect--to look back at what they do, evaluate it, and change whatever they decide to change. Students reflect on their processes and evaluate on a continual basis.

Accumulate supplies by working with the students and their families. Get the information out to friends and colleagues. These can be valuable resources for needed materials. Build a personal collection of literature and resource books.

Reflect on the teacher's role. Teachers and children negotiate curriculum in a community of learners. Negotiate class rules together. Daily business can be turned over to the students. Practice listening and observing students. Look for students' strengths and build on these strengths.

Establish curricular structures that are components of a wholistic classroom. Consider the following:

1. Share literature.
2. Read material of their (students') choice.
3. Allow for Sustained Silent Reading and Writing as well as responding.
4. Share books.
5. Read aloud by teacher.
6. Employ readers' theater.
7. Set up paired reading.
8. Use literature sets.
9. Use basals and textbooks as resource materials.
10. Teach skills in context.

11. Use semantic maps, sketch to stretch, and other whole language activities.
12. Increase use of journals and learning logs.
13. Allow time for sharing.
14. Establish an author's circle to clarify meaning.
15. Set up an author's folder for ongoing student writing.
16. Establish a classroom newspaper.
17. Edit with peers.
18. Generate written discourse.
19. Encourage interviews so students can interact and learn about and from each other.
20. Respond to literature in a variety of ways.
21. Celebrate learning and authorship by preparing and presenting books and other creative endeavors.

After the environment and structures are in place, begin the cycle by finding out what students already know about the theme. Find out what they want to know and learn. Students and teachers work together to determine ways that they might find out the answers. Students make decisions about what they are going to investigate. Students work together in a variety of ways and share the results. This leads to new investigations which keeps the cycle going.

Use teacher resources for curricular components that support your integrated social studies-language arts curriculum.

Save student generated work and have students assist in evaluating their work. These materials can be shared with parents at conference time. Conference with students on a regular basis.

Continue to read articles and books to assist you in your journey to change. An excellent book is Creating Classrooms for Authors: The Reading-Writing Connection by Jerome Harste, Kathy Short and Carolyn Burke.

Lastly, look at the model unit in this project to guide and assist you in putting together your unit. Read through the "Walk Through..." in order to gain some insights as to how the unit could possibly evolve for you. Each one is unique and special as it should be.



## CHILDREN'S REACTIONS

### AS THEY WORKED THROUGH THE UNIT

Since this was a new way of doing things for me and this class, it was interesting to note some of the children's reactions as we implemented the unit.

All the children were astonished at how we reviewed the requirements that were supposedly my responsibilities. The children read from curriculum strips provided by my district and suggested topics that sounded interesting to them. They simply could not believe that I had included them in the curricular process. They enjoyed selecting the topics on which we voted. They had never done anything like this and could not believe that I was sharing this responsibility with them.

Even more astonishing to all of them was the fact that we voted on topics and decided in a democratic way what the topic of study would be. Nearly every child commented that they had never done anything like this before and they stated that it was a very fair way to work with a class. I continually heard the word "fair" as we processed through this stage.

They realized that the democratic process was the result of a fair way to select a topic, however, they did not understand the concept of democracy before, and this process helped each child comprehend the

democratic process. Each child felt good that he/she had a voice in the selection. Many were disappointed that their topic was not selected, but they were very comfortable that they even had a choice in this kind of decision.

When they came to the point where they needed to select what they wanted to research, there was quite a bit of confusion, but that was anticipated since this was a new process for all of us. Once the students decided what they wanted to pursue and got involved, the group dynamics were very interesting.

The "at risk" students felt good that they could work with more knowledgeable students. They also contributed information as a result of taking in information from auditory and visual input from videos, oral readings, and discussions within the groups. I noticed that they did not depend on the more talented students, but were comfortable with their input.

Many of the "at risk" group worked on murals and presented oral reports. Again, they demonstrated artistic and verbal abilities that compensated for their low reading abilities. They commented that they not only enjoyed doing the murals, but that they liked being able to share information as a group. I know that they felt good about themselves by the way they smiled as they worked and presented their shared

projects. I often heard comments like, "This is really fun. I wish we could always do this."

This comment was heard throughout the implementation of the unit.

After they presented their projects, they walked off with proud looks on their faces. You could tell that they were pleased with their projects. There were many kind comments within the groups as they finished presenting. They actually seemed to develop a sense of respect for what others had contributed to the outcome.

I also noticed a sense of excitement when information was found on their topics. They ran up to me with the books or magazines and shared with me what they had just discovered. It was exciting for me to see how much they learned.

One thing that surprised me was the fact that many students, including the "at risk" population, went to the library and checked out their first library cards and brought in books to share with the class. They were really excited about this process. They were really proud that they brought in books to share. There were many smiles when they did this. I also heard many comments from the children that the parents enjoyed getting involved by taking them to the library. This was a good opportunity for parents to do something positive with their children.

Finally, student journals revealed much information about how they felt as we implemented the unit. I continuously read from almost everyone:

1. This is fun.
2. I hope that we get to do this again.
3. I liked working with a group.
4. It was fun writing a song and presenting it.
5. We get to talk alot.
6. I like to draw.
7. Painting murals are fun.
8. I like reading about the gold rush.
9. I like studying about rocks and minerals.
10. I hope that I get to have Mrs. "Fi" again next year.

There definitely was a positive tone in the overall class as we implemented the unit. It seemed as though the students got along better with each other as we progressed through the unit. I could sense the difference and it was just more pleasant being in a classroom where children cooperated and enjoyed what they were doing.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following key indicates the use of each book and can be found in brackets at the end of each entry.

S. S. = This book is used to teach social studies content. It includes the broad base of social studies which includes geography and history.

M. C. = This book is used to address the multicultural aspect as related to the diversity of cultures in the state of California. It does not mean that it is restricted to a specific grade level, but enhances the knowledge of multicultural education and meets the needs of the diversity of learners in the classroom today.

L. L. = This book is used to teach language.

Lit. = This book is used for literature based instruction, even though it may be on an assigned list for another grade level. This meets the needs of the diversity of learners in the classroom today.

### BOOKS

Aardema, V. (1981). Bringing the rain to kapiti plain. Dial Books. This African rhyming folktale tells how Ki-pat, the herdsman, works out a clever method to save plain from a long drought. Grade levels 1-4. Folklore. {Lit., & M. C.}

Adolph, A., Ill. by Steptoe, J. (1982). Colors of the race. Lathrop. The poems in this book are written from the point of view of a child with a black mother and a white father. Grade levels 4-6. Multicultural aspects. {Lit., M. C.}

Ahlberg, A., & Ahlberg, J. (1986). The jolly postman. Little, Brown. A postman delivers mail to fairy tale characters. Every other page of the book is an envelope with a letter inside, demonstrating different kinds of written communications. Grade level 1. Letter writing. {L. L.}

Amon, A., Ill. by Amon, A. (1981). The earth is sore: Native Americans on nature. Atheneum. Poems and songs that express the feelings and thoughts of American Indians about nature, the white man, and land misuse. Grade levels K-6. Multicultural aspects. {S. S., Lit., M. C., L. L.}

- Aylesworth, T. G. (1988). The Pacific: California, Hawaii. The New York: Chelsea House Publ. Discusses the geographical, historical and cultural aspects of California and Hawaii. Geography; Multi-cultural aspects. {S. S., M. C.}.
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- Barkin, C., & James, E. (1983). How to write a great school report. William Morrow. Written for the student, the step-by-step process of preparing (choosing, finding facts and information, taking notes) and writing (getting ready, rewriting, checking) a report for school are laid out. Examples of reference materials and sample reports are included. Grade levels 4-9. Report writing. {L. L.}
- Barnard, J. (1972). Voices from the Southwest: Antonio Jose-Martinex, Elfego Baca, and Reices Lopez Tyerina. Scholastic. The author describes the struggles of three Mexican Americans in various historical periods to redress the wrongs that their people suffered. Grade levels 4-9. {M. C., S. S.}
- Baylor, B. (1972). When clay sings, (Southwest). Scribner. Poems and drawings describe the life of an American Indian in earlier times as depicted on pottery. Grade levels K-6. Nonfiction: Poetry; Multicultural aspects. {Lit., L. L., M. C.}
- Blair, W., Ill. by Rounds, G. (1944). Tall tale America. This legendary history of our humorous heroes includes Captain Stormalong, Jonathan Slick, Mike Fink, Febold Feboldson, Paul Bunyon, Davy Crockett, Pecos Bill, John Henry, and numerous others. Grade levels 4-6. Tall tales. {Lit., L. L.}
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dream of discovering gold. Gold rush; pioneers; immigrants. {Lit., S. S.}.

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Brewton, S., & Brewton, J. (Eds.). (1968). America forever new: A book of poems. Crowell. This collection includes poems about American history, tall tales, pioneers, city dwellers and landscapes of American. Grade levels 2-6. Poetry. {S. S., M. C., Lit., L. L.}.

Burton, V. L. (1942). The little house. Houghton Mifflin. The story of a little house that sees many changes over the years, information about buildings, transportation, growth of population, and the increase in urban life is presented. Caldecott Medal. Grade levels 2-5. Pioneer life. {Lit., S. S.}.

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Cleary, B., Ill. by Zelinsky, P. O. (1983). Dear Mr. Henshaw. Dell. When Leigh Botts writes his favorite author, the letters evolve into a journal. Then he learns how writing can become a personal tool that brings insight and understanding. Newberry Medal. Grade levels 4-7. {Lit., L. L.}.

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- Cricket Songs: Japanese Haiku. Translated by Harry Behn. (1964). Harcourt. Brief, nonrhyming poems express the wonders of nature. Grade levels 3-6. Poetry. {L. L.}.
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their experiences. Grade levels 5-8. Nonfiction information. Pioneers. {S. S., Lit.}.

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